

CHAPTER 7

Sexuality and Violence

In Chapter 5, I introduced the concept of “a violence and nonviolence continuum” by organizing the ideas of “mild,” “moderate,” and “extreme” forms of violence and nonviolence and connecting these to their interpersonal, institutional, and structural pathways (see Figure 5.5). In the context of violence, I also discussed sexual coercion and identified some of the “properties” shared in common by heterosexual rapists, child molesters, and gender harassers. In so doing, I raised questions about these individual perpetrators using their power over others and even inflicting sexual terror on their victims so that they might, in effect, compensate for or feel some kind of temporary relief from their own sexual and identity maladies.

This pathologic or sympathetic interpretation and analysis of these perpetrators’ sexuality as “sick” or compulsive, or of their behavior as the product of weakness, vulnerability, and underdevelopment (i.e., the perpetrators are also victims), is one viable view, among others, of what motivates these offenders. Other viable analyses include the idea that the different pathways of these coercers originate in a need for sexual gratification, control, domination, or some combination of these. From this latter perspective, the ordinary occurrences of acquaintance, date, and marital rape, for

example, are viewed as extensions or exaggerations of conventional sexual relations and the power differentials between men and women, boys and girls. These violations are not the result of some kind of aberration or deviant response on the part of so many normative “offenders.” According to this view, rape is not about pathology, it’s “a form of socially conditioned sexual aggression that stems from traditional gender socialization and sexual learning” (Berger, Free, & Searles, 2001, p. 250). In the end, there is plenty of data to support the positions that both “mentally ill” and “culturally normative” offenders and victims comprise the perpetrators of sexual violence.

The relationships between sexuality and violence go beyond the interpersonal actions of the sexual perpetrators themselves. Hence, analyses of sexuality and violence must also encompass those institutional and structural relations that exist across the interactions of these offenders and the larger cultural order of which they are a part. Once again, all expressions of violence and nonviolence or of violent or nonviolent behavior need to be examined with respect to both their symbolic and real meanings, as these are constantly shaped and redefined by societies’ responses to specific behaviors and conditions, on the one hand, and in the context of the

interaction between these reactions and the mediated representations of sex and violence, on the other hand. When this kind of examination is made, one is better able to grasp that similar, different, and contradictory messages are concurrently attached to violence and the lack of nonviolence in everyday mass communication.

In other words, from an institutional or structural pathways perspective on violence, acts such as a “moderate” flashing or an “extreme” rape may also function to reassure the perpetrators of their power and potency over women because both of these acts “include, as a crucial factor in that reassurance, the fear and humiliation of the female victims” (Cameron & Frazer, 1987, p. 164). From the perspective of victimized females, this is certainly happening to varying degrees. Many times, however, the perpetrators are not actually reassured by their actions; on the contrary, they may feel even more frustrated and ashamed than before they sexually violated somebody, creating a proverbial recycling of angry emotions and sexual aggressions. More often than not, these male perpetrators, regardless of their motives, are unaffected by the pain and suffering they cause their victims, and they are indifferent to what women and girls want.

Culturally, however, the abusers’ lack of empathy or mutuality with their victims’ needs may also reflect the larger world of the politics of sexual violence. That is to say, depending on the “value” or “innocence” placed on the victims of sexual abuse, society may be indifferent or unaffected, as evidenced by its lack of empathy, compassion, and aid. From this perspective, the legacies of patriarchy and misogyny may work hand in hand with an androgenic bias about male-female heterosexual relations that gathers both ideological and social strength from its various synergistic forms of inequality, which function to keep “good” and “bad” women “in their place.”

Moreover, the sheer numbers of the interpersonal acts of sexual violence against women, combined with a *mélange* of mass-mediated images of sexual danger looming over the “weaker” gender—ranging from serial rape and “snuff” pornography to mainstream news and mass advertising—have created a cultural climate of fear and intimidation, if not victimization, for many women, girls, and boys. As Catherine MacKinnon (1983) has written about rape law and its reform: “From a women’s point of view, [it] is not prohibited, it is regulated” (p. 653). Whether these sexual violations are verbal, visual, or physical, they are *expected* within the arrangements of the existing legal and political order. What’s more, these reel and real violations “serve to remind women and girls that they are at risk and vulnerable to male aggression just because they are female” (Sheffield, 1989, p. 484). As Berger, Free, and Searles (2001) point out:

Since men’s sexuality is presumed to be naturally aggressive, women’s fear of sexual violence seems inevitable. Society even places responsibility on *women* to monitor their behavior so they won’t be violated. If they are violated, they may be blamed for their victimization or find that their suffering is “trivialized, questioned, or ignored.” (p. 247)

Herein lies a key relationship or connection between the “concept of a sexual violence continuum” (Kelly, 1987) and the “concept of a sexual intimacy continuum” (Schmallegger & Alleman, 1994), as the two of these overlap or converge at the point of appropriate and inappropriate behavior, bringing together some forms of sexual violation with the more common behaviors or everyday expressions of masculine sexuality.

As Betsy Stanko (1985) suggested early on in her study of female victimization, women “who feel violated and intimidated by typical male behaviour have no way of specifying

how or why typical male behaviour feels like aberrant male behaviour” (p. 10). In part, this has to do with the way in which mass media both trivializes and eroticizes violence against women and children. Moreover, in terms of trying to establish separate pathways to consensual and nonconsensual sex, Liz Kelly (1987) and others have found that women often experience heterosexual sex not as an either/or (i.e., consent or not, yes or no) thing, but as a continuum that moves from choice to pressure to coercion to force. Unfortunately, far too many men have also approached heterosexual sex not as an either/or matter. If they had, women probably would not have come up with the slogan: “What about *no* don’t you understand?”

