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REVIEW

Sexual Motives: Cultural, Evolutionary, and Social Psychological Perspectives

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Abstract Recently, scholars from a variety of disciplines have begun to investigate passionate love, sexual desire, and sexual behavior. Specifically, they have started to ask such questions as: "Why do young men and women engage in sexual liaisons?" "Why do they avoid such encounters?" Unfortunately, in attempting to answer such questions, scholars have generally focused on surveys and experiments within their own disciplines and have accorded scant attention to the discoveries of other disciplines. In this paper, we will begin by discussing three theoretical perspectives that have had the most to say about why young people seek out (or avoid) sex—cultural psychology, evolutionary psychology, and social psychology (where theorists often take a biopsychosocial approach). Then, we will (1) describe the many scales that have been used to assess sexual motives, and (2) review the multidisciplinary data which has been assembled in an attempt to answer the questions as to why people seek out (or avoid) sexual activity. Unfortunately, almost all this research was conducted by Western researchers, investigating the attitudes and behavior of young American men and women, who were heterosexual. (Alas, the wider-ranging data one would wish to consider is as yet only rarely available.) Through this multidisciplinary synthesis, we hope to demonstrate the impact of culture, social experience, and biological imperatives in shaping young men's and women's motives for engaging in sexual encounters and provide a sort of "encyclopedia" of sexual motives measures and research for future scholars.

Keywords Sexual motives · Sexual motive measures · Sexual behavior · Social psychology · Culture · Sexuality · Sex

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Introduction

Scholars from a variety of disciplines—such as cultural psychology, feminist and gender studies, "Queer" studies, social psychology, social history, sociology, philosophy, the neurosciences, biology, sexology, and the like—have recently become interested in passionate love, sexual desire, and sexual behavior. They have begun to speculate about such profound questions as: "What motivates young men and women to choose to engage in sexual activities?" "What motivates them to avoid such activities?"

Historians such as D'Emilio and Freedman (1997) have observed that throughout history people have assigned very different meanings to passionate love, sexual desire, and sexual activity. Historically, the dominant metaphors have been religious, medical, romantic, or commercial. During the Catholic Church's domination of Europe (which lasted for several centuries) procreation was the only sanctioned motive for sexual activity (Hatfield and Rapson 1993). Vatican City may still press for that definition of "legitimate" sexuality, but most modern-day observant Catholics now ignore that stricture (Hatfield and Rapson 1993; Rapson 2007).

Over the past decades, (building on the work of D'Emilio and Freedman), Hatfield and Rapson (2006) have asked University of Hawai'i students to list the reasons why they and their friends engage in sexual relations. These students provided a surprising array of reasons why people engage in sex. "I wanted to get closer to God." "I loved her." "I wanted to thank him for all he's done for me." "My friends kept teasing me, calling me SIFM: Saving it for marriage." "I was furious at my boyfriend and I thought: I'll show that SOB." "It's a wife's duty—like it or not." Among the sexual motives informants mentioned were indeed the Big Three that scholars have so often studied—love, a desire for pleasure and eroticism (the attainment of physical pleasure; recreational sex; "sport fucking"), and the hope of procreation (DeLamater and MacCorquodale 1979). But the informants mentioned an impressive array of other reasons as well—among them a desire for self-esteem, status, spiritual transcendence, duty, conformity, kindness, conquest/power (people can, of course, also *withhold* sex in the hopes of attaining power), submission to others, vengeance (a desire to conquer, degrade, and punish), curiosity, money, to make up after a fight ("make-up sex"), to make someone jealous, attain health and long life (Yin and Yang), stress reduction, to save the World, political revolt, relaxation/help in getting to sleep… and so on.

A Definition of Sexual Motives

The APA Dictionary of Psychology (2007) defines a motive as:

> The impetus that gives purpose or direction to human or animal behavior and operates at a conscious or unconscious level…. Motives are frequently divided into: (a) physiological, primary, or organic motives, such as hunger, thirst, and need for sleep; and (b) personal, social, or secondary motives, such as

> affiliation, competition, and individual interests and goals. An important distinction must also be drawn between internal motivating forces and external factors, such as rewards or punishments, which can encourage or discourage certain behaviors (p. 594).

In this paper we will be concerned with the cultural, social, and biological motives that spark sexual behavior. Sexual behavior will be defined as romantic kissing, French kissing, petting (touching of breasts and/or genitals), oral sex, manual sex, penile-vaginal intercourse, and/or anal sex. (Given the paucity of research, we will not attempt to speculate about motives for masturbation.)

