

Human Sexuality  
October 21, 2009  
Sexual Attraction and Culture

Final Exam  
• Friday, December 18, 2009  
from 7-9pm

Continuum

- Attraction  
↓
- Intimacy  
↓
- Love

Who are you attracted to?  
Features of attraction

1. Mere Exposure Effect → we are attracted to those we see often

2. Homophily → we are attracted to those similar in social status (race > education > age > religion)

But opposites can attract with respect to personality style

3. Attractiveness → we are attracted to more physically attractive people (more important for men than women)

**But what is considered physically attractive?**

- Visual perception (i.e., body shape and appearance sanctioned by the local culture, lack of visible deformity, symmetry, pleasing body posture)
- Audition (i.e., how they sound, how noisily they walk, etc.)
- Olfaction (i.e., how they smell – naturally and artificially)

4. Interpersonal marketplace →

for heterosexuals, higher status men are more attractive, but, this depends on a woman's sense of self-worth

## Who are you attracted to? Theories of attraction

- Reinforcement Theory → a partner's rewards make us feel good about ourselves. This is *rewarding* and will lead us to want to spend more time with that person

- Sociobiological (Evolutionary) theory → we want to maximize chance of offspring survival so...
  - Seek younger female mates
  - Attractive female partner = healthy
  - Attractive male partner = reproductively valuable
  - Higher male status = able to care for offspring
- But is this still the case for modern women who do not depend on men to provide for them?

## Waist-hip-ratio



Measure waist  
at narrowest point

Ratio =  $\frac{\text{Waist}}{\text{Hips}}$

Measure hips at  
widest point

ADAM

- Men from western society tend to prefer waist-to-hip ratio of 0.7
  - Associated with lower risk of heart disease
  - Higher reproductive rate
  - Higher female > male hormones

## Do children show these same waist-hip-ratio preferences?

- Showed 4 waist-hip-ratio pictures (0.7, 0.8, 0.9, 1.0) by three weight categories (underweight, average, overweight) to university aged and elementary school aged children
- If > age 12: “who is the most attractive?”
- If < age 12: “who looks the nicest?”

## Findings

- With increasing age, there is a preference for lower waist:hip
- With very young age (age 6), there is no preferred waist:hip ratio
- The “adult-like” preference for males emerged at age 10

time of adrenarche

## Explanation

- Hormonal changes that trigger puberty may also increase children’s attention to the social norms for attractive body shapes
- Hormonal changes that trigger puberty may *directly* affect children’s preferences by stimulating the prewired preference for fit mates

## Love

- 3 components:
- Intimacy → emotional
- Passion/Romance → motivational
- Decision/Commitment → cognitive

Sternberg’s Triangular Theory of Love, 1986

## Passionate love

- a state of intense longing for union with the other person and of intense physiological arousal
- Biological changes:
  - increase in dopamine (euphoria and craving)
  - increase in oxytocin (correlates with touch, pleasure, orgasm, trust)
  - increase in prolactin

### Passionate Love: 13 psychophysiological characteristics

Feeling	Neural correlate
1. Feeling the beloved is unique; cant feel this way towards anyone else	Inc. DA
2. Focus attention on positive attributes and ignore negative ones	Inc DA, Inc NE
3. Labile psychophysiological responses (exhilaration, euphoria, energy, sleeplessness, anxiety symptoms, abrupt mood swings, decreased appetite	Inc DA
4. Increased infatuation in times of adversity	Inc DA
5. Intrusive thinking about the beloved	Decr 5-HT
6. Signs of emotional dependency	-

### Passionate Love: 13 psychophysiological characteristics

Feeling	Neural correlate
7. Experience longing for emotional union with the beloved	
8. Powerful sense of empathy and willingness to sacrifice	
9. Reorder daily priorities, change clothing, mannerisms, habits, etc. to become available	
10. Possessiveness and feelings of jealousy	
11. Craving for emotional union > sex	
12. It is involuntary and uncontrollable	
13. Is impermanent	

### Timeline

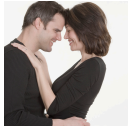
- starts when one views the other as special or unique
- aggrandizing their traits and overlooking or minimizing flaws
- lovers are emotionally dependent and change their priorities and daily habits to remain in contact and/or impress the beloved
- experiences sexual desire and intense mate guarding and possessiveness