Even more fundamentally, MacKinnon (1983) has challenged altogether the notion of consent. She too finds it problematic, within the cultural patterns of sexual interaction, where males initiate and often dominate the transactions, but within which they have also been socialized not to be too concerned about the needs of women or others, to seriously entertain the idea of real consent or the idea that men really care about it. In addition, under the prevailing conditions of male-female sexual relations, as Berger et al. (2001) assert:

It’s difficult for women to assess how much resistance is necessary to convince men that they haven’t been granted consent or that they’ve withdrawn it . . . and the fact that the man may not have used physical force doesn’t guarantee that the woman had freely agreed to sex. He may fail to distinguish acquiescence and consent, and so may she. She may consider it rape, or she may be confused by the fact that she stopped resisting and *not* define the encounter as rape, even though she experienced it as unwanted and nonconsensual. (p. 252)

The principal objectives of this chapter are not only to try to understand how gender, media, and other relations

constituting the “battle of the sexes” have evolved over time but to expose common properties or pathways between sexual and nonsexual violent behavior. The efforts here are primarily anthropological, sociological, and psychological, as the focus shifts between an examination of sexuality and violence and the social relations of sex, aggression, and gender as these have emerged and developed more or less universally over time. To understand the intricate relationships of sexuality, violence, and human nature, one must appreciate that although the individual and society are inseparable, they are not identical—the individual does not disappear in the social whole, nor is the social whole reflected in the individual. In sum, to unravel the complexities of sexuality and violence, one must address both the real and symbolic interactions of individuals and society.

PHILOSOPHIZING ABOUT SEX AND SEXUALITY

One can think about love, hate, aggression, violence, nonviolence, peace, and cooperation as separate phenomena, yet one can also think about the unity or totality of the relations between all of these. Analysts of human behavior have studied aggressive patterns in general and the type of aggression that occurs in particular between and within the sexes. Researchers have also addressed the similarities and differences in the violence of both sexes (Dobash & Dobash, 1998c; Godenzi, Schwartz, & DeKeseredy, 2001; Hatty, 2000; Messerschmidt, 1993; Miller, 1991; Renzetti, 1992; Stanko, 1985; Totten, 2000). Many of these findings will be reviewed later in the chapter. For now, I turn to a more general discussion of how sex and sexuality have been philosophically viewed over the past century or so.

When it comes to heterosexual relations, there is a popular saying used by both men and women to describe the opposite sex that captures the interplay of aggressive and libidinal forces: “You can’t live with them, and you can’t live without them.” Consciously or subconsciously, this aphorism addresses the issue of “sexual antagonism,” or what various scholars of human sexuality have referred to as “sexual ambivalence,” “sexual hostility,” or “sexual animosity” (Schoenewolf, 1989).

There is another popular saying that addresses the more generic question of “sexual and nonsexual aggression.” It includes and yet transcends sexual dyads at the same time: “Make love, not war.” In psychoanalytic language, this aphorism conveys the duality of Eros (forces of life and love) and Thanatos (forces of destruction and death). It contends that in the most intimate sense, acts of copulation are the ultimate victories of Eros over Thanatos and the place where an individual’s aggression is neutralized (Klein, 1932). Perhaps in some ideal or abstract world, the act of love or sexual intercourse might be a pure expression of Eros. But in the real world, as no one is without aggression, Eros and Thanatos may be said to intermingle, more or less, in every heterosexual interaction.

In *The Art of Loving*, Erich Fromm (1956) contended that strong emotions of virtually any kind could readily blend with sexual desire. He was not only referring to love and vanity, but to the wish to vanquish or be vanquished, to hurt or be hurt, and even to the anxieties of depression and loneliness. Others, from the perspectives of physiology and endocrinology, have similarly examined the relationships between romantic love, sexual desire, and what is called “peripheral arousal,” or the assumption that something (e.g., anger, a fetish) other than emotional attraction can enhance sexual interaction (Berscheid & Walster, 1974). Moreover, to

the extent that sexual desire is influenced by the feedback of peripheral (“indirect”) arousal such as through pornography, any emotions capable of producing a flow of adrenaline are capable of exciting sexual arousal, including violence. And because adrenaline controls peripheral arousal, it can not only fuse with sex and/or aggression, it can make the heart grow fonder or angrier.

Conflicts and confluences over sexuality and violence in general, and the “battle of the sexes” in particular, raise questions of similarities and dissimilarities about battering, incest, rape, and other assaults, sexual and nonsexual, in relation to power and conflict, dominance and submission, male and female psychologies, illness and wellness, life and death. Conflicts over or about sexuality also revisit some of the indirect-effects kinds of questions raised about mediated violence, pornography, erotica, and other graphic portrayals of sexuality (see Figure 6.1 and Box 7.1). In trying to make sense of the various ways that aggression and hostility work in general and in relation to sexual intimacy and violence in particular, responses within and across the disciplines have varied.

Those with a psychoanalytic orientation see most, if not everything, as related to sex. For example, the 19th-century philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer (1896) underscored the importance of male-female relations and the impact of sexual conflict on society. He argued essentially that the relation of the sexes was the invisible central point of all action and conduct. This was the case not only between men and women, but between women and women and between men and men. He contended that the causes of war and peace were also about the relations of the sexes. He went so far as to argue that these relations were the basis of jests, wit, allusions, and hints. Such relations, he maintained, were behind the daily thoughts of the chaste and unchaste, of the young and often the old. Schopenhauer argued that sexual

passion was at the root of an individual's identity, and that sexual discord was at the root of one's misery.

Carl Jung (1951) is credited with being the first person to use the word *animosity* with regard to the male-female dyad. His formulation was based on a physiological explanation of male-female disharmony located in the "collective unconscious" of humankind and passed on from generation to generation. He saw sexual animosity as rooted in the anima-animus relationship between men and women: the man's anima (i.e., unconscious female component of his personality) and the woman's animus (i.e., unconscious male component of her personality) produce feelings of repulsion toward members of the opposite sex as a result of negative projections based on feelings of genital anxieties. Jung argued that this sexual duality affected the internal harmony of each individual as well as the relations of men and women in general.