Theoretical Perspectives

Theorists from a variety of intellectual disciplines have speculated about the factors that may lead young people to seek out (or to avoid) sexual encounters. Let us begin by considering three of these approaches: cultural perspectives, evolutionary perspectives, and social psychological (biopsychosocial perspectives). We hope this review will make it clear why scholars from different disciplines have focused on somewhat different potential sexual motives.

Cultural Perspectives

Culture is known to have a profound impact on people's sexual attitudes, feelings, and behaviors. Cultures also differ markedly in what are considered to be "appropriate" reasons having sex or abstinence. The Silwa, in Aswan, Egypt, for example, disapproved of young men and women even talking about sex, much less engaging in it (Ammar 1954). Marriage was the only legitimate justification for sex. In a few Polynesian societies, things were very different. Marshall (1971) conducted field research in Mangaia, in the Cook Islands. He found that in Mangaia, although romantic love was rare, young engaged in a great deal of casual sexual activity. In some cultures, casual sex is the norm; in others (particularly fundamentalist religious societies), premarital sex is a serious offense, generally punishable by death. Even in cultures where young people are permitted to engage in sexual activity, there exists a great deal of cultural variability in what are considered appropriate *reasons* for engaging in such activities (see Francoeur 1999–2002; Hatfield and Rapson 2005; Jankowiak 1995, for a summary of this field research.) Sexual desire may be "hard-wired" in the brain (Fisher 2004), but if a particular society punishes acting out that desire by parental censure, peer group ridicule, or—at the extreme—one's being stoned to death or consigned to the terrors of eternal torture, that desire (or at least the corresponding behavior) may be diminished.

Evolutionary Perspectives

Since Darwin's (1859/1988) classic treatise, *The Origins of Species,* scholars have been interested in men's and women's sexual choices. Most evolutionary

psychologists agree that one trait that has stood Homo *sapiens* in good stead is their amazing ability to adapt. Humankind can survive (and prosper) in a wide range of climates (from the Arctic to the sub-Saharan Africa), physical settings (from seashore, to forest, to desert), and social structures (polygamous, monogamous, and polyandrous). No surprise for traditional Darwinians, then, in Homo *sapien* societies, as well as in primate groups, there exists a stunning array of sexual attitudes, motives, and behavior. Men and women appear to respond more to cultural and social conditions than to genetic imperatives (Hrdy 1981, 1997).

On the other hand, many prominent evolutionary theorists argue that certain gender differences are "bred in the bone." This pioneering theory and research, while fascinating, is (in many quarters) still controversial. In an early article, Symons (1979), argued that men and women are programmed to desire very different things in a mate or sexual partner. His argument proceeds as follows:

> According to evolutionary biology, an animal's "fitness" is a measure of the extent to which it succeeds in passing on its genes to the next generation (p. 6).

It is presumably to both genders' evolutionary advantage to produce as many children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren as possible. But men and women differ in one critical respect—how much they must invest to ensure the survival of their offspring. *Men* need invest a trivial amount of time and energy in any one child. A single man can conceivably father an almost unlimited number of children. In recent times, Abdul Aziz married more than 300 wives in order to ensure the loyalty of the desert tribes. His sons now rule Saudi Arabia. One Saudi ruler claims to have more than 5,000 children (Sasson 1992). *Women,* on the other hand, must invest a great deal of time and effort in their offspring if they are to survive. In tribal societies, most women are lucky to produce even five surviving children (Hrdy 1981). Howell (1979) followed the reproductive careers of 166 !Kung women over 11 years. She reported that the maximum number of births for any woman was five, the minimum zero. Women must usually sacrifice a year or two in nursing, protecting, and teaching children to survive on their own.

Symons (1979) observed:

> The enormous sex differences in minimum parental investment and in reproductive opportunities and constraints explain why *Homo sapiens,* a species with only moderate sex differences in structure, exhibits profound sex differences in psyche (p. 27).

In a seminal paper, Buss and Schmitt (1993) proposed a "Sexual Strategies Theory" of human mating. They argued that men and women programmed to desire different traits in a mate, to employ very different strategies in short-term relationships (such as "one-night stands") versus long-term (marital) relationships, and to desire sexual encounters for very different reasons. Here is a brief recap of what their theory has to say about gender and sexual attitudes, motives, and behavior:

1. In *short-term relationships,* men should tend to be interested in "playing the field," or engaging in as much casual sex with as many fertile partners as

possible. Women's casual sex strategies should vary—depending on whether they are entirely focused short term or long-term advantages.

