Heterosexism And The Problems of Patriarchy in the Study of Sexuality

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The Study of Sexuality

• Most existing research has been positioned in a heteronormative framework, with patriarchal assumptions
  – Heteronormative means relationship structures are presumed M/F
  – Patriarchal assumptions are implicit beliefs that assume male dominance and female passivity
• To begin to define, much less understand, the spectrum of sexuality, we should deconstruct existing research problems
Terminology

• Heterosexual-exclusive interest in a different gender than your own
  – Non-hetero can be anything other than exclusive interest in a different gender, including exclusive interest in the same gender, or interest in multiple genders
  – Can include bisexual, pansexual, queer

• Homosexual-exclusive interest in the same gender as your own

Terminology

• Allosexual-interest in partnered sexual activities, non-asexual

• Asexual identities run a spectrum, but all involve a “general” disinterest in partnered activities
  – Asexual identities can include those who are aromantic, or those having a hetero or non-hetero romantic orientation
• {Martin} The way we have studied sexual behaviors [reproductive behaviors] has framed female sexuality as passive, and male sexuality as aggressive

• This is shaped by how we describe sexual behaviors, right down to sperm and egg interactions


• Sperm are **ejaculated** and **journey**. They **deliver** their genes to the egg. They have **velocity**. They **whip** their tails, that **propel** them. They need **energy** to **penetrate** the egg, to complete their **mission**.
The egg is swept or drifts along the fallopian tube. The egg has a protective coat: vestments, and has a corona. The egg is accompanied by attendant cells.
Casual Sex

• Men like it; women don’t – right?
• According to Clark & Hatfield (1989) men were more interested in an offer of anonymous sex than women
  – we report two experimental tests of this hypothesis. In these experiments, conducted in 1978 and 1982, male and female confederates of average attractiveness approached potential partners with one of three requests: "Would you go out tonight?" "Will you come over to my apartment?" or "Would you go to bed with me?" The great majority of men were willing to have a sexual liaison with the women who approached them. Women were not. Not one woman agreed to a sexual liaison.


"men are more judgmental toward women than toward men who have casual sex. Men appear to over-report and/or women to under-report intercourse and fellatio, suggesting that men see these acts as enhancing and/or women see them as diminishing their status...Women face more negative judgment than men when they are known to engage in casual sex, and they also report less interest in casual sex than men."

Casual Sex

- Baranowski & Hecht (2015) found that women were equivalently interested in casual sex when the threat of shaming and other safety concerns were reduced


Heteronormative and Hetero-essential

- The research framework is rooted in both heteronormativity and patriarchy
- Non-hetero, non-cis, and non-allo identities and behaviors are often not observed at all
- Past researchers have also attempted to explain non-hetero identities as serving a hetero-social function
Heteronormative and Hetero-essential

• The conclusion framed non-hetero sexualities in women as having been evolutionarily selected for as a result of being desirable partner traits by hetero men

• Additionally, women in the study showed a disinterest in male partners with any non-hetero proclivities
Heteronormative and Hetero-essential

• The “Gay Uncle” Hypothesis argued that gay men offer an advantage to the children of their siblings [resources and childcare], and gay male sexuality is selected for by those “gay uncles” helping their siblings children survive and thrive, proliferating the genes that carry this trait


Hetero-centric Study of Sexuality

• Assumptions of male dominance, and assumptions of hetero-essentialism, distort the findings related to marginalized sexualities and gender identities
  – Biases frame our conceptualizations
  – Attribution errors result in questionable deductions
• These things spread implicitly, and go forward affecting us implicitly. We can’t ever know the extent to which our perceptions are influenced.
References


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