Though Sigmund Freud (1918, 1925/1957, 1931/1957), like Jung, believed in the primary bisexuality of humans, he approached the subject of sexual animosity from the angle of psychosexual development rather than from biology. He concentrated on the psychodynamics of the phallic stage, during which males and females (raised by heterosexual couples) first become attracted to their parents of the opposite sex. In his formulation, animosity stems from man's castration complex and woman's penis envy and from their feelings of guilt and/or unresolved Oedipal and Electra complexes. Contemporary psychology has had much to say in critiquing and modifying these and other concepts related to mechanistic, Freudian models of sexuality and development.

Feminist psychoanalysts in particular, such as Alfred Adler (1927/1977) and Karen Horney (1926/1977) early on and Carol Gilligan (1982) more recently, have questioned both the methods and assumptions of

Freudians; however, they have not abandoned the idea of sexual animosity. Rather, they have argued that the cultural differences or inequalities between men and women have been the outcomes of patriarchy and the conscious and unconscious subjugation of—and hostility toward—women by men. Hence, sexual animosity is attributed largely to cultural values of hierarchy that favor men and oppress women.

Many other feminist scholars have also questioned the rigidly defined categories of sexual and gender differences, challenging as well the very notion of a naturally expressed animosity or unconscious hostility between men and women. Their emphases are on the social construction of sex and gender roles, as well as sexual identities, and how these express themselves in everyday relations. For example, Gayle Rubin (1975) from social anthropology has argued fundamentally that "the social organization of sex rests upon gender, obligatory heterosexuality, and the constraint of female sexuality." In other words, "gender is a socially imposed division of the sexes," "a product of the social relations of sexuality" (p. 179). Similarly, MacKinnon (1987) from law and jurisprudence critiques the idea of gender difference in the law because it "legitimizes the way gender is imposed by force" and "helps keep the reality of male dominance in place" (p. 3).

Finally, from sociology and philosophy, Michel Foucault (1980) critiques the notion of a "naturalness" of sexual relations and warns that "sexuality must not be described as a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient to a power which exhausts itself trying to subdue it and often fails to control it entirely" (p. 103). In his broad and engaging discussion of sexuality and its expressions throughout social organization, he argues that it "appears rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power: between men and women, young

people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, [and] an administration and a population" (p. 103). Foucault concluded that sexuality was not among the most intractable elements in power relations, but rather one of those endowed with the greatest instrumentality. For example, as James Messerschmidt (1993) from criminology has observed, although sexuality has recently become "a domain of extensive exploration and pleasure for women," it still remains "a site where gendered oppression may occur" (p. 76).

NATURE, NURTURE, AND HUMAN EVOLUTION

Regardless of their particular takes on the "battle of the sexes," most contemporary students of human violence and sexual aggression view these conflicts primarily as socially established, yet they function or operate through the interaction of both nature and nurture. As human evolution occurs, however, we are not free agents in this process of social development because we are forever subject to the specific, yet flexible, determinations of our cultural histories. The roots of this kind of anthropology are in the double contentions: we are of nature, and we are more than nature.

For example, other animals use nature, but humans master nature as self-conscious organisms. Other animals may have changed, adapted, or evolved over time in response to environmental changes, but they have not transformed their environments as they have evolved. Humans possess a superiority over other animals because of our abilities to comprehend the laws of nature and to apply them in practice. So although "a spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her

cells . . . what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in the imagination before he erects it in reality" (Marx, 1906/1940, p. 198). The point is that, because we have the power of imagination or the power of the ideal, we can transcend any immediately given social reality or material condition. However, because we are natural beings, too, we cannot transcend nature any way we please. We can reconstitute ourselves and the world only by reconstructing the current personal, social, and cultural environments of which we are all a part.

Perhaps the most fundamental lesson about evolution is that, as an ongoing force, it has shaped attributes and behaviors shared by all human beings, and at the same time, it has given every single individual a different nature. We are all the same and yet we are all uniquely different. Why? The background necessary to answer this question lies within the intersecting domains of biological and cultural evolution. The answer itself lies within the gradual alterations, over some 6 million years, of genetic and cultural information possessed by humanity.

Biological evolution refers to that part of evolution that causes changes in our genetic endowment. This evolution has helped to shape human natures, including human behavior, in many ways. These behaviors are shaped in very general ways, however, as there are simply not enough genes to program all of the behavioral variations. In short, genes are not destiny. As Paul Ehrlich (2000b) explains:

Human beings have something on the order of 100,000 genes, and human brains have more than one *trillion* nerve cells, with about 100-1,000 trillion connections (synapses) between them. That's at least one *billion* synapses per gene, even if each and every gene did nothing but control the production of synapses (and it doesn't). Given that ratio, it would be quite a trick for genes

typically to control more than the most general aspects of human behavior. (p. B7)

Cultural evolution refers to that part of evolution that passes on nongenetic information and that is unique to human beings. This evolution consists of the socially transmitted behaviors, beliefs, institutions, arts, and sciences that are shared and exchanged among people. Comparatively, cultural evolution can be much more rapid than genetic evolution. Since the invention of agriculture some 10,000 years ago, our evolution has been overwhelmingly cultural in nature.