For these casual encounters, it is to *men's* advantage to be sensitive to clues to women's reproductive fitness. Specifically, that means that they should be "turned on" by women who are easily available and "turned off" by women who are sexually inexperienced, conservative, prudish, or who possess a low sex drive. They should care a great deal about good looks, youth, and health. They should be eager to have numerous, fleeting sexual encounters. In the absence of an ideal sexual partner, men should be willing to engage in casual sex with almost anyone, under almost any circumstances. They should try to avoid commitment or investing too much in any one relationship.

Women in short-term relationships should employ one of two adaptive strategies. Some may focus on what's in it for them in the short-run. They attempt to maximize their outcomes by demanding a high price for their sexual favors. Buss (2003), for example, observes:

> In many traditional societies, such as the Mehinaku of Amazonia and the natives of the Trobriand Islands, men bring food or jewelry, such as tobacco, betel nuts, turtle shell rings, or armlets, to their mistresses. Women deny sex if the gifts stop flowing. A girl might say, "You have no payment to give me—I refuse (p. 86).

According to this theory, women in short-term or casual relationships will attempt to maximize their outcomes by demanding a high price for their sexual favors.

Casual encounters can be entered into with a vision for the future. Women may participate in casual sex in the hopes of attracting an appealing mate for the long term. Even in a one-night stand, they might search for professional men with ambition, status, good earning capacity, and a strong career orientation; men who are kind and considerate, understanding, honest, dependable, easy-going and adaptable; men who like children. These qualifications for casual sex would indicate potential hope for a more long-term relationship.

Buss and Schmitt continue:

2. In *long-term relationships,* men and women confront a different set of adaptive problems. Men should still prefer women who are good looking, young, healthy, and possessing maximum reproductive value. But now they must also be concerned about finding a marital partner who will be willing and able to commit to a long-term relationship, who will be faithful, and who possesses good mothering skills. Women who are considering a long-term relationship should prefer men who are willing make a commitment, who are able and willing to invest resources in them and their children, who possess parenting skills, and who are willing and able to protect the family from harm. In theory, as men's and women's investments converge (as they do when contemplating commitment to long term relationships), both should become increasingly choosy about the appropriateness of a mate.

Sexual Strategies Theory (Buss and Schmitt 1993) and Strategic Pluralism Theory (Gangestad and Simpson 2000) argue that men and women possess a menu of mating strategies. Considerable evidence (which we will consider in more detail in a later section) exists to support the contention that currently, in general, men possess more positive attitudes toward casual sex, think about casual sex far more often than do women, possess a stronger desire for sexual intercourse with a variety of partners in a variety of settings than do women, are more reluctant to forgo sex, tend to initiate sex (and rarely refuse sexual offers), are willing to sacrifice more for sex, and so forth (see Baumeister et al. 2001; Buss 2003; Gangestad and Simpson 2000; Schmitt et al. 2003; for a review of this research). Evidence also exists to support the contention that men's and women's motives for participating in casual and intimate relationships may differ (see Baumeister et al. 2001; Meston and Buss 2007; Schmitt et al. 2003 for a survey of this research).

Social Psychological (Biopsychosocial) Perspectives

Currently, the once passionate arguments over "Is it culture or is it evolutionary imperatives?" seem to be moderating. Today, many social psychologists take a biopsychosocial perspective in attempting to understand people's sexual motivations (Eagly and Wood 1999; Eastwick 2009; Garcia and Reiber 2008; Hatfield and Rapson 1993, 2005; Mathes et al. 2002; Wood and Eagly 2002).

Wood and Eagly (2002) point out that if scholars are to understand people's attitudes, motives, and behavior, they must consider both the immediate, proximal causes (such as gender roles and social experiences) as well as ultimate distal causes (such as genetic factors, biological processes, and features of social structures, such as local ecologies) of such behaviors.

There is considerable evidence in support of Wood and Eagley's contention that culture, socialization, and evolved physical and reproductive capacities influence men's and women's sexual choices and sexual motives. An example: In patriarchal societies (where property is inherited through the male line), men generally possess power, status, and control resources. There is generally a strict sex-typed division of labor, in which men are assigned the role of protector and provider, while women are assigned childrearing activities. In such societies, powerful men tend to craft social norms that cater to their own needs and desires (say, to assure the paternity of their offspring), while sacrificing those of women. Men are allowed to be sexual beings while women's lives are fairly restricted. In contrast, in more egalitarian societies power is shared and a fairly flexible sexual division of labor exists. In those societies, a sexual double-standard favoring men is less likely to prevail. Men and women are likely to be more similar (than different) in their sexual attitudes, feelings, sexual motives, and behaviors. Nonetheless, even in these societies, many biologically based gender differences will exist, given that men are generally taller, stronger, and do not get pregnant.

