

# GENDER, SEXUALITY DESIRE AND PLEASURE

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Abstract: Gender is the division of people into two categories, “men” and “women”. This paper examines the role of gender as regards sexual desire and pleasure. That is, how people experience and express themselves as sexual being, biologically, which encompass sexual intercourse and sexual contact in all its forms between male and female.

Key words: Gender, sexuality, desire, pleasure ,sex, culture, communication

“We allow our ignorance to prevail upon us and make us think we can survive alone, alone in patches, alone in groups, alone in races, even alone in **genders**.”

Maya Angelou quotes (American Poet, b.1928)

Gender is a social characteristic of individual in our society that is only sometimes consistent with biological sex. Therefore, Animals, like people, tend to be identified as male and female in accordance with the reproductive function, but only people are described by their gender, as a man or woman.

In examining how gender influences sexuality, moreover, you will see that gender rarely operate alone: class, culture, race and individual difference also continue to influence sexuality.

The gender of the person you desire is a serious matter seemingly fundamental to the whole business of romance. And it isn't simply a matter of whether someone is male or female, how well the person fulfills a lover's expectation of masculinity or femininity is of great consequence. Although sex is experience as one of the most basic and biological activities, in human beings it is profoundly affected by things other than the body's urges.

On one level, sex can be regarded as having both a biological and a social context. The biological (and physiological) refers to how people use their genital equipment to reproduce. In addition, as simple as it seems, bodies make the experience of sexual pleasure available whether the pleasure involves other bodies or just one's own body and mind. It should be obvious, however, that people engage in sex even when they do not intend to reproduce. They have sex for fun, as a way to communicate their feelings to each other, as a way to satisfy their ego, and for any number of other reasons relating to the way they see themselves and interact with others.

Sexual desire, on the other hand is the motivation to engage in sexual acts. It relates to what turns people on. A person's sexuality consists of both behavior and desire.

The implication of mutual orgasm is that sexuality gains a new interpretation; female sexuality becomes redefined as pleasure and not necessarily as procreation and male sexuality become partly redefined in relation to female pleasure. This approach is new, exciting and more engaging for both women and men compared to conventional perspectives on sexuality emphasizing the procreative aspects of sex. For many young adults, to have a fulfilling sex life has become a symbol for a truly contemporary person. This does not necessarily imply that it is perceived as a green light to sexual permissiveness. Depending on the person's morals, a sexual life is developed only in marriage, while for other it is possible in pre-marital relationships as well. Both women and men are advised and encouraged to 'work' on their sex life, as it 'enriches' their personal sexual experiences as well as their partner's. Personal and mutual sexual happiness becomes as well as a symbol for a successful relationship.

## **Gender-role expectations**

The feminine traits that are not valued include characteristics such as emotionality and lack of competitiveness. The traits that is valued in men fall in a general "competency" category, including traits such as independence, objectivity, competitiveness, logicalness, and skill in business. That is a key expectation for men in our culture in that they be competent and possess the characteristics that go along with competence. A "Macho" personality constellation also exists in our culture. It includes the belief that men should have callous attitudes about sex, that violence is manly, and that danger is exciting.

Heterosexuality is another important part of gender roles. The feminine woman is expected to be sexually attractive to men and in turn to be attracted to them. Heterosexuality is equally important in the male role that is "real man" should be a skilled lover, even in bed, men are required to be competent.

## **Male –female psychological differences**

Gender difference in personality and behavior. Here we will focus on gender difference in two areas that are particularly relevant to gender and sexuality. Aggressiveness and communication styles.

As it has been noted, males and females differ in aggressiveness. Males are more aggressive than females. This is true for virtually all indications of aggression (physical aggression such as fighting, verbal aggression, and fantasy aggression)

What are the implications of these gender differences in communication styles for sexuality? For example, if men are unwilling to disclose personal information about them, might this not hamper their ability to communicate their sexual needs to their partners? If women react more favorably to being touched than men do, might this suggest that women enjoy this aspect of sex and that men might be relatively hampered in their enjoyment of being touched sexually?