There are also important “co-evolutionary” interactions between cultural and biological evolution, such as how farming practices changed the environment in ways that altered the evolution of blood cells. In terms of nature (i.e., genetic and biological) or nurture (i.e., learning and culture), it makes sense to view these as coproducers of social evolution rather than a case of “nature versus nurture.” For example, the ability to speak human languages is a result of a great deal of genetic evolution. At the same time, the diversity of languages around the world speaks just as loudly to the power of cultural evolution. The point is that both genetic and nongenetic information are important for our understanding of the evolution of human nature:

Not only is the evolution of our collective non-genetic information critical to creating our natures, but also the rate of that evolution varies greatly among different aspects of human culture. That, in turn, has profound consequences for our behavior and our environments. A major contemporary human problem, for instance, is that the rate of cultural evolution in science and technology has been extraordinarily high in contrast with the snail’s pace of change in the social attitudes and political institutions that might channel the uses of technology in more beneficial directions. (Ehrlich, 2000b, B8)

Evolution theory holds that virtually every attribute of every organism is the product of the interaction between its genetic code and its environment. The relative contributions of heredity and environment are difficult, if not impossible, to specify. It is much like trying to assess the contributions of length and width in the area of a rectangle. Moreover, the contributions of nature and nurture vary from attribute to attribute. So when it comes to aggregated attributes or to the variations in adult human behavior, there is not a lot to detail. What scientists know is that genes do not shout commands to us about our behavior. It seems more as if genes “whisper suggestions, and the nature of those whispers is shaped by our internal environments (those within and between our cells) during early development and later, and usually also by the external environments in which we mature and find ourselves as adults” (Ehrlich, 2000b, p. B9).

In another vein, geneticists are busy trying to sort out some of the ways genes and environments, as well as hereditary endowments, interact in making their contributions to the development of the individual. They have learned, for example, that even within experimental environments, it is often very difficult for genetic evolution to change just one characteristic or gene at a time. This is especially worthy of consideration in light of the claims that “natural selection” has programmed humans to be selfish and greedy or altruistic and compassionate. Other hereditary studies criticize those who have made claims about genetic differences between males and females, such as that the former are naturally dominant, violent, aggressive, controlling, or sadistic and the latter are naturally subordinate, submissive, passive, accommodating, or masochistic.

From this evolutionary perspective, it seems to make sense, as Ehrlich (2000a) argues, to think in terms of both human natures and human nature. The latter term, or singular human nature, for example, should

be employed when we are discussing things that all humans possess, such as the ability to communicate through language or the capacity to develop complex penal systems. Talking in terms of more than one human nature also makes sense, as (a) most aspects of our natures and our genomes (genetic endowments) are nearly universal, and (b) the variations or differences within our hereditary endowments are small compared with those between humans and chimpanzees.

At the same time, the plural use of human natures recognizes the cultural diversity within *Homo sapiens*, the variations from society to society, from individual to individual, and from place to place in time and space. For example, the human natures of Chinese living in Beijing are slightly different than the human natures of Chinese living in San Francisco. These Chinese natures are also slightly different than they would have been for Chinese living in either city 50 years ago or than they will be 50 years from now. The human natures of great inventors, musicians, athletes, or artists may be similar, but they are not identical. Inner-city gang members' natures are different than the natures of those youths raised in an affluent suburb. The natures of those, even those who are identical twins, who habitually vote Republican are different from those who habitually vote Democrat. All of these subtle differences or variations are products of the power of cultural evolution, the super-rapid kind of evolution that only our species excels at. In sum, different cultural environments—local, regional, and international—have the power to shape and alter human nature over time.

ON AGGRESSION AND NONAGGRESSION

During the last quarter of the 20th century, studies of violence moved away from

individualistic and toward social or relational models of aggression (Dobash & Dobash, 1998b; Malamuth, 1998; Smuts, 1992). The earlier individual models of aggressive behavior tended to divide up between those that favored nature and those that favored nurture. In his classic book *On Aggression*, Lorenz (1966) argued that animals and humans shared an instinct for aggressive behavior. He also argued that humans, unlike other species, lack developed mechanisms for the inhibition of aggression. Subsequent research and analysis repudiated both of these positions and basically put the “killer ape” myth to rest (Barnett, 1983; Binford, 1972; Montagu, 1968, 1976).

On the side of nurture were the psychologists, who developed frustration-aggression hypotheses and studied the effects of role models and authorities. Proponents on both sides of the nature-nurture divide, however, were in agreement on the *antisocial nature or character* of aggressive behavior. However, the evidence from neither animal and psychophysiological research nor from psychoanalytic and anthropological research has justified the conclusion that *Homo sapiens* have passed along aggressive genes or instincts that are compelled to find expression of one kind or another when stimulated by specific environmental cues.

The first problem with these individual models of aggression is that they are oblivious to social contexts. The second problem is that they are one directional. The models focus on a myriad of different influences on aggression, both internal (e.g., hormones, genes, drives) and external (e.g., frustration and pain, alcohol, learning), but they do so without examining the social consequences of aggression. In effect, they analyze individual aggression in a real social vacuum. At best, these models can tell us how aggression starts, but not how it ends or how it is kept under control. Such models are unable, for example, to offer any insights into

peacemaking or conflict resolution, or to address what contemporary anthropology refers to as a range of conflict-of-interest responses, including “tolerance” (e.g., sharing or exchanging of resources), “avoidance” (e.g., submission or withdrawal), and “aggression” (e.g., infliction of harm or humiliation).

By contrast, the more recent social or relational models of violence view aggressive behavior as one of several interactive ways that conflicts of interest can be settled. Initially inspired by studies of primate societies and later by the study of children and adults, anthropologists and other behavioral scientists discovered that both nonhuman and human primates use aggression as a tool of competition and negotiation. At the same time, both of these species engage in various practices of cooperation and reconciliation. These reconciliations are usually after, but may occur any time in, the “cycles of violence” as aggression becomes an enduring phenomenon (de Waal, 2000). For example, in the case of preschoolers, two forms of conflict resolution have been noticed:

Peaceful associative outcomes, in which both opponents stay together and work things out on the spot, and friendly reunions between former opponents after temporary distancing. These two complementary forms of child reconciliation, expressed in play invitations, body contacts, verbal apologies, object offers, self-ridicule, and the like, have been found to reduce aggression, decrease stress-related agitation (such as jumping up and down), and increase tolerance. The striking similarity of these findings to those on nonhuman primates suggests causal, as well as functional, parallels. (de Waal, 2000, p. 589)

In the days before there were relational models of aggression and nonaggression, the rarity of violence, especially lethal violence, was attributed exclusively to the physical differences between the potential combatants’

fighting abilities. In many social animals, however, including humans, both parties to a conflict stand to lose if fighting escalates out of control. Recent research of de Waal (2000) and others demonstrates, without denying the human heritage of aggression and violence, that there is an equally old heritage of countermeasures designed to protect cooperative arrangements against the undermining effects of competition. In Part III, the implications of these findings will be explored in terms of erecting individual and collective pathways to social, political, and economic nonviolence.