There is some evidence for Wood and Eagly's biosocial model. Schlegel and Barry (1986) compared values in 185 non-industrial societies. They found that in societies in which women made substantial contributions to the food-based economy, people were more tolerant of premarital sexual permissiveness—for both

boys and girls. In modern-day, post-industrial cultures and societies, where traditional gender roles are becoming less confining, women's and men's sexual attitudes, feeling, and behaviors are becoming increasingly permissive (and similar). (See also Blumstein and Schwartz 1983; Clement 1989; Herold and Mewhiney 1993; Howard 1988; Netting 1992; Oliver and Hyde 1993; Lyons 2009; Schmitt et al. 2003; Wood and Eagly 2002).

In this paper—perhaps not surprisingly, since the authors are social psychologists and historians—we will take a biological approach in attempting to review what is known about people's motives in seeking out and avoiding sexual activity. That means that we will assume that both culturally imparted, socially imparted, and biologically imparted sexual motives are important.

The Existing Literature

In attempting to discover all that is known about (1) measures of sexual motives and (2) sexual motives themselves, it was necessary to engage in a great deal of detective work. We began by contacting scholars who had been (or were currently) conducting research on love, sexual desire, or sexual motives and asked them for leads. We then contacted the scholars *they* mentioned, conducting a sort of "snowball" survey of sexual motives researchers. We posted requests for information on the various listservs (such as SexNet, IASRNET, ISRE-L, SPSP-discuss-l, and the like) developed by social psychologists and sexologists. Finally, we conducted computer searches of the terms: "sexual attraction" "sexual desire," "sexual motives," "approach and avoidance sexual motives," "sexual abstinence," "sexual avoidance," and so forth, utilizing the PsycINFO database (American Psychological Association, 1967–2009), MEDLINE (National Library of Medicine, 1966–2009), and search engines such as Google, GoogleScholar, Safari, Explorer, and Netscape.

Once we had compiled a list of reliable and valid scales crafted to measure sexual motives, we set out to compile a compendium of what scholars had learned about the nature of sexual motives in various cultures, historical eras, and social circumstances. Alas, we discovered almost all existing research had been conducted in the West with young, men and women, who (it was assumed) were heterosexual—and thus, for now, that must be our focus.

All but one of the psychometricians was American. Almost all of the participants were American college students, comprised of roughly 41% men and 59% women. Although the participants ranged in age from 18 to 76, this seeming diversity is a bit misleading because in fact almost all the college students ranged in age from 18 to 23 ($M = 20.66$). In all but two cases—that of Browning (2004), who interviewed American and Thai participants, and Tang (2011), who interviewed American and Chinese students—participants were American college students, of European ancestry or of assumed European ancestry. (Often the authors made no mention of ancestry.) In more recent studies, in accord with America's changing demographic, researchers such as Meston and Buss (2007) were able to interview a sprinkling of African-American, Asian-American, and Hispanic students as well. These authors

did not compare the responses of the various ethnic groups, however, since the samples were too small to make such comparisons possible.

(This lack of diversity is unfortunate, because people's sexual motives may well be shaped by culture and may become more complex with age, experience, and with the duration of a relationship. Then too people may possess different motives for engaging in masturbation or partnered sexual relationships.)

To the extent possible, we hoped to integrate this multidisciplinary research, but practically, the best we can hope for is to provide an encyclopedia of (1) the multitude of valid and reliable sexual motive measures that exist, (2) a review of the empirical survey and experimental research (much of it unpublished) that has been conducted, and (3) thereby assist future scholars in their own theorizing and research as to the nature of sexual motives.

Scales Designed to Measure Sexual Motives

It turns out that psychometricians have crafted a plethora of scales designed to assess young people's motives in seeking out (or avoiding) sex. After an exhaustive survey of our colleagues and the scholarly literature, we were able to identify 35 scales designed to assess people's motives for engaging in sex and 15 scales designed to assess people's motives for avoiding sexual encounters.

Scales Designed to Measure Motives to Pursue Sex

Thirty years ago, Nelson (1978) developed the first battery of tests designed to assess potential sexual motives. Other test batteries soon followed. These include scales designed by Browning (2004), Cooper et al. (1998), DeLamater and MacCorquodale (1979), Hawk, Tang, and Hatfield (reported in Tang 2011), Hill and Preston (1996a, b), Horowitz (2002), Leigh (1989), Meston and Buss (2007), and Tiegs et al. (2007). In addition to social psychologists who have devised full-fledged test batteries designed to assess a variety of sexual motives, many researchers have attempted to assess just a motive or two. These researchers have investigated 25 additional motives for seeking out sex (see Hatfield et al. (2010), for a list of these additional motives and their sources.) We will cite these one- or two-item measures later in the paper, when describing research results.

