VARIATIONS IN SEXUAL BEHAVIOR: KINKS, FETISHES, & PARAPHILIAS

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When Is Sexual Behavior Abnormal?

- Sexual behavior varies greatly from one culture to the next.
- There is a corresponding variation across cultures in what is considered to be abnormal sexual behavior.
When Is Sexual Behavior Abnormal?

• To establish a reasonable set of criteria for gauging the normality or abnormality of a sexual behavior, we can use the following approaches:

  • **Statistical Definition:** An abnormal sexual behavior is one that is rare, or not practiced by many people.

  • Unfortunately, this definition does not provide much insight into the psychological or the social functioning of the person who engages in the behavior.

  • **Sociological Approach:** Recognizes the importance of the individual’s interaction with society and of the problems that people face if their behavior is labeled “deviant” in the culture in which they live.

  • A sociologist might define a deviant sexual behavior as a sexual behavior that violates the norms of society...in other words, if a society says that a particular sexual behavior is deviant, it as — at least in that society.
When Is Sexual Behavior Abnormal?

• **Psychological Approach:** According to Arnold Buss (1966), “the three criteria for abnormality are discomfort, inefficiency, and bizarreness”.

  • Bizarreness is culturally defined…what appears to be bizarre in one culture may appear to be normal in another.

• **Medical Approach:** Based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (American Psychiatric Association, 2013), paraphilias are atypical sexual interests and there are 8 specific paraphilias that are recognized.
When Is Sexual Behavior Abnormal?

- **Paraphilia:** any intense and persistent sexual interest other than sexual interest in genital stimulation or preparatory fondling with phenotypical normal, physically mature, consenting human partners...intense and persistent unconventional sexual interest.
  - Fetishism
  - Transvestism
  - Sexual Sadism
  - Sexual Masochism
  - Voyeurism
  - Frotteurism
  - Exhibitionism
  - Pedophilia
The Normal-Abnormal Continuum

- A mild preference or even a strong preference, for the fetish object (silk panties, heels, etc) is within the normal range of sexual behavior.

- When the silk panties, a thong, heels, etc become a necessity — when a person cannot become aroused and have intercourse unless the fetish object is present — we have crossed the boundary into abnormal behavior, it has become a paraphilia.

- When a person becomes obsessed with a fetish object and engages in behavior to make sure the fetish object is always available, the fetish has become a fetishistic disorder.

- In extreme forms, the fetish object may become a substitute for a human partner, and the man’s sexual behavior consists of masturbating with the fetish object present.
Fetishism

• **Fetishism:** Refers to a sexual fixation on some object other than another human being and attachment of great erotic significance to that object.

• A common fetish in the United States is for clothing made of leather.

• A **fetishistic disorder** is characterized by sexual fantasies, urges, or sexual behaviors involving the use of nonliving objects to produce or enhance sexual arousal with or in the absence of a partner, over a period of at least 6 months and causing significant distress.
Fetishism

• In extreme cases, the person is incapable of becoming aroused and having an orgasm unless the fetish object is present.
Common Types of Fetishes

- Acrotomophilia (Amputee Fetishism)
- Breast Fetishism
- Corset Fetishism (Tightlacing)
- Diaper Fetishism
- Foot Fetishism
- Furry Fetishism
- Glove Fetishism
- Belly Button Fetishism
- Leather Fetishism
- Pregnancy Fetishism
- Rubber Fetishism
- Boot Fetishism
- Spandex Fetishism
- Stocking Fetishism
Cross-Dressing

• **Cross-Dressing**: Refers to dressing as a member of the other gender.

• Male transsexuals may go through a stage of cross-dressing in the process of becoming a woman.

  • Discomfort with one’s anatomic sex and the desire to be the other sex.

• **Drag Queens**: men who dress in feminine clothing (caricatures of traditional gender roles).

• **Drag Kings**: women who dress in masculine clothing (caricatures of traditional gender roles).
Cross-Dressing

• A survey was conducted by mailing questionnaires to 1,200 members of a national cross-dressing organization.

• 372 questionnaires were returned.

• The median age at which the men began to cross-dress was 8.5 years old.

• 32% of surveyed men reported that they first dressed as a female before they were 6 years old.
Cross-Dressing

- **Transvestism**: Some men regularly dress in female clothing to produce sexual arousal and experience sexual excitement…a person who is troubled by persistent, recurring urges to cross-dress.
  