At the cross-cultural level, even without those studies on the natural heritage for conflict resolution, there are and have been a number of human societies in the world that cannot be characterized as aggressive or violent (Montagu, 1978). Even if these nonaggressive cultures represent only a small portion of humanity, they offer more than enough proof to conclude that the human species has acquired the means to do away with its “violent impulses.” Even in those societies which can be (or are) characterized as aggressive or violent, relatively few boys or men, and even fewer girls or women, actually kill or seriously wound anybody during the course of their lives. In social reality, no matter how angry or mad most people become even in the so-called violent societies, they have learned to control their “aggressive natures.” This is not to deny that we are all born with the potential and capacity for learning both violence and nonviolence.

A Relational Model of Aggression

If we are to examine the relations of violence, sexuality, and culture, it is useful to have a relational model of aggression as reflected in the anthropological and sociological evidence on violence. One such model views violent acts as the product of two sets

of opposing tendencies operating in any potentially aggressive situation. Jeffrey Goldstein's (1986) "relational model of aggression" maintains that in any social situation, there are opposing tendencies to be aggressive and not to be aggressive. Succinctly, Goldstein argues that any aggression overtly expressed as violence is a product of pro-aggression factors triumphing over anti-aggression factors:

The decision of whether or not to aggress in any particular situation depends upon the relative strength of these two opposing tendencies. When the number and strength of all the pro-aggression factors outweigh the number and strength of the anti-aggressive factors, aggression will ensue. When the anti-aggression factors are stronger than the pro-aggression forces, no aggression will result. (p. 24)

Finally, Goldstein's relational model views aggressive behavior as a complex act involving three simultaneously interacting elements. "There must be some impetus to aggress, inhibitions against aggressing must be overcome, and the situation—in terms of the opportunity and ability to aggress and the availability of a target—must be appropriate" (Goldstein, 1986, p. 24). In turn, this integrative model divides pro- and anti-aggressive features into *long-term* and *situational* factors.

Long-term factors promoting aggression are those which are relatively enduring, such as individual and cultural norms, attitudes, and values supportive of aggression and violence, positive prior experiences with aggression and violence, and knowledge of and the ability to use aggressive and nonaggressive strategies in disputes of all kinds, real and imagined. Enduring factors in aggression find their source in socialization and selective reinforcement by parents, peers, teachers, and cultures. For example, in the United States and elsewhere, long-term cultural

values that facilitate aggression include the teaching that aggression is desirable when used in defense of country, self, property, or the law.

Situational factors that facilitate aggression are immediate and consist of circumstances—idiosyncratic, habitual, or otherwise—conducive to violence. These include any factors that momentarily raise a person's (or nation-state's) tendencies to be aggressive or to lower a person's (or nation-state's) restraints against aggression. Such factors include the presence or absence of friends and relatives, levels of emotional arousal and frustration, availability of weapons or witnesses, and physical environments conducive to anonymity or exposure.

There are long-term and situational factors conducive to nonaggression, as well. Just as we learn which situations, targets, and means are appropriate for violence and aggression, we learn which situations, targets, and means are inappropriate for such actions. There are, for example, locations in most societies conducive to aggression and nonaggression: the former type includes taverns, sporting events, public streets, vacant lots; the latter includes other people's homes, workplaces, theaters, churches, and so on. Situational factors conducive to nonaggression or to the reduction of aggression are the presence of punishing agents (e.g., parents, teachers, police), unfamiliar environments, lack of potential victims, identifiability of the actors or actions, and the presence of nonaggressive others. For example, very few batterers or aggravated assaulters, habitual or occasional, rarely (if ever) lift so much as a finger to anyone else when they believe there is any chance of getting their own "ass whipped."

In sum, according to this relational model of aggression, violence is the product of conflicts—personal and social. This model assumes that violence is not simply a matter of pro- and anti-aggressive factors, but that it also consists of the relative importance of

each of these factors to the involved parties. Moreover, we can talk about violence or aggression as long-term and short-term conflicts or as high-conflict and low-conflict situations. Whatever the case, antisocial aggression or violence is not viewed as the result of too few norms or values, as functional sociologists have argued for more than 150 years, but quite simply as a “power play” based on the perpetrator’s reasonable expectation that he will get away with his abusive behavior.

An Evolutionary Perspective on Sexual Aggression

The vast literature on rape and male sexual assault leaves no doubt that violent action may continue and even escalate after sexual access has been accomplished or sexual frustration has allegedly dissipated. In many other instances of sexual violence, aggressive impulses may dominate sexual ones. In less coercive sexual scenarios, sex may become a means of expressing aggression in the form of debasing or humiliating one’s victim. Of course, motivations for these actions will vary. On the continuum of an aggression-sexual fusion between “consenting” partners, the sexual art of flagellation and bondage involved in the contemporary practices of sadomasochism (S&M), or the use of pain and control in the service of sexual pleasure, appears to be a normative way of experiencing intimacy between many sexually active adults (Chancer, 1992; Hunt, 1974; Presdee, 2000).

