

# SEXUALITY AND ADDICTION

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# Making strange the familiar



# Sexuality and Addiction

How does the use of alcohol and drugs affect sexuality?

How does sexuality affect alcohol and drug use?

# What is sexuality in the context of addiction?

**Definition I:**

**Sexuality = sexual behavior**

# Four descriptions of sexual behavior

Women as victims of sexual assault

Unsafe sex

Sexual dysfunction

Drugs that act as aphrodisiacs

# WOMEN AS VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ASSAULT

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# Women as victims of sexual assault

In the US, alcohol use by perpetrators of sexual assault ranges from 34 to 74 percent

Alcohol use by women who are assaulted ranges from 30 to 79 percent

In the US, 80 percent of sexual assaults occur when the perpetrator and victim know each other



# What about men?

Very little focus on males of perpetrators of sexual assault

Very little focus on males as victims of sexual assault

# UNSAFE SEX

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# Unsafe sex

Primarily understood in terms of physical health

Cognitive impairment and weakened impulse control

# Unsafe sex or sexual violence?

Sexual assault is not by itself considered unsafe sex though it may involve unsafe sex

# SEXUAL DYSFUNCTION

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# Sexual dysfunction

Desire

Excitement

Orgasm

# Dysfunction?

Presumes a clear and normative arc for “functional” sex as heterosexual intercourse

# DRUGS AS APHRODISIACS

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# Drugs as aphrodisiacs

Increase sexual desire, libido, or pleasure

Abused as a way to overcome sexual dysfunction

Abused as a way to liberate repressed desires

# Prescription drugs?

Prescription drugs cause sexual dysfunction

Illegal drugs to overcome effects of prescription drugs

What is sexuality in a context of addiction?

Definition II:

Sexuality = sexual orientation

# Sexuality as sexual orientation

Heterosexuality

Homosexuality

Bisexuality

# Lesbian, Gays, and Bisexuals

More likely to use and abuse alcohol and other drugs

Less likely to decrease their use with age

More likely to report alcohol and drug problems

# What about heterosexuality?

Most people who are addicted to alcohol or drugs are heterosexual

# COMPLICATING SEXUALITY:

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Other considerations

# What else is sexuality?

Physical

Psychological

Social/relational



# Sexuality is physical

Bodies including but not limited to reproductive anatomy

Sex (male, female, or intersex)

Hormones

Genes

Sex drive

Behaviors

# Sexuality is psychological

Gender identity (masculine, feminine, androgynous)

Sexual identity

Body image

Self esteem

Desires, hopes, and fantasies

# Sexuality is social/relational

Beliefs about sex and sexuality

Familial attitudes

Cultural attitudes

Ethical and religious beliefs about sex and sexuality

Personal history/experience with others

# Problem with categories?

Most of these features or aspects  
can jump categories or belong in  
more than one



# COMPLICATING SEXUALITY EVEN FURTHER:

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More considerations

# Three familiar but underappreciated dimensions of sexuality and addiction

Sexism and its connection to heterosexism

Childhood sexual abuse

Hypersexuality or Sex Addiction

# SEXISM

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# Sexism

Narrowly and rigidly defined gender roles for men and women

Systemic—functions through all sorts of formal and informal institutions

# Masculinity

Macho

Not overly emotional

Strong to the point of aggressive

Beliefs about the relationship between men and women

Drink like a “real man”

Have sex like a “real man”

# Femininity

Passive

Weaker

Better behaved/more virtuous

Beliefs about relationships with men

Responsible for sex **not** happening

But: expected to seek male approval

# Heterosexism

Rests on a foundation of sexism with rigid gender roles

A system of oppression in which heterosexuality is regarded as normal, natural, and normative.

Homosexuality and bisexuality require explanation if not justification or apology

# Heterosexuality and sexual violence

In the US, ninety one percent of rape and sexual assault victims are women

Ninety nine percent of offenders are male

But: is assaulting part of one's sexual orientation?  
Generally do not think so for heterosexuality but do for homosexuality

# Heterosexual without being heterosexist?

What room is there for men and women who do not meet gender expectations?

How can a person disown heterosexual privilege?