  - Almost all transvestites are men (heterosexual and homosexual men)…essentially unknown among women.
  
  - Our culture’s tolerance of women who wear masculine clothing and the intolerance of men who wear feminine clothing.
  
  - Traditionally, women’s clothing is by design sexual and erotic, whereas men’s clothing is functional (Wheeler et al., 2008).

- When the desire to dress as a woman (for the purpose of sexual arousal) persists for at least 6 months and causes clinically significant distress, it becomes a transvestic disorder (APA, 2013).
  
  - The cross-dressing may be done in private (with or without the knowledge of one’s partner).
Sadism and Masochism

• **Sexual Sadist:** a person who experiences intense sexual arousal from the physical or psychological suffering of another person, as manifested by fantasies, urges, or behaviors.

• **Sexual Masochist:** a person who experiences intense sexual arousal from the act of being humiliated, beaten, bound, or otherwise made to suffer, as manifested by fantasies, urges, or behaviors.

• When this is experienced for at least 6 months and causes distress or impairment, it is a paraphilic disorder (APA, 2013).
Sadism and Masochism

There are two specific styles of interaction related to sadism-masochism (S-M).

- **Bondage and Discipline (B-D):** Refers to the use of physically restraining devices or psychologically restraining commands as a central aspect of sexual interactions.

- These devices or commands may enforce obedience and servitude without inducing any physical pain.
  - Ritual restraint, as by shackles.

- **Dominance and Submission:** Refers to interaction that involves a consensual exchange of power; the dominant partner uses his or her power to control and sexually stimulate the submissive partner.
Sadomasochistic Behavior

• Sadomasochism (S-M) is a rare form of sexual behavior.

• According to Krueger (2010), among men evaluated for paraphilic disorders, 3-11% were diagnosed as sadists, and 2-6% were diagnosed as masochists.

• Mild versions (nonparaphilic) of S-M are more common than people may think...26% of females and a similar percentage of males had experienced definite or request erotic responses as a result of being bitten during sexual activity (Kinsey et al., 1953).
Sadomasochistic Behavior

- According to data collected from questionnaires administered to 130 male and 52 female respondents from S-M magazines, 33% of males and 28% of females preferred the dominant role.

- 41% of the males and 40% of the females preferred the submissive role.

- 26% of the males and 32% of the females were versatile.

- A majority of the respondents identified as heterosexual.

- Men involved in S-M frequently report having been interested in such activity since childhood.

- Women are more likely to report having been introduced to S-M by someone else.

- Women prefer bondage, spanking, oral sex, and master-slave role playing (Levitt et al., 1994).
Sadomasochistic Behavior

• S-M is often about “play”…S-M sexual activities are organized into “scenes”; one “plays” with one’s S-M partner.

• Roles, costumes, and props are important parts of each scene.

• The roles include slave and master, maid and mistress, and teacher and pupil.

• The props may include tight leather clothing, pins and needs, ropes, whips, and hot wax.
Voyeurism

- **Voyeurism**: A voyeur is a person who experiences intense sexual arousal from watching an unsuspecting person who is naked, in the process of undressing, or engaging in sexual activity.

- Voyeurism becomes a paraphilia when it is manifested by fantasies, urges, or behaviors.

- Often referred to as “peeping toms”.

- The most common of potentially law-breaking sexual behaviors.

- The lifetime prevalence of voyeuristic disorder is estimated at 12% of men and 4% of women.

- According to the F.B.I, 9 men to 1 women are arrested on charges related to “peeping”.

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Image: A woman standing in a bedroom, partially undressed, with a lamp on a bedside table and a window with blinds. The image is in black and white.
Voyeurism

• Voyeurism illustrates the continuum from normal to abnormal behavior.

• Many men and women find it arousing to watch a man or woman undress and “dance” — otherwise, there would be no strip clubs — well within the range of normal behavior.

• Some heterosexual women are “crotch watchers” much as men are “breast watchers” (Friday, 1973).
Voyeurism

- In a 2007 study, college students were asked whether they would watch an attractive person undress and an attractive couple having sex...the likelihood of getting caught was rated at 0%, 10%, and 25%.

- 66% of the respondents said they would watch someone undress.

- 45% of the respondents said they would watch the couple having sex.

