Variations in Sexual Behavior
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When Is Sexual Behavior Abnormal?

• **Statistical definition** - an abnormal sexual behavior is rare or not practiced by many people.

• **Sociological approach** - sexual behavior that violates the norms of society.

• **Psychological approach** - criteria include discomfort, inefficiency, and bizarreness.
When Is Sexual Behavior Abnormal?

- Medical approach - the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders recognizes 8 paraphilias.
  - A paraphilia is a recurring, unconventional sexual behavior that is obsessive and compulsive.
The Normal-Abnormal Continuum

• Normal and abnormal sexual behavior are not two separate categories, but rather gradations on a continuum.

• A mild, or even strong, preference for an object is within the normal range of sexual behavior but is abnormal if it becomes an extreme necessity.
Continuum for Normal-Abnormal Behavior

Strength of preference for fetish object

Mild preference | Strong preference | Necessity | Substitute for human partner

Abnormal
Fetishes

• **Fetishism** is characterized by sexual fantasies, urges, or behaviors involving use of nonliving objects or a highly specific focus on non-genital body parts:
  – to produce or enhance sexual arousal.
  – with or in the absence of a partner.
  – over a period of at least six months.
  – causing significant distress.
Fetish Types

• Media fetish – the material out of which an object is made is the source of arousal (e.g., leather, latex)

• Form fetish – the shape of an object is what is important for arousal (e.g., shoes, lingerie)
Why Do People Become Fetishists?

• Learning theory
  – Fetishes result from classical conditioning, in which a learned association is built between the fetish object and sexual arousal and organism.

• Cognitive theory
  – Fetishists have a serious cognitive distortion in that they perceive a nonconventional stimulus as erotic.
Transvestism

- Refers to dressing as a member of the other gender.
- **Drag queens** are male homosexuals that dress up as women.
- **Female impersonators** are men who dress as women, often as part of an entertainment job.
Transvestism

• **Transvestite fetishism** refers to a heterosexual man who dresses in female clothing to produce or enhance sexual arousal.

• Transvestism is almost exclusively a male sexual variation and is essentially unknown among women.
Other Sexual Variations

- **Troilism** - or triolism, refers to three people having sex together.
- **Saliromania** - disorder found mainly in men; desire to damage or soil a woman or her clothes.
- **Coprophilia** - feces are important to sexual satisfaction.
- **Urophilia** - urine is important to sexual satisfaction.
Other Sexual Variations

• **Frotteurism** (*DSM-5*) is recurrent and intense sexual arousal from touching or rubbing against a non-consenting person, as manifested by fantasies, urges, or behaviors.

• **Necrophilia** - sexual contact with a dead person.

• **Zoophilia** (bestiality) - sexual contact with an animal.
Voyeurism

• **Voyeur** - a person who becomes sexually aroused from secretly viewing nudes.

• **Scoptophilia** - a sexual variation in which the person becomes sexually aroused by observing others’ sexual acts and genitals.
Exhibitionism

• The person derives sexual pleasure from exposing his genitals to others in situations where this is clearly inappropriate.

• A man who exposes himself is considered offensive, but a women who reveals most of her breast is likely to be thought of as attractive.

• Causes of exhibitionism are not known.
Compulsive Sexual Behavior

- A disorder in which the individual experiences intense, sexually arousing fantasies, urges, and associated sexual behaviors.
  - Intrusive, driven, and repetitive
  - Lacking in impulse control
  - Often incur social and legal sanctions
  - Interfere with personal and occupational functioning
  - Create health risks
Hypersexuality

- **Nymphomania** (women) and **Satyriasis** (men)
  - High level of sexual activity
  - Excessive sex drive; person is apparently insatiable.
  - Leads to compulsive behavior; sexuality overshadows all other concerns and interests.
Problems Defining Hypersexuality

• Difficult to determine what is “excessive.”
  – Terms are imprecise; couples may disagree.
• Especially difficult diagnosing women:
  – One definition for men was 7 or more orgasms per week for six months, but this may not be abnormal for multiorgasmic women, and hypersexual women may have no orgasms.
Sadism and Masochism

- **Sadist** - a person who derives sexual satisfaction from inflicting pain on another person.
- **Masochist** - a person who derives sexual satisfaction from experiencing pain.
Sadomasochistic Behavior

• Sadomasochism (S-M) is a rare form of sexual behavior, although in its milder forms is probably more common than people think.
  – Causes are not precisely known.
Bondage and Discipline

• **Bondage and discipline** - use of physical or psychological restraints to enforce servitude.

• **Dominance and submission (D-S)** - the use of power consensually given to control the sexual stimulation and behavior of the other person.
Asphyxiophilia

- The desire to induce in oneself a state of oxygen deficiency in order to create sexual arousal or to enhance excitement and orgasm.
- People engage in asphyxiophilia in the belief that arousal and orgasm are intensified by reduced oxygen.
Cybersex Use and Abuse

• Use of the Internet to access sexually oriented materials, chat rooms, and bulletin boards.
  – Characterized by anonymity, accessibility, and affordability.
  – Can become compulsive, addictive, paraphilic.
Diagnosing Sexual Variations

- Categories for diagnosis are not nearly as clear-cut as they may seem.
- Multiple diagnoses for one person are not uncommon.
Prevention of Sexual Variations

• Difficult to do primary prevention.
• Interest in developing preventive programs targeting children has increased.
• Analyze the components of sexual development:
  – Gender identity
  – Sexual responsiveness
  – Formation of relationships with others
Treatment of Sexual Variations: What Works?

• No single treatment works in all cases.
• Carefully controlled research is needed.
Treatment of Sexual Variations: 12-Step Programs

• Modeled on the program of Alcoholics Anonymous.
Treatment of Sexual Variations: Medical Treatments

• Hormonal treatment
  – Use of drugs to reduce androgen production or block effects of androgen.

• Psychopharmacological treatment
  – Use of psychotropic medications to influence psychological functioning and behavior.
Treatment of Sexual Variations: Cognitive-Behavioral Therapies

• Behavior therapy
• Social skills training
• Modification of distorted thinking
• Relapse prevention
Treatment of Sexual Variations: Skills Training

• Programs may include:
  – how to carry on a conversation
  – how to develop intimacy
  – basic sex education

• Sex surrogates interact socially and sexually with the client and a therapist.