These and other forms of sexual and aggressive fusion apply to both women and men as they exchange places and roles in these S&M scenarios of mutual love, respect, and identification without doing harm or violence. However, even where trust has been established between intimates, S&M scenes have sometimes resulted in very real physical or mental anguish, even to those

who thought they were enjoying it. Such are the dialectics of pain, pleasure, and sexuality. Although these types of consensual sexual and aggressive acts are not my concern here, they do speak to the abilities of heterosexual and homosexual dyads alike to negotiate pleasure and pain fully and mutually within the terrains of intimacy and sexuality. In contrast to the relatively positive and nonabusive aggressive-sexual fusions, my primary focus in this section is to try to account for the social evolution of negative, abusive, and violent male aggression toward women and others. In short, where does controlling or dominating male sexual aggression come from?

In her examinations of male aggression against women, Barbara Smuts (1991, 1992) uses a biological, evolutionary perspective. She makes it clear that such a framework need not rest on any type of genetically deterministic assumptions, nor does it have to result in conclusions that are necessarily supportive of the status quo. On the contrary, Smuts argues that evolutionary perspectives can be quite useful for rendering costs-benefits analyses of different courses of action. Finally, to the extent that these perspectives can identify those situations and conditions that favor male aggression toward women, they can contribute both to political strategies and to the formulation of social policies that may alter those situations and conditions.

Using evidence from research on both human and nonhuman primates, Smuts (1992) argues that historically “men use aggression to try to control women, and particularly to try to control female sexuality, not because men are inherently aggressive and women inherently submissive, but because men find aggression to be a useful political tool in their struggle to dominate and control women and thereby enhance their reproductive opportunities” (p. 30). She also argues that male use of aggression as a tool is not inevitable but conditional. Under

some circumstances, coercive control of women pays off; under other circumstances, it does not. What underpins Smuts' idea about the conditional nature of male aggression against women is its emphasis on individual reproductive success as the ultimate goal of both male sexual coercion and female resistance to it.

Evolutionary analyses begin with the successful reproduction of the human species from the interests of both males and females. Through sexual intercourse, it is assumed that male eagerness to mate, combined with female reluctance to reproduce with any male who comes along, creates an obvious sexual conflict of interest that is virtually universal (Hammerstein & Parker, 1987). In terms of resolving or negotiating an exchange over sexual reproduction, males could overcome female resistance and improve their chances of mating by one of three means. They could offer females benefits, such as meat, or protection from other males. They could provide assistance to females in rearing the young. Or, they could employ force or the threat of force. In turn, women restricted their sexual promiscuity and provided limited sexual access to one male or a few. In the larger scheme of social relations, what evolved were *pair bonds*: long-term, more-or-less exclusive, mating relationships.

Pair bonding has long been considered a critical development in human social evolution, especially since it is unique among primates. Smuts suggests that as males and females developed long-term mating associations, men formalized the kind of tolerance seen among male allies in nonhuman primates. This was beneficial at some point during hominid evolution, when male cooperation became increasingly important in terms of hunting and intragroup competition for power, resources, and mates. It was also beneficial to women, as it reduced their vulnerability to sexual coercion, including

the perpetration of infanticide by males. In Smut's (1992) speculative scenario, "Human pair bonds, and therefore human marriage, can be considered a means by which cooperating males agree about mating rights, respect (at least in principle) one another's 'possession' of particular females, protect their mates and their mates' children from aggression by other men, and gain rights to coerce their own females with reduced interference from other men."

Evolutionary theorists and cultural anthropologists of a functionalist orientation tend to emphasize the cooperative nature of the division of labor in humans. Women gather and harvest, men hunt and plow. Those evolutionists with a conflict orientation tend to stress the widespread existence of sexual asymmetries in the control of resources (e.g., food, property, tools, weapons) that allow men to control women. They also recognize how once women became dependent on men for resources, their vulnerability to male coercive control also increased. As men expended more resources on their mates and offspring, they were motivated to control female sexuality because of issues of paternity. As women became more dependent on men for resources, the alternatives to remaining with a coercive mate declined, further reducing the power of women to negotiate the terms of the relationship. Cross-cultural analyses generally support the hypothesis that male control of resources makes women more vulnerable to male aggression, involving cases such as rape (Schlegel & Barry, 1986) or wife beating in developing (if not necessarily developed) societies (Levinson, 1989).

In sum, evolutionary perspectives vary, but they all assume that male aggression against women reflects selective pressures that began operating during the social evolution of our ancestral hominids (Burgess & Draper, 1989; Daly & Wilson, 1988). Most also assume that male domination of women is not genetically

determined, and that frequent male aggression toward women is a changeable feature of human nature. In fact, there is dramatic variation in male aggression toward women throughout the world. And although there are still a sizable number of men who resort to the use of aggression and sexual violence toward women, it can be shown that roles culturally scripted around sex, gender, and violence in the past and present have helped to reproduce male sexualities that are more or less likely to engage in violence against other men and women. Research, however, generally demonstrates that even with an association between higher levels of androgens, especially testosterone, and some forms of violence, there are still no significant behavioral differences between men and women with respect to aggression, dominance, and competition that can be linked to heredity or biology (Richmond-Abbott, 1992).

MARKING THE SEXUALITIES OF DIFFERENCE AND HIERARCHY

Sexualities of difference and hierarchy are both physical and mental. In other words, female and male sexualities are a function of both corporal bodies and constructed images. As Rubin (1975) has commented: "Sex is sex, but what counts as sex is equally culturally determined and obtained. Every society also has a sex/gender system—a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner, no matter how bizarre some of the conventions might be," (p. 165) such as the ones involving female circumcision (genital mutilation).

In contemporary sexual discourse, *sex* refers to nature and the biological components that characterize male and female—chromosomes, hormones, anatomy and physiology. By contrast, *gender* typically

refers to nurture and the psychological, social, and cultural components that "encapsulate the dominant ideas about feminine and masculine traits and behaviors prevalent in any society at one time" (Hatty, 2000, p. 111). Sexualities may be thought of as combining elements of sex and gender as well as a person's subjective sense of him- or herself, or what is usually referred to as gender identification or the engendering of a "masculine" or "feminine" personality.