In an extensive review of possible sexual motives, for example, Meston and Buss (2007) provided a list of relatively rare reasons people give for having sex. These included a desire to wreak vengeance on a date or mate (e.g., "I was mad at my girlfriend, so I had sex with someone else"), a desire to harm a rival ("I wanted to make him pay so I slept with his girlfriend,") or a stranger ("I wanted to make someone else suffer [from herpes or AIDS]"). Some (infrequently) mentioned using sex to get a job, a promotion, money, drugs, or gifts. Interestingly, Browning (2004) discovered that men confessed to having sex for financial reasons more often than did women! Still others in the Meston and Buss (2006) survey reported (infrequently) that they used sex to enhance social status ("I wanted to be

popular"), out of a sense of duty, or because they were pressured to do so. Finally some used sex to get rid of a headache or menstrual cramps.

Scales Designed to Measure Motives to Avoid Sex

All sexual affairs involve risk. Most religions consider sex outside of marriage to be immoral (Cubbins and Tanfer 2000). Men and women may worry that if they flout community prohibitions they may acquire a poor reputation or risk community and family reprisals. Or they may worry about unwanted pregnancies. Sexual encounters can rouse negative emotions such as guilt, shame, anger, regret, and disappointment (Moore and Davidson 1997; Sawyer and Smith 1996; Tsui and Nicoladis 2004)—especially if sex occurs in the context of coercion and abuse (Jordan et al. 1998). People contemplating sex may fear disease (contracting STIs and AIDS) if they engage in high-risk behavior—and they are right to be fearful. Casual sex with multiple partners, whether heterosexual or homosexual, without adequate protection *is* associated with disease (Cubbins and Tanfer 2000; Paul et al. 2000).

Researchers have developed a variety of test batteries designed to assess people's motives for avoiding sexual liaisons. Hatfield (1984) proposed six reasons why people might fear intimacy, including sexual intimacy. These included such things as fear of (a) exposure, (b) abandonment, (c) angry attacks, (d) loss of control, (e) one's own destructive impulses, and (f) losing one's individuality or being engulfed. Paul and her colleagues (2000) found that young people who fear intimacy tend to seek out casual sexual relations ("one-night stands" or "hookups,") or to avoid sexual activity altogether—be it in casual or loving, intimate relationships (see Gentzler and Kerns 2004; Grello et al. 2006; Paul et al. 2000).

Other theorists have focused on still other reasons for avoiding casual and premarital sex: see Leigh (1989) and Tiegs et al. (2007). In addition to the social psychologists who have devised full-fledged batteries to measure a variety of reasons why young people might choose to remain virgins or avoid casual sex, 12 researchers attempted to assess just a reason or two for such avoidance (again, see Hatfield et al. (2010), for a list of these motives and their sources.) Once again: we will cite these references later in the paper when summarizing research findings.

What we have is a variety of theories, a variety of test batteries designed to assess people's motivations to seek out (and to avoid) sex. Is it possible to integrate these theories? To provide a comprehensive picture of sexual behavior? As we have seen, some theorists stress the importance of culture, history, and social role assignments in shaping men's and women's sexual attitudes and behavior. Others focus on cultural universals—on the architecture of the mind that evolved in the long history of humankind. In the following section, we will see that the sparse empirical data which exist suggests: (1) Cultural researchers, historians, and social role theorists are indeed right when they argue that in various cultures and historical eras men and women have been propelled by a wide variety of motives to seek out (or avoid) sex. (2) Theorists, regardless of perspective, agree that for cultural, social, and biological reasons, men and women possess somewhat different sexual motives. Evolutionary theorists point out that currently, throughout the world, a few gender differences are

indeed pervasive, and perhaps embedded in cognitive, neurochemical, and biological structures.

Results of the Literature Review

Culture and Sexual Motives

Tang (2011) observes that the world's cultures differ profoundly in the extent to which they emphasize individualism or collectivism. Individualistic cultures such as the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, and the countries of Northern and Western Europe tend to focus on personal goals. Collectivist cultures such as China, many African and Latin American nations, Greece, southern Italy, and the Pacific Islands, on the other hand, press their members to subordinate personal interests to those of the group. Triandis et al. (1990) pointed out that in individualistic cultures, young people are allowed to "do their own thing"; in collectivist cultures, the group comes first. As a consequence of these differences, Tang (2011) argues that cultures differ markedly in the way men and women are socialized and in the sexual motives that they consider to be acceptable or unacceptable. Americans, for example, should be more concerned with pleasure and stress reduction than are, say, the Chinese. The Chinese should be more concerned with pleasing one's partner and maintaining a close relationship.