Communication is the process of sharing ideas, information, and messages with others in a particular time and place, and it is a vital part of personal life and also important in our sexuality. Great sex begins with talking together with your partner in an open, trusting, acceptable manner. It also depends on

things like in-depth communication, a sense of sharing your lives, emotional intimacy and, especially, sense of commitment. But that's not the lie our culture feeds us. Television, the movies, books and magazines pass great messages that great sex comes through dropping personal inhibitions, mastering techniques and finding that "right person" with whom the sexual sparks will fly.

A multitude of factors lie behind each person's desire for more or less sex. Don't assume that it's simply a male vs. female discrepancy in desire or that you know what your partner's "problem" is don't insist that your partner conform to your libido and timetable. Some people came into relationships and marriage having suffered difficult experiences that prevent them from fully enjoying God's gift of sex. Sexual abuse, promiscuity, rape and sexual addictions leave memories that can make it hard, sometimes even impossible, to desire further sexual intimacy. On the other hand, don't assume your mate knows why you feel he way you do. You have to express your own feelings, preferences and concerns. A good communication is listening deeply and expressing yourself honestly to your partner.

## **Gender sexuality biological factor**

There has been some speculation that gender differences in sexuality are created by two biological factors: anatomy and hormones. The male sexual anatomy is external and visible and has a very obvious response i.e. erection. The female sexual organs, in contrast, are hidden further the female's genitals do not have an obvious arousal response like the male erection

Regarding hormone female generally have lower levels of testosterone in their tissue than males do. Human females, for example, have about one-sixth the level of testosterone in their blood that human males do. The hormonal explanation then is that if testosterone is important in activating sexual behavior and if females have only one-sixth as much of it as males have this might result in a low "sex drive". A very high level of testosterone may contribute to aggressiveness and increased sexual activity.

## **Culture and sexuality**

The cultural layer of sexuality can be described as the total ways of life of people in a society. People's life way may include arts, beliefs, customs, knowledge, morals, and other cultural traits such as dress, drinks, food, marriage and music. A very high significant relationship can be found between culture and human sexuality. Nigeria is a highly heterogeneous African society; therefore a perspective of human sexuality cannot fit all setting of the Nigeria social structure. The peculiarities and differences in sexuality of the each of the Nigerian ethnic groups can be understood in different cultural contexts such as attires, beauty, ceremonies, dialects, greetings, history, poetry and proverbs.

In southern Nigeria, cultural practices such as fattening ceremony among the Okirika as well as popular music and dance among the Tiv have contributed to the development of cultural layer of sexuality. Similarly in Northern Nigeria, a considerable proportion of Hausa and Fulani are known for the use of traditional medicines "Burantasi" and "kayamata" in the treatment of sexual weakness in men and women. This medicine can aid sexual satisfaction of different stages of sexual expression, desire, arousal, plateau, orgasm and resolution. Also nuptial songs, popular transitional sexual expressions among the Yoruba of the western Nigeria, serve as avenue for sharing cultural knowledge of sexuality. Furthermore, some part of the Yoruba land, the Benin, Itsekiri use waist beads, this is used for sexual pleasure it's basically used by women.

## Sexual pleasure

“Happiness is neither virtue nor **pleasure** nor this thing nor that but simply growth.  
We are happy when we are growing.”

William Butler Yeats

(Irish prose Writer, Dramatist and Poet. Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923. 1865-1939)

Sexual pleasure consists of those positively valued feelings involved by sexual stimuli. Notice that this conceptualization encompasses a broad range of sexual pleasure, from the soothing sensations of sensual massage, to the explosion of feeling that accompanies orgasm.