Under the older regimes and studies of sexology, the Western heritage of a Cartesian duality or split between the mind and body required a situation in which the former was allegedly in control of the latter. In the newer regimes of multiplicity and integration, "we now acknowledge that subjectivity and corporeality are intimately entwined, and that the body mediates the experience of the external world" (Hatty, 2000, p. 119). In other words, in the postmodern culture, the body is viewed as contributing to subjectivity and as central to the experience of self.

These two accounts of gender and sexuality represent modernist (traditional) and postmodernist (revisionist) explanations of difference and hierarchy. The traditional models stress the idea that masculinity and femininity are embedded in fixed and stable gender identities, expressing an inner essence of maleness and femaleness. These models view masculinities and femininities as deep-seated, resilient, and persistent aspects of individual identities or personalities, a function and a reflection of an organism's biological plumbing and constitutional make up. Gender and sexuality are reduced to the differences of *m/f* based on chromosomal sex (i.e., XY males or XX females), gonadal sex (i.e., testes or ovaries), hormonal sex (e.g., androgens or estrogens), and the sex of the internal (i.e., prostate glands and ejaculatory ducts or uterus and fallopian tubes) and external (i.e., penis and scrotal sacs or clitoris, labia, and vagina) organs.

The revisionist models, by contrast, stress the idea that the taking up of gender identity and sexuality is a highly flexible, contextually sensitive, and relational enterprise.

In these models, physiology and genitals are not necessarily destiny. As studies of the relative importance of chromosomes, hormones, physical appearance, and the manner in which a child has been reared have revealed, the sex of rearing is almost always found to be the primary factor. "Even when the external genitals contradicted the sex of rearing," for example, one study "reported that twenty-three of twenty-five [subjects] believed themselves to be the sex which they were raised" (Richmond-Abbott, 1992, p. 40).

Money and Ehrhardt (1972) argued that children acquire their gender identities from the age of 6 months to 3 or 4 years, and that it is relatively difficult to change children's primary orientation after the age of 2 years without emotional trauma and even permanent damage to their gender or sexual identity. The historical record actually reveals that there have been successful and unsuccessful sex and gender reassignments of both children and adults. Either way, revisionists generally hold that gender and sexuality represent processes of becoming rather than states of being. In sum, there is a tendency in traditionalists to treat sexuality as a "noun" and in revisionists to treat sexuality as a "verb."

Once again, Foucault (1980) is instructive when he says that "sexuality must not be thought of as a kind of natural given which power tries to hold in check, or as an obscure domain which knowledge tries gradually to uncover" (p. 105). Instead, he argues that the production of sexuality is a historical artifact or social construction. It is "not a furtive reality that is difficult to grasp, but a great surface network in which the stimulation of bodies, the intensifications of pleasures, the incitement to discourse, the formation of special knowledges, the strengthening of

controls and resistances, are linked to one another" (p. 106). Historically, even the most cursory examination of bodies, sexualities, and genders discloses that ideas about each of these or about sex and gender systems as a whole are quite malleable and subject to change.

What has constituted feminine and masculine traits and behaviors has varied over time. In fact, throughout history the cultural images and the living expressions of maleness/femaleness or masculinity/femininity (*m/f*) have assumed a variety of forms. Notions about the attributes and characteristics of each of these have provided a range of possibilities that are to be achieved through culturally specific processes or rituals in which one becomes the ideal man or woman. Cross culturally, ideas of *m/f* have not only contradicted themselves, disappeared, and reappeared; they have also normally involved a wide range of meanings and behaviors. Surprisingly, perhaps, the very configurations of sexed bodies and of the nature of male and female gender have even reversed themselves at certain times (Hatty, 2000).

In most traditional prestate societies where evidence of hierarchy between the sexes prevailed, femaleness was associated with self-sufficiency and maleness with dependency; in other more egalitarian formations, images of sexual androgyny prevailed (Hatty, 2000). Contrast these with most modern, industrial societies, which have associated maleness with strength and independence and femaleness with weakness and dependence. Yet, women (or some classes of women) to varying degrees have always been presented sexually as dangerous, polluting, and threatening to the well-being of societies. Female bodies have also tended to be characterized more negatively than male bodies.

In terms of the Western ideologies that emerged in the 17th century regarding the closed, controlled, and well-mannered "positive" bodies associated with civil societies,

the “privatized and contained body, modeled on a masculine ideal, can be contrasted against the ‘grotesque body,’ which is characterized by its openness and its orifices, which lack closure” (Hatty, 2000, p. 147). Women’s bodies, with their cyclical nature and reproductive potential, past and present, threaten to “spill over” into social space, threatening or breaching its order. As sexed objects in contemporary Western society, the unbounded or unrestrained character of women’s bodies incites fear in most, if not, all masculine imaginations, as feminists and others often say. At the same time, many men and women today characterize female sexuality as both lower in intensity and less oriented toward sexual variety than male sexuality but acknowledge women’s greater empirical capacities for intensity and frequency of orgasm (Richmond-Abbott, 1992).

Moreover, an abundance of anthropological evidence, past and present, exists to suggest that female sexuality, especially in male-dominated systems of interaction, may not yet have “evolved” into its own and is still captive of male needs and desires rather than subject to its own needs and desires (Rubin, 1975). Numerous examples pertain to the negative sanctions, including physical punishment as well as body mutilation, that certainly put a damper on female sexuality. As Smuts (1992) cautions,

both the objective, observable expression of female sexuality and women’s subjective experience of their own sexuality are so influenced by repression and fear of violent coercion that, in most societies, it is impossible to identify the “intrinsic” nature of female sexuality based on female behavior. It seems premature, for example, to attribute the relative lack of female interest in sexual variety to women’s biological nature alone in face of overwhelming evidence that women are consistently beaten for promiscuity and adultery. (p. 29)

Similarly, labels or ideologies attached to various connotations of sexuality, especially those associated with “safety” and “danger,” are often split around class and ethnic lines. For example, the “pure” labels of female sexuality have been reserved for middle and upper class white women; the “dirty” labels (e.g., sluts, whores) of female sexuality have been allocated to poor and working class women and women of color. For men, there have been no similarly negative stigma. On the contrary, because men are all assumed to be desirous of sexual variety, they are awarded labels of “stud” or the less flattering “womanizer,” statuses aspired to consciously or subconsciously by most adolescent and adult heterosexual males. These ideologies of sexual difference, which depict some women as “whores,” allow boys and men, especially those of higher socioeconomic status, to “attribute their sexual exploits to [“bad”] women’s voracious sexuality, drawing attention away from the coercive tactics they employ to gain access to these women” (Smuts, 1992, p. 26).