There is ample support for the contention that cultural values have an impact on people's sexual motives. True, in a large-scale study of Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Thais, Browning (2004) found that—regardless of age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or relationship status—many of men's and women's sexual motives were surprisingly similar. In every group, love, pleasure, and partner pleasing were always the three most highly endorsed motives. Next came role fulfillment, stress reduction, and experimentation (though not always in that order). Rarely mentioned were peer conformity, rebellion, revenge/jealousy induction, or rebellion. The few cultural differences that Browning (2004) did secure, however, were in accord with Tang's (2011) predictions. Asian Americans, for example, were more likely to endorse peer conformity and submission motives than were their American peers.

Browning secured one unexpected finding: young Native Hawaiians were far more likely than any other group to consider "a desire for procreation" as a prime motive for sex. Why would Hawaiians so link sex and procreation? Perhaps one reason is historical. In 1820, the first Protestant missionaries arrived from New England. Within a decade, Waikiki was transformed from a sleepy hamlet to a thriving commercial village, alive with the bustle of missionaries, merchants, traders, explorers, sailors from the whaling vessels, and convicts. With them, the travelers brought Western civilization—Christianity, medicine, trade, and commerce—as well as a host of infectious diseases—ailments as yet unknown in the Sandwich Islands: colds, influenza, measles, consumption, cholera, typhoid fever, smallpox, and venereal disease. Pestilences for which the Hawaiians possessed no immunity. These diseases spread like wildfire, ravaging the Nation. When Captain

Cook arrived in "Owhyhee" in 1778, 400,000 Native Hawaiians inhabited the Islands; by 1896, the population had been reduced to 8,485 purebred Hawaiians and 31,000 part-Hawaiians. Perhaps today, given their history, Hawaiians are more sensitive to Hawaiian survival, the benefits of family, and therefore procreation than are their peers. This is purely speculative, but it may suggest how an emphasis on procreation can occur in a non-Catholic context.

The Impact of Gender on Sexual Motives

Theorists, regardless of perspective, agree that for cultural, social, and biological reasons, men and women possess somewhat different sexual motives.

In the West, cultures promote very different "sexual scripts" for men and women (DeLamater and MacCorquodale 1979). Traditional sex-role stereotypes dictate that men and women ought to engage in sex for different reasons. Men are taught to think of themselves as sexual beings, primarily concerned with physical gratification. Women are taught that premarital sex violates social taboos; they are expected to be the sexual "gatekeepers," refusing sex until marriage. Thus, for women, love and commitment should be a major concern. They should be more concerned with their partner's happiness than their own. There appears to be a grain of truth in some of these stereotypes (Leigh 1989; Tiegs et al. 2007).

There is considerable support for the notion that women are generally motivated by love and a desire to get psychologically close to another, while men are more motivated by lust (such as the "She was too hot to resist," "It felt good." "I was feeling horny") in making sexual decisions (Carroll et al. 1985; Denney et al. 1984; Leigh 1989). When Whitley (1988) asked men and women: "What was your most important reason for having sexual intercourse on the most recent occasion?" a full 51% of women and a scant 24% of men mentioned love/emotion reasons; whereas 9% of women and 51% of men mentioned lust/pleasure reasons. Patrick et al. (2007) found that while college men were self-focused in their sexual decisions, women were more concerned with ethical issues and primarily partner-focused when deciding whether or not to participate in sexual activities. Christenson and Gregg (1970) reported that 23% of the women, but only 2.5% of the men in their college sample, said their first intercourse was the result of physical force, or a sense of obligation, rather than personal desire.

Evolutionary theorists also argue that men and women possess very different reasons for agreeing to participate in a sexual encounter. Generally, men are primarily motivated by physical attractiveness, a desire for status, pleasure, sexual variety, and a variety of utilitarian reasons. Women generally choose to engage in sex for emotional reasons, such as expressing love or intensifying personal commitment. In fact, for the vast majority of women, love and commitment are a prerequisite for agreeing to engage in sexual activities (Carroll et al. 1985; Reiss 1960; Taris and Semin 1997.) Many scholars support the contention that man and women's sexual motives may differ (Buss 2003; Buss and Schmitt 1993; Carroll et al. 1985; Leigh 1989; Meston and Buss 2007; Symons 1979; Whitley 1988). In fact, these are among the most common gender differences to be found in the

literature (Browning et al. 2000; Carroll et al. 1985; Hill and Preston 1996a, b; Leigh 1989; Nelson 1978; Whitley 1988).

In our review of all of the 34 measures designed to assess motives for pursuing sex and the 16 measures designed to assess motives for avoiding sex, and the research conducted with these 50 instruments, we found the following gender difference in sexual motives to be fairly robust (Table 1).