### fMRI findings

- Fisher, 2005
- n = 10 women, n = 7 men

## fMRI findings

- Fisher, 2005
- n = 10 women, n = 7 men



40 sec



30 sec



## Fisher, 2005

- **beloved specific activation** took place in: right ventral tegmental area
- VTA is a central part of the reward system associated with pleasure, general arousal, focused attention, and motivation to pursue and acquire rewards
- VTA sends projections to caudate – plays a role in reward detection and integration of sensory inputs to prepare for action
- Thus, romantic love is a motivation system

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Breaking News 'Tm no puppet master'

### Love triangle poser in murder

By Teoh E! Sen September 30, 2008 Categories: News



Police suspect that the brutal murder of P. Pholi Philai, 53, whose body was found with almost severed limbs at a road shoulder in Shah Alam last Saturday, could be due to the rage of a jealous lover in a tragic love triangle — a significant change from the original investigation that focused on robbery.

They are looking for Gunasegaran Ponniah, 38, (IC No: 701231-10-6147), whose last known address is Lot 2398R Jalan Bukit Kemuning, Batu 8, Klang, Selangor, to help in investigations.

Gunasegaran has three previous arrest records, two for robbery and an assault case.

Gunasegaran: Police are seeking his help in the murder

The woman in the centre of the love triangle is believed to be a 48-year-old Thai, a permanent resident in Malaysia who was detained by police on Sept 27. Also arrested on the same day was a 25-year-old man whom police suspect has a link to the murder. Both are being held in remand till

## Passionate love is not the same as sex drive

- sex drive is the urge for sexual gratification
- associated with androgens in humans
- differences between sex drive and passionate drive:
  1. sex drive is focused on sexual union with another; passionate love is focused on emotional union
  2. sex drive can be focused on a range of people whereas romantic love is directed to one person
  3. sex drive can be quelled when satisfied; passionate love is not and can persist unabated for years
  4. can engage in sex with no passionate love and can be in love with someone with whom you've had no physical contact

### What if passionate love is not reciprocated

- Fisher (2005) studied brains of 10 women and 5 men who were still in passionate love but who were recently rejected
- Compared to those happily in love, rejected lovers showed significantly more activation in the ventral striatum/putamen/ pallidum
- These are areas associated with risk taking for big gains/losses, physical pain, OCD, ruminating on intentions of the rejecter

- **\*\*intense romantic love is a cross-cultural universal**
- Jankowiak and Fisher found evidence of passionate love in 147 of 166 societies examined.

### Importance of culture

- Value-laden
- Sexuality-related beliefs & values vary across cultures

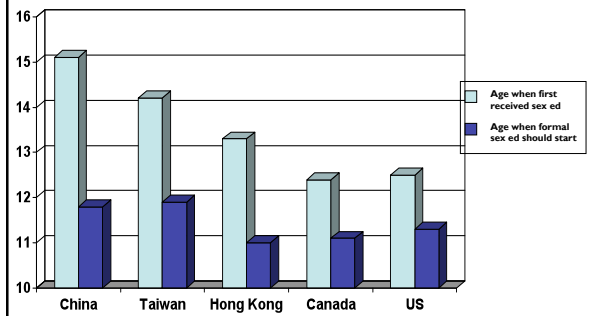
### Importance of culture

- Sexually conservative beliefs and behaviour in Chinese individuals compared to Western norms
- Sex education is minimal; parents & health professionals are reluctant to discuss sexuality
- Chinese culture in general: collectivistic, patriarchal

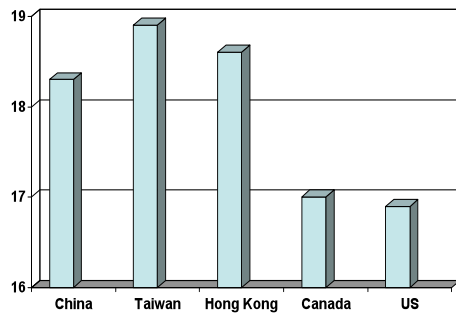
### Durex Study (2005)

- n = 317,000
- 41 countries

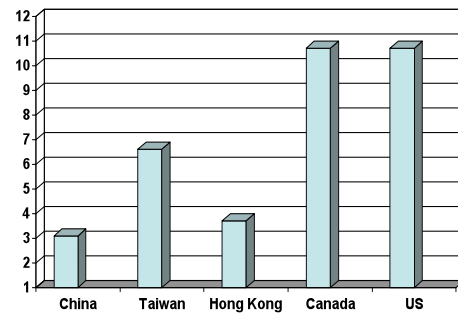
### Sex Education (Durex Study, 2005)



