

What Drives Sexuality?

Student Name

School Name

Abstract

Human sexuality is such a powerful force in society that it must be studied. It is a motivator and a shaper of lives and cultures. Despite it being something that links all human beings together and something that has such a major impact on life, it is not as well understood as one might think. Sexuality, it seems, is a bit of mystifying force, even for those people who are charged with trying to understand it. With this in mind, the primary question of “what drives human sexuality?” is a very difficult one to answer. No unified theory has been found to exist on this. People of different distinctions have various understandings of this topic, and they have each been able to contribute something to the discussion. With this in mind, this particular literature review seeks to dig into those topics, offering a snapshot of what authors have written about this

[topic](#) [issue](#).



What Drives Sexuality?

Sexuality is one of the forces that permeates society as it is known today. It is present in almost every person, and over the last decade or more, science has learned much more about its drivers. In fact, the human science world has come to expand the spectrum, seeing sexuality in wider terms while seeking more attribution to its causes. It is worth understanding that there is not one single theory of sexuality. Many authors and theorists have taken on this important topic with varying degrees of success. Some have seen sexuality as being explicitly mental. Others have seen genetic drivers of sexual characteristics or desires. The lack of a unified theory leaves some room for further understanding, but it does not detract from the fact that many skilled people have provided useful ~~artifacts~~information for better understanding this critical part of human nature. The following literature review provides an overview ~~enof~~ of sexuality and its many drivers. In particular, this literature review will cover three of the primary bodies of theory that tend to explain human sexuality. Those are the drive theory, the identity theory, and the practices model. Each of these has important champions who are well-respected, and while there may be some conflict between ~~them~~the theories, when they are taken together, ~~they~~these ideas create a fuller understanding of human sexuality.

Tessier (2014) writes about the connection between sexuality and fantasy. According to the author, sexuality is based in part on fantastical sexual desires that are ~~based-mostly~~embedded in the psyche. The author suggests there is a sexual unconscious that is always lurking beneath the surface in every single person. This, according to the author, helps to link all human beings together. He built on the work of Sigmund Freud, who suggested very strongly that seduction can in some ways be unconscious or subconscious, with people developing their sexual wants or desires throughout life. Even messages embedded during childhood can play a major role in



dictating how one's sexuality develops over time. Tessier suggests that people are trying in some ways to achieve the fantasies of their self-conscious.

These authors are guided by something called the “drive” model of sexuality. Under the drive model, as envisioned by Freud, sexuality is something that is given to a person at birth. A person assumes their sexuality, and it is unchanged from birth until death. As they get older, they find ways to discharge this sexuality, whether through relationships or other means. This is a controversial brand of sexuality theory because it rests on the idea that sexuality is at all times unchanging. In Freud's work published in 2014, the author notes that sexuality is set and established even in children, as they are hardened by the messages they receive both directly and indirectly through their parents (Freud, 2014). This particular model of sexuality finds its feet in the idea of repression and expression. Namely, people ~~experience both repression of deeply bury~~ their sexual desires and the later opportunity, in adult life, to express those sexual desires. Freud has at times been criticized by other thinkers for his sexual theories, of course. He has been noted as a person who is obsessed with sex and views all elements of human life through sex. While his ~~theories~~ ideas have some role in explaining what drives sexuality, there are other theories, as well, that must be considered in order to have a full and rounded understanding.

While the “drive” model championed by Freud suggests ~~strongly~~ that there is an immutable drive that pushes people toward their adult sexuality, there are two other models that must be considered, as well. For instance, some thinkers in the sexuality realm have suggested that the identity model may be a better explanation for why people act the way they act in this area. According to functionalist theory, the way people behave is largely a function of the structures and norms that have been ~~placced around~~ imposed on them. Some thinkers, seeking to use this to explain elements of the world that do not sit well with them, suggest that there is an



effort on the part of some institutions to control the way people think and behave. In looking at sexuality, the identity theory would suggest ~~strongly~~ that people are driven in their sexuality mostly by the gender norms and other social norms that are placed on them by a society with a very intentionally agenda. Symons and Altman (2015) have written about the way identity theory plays out over the course of time. They have written that ~~identity~~this theory has been an important driver of sexuality in the international realm, as governments have at times put people in very specific boxes for the purposes of oppression. Understanding the subject through this lens, one can see how the pressures that are often placed on people could be primary drivers of their sexuality and the constituent sexual ~~behavior~~behaviour that comes from that sexuality. In extreme cases, sexuality is driven by identity as people face very existential pressures, as with those situations where hostile governments are looking to punish or eliminate them for some kind of sexual ~~behavior~~behaviour. In other cases, these things are much more subtle, as institutional forces like churches help to form the social identities of individuals through a host of different pressure-causing methods. As Carter (2014) notes in his writings, gender ~~socialization~~socialisation plays a major role in this process, both through religious institutions and through more normative institutions like the family unit. People are, from their very birth, ~~socialized~~socialised into norms of gender that they may or may not be aware of. Men are taught that they are supposed to behave in certain ways and aspire to certain qualities. At the same time, women are expected to adhere to various norms that are heavily influencing on their sexuality. In more modern, specific contexts, this has had a major impact on the way people relate with one another in a society where “rape culture” is a major factor. As some have noted, sexuality has in some ways become a destructive force as social expectations and pressures have caused there to



be a culture that encourages aggressive sexual ~~behavior~~behaviour and the disrespect of boundaries.

Mizock and Hopwood (2016) note that the emergence of transgender awareness has prompted a better understanding of how the intersection between gender and sexuality is not always so easy to understand. The standard male/female boundaries and borders are simpler in the cisgender context, but those sorts of motivations and drivers for sexual ~~behavior~~behaviour among transgender individuals do not square nearly as cleanly or easily.

The third driver of sexuality is known as practices theory, and it has been discussed by many famed theorists. As Simon (2017) writes, this is a theory that has mostly been attributed to Foucault. He was concerned heavily with the dynamics of power and how they could shape human understanding and human ~~behavior~~behaviour. Foucault believed that one could break down the sexual interactions between people in society on the basis of a power play. His may have been one of the most important explanations for the current rape culture and a society in which sexuality has been conflated with the dynamics of oppression. He noted that those with power have typically used sexuality as a means through which they could both control others and assert their power in a very real, perverse way.

Hess et al. (2015) explain importantly that Foucault's understanding of sexuality and power can also be linked to sexual empowerment. When people begin to take control of their ~~own~~ sexuality rather than allowing other people to dictate what they will and will not do, they take power and control of their ~~own~~ lives in a way that is dynamic and demonstrable. Some credit this line of thinking with inspiring the sexual revolution, in which many women sought personal empowerment through their sexuality, essentially throwing off the very thing that had been used to keep women in place over the course of history. If the dictation of another person's



sexuality can be a demonstration of power, then the ability to control one's ~~own~~ sexuality must be seen in the same way.

There is no one single way to understand sexuality that can provide a convincing answer. Because sexuality has long been one of the most important things in society, there is no shortage of people who have taken the time to study it. They have looked at the way human beings behave, the different dynamics in society, and other elements in order to describe the situation on the ground. These authors and theorists have been able to come up with three different theories of sexuality that provide a piece needed to understand why human beings do what they do. Drive theory, which is one of the most championed ~~theories~~concepts, suggests that human beings are gifted their sex drive early and seek to discharge it through life. Others have used identity theory, to ~~suggest~~note that sexuality is driven by societal factors and institutional forces. Others have used the idea of practices, based ~~in~~on the idea of power by Foucault. Each of these theories has something important to add and contribute to the collective understanding of sexuality.



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