Many have argued that worldwide, men appear to possess a stronger sex drive than do women (Baumeister et al. 2001; Meston and Buss 2007). Thus, it is perhaps not surprising that men give far more reasons for participating in sex than do women.

Table 1 Gender Differences in sexual motives

Women are more likely to endorse these sexual motives:	
Love and commitment	Browning (2004), Carroll et al. (1985), Denney et al. (1984), Leigh (1989), Townsend (1998). (Others have failed to replicate these findings)
Intimacy	Hatfield et al. (1988), Impett and Peplau (2003)
Sexual compliance	Browning (2004), Browning et al. (2000), Impett and Peplau (2002)
Please partner and meet his needs	Hill (2002)
Solidify a relationship	Impett and Peplau (2002)
Forced to have sex; rape	Christenson and Gregg (1970)
Men are more likely to endorse these sexual motives:	
Physical appeal of partner	Meston and Buss (2007)
Pleasure	Browning (2004), Hill and Preston (1996a, b), Hatfield et al. (1978). (Others have failed to replicate these findings: Ozer et al. 2003)
Self-Affirmation	Browning (2004)
Status and Recognition	Browning (2004), Impett and Peplau (2002), Meston and Buss (2007). (Others have failed to replicate these findings)
Power	Hill and Preston (1996a, b). (Others have failed to replicate these findings)
Conquest	Leigh (1989)
Peer Conformity	Browning et al. (2000), Browning (2004), Cooper et al. (1998), Nelson (1978)[a]
Seeking sexual experience and variety	Buss and Schmitt (1993), Schmitt et al. (2001), Meston and Buss (2007); Symons (1979)
Stress Reduction	Browning (2004), Hill and Preston (1996a, b)
Rebellion	Meston and Buss (2007)
Financial and other utilitarian motives	Browning (2004), Meston and Buss (2007)
Goal attainment	Meston and Buss (2007)

[a] If these authors had studied motives for avoiding sex, of course, perhaps they would have found women equally high on this motive, since peers often pressure women to refrain from sex—think of the once popular Dad-Daughter Pledge of Chastity dances, in which women (at 13 years of age) promise parents and friends to remain "pure" until marriage

A note: although gender differences exist, we should not exaggerate their magnitude or their consistency. In this world, men are *not* from Mars, women from Venus. When we look carefully at apparent gender differences, we discover that they are sometimes not so clear-cut as the stereotypes suggest. First, men and women are far more similar than different. (For example, the primary reason both men and women engage in one-night stands is that they are pleasurable [Greiling and Buss 2000]. See also Hendrick and Hendrick 1995; Oliver and Hyde 1993.) Second, cultural, personality, and individual differences in men's and women's sexual motivations are great; gender differences are generally fairly small and inconsistent (Hill and Preston 1996a, b; Meston and Buss 2007). Lastly, although most studies find men and women differ as predicted, a few do not—or that they secure differences opposite to those proposed (Browning 2004; Hill and Preston 1996a, b). This is true even for gender differences that seem "obvious." As a consequence, if we want to predict a man's or woman's attitudes and behavior, we need to know something about his or her cultural values, personalities, the situation in which he or she finds themselves, the nature of their relationships, the potential costs-benefits of their choices, and the like. These factors have been found to be more important than gender alone in predicting human behavior. For all these reasons, Leigh (1989) suggested: "perhaps we should concentrate on the many similarities in motivations among the groups, rather than on their small differences" (p. 208). Nonetheless, as we have seen, gender differences (although small) remain of great interest to many theorists, researchers, and public policy experts.

Gender and motives to avoid sex. Cultural scripts mandate that men should initiate sexual activity while women should limit it by saying "No" (DeLamater 1987; Leigh 1989; Peplau et al. 1977). Not surprising, then, is the fact that young men and women differ somewhat in their reasons for clinging to virginity and refusing to participate in sexual encounters. Men often fail to "make a pass" at women because they fear rejection. Women more often cite a concern with morality and reputation—or (infrequently) a lack of interest or a failure to enjoy sex—as reasons for avoiding sex.

Tiegs et al. (2007) interviewed 345 Texas undergraduates; he administered a *Beliefs about Sex Scale*. Somewhat surprisingly, they found that men were more likely to feel that sex was "more personally costly" than did women. This is surprising given that the items touched on traditional female worries such as "Will he/she respect me in the morning?" and "Will I get pregnant." The authors explained this seemingly paradoxical result this way: men are far more likely to engage in risky sex than are women.