### Age of First Intercourse (Durex Study, 2005)

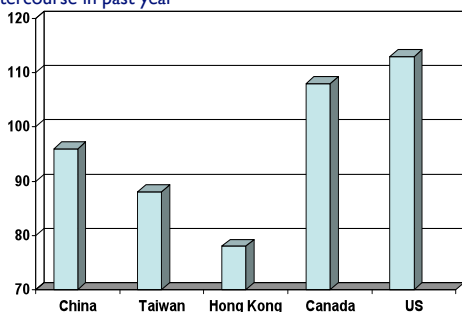


### Number of Sexual Partners (Durex Study, 2005)



### Frequency of Intercourse (Durex Study, 2005)

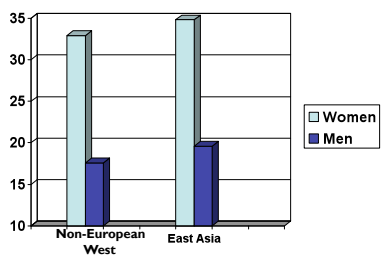
Number of times had intercourse in past year



### Laumann et al. (2005)

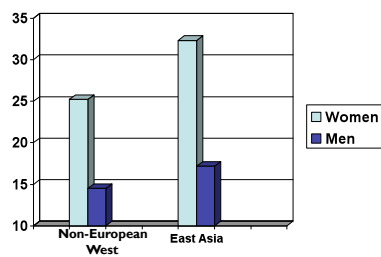
- n = 13,882 women; 13,618 men
- 29 countries (Europe, North America, South America, Middle East, Asia, Australia, NZ)

### Lack of Sexual Interest (Laumann et al., 2005)



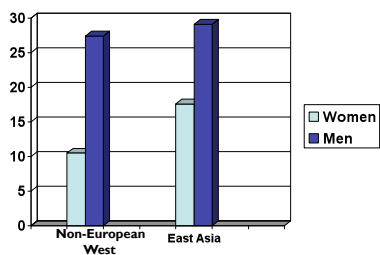
Non-European West: Australia, Canada, NZ, South Africa, US  
 East Asia: China, HK, Japan, Korea, Taiwan

### Inability to Reach Orgasm (Laumann et al., 2005)



Non-European West: Australia, Canada, NZ, South Africa, US  
 East Asia: China, HK, Japan, Korea, Taiwan

### Orgasm too Quickly (Laumann et al., 2005)



Non-European West: Australia, Canada, NZ, South Africa, US  
 East Asia: China, HK, Japan, Korea, Taiwan

### Acculturation

- Process by which an individual who moves from one culture to another assimilates aspects of the new culture's values and beliefs
- Early research on acculturation assumed:
  - that the longer an individual has lived in the new culture, the more the individual will embrace the values of the new culture (length-of-residency assumption)
  - that as an individual embraces the new culture, he/she simultaneously relinquishes the culture of origin (unidimensional acculturation assumption)

### Acculturation

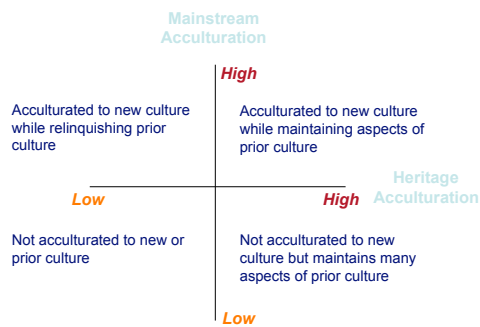
#### Unidimensional Model of Acculturation

Heritage Culture

Mainstream Culture

### Acculturation

#### Bidimensional Model of Acculturation



### Acculturation & Sexuality

- Brotto et al. (2005)
- n = 349 (173 Caucasian, 176 East Asian)
- female
- university students
- ethnic differences in sexual knowledge, attitude, experience, desire, arousal, frequency

### Acculturation & Sexuality (Brotto et al., 2005)

#### Acculturation Results (East Asian women only):

- ↑ mainstream acculturation → more sexual experiences
- Heritage & mainstream acculturation interact in predicting sexual openness
  - ↑ mainstream acculturation → more sexual openness, but ONLY if heritage acculturation was low
  - ↑ mainstream acculturation did NOT → more sexual openness if heritage acculturation was high