- As the risk factor of getting caught decreased from 25% to 10% to 0%, respondents stated that they would watch the person undress at a higher rate.
Voyeurism

- Peepers typically want the women they view to be a stranger and do not want her to know what they are doing (Yalom, 1960).

- The element of risk is also important; while one might think that a nudist camp would be heaven to a peeper, it is not, because the element of risk and forbiddenness are missing (Sagarin, 1973).

- A 2006 survey of randomly selected 18-60 year olds in Sweden found that 8% of respondents reported being sexually aroused by watching others having sex… 75% of the 8% who admitted to being sexually aroused were men.
Exhibitionism

- **Exhibitionism**: An exhibitionist is a person who derives sexual gratification from exposing his genitals to an unsuspecting person.

- Most exhibitionists are men.

- 30% of all arrests for sexual offenses are for exhibitionism.

- According to one survey, 33% of college women have been the objects of indecent exposure (victims may experience negative psychological consequences).

- The exhibitionist’s goal is to produce shock or some other strong emotional response, the women who becomes extremely upset is gratifying to the exhibitionist.

- Considered problematic behavior because the other person involved in an unwilling participant.

- Exhibitionists are usually not physically threatening… often lonely and sexually repressed.
Frotteurism

- **Frotteurism**: is the act of touching or rubbing one’s genitals up against another person in a sexual manner without their consent, in order to derive sexual pleasure or reach orgasm.

- Frotteurism typically occurs among males between the ages of 15 to 25 years old.

- The act of touching an unsuspecting and non-consenting person’s breasts, legs, buttocks, or genitals, or rubbing one’s own pelvic area or erect penis against that person, generally from behind...groping.

- Frotteuristic behavior is repetitive, and usually occurs in crowded public places, such as trains, buses, elevators, and crowded streets.

- Toucherism: characterized by the persistent urge to fondle non-consenting strangers,
Zoophilia and Necrophilia

- **Zoophilia**: characterized by urges and fantasies involving sexual contact with animals.
- **Bestiality**: Involves actual sexual contact with an animal.
- **Necrophilia**: characterized by the desire for sexual activity with corpses. Three types:
  - **Regular**: sex with a dead person
  - **Necrophilic Homicide**: commit murder to obtain corpse for sexual purposes
  - **Necrophilic Fantasy**: fantasies about sex with corpses
- Very rare paraphilia and necrophiles are seriously disturbed.
Less Common Paraphilias

- Klismaphilia: sexual arousal is derived from the use of enemas.

- Coprophilia: sexual arousal is attained in connection with feces.

- Urophilia: associated with urine.
More Common Paraphilias

- Hypoxyphilia: person seeks to enhance sexual arousal, usually during masturbation, by becoming deprived of oxygen.
- Katoptronophilia: achieving a heightened state of arousal by having sex in front of a mirror.
- Anililagnia: an erotic attraction to older men/women and rarely to someone within your own age range.
- Trichophilia: achieving sexual arousal by playing with someone’s hair, smelling it, or just staring at the hair.
- Pictophilia: achieving a heightened state of sexual arousal by watching pornography or looking at pornographic images.
- Nasolingus: increased sexual arousal and pleasure is achieved by sucking a person’s nose.
- Podophilia: achieving sexual arousal by sucking, nibbling, licking, touching or caressing someone’s feet.
- Agalmatophilia: sexual arousal from mannequins, statues, or dolls.
Treatment of Paraphilias

- **Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy**: focuses on resolving unconscious conflicts.
- **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy**: focuses directly on changing behavior.
Treatment of Paraphilias

Systematic desensitization
- A method for terminating the connection between a stimulus and an inappropriate response
- Relaxation replaces sexual arousal

Aversion therapy
- A method for terminating undesirable sexual behavior in which the behavior is paired repeatedly with an aversive stimulus such as electric shock so that a conditioned aversion develops

Covert sensitization
- A form of aversion therapy in which thoughts of engaging in undesirable behavior are paired repeatedly with imagined aversive stimuli
- Used with pedophiles, a paraphilia involving sexual interest in children
Treatment of Paraphilias

Social skills training

- Behavior therapy methods for building social skills that rely on a therapist’s coaching and practice
- Used to help individuals relate to the other gender

Orgasmic reconditioning

- A method for strengthening the connection between sexual arousal and appropriate sexual stimuli by repeatedly pairing the desired stimuli with orgasm