

# Heterosexism And The Problems of Patriarchy in the Study of Sexuality

Lisa Bauer

## 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

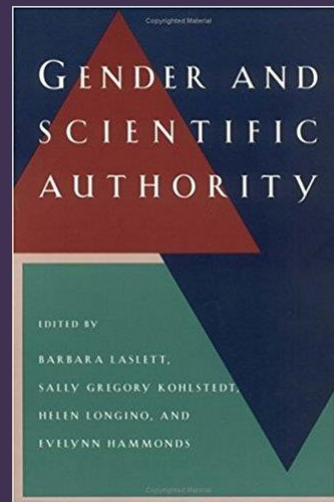
## Terminology

- 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

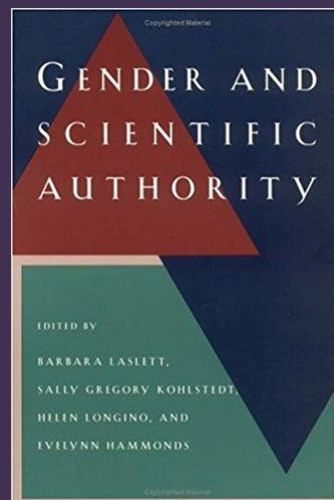
- Allosexual-interest in partnered sexual activities, non-asexual
- Asexual identities run a spectrum, but all involve a “general” disinterest in partnered activities
  - Asexual identities can include those who are aromantic, or those having a hetero or non-hetero romantic orientation

- {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

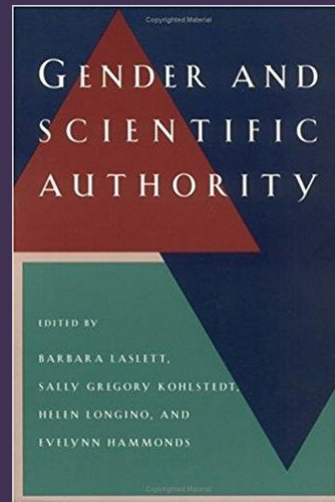


Martin, E. (1991). The egg and the sperm: How science has constructed a romance based on stereotypical male-female roles. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 16(3), 485-501.

- 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**.



tive psychologist Steven Pinker, of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. “Most human drives have ancient Darwinian rationales,” Pinker wrote. “A prehistoric man who slept with fifty women could have sired fifty children, and would have been more likely to have descendants who inherited his tastes. A woman who slept with fifty men would have no more descendants than a woman who slept with one. Thus, men should seek quantity in sexual partners; women, quality.” And isn’t it so, he says, everywhere and always so? “In our society, most young men tell researchers that they would like eight sexual partners in the next two years; most women say that they would like one. On several college campuses, researchers have hired attractive assistants to approach students of the opposite sex and proposition them out of the blue. What proportion says yes? Of the women, zero percent; of the men, seventy-five percent. (Many of the remaining twenty-five percent ask for a rain check.)”

Angier, N. (2000). *Woman: An intimate geography*. Anchor. Pg 367

## 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.

Clark, Russell D., and Elaine Hatfield. "Gender differences in receptivity to sexual offers." *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality* 2.1 (1989): 39-55. <http://www.elainehatfield.com/79.pdf>



“..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.”

England, P., & Bearak, J. (2014). The sexual double standard and gender differences in attitudes toward casual sex among US university students. *Demographic Research*, 30, 1327-1338. <http://www.demographic-research.org/volumes/vol30/46/30-46.pdf>

## 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

Baranowski, A. M., & Hecht, H. (2015). Gender differences and similarities in receptivity to sexual invitations: Effects of location and risk perception. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 44(8), 2257-2265. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/25828991>

## 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 evolution of female same-sex attraction: The male choice hypothesis



Menelaos Apostolou \*, Marios Shialos, Michalis Khalil, Vana Paschali

University of Nicosia, 46 Makedonitissas Ave., 1700 Nicosia, Cyprus

## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 12 April 2017

Received in revised form 12 May 2017

Accepted 13 May 2017

Available online xxx

### Keywords:

Same-sex attraction

Weak selection hypothesis

Homosexuality

Parental choice

Male choice hypothesis

## ABSTRACT

Prevalence studies indicate that about one in five women experience some degree of same-sex attraction. The evolutionary origins of such attraction are not well understood. Accordingly, this paper proposed a theoretical framework where, during the period of human evolution, same-sex attractions in women were under positive selection. The source of positive selection has been male preferences for opposite-sex partners who experienced same-sex attractions. This theoretical framework was used to generate four predictions that were tested in two online studies which employed a total of 1509 heterosexual participants. It was found that heterosexual women did not desire partners who experienced same-sex attractions, but a considerable proportion of heterosexual men desired partners who experienced same-sex attractions. In addition, it was found that men were more sexually excited than women by the same-sex infidelity of their partners, and they desired more than women, their opposite-sex partners to have sex with same-sex individuals. Finally, participants' preferences were contingent on the seriousness of the relationships, with same-sex attraction to be preferred more in short-term than in a long-term partner. These findings were employed in understanding the evolutionary origins of same-sex attraction in women.

© 2017 Published by Elsevier Ltd.

# 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

Mayr, E. (1982). *The Growth of Biological Thought: Diversity, Evolution, and Inheritance*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p 598.

## 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

- Angier, N. (2000). *Woman: An intimate geography*. Anchor
- Apostolou, M., Shialos, M., Khalil, M., & Paschali, V. (2017). The evolution of female same-sex attraction: The male choice hypothesis. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 116, 372-378.
- Baranowski, A. M., & Hecht, H. (2015). Gender differences and similarities in receptivity to sexual invitations: Effects of location and risk perception. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 44(8), 2257-2265.
- Clark, Russell D., and Elaine Hatfield. "Gender differences in receptivity to sexual offers." *Journal of Psychology & Human Sexuality* 2.1 (1989): 39-55
- England, P., & Bearak, J. (2014). The sexual double standard and gender differences in attitudes toward casual sex among US university students. *Demographic Research*, 30, 1327-1338
- Martin, E. (1991). The egg and the sperm: How science has constructed a romance based on stereotypical male-female roles. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 16(3), 485-501.
- Mayr, E. (1982). *The Growth of Biological Thought: Diversity, Evolution, and Inheritance*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press. p 598.

Lisa Bauer

[bauerl@newpaltz.edu](mailto:bauerl@newpaltz.edu)