Although the positive sensation we are calling sexual pleasure can be evoked, to some extent, by erotic thoughts, fantasies, and direct neural stimulation, we assure here for the sake of simplicity that stimulation of genitals, breast, or other relevant body parts (i.e, the erogenous zones) is necessary to initiate these feelings. According to this simplified model, the experience of sexual pleasure begins when the skin receptors in one or more erogenous zones are stimulated, and end with a positive evaluation within the brain that the sensations experienced are indeed both pleasurable and sexual in nature.

Modern scientific sex research has clearly demonstrated that the sexual response follows essentially the same pattern in both sexes. Indeed, the sexual capacity of females is at least equal to and, in some respects, even greater than that of males. Today we know that both women and men can respond sexually to the same sensory stimuli. Touch, vision, hearing, smell, and taste play an important role in all human sexual arousal.

Of all the human senses, the sense of touch seems to be one most often responsible for erotic arousal.

Touching, stroking, tickling, rubbing, slapping, kissing, or licking these areas (erogenous zones) can often create or increase sexual excitement. However, this response is by no means automatic. A great deal depends on a person's previous conditioning and on the circumstances under which the stimulation occurs. For instance, when a doctor touches a patient erogenous zone in the course of physical examination, there may be no sexual response at all. It is important to note that the responses to touch are not the same in everyone. Because of their different experience, different individuals are likely to develop different degrees of sensitivity. Negative mental associations can prevent any sexual response to touch. Infact, there are people who want to be touched as little as possible even during sexual intercourse. On the other hand, pleasurable sexual encounters can develop a welcome sensitivity almost anywhere in the body and thus lead to the discovery of new erogenous zones. In the final analysis, people have to find out for themselves which parts of their own (or their partner's ) bodies most readily respond.

The Other senses contribute greatly to sexual arousal and excitement. Most people are well aware of the fact that they can become sexually aroused not only by persons or things they may touch, but also by what they may see, hear smell, or taste. The sight of a beautiful body, the sound of musical voice, he

smell of a perfume, the taste of certain foods or of a lover's glandular secretions can be powerful stimulants. However, their effect depends entirely on mental associations. A particular individual becomes excited by a particular sight, sound, smell or taste because he associates it in his mind with a previous pleasant sexual experience. (Unpleasant associations on the other hand produce a negative reaction. They can reduce or extinguish sexual excitement).

It seems erotic thoughts, fantasies, and anticipations have a more certain effect on males than on females. In general, men are more easily aroused by visual stimuli (Sights), women more by tactile and acoustic stimuli (touch and sound). During sexual intercourse, most women reach orgasm only as a result of continuing physical stimulation.

### **The link between sexual pleasure and individual well being.**

It is interesting to note that although some women say they were not taught openly about sex and on the contrary can tell from a woman's happy face if her husband satisfies her or not. This of course would not be discussed openly. If you look at the absence of pleasure, particularly in the context of violence, would affect women's general well being. I would like to say that sexual pleasure and satisfaction is actually good for women. But the interesting thing is that you look at different forms of pleasure as being very much a male thing. You would find out that in some cultures, women are taught how to give men pleasure, but hardly would you find occasion where women are taught how to get pleasure nor men are taught how to give maximum pleasure to their women themselves. So the pleasure is very much toward the male pleasure and satisfaction. I have heard a situation where a man was ill and he was advised to have sex with his wife, after the encounter that night he was in his office the following morning. Sex generally helps men to relax both physically and mentally. For women who love and enjoy sex after every experience they are socially, psychologically and physically active.

### **CONCLUSION**

In spite of the biological facts and well-established psychological findings, women in African culture have, for a very long time, suffered from cultural restrictions that deprived them the full expression of their sexuality. It was generally assumed that men were possessed by a powerful "sex drive" while women were considered incapable of strong sexual feelings. As a consequence, men were encouraged to enjoy their sexual capacities, while women were taught to regard sexual desire as base, improper, and degrading. This so-called double standard for male and female sexual behavior has had some very unfortunate consequences, not only for the moral health of society but also for the physical well-being of men and women.

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