### History of Sex in China

3 main influences on Chinese sexuality:

- Concept of Yin & Yang
- Confucianism
- Taoism

\*\*\* This section focuses on heterosexual relationships due to the heterocentrism inherent in each of the above influences

### History of Sex in China

#### Concept of Yin & Yang

- All objects & events are products of 2 elements:
  - Yin- negative, passive, weak, destructive (female)
  - Yang- positive, active, strong, constructive (male)
- Harmonious interaction of male & female principles is vital
- In traditional Chinese medicine, everything is classified as either Yin or Yang- patient's physical constitution, symptoms, herbal & dietary remedies
  - Yin- deficiency, cold
  - Yang- excess, heat
  - Illness- imbalance of Yin & Yang elements
  - Treatment goal- restore balance between Yin & Yang

## History of Sex in China

### Concept of Yin & Yang (cont'd)

- “A cold disease should be heated up, a hot disease should be made cold, a warm disease should be cooled down, a cold disease should be warmed up, a dispersing disease should be constricted, an inhibiting disease should be dispersed...”  
~ Nei Jing (“Canon of Internal Medicine”, Chinese medical classic)
- Preventive health care, balanced diet = maintaining balance between Yin & Yang
- Sexual intercourse = opportunity to exchange Yin & Yang

## History of Sex in China

### Confucianism

- Confucius (551-479 BC)
- System of moral philosophy & political ideology- Official ideology of the imperial bureaucracy for 2,000 years
- Positive attitude toward human sexuality
  - Eg. “Eating food and having sex is human nature”
  - Eg. “Food and drink and the sexual relation between men and women compose the major human desires”
- Qualifiers: maintaining orderly relationships; context of marriage & filial obligation

## History of Sex in China

### Taoism

- Philosophy & religion
- Practical way of life; individual life & tranquillity
- Sexual technical books

## History of Sex in China

### Names for Male & Female Genitalia

Male	Female
Weapon of love	Grotto of Pleasure
Warrior	Love Anemone
Jade Sceptre	Valley of Lust
Crimson Bird	Golden Groove
Yang Pagode	Purple Peony

Compare with cock, dick, schlong; beaver, muff, pussy

## History of Sex in China

### What happened?

- Neo-Confucianism in 1,000 AD (Song Dynasty)
- “It is a very small thing to die as a result of starvation, but a very serious evil to lose chastity toward one’s dead husband by remarrying” ~ Cheng I, Neo-Confucian
- Since then, successive regimes have maintained repressive sexual policies

## History of Sex in China

### Recent Changes

- In mid-1980’s, government began to acknowledge need for sex education programs. Why?
  - Pressure from politically influential individuals
  - High population growth was a problem. In 1973, implementation of birth control program; needed to provide sexual information essential to understanding and using contraception
  - Teenage pregnancy, juvenile sex crimes, STIs seemed to be increasing; hoped that sex education would address some of these problems
  - Opening up of China to Western cultural influences → ↑ personal freedoms, expression of desire to improve sexual lives

## History of Sex in China

### Excerpt from Secret Instructions Concerning the Jade Chamber (Classical Chinese sex manual, 4<sup>th</sup> Century?)

[The Yellow Emperor asked] “How can I become aware of the joyfulness of the woman?”

[Replied the Immaculate Girl] “There are 5 signs, 5 desires, and 10 movements. By looking at these changes, you will become aware of what is happening in her body. The first of the 5 signs is called “reddened face”; if you see this you slowly unite with her. The second is called “breasts hard and nose perspiring”; then slowly insert the jade stalk [penis]. The third is called “throat dry and saliva blocked”; then slowly agitate her. The fourth is called “slippery vagina”; then slowly go in more deeply. The fifth is called “the genitals transmit fluid” [female ejaculation]; then slowly withdraw from her.”

...[The Immaculate Girl said] “Through the 5 desires, one is made aware of the woman’s response, or what she wants you to do to her. First, if she catches her breath, it means that she wants to make love with you. Second, if her nose and mouth are dilated, it means that she wants you to insert your penis. Third, if she embraces you tightly, it means that she is very stimulated and excited. Fourth, if her perspiration flows and dampens her dress, it means that she wants to have her orgasm soon. Fifth, if her body straightens and her eyes close, it means she has already been satisfied.”