> Perhaps because men engage more often in risky sexual behaviors than women do, men reported sex as more personally costly. The more partners and the more sex one has, the more likely one is to encounter consequences, such as unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. Men in our sample appear walk a fine line between wanting the risky sex that society says they should have and paying the price for having had it (p. 455).

As expected, women (more than men) were convinced that having sex violated social expectations and were more worried that such behavior would have more negative social impact on their reputations.

Conclusions

On first reading, the scholarly research herein described may feel overwhelming in its complexity. There are probably two major reasons for this. Firstly, scholars are often unaware of other theorists' work. (How many times have we read: "Ours is the first attempt to develop a comprehensive measure…"?) These researchers have hailed from a variety of disciplines, possessed a diversity of theoretical models, posed a variety of questions, attempted to answer them in very different ways, and published their results in different journals. It is hoped that this review (of theories, the myriad of measures that have been crafted, and the existing data collected thus far) may help facilitate a conversation between present-day researchers and facilitate attempts to bring some unity to their competing theorizing, constructs, measures, and reporting styles.

Secondly, these days the United States, like the rest of the world, finds itself swept up in breathtaking historical and social changes. It's reasonable then to discover that attitudes and beliefs about sexuality are in flux. Thumb through an Introductory History book, and you will be struck by the social revolutions that have transpired—they started slowly and then gathered speed. In the 1500s and 1600s: Catholicism challenged, the Protestant Reformation, and the Catholic Counter-reformation; the Age of Enlightenment; the "invention" of marriage for love rather than family or practical reasons.

And in more recent times: Margaret Sanger, offering slum families information about family planning. Alfred Kinsey, providing Americans with a glimpse into the realities of sexual behavior. A Jewish émigré, Carl Djerassi, inventing the birth control pill. (For the first time men and women could engage in sexual activity without worrying about pregnancy.) Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan's promoting the Women's Liberation Movement. The Sexual Revolution of the 1960 and 1970s, young people chanting: "Make love, not war." The global village created by worldwide communication, computers and satellites, information exchange, travel, and trade. The appearance of AIDS and the STDs, casting a pall over the idea of casual sex.

What do all these changes mean for men's and women's sexual activities, feelings, and behavior? How do they affect the complexity of the results we have reported? Given what we have said heretofore:

1. No surprise that American's values appear to be in flux. Many traditionalists still cling to the old values; modern-day pioneers are embarking on new adventures. Young people seek pleasure and get hurt; they resolve to do things differently the next time; they do or they don't. No surprise then that today a confusing array of values exists out there. People may embark on sex for one

reason in their 20 s, discover that life doesn't suit them, and seek out other gratifications (and attempt to avoid other pains).
2. No surprise that men's and women's sexual values and motives are becoming increasingly similar over the decades (Oliver and Hyde 1993).
3. No surprise that people seem to possess a surprising array of reasons for participating in sexual activity—far more reasons for choosing to engage in sexual activity than in former times. They do in fact participate in these varied sexual activities more often than heretofore.
4. No surprise that sexual activity may be in process of becoming demystified. Instead of the mystery, fear, anxiety, and sacrilization that have surrounded sexual activity for so many centuries, that activity seems to have become "no beeg teeng," as we say in Hawaii. What that means for society and for individuals is anyone's guess. And the exponential growth of cybersex and pornography further clouds the crystal ball.

At this stage, we conclude by saying that the expansion of possible motives for having sex probably *is* a "beeg teeng" and that we are well advised to take that expansion seriously and try to come to grips with it, to understand it as one of our planet's most important new developments.

In spite of all these complexities, in this survey, we have learned some things: Firstly, as we proposed, men and women may indeed choose to engage in sexual activities for a plethora of reasons. In future, theorists will have to do more than investigate the Big Three of motives (a desire for love, recreation, and procreation) and will have to insure that their theories and research take into account the myriad of motives that may motivate people to seek out (or avoid) sexual encounters.

Secondly, as readers might suspect, we have seen that a variety of factors—cultural, social, and historical—shape the way people respond to the pressures inspired by our evolutionary heritage to fulfill our sexual cravings.

Hopefully, knowledge of people's cultural backgrounds, personalities, and (most importantly) sexual motivations can assist scholars in gaining an understanding of sexual fantasy, masturbation, and sexual activity in general (Davis et al. 2004; Hill and Preston 1996a, b; Nelson 1978). An awareness of one's partner's sexual motives may also facilitate communication. Given differences in the meanings that people assign to sex, misunderstandings are inevitable. An understanding of the diversity of sexual motives may help reduce conflict in romantic relationships. Finally, such information may assist public health officials in crafting messages and programs designed to reduce young people's risky sexual behavior.

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