Conclusion: Necessary to pay attention to the sexual orientation of all people

# CHILDHOOD SEXUAL ABUSE

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# Childhood Sexual Abuse

In the US, One out of four girls will be sexually abused by the time she is 18

One out of six boys will be sexually abused by the time he is 18

Two-thirds of births to teenage girls were fathered by males over 20



# Closer to home

## Hospital Pérola Byington

Núcleo AVS. Principais estatísticas de atendimento

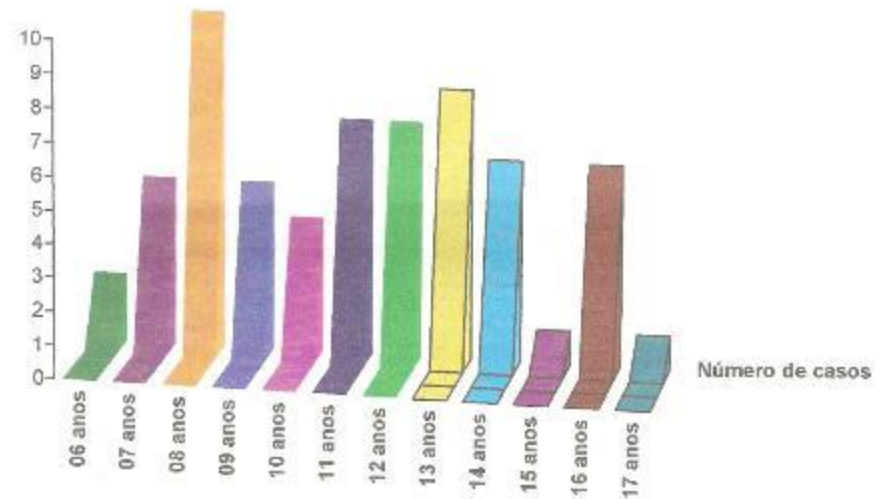
18.740 casos de violência e abuso sexual entre 1994 e 2008

- Prevalência das ocorrências no **sexo feminino**: 17.085 casos (91,1%)
- 1.655 casos contra **meninos** menores de 12 anos (26,1% das crianças)
- Em **2008** crianças corresponderam a **47,3%** dos atendimentos

Fonte:  
Centro de Referência da Saúde da Mulher, 2009

CRUST, J. 2009  
Centro de Referência da Saúde  
da Mulher

Idades registradas entre as vítimas



O maior número de vítimas têm entre 08 e 14 anos

# Childhood sexual abuse and alcohol and drug use

Perpetrators have higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse

Perpetrators have higher rates of having been abused

Crucial: Most victims do not become perpetrators

# Childhood sexual abuse and alcohol and drug use

Victims of sexual abuse tend to have higher rates of alcohol and drug abuse

They tend to be more vulnerable to sexual assault later

Conclusion: Abuse has significant and not always identifiable effects on the sexuality of both perpetrators and victims

# HYPERSEXUALITY

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# Hypersexuality, Compulsive Sexual Behavior and Sex Addiction

What is in a name?

# Who are sex addicts?

In the US, and estimated three to six percent of the population have compulsive sexual behaviors or sex addiction

Eighty to Eighty-five percent are adult males

Eight to twelve percent of those seeking treatment are women

# Characteristics

Dominates life

Mood altering

Willing to make sacrifices to engage in practice

Tolerance

Inability to control or cut down impulses

# Connection to rigid gender roles and heterosexism

## Masculinity

Heightened sexual activity  
Masturbation  
Pornography  
Multiple partners  
Sexual risk taking  
Sexual dysfunction  
Strip clubs  
Cybersex/phone sex

## Femininity

Prostitution  
Early pregnancy  
Sexual risk taking  
Sexual dysfunction



# Connection to childhood sexual abuse

A history of physical or sexual abuse

Co-occurring mood disorder or impulse control disorder  
(Bipolar disorder in particular)

Alcohol or drug abuse

Conclusion: Hypersexuality is formed against a backdrop of sexism and abuse and must treat co-occurring addiction

# Conclusions

Sexuality includes sexual behaviors and sexual orientation but these are far more complicated than they originally appear

Must attend to the ways that those behaviors and orientations are shaped against sexism and heterosexism. Rigid gender roles harm men and oppress women.

# Conclusions cont.

There are higher rates of addiction for people who have been the victims of childhood sexual abuse or sexual assault

People who are hypersexual tend to be addicted to alcohol or other drugs.

All of this may be invisible or opaque to people seeking treatment and those who are treating them.

# Sources

NIAA Alcohol and Sexual Assault

Sexual orientation

Mayo clinic

Other articles

Still under construction