More generally, the frequent construction of many, if not all, women or the female gender as the dangerous sex serves to reinforce a gendered threat that relies heavily on

the utilization of violence by men—in intimate relationships, in public places, and on a national and international scale. Violence, as a prerogative of the dominant gender, is invoked to sustain this position of social superiority. . . . Violence is also invoked in transactions between men. Displays of hegemonic masculinity involving violence assert the primacy of this version of manliness and marginalize alternative versions. (Hatty, 2000, p. 148)

In a related way, it may also be true that what we identify as the “intrinsic” nature of male sexuality may also be a distortion or a reflection of a different kind of sexual repression and fear associated with the various

meanings of *m/f*. Men, in separate and yet related ways, may also be captives of a sexuality that they are either not fully one with or that they are alienated from. In short, it appears that sexualities for many males and females are still relatively repressed.

Historically, we could talk about specific medieval, Enlightenment, New World, or postmodern masculinities and femininities. For example, during the Middle Ages (12th to 14th centuries), heroic masculinity was associated with action and movement, with slaying enemies and conquering malevolent powers. In addition, this masculinity was detached from the institutions of marriage and antithetical to the sphere of domesticity. A few centuries later, modern civilizations of greater stability and order arose, derivative of self-control and self-discipline. A bit later, during the Enlightenment period or Age of Reason, a developing individualism of heroic proportions reinforced and supported the sexualities of married couples only; it condemned or marginalized the sexualities of everybody else (Foucault, 1980).

In 20th-century America, *m/f* was affected by many developments, including the ideologies of militarism associated with World Wars I and II; the struggles of feminism and the crises in masculinity associated with both Vietnam-related anxieties and the Sexual Revolution of the 1960s and after; the “backlash” response to these and the associated emphasis on exaggerated masculine values and behaviors during the “get tough” era of President Reagan and politics of Cold War; and, most recently, in the “transgender” cultural attitudes of hardness and aggression for men and women, which first began to appear thematically on television and in films during the 1990s. Today, as Connell (1987) and others have argued, we find ourselves living in a world, domestically and internationally, that relies on diverse and heterogeneous constructions of *m/f*, ranging from a “hegemonic masculinity” to various

subordinated masculinities and femininities. While there may be a preferred or prominent version of femininity, “there is no femininity that is hegemonic in the sense that the dominant form of masculinity is hegemonic among men” (Connell, 1987, p. 183).

Hegemonic masculinity, in other words, is the cultural manifestation of men’s ascendancy over women, dependent on the circulation of mass-mediated ideologies and images for its survival and prosperity, and not at all divorced from the uses of force or violence. For example, J. Gilligan (1996), Totten (2000), and others have discussed in different and related ways how crimes, particularly crimes of violence, often revolve around issues of male sexuality and identity and proving that one possesses the required hegemonic masculinity. When adolescent boys are unable to comfortably express their sexualities, for example in the case of young males coming to terms with their or somebody else’s homosexuality, the chances of their physically abusing another person, male or female, becomes more likely (Totten, 2000). In the forms of some male homicides, issues of identity formation and sexual intimacy have been germane to the type of person who became the target of these kinds of killers (Gilligan, 1996).

Similarly, Messerschmidt (1993, 1997) has emphasized the relational and hierarchical character of masculinities. He argues essentially that excluded or marginalized male youth, especially African American or Hispanic American, who have not been able to demonstrate their manliness in more conventional or legitimate ways (e.g., social achievements) may adopt a masculinity of resistance or opposition. Middle class white male adolescents, by contrast, may embrace an accommodating masculinity in the short run as they assume that in the not too distant future they will acquire some of the semblances of hegemonic masculinity and the rewards that come with it.

Box 7.1 The Dialectics of Sexuality and the New Pornography

In postmodern culture, the traditional distinctions between “erotica” and “pornography” no longer apply, even if they once may have. As Brian McNair (1996) has pointed out, “the dramatic increase in sexually explicit images which has characterized the post-1960s period in the west is not the cause of sexism and patriarchy, but the reflection of broader social developments, some negative (HIV/AIDS), others positive (the achievements of feminism and gay rights)” (p. 174). Today, it makes more sense, is less ideological or moralistic, and is more representational of the diverse, overlapping, and contradictory images and texts of sexuality to speak in terms of the content or intent of a variety of pornographies. In a nutshell, there are pornographies that are and are not misogynistic and sexist.

Even in the context of those “old” pornographies that operate out of male desire or from a male point of view, and where there are frequently distasteful, crude, and offensive sexual representations supportive of hierarchy, inequality, and patriarchy, nothing has precluded the development of other caring, trusting, and mutually satisfying representations of explicit “hardcore” (e.g., erections, penetrations, and “money shots” in film or video) sexualities derived from the desires and points of view of male, female, gay, or straight audiences or some combination thereof. These “new” pornographies may also be politically correct or incorrect, but like their older counterparts, should only be censored or banned on “the basis that illegal acts have been committed in the process of [their] production, for which the pornography is the evidence, as well as being the crime itself” (p. 174).

Philosophically, the new pornographies do not deny the fact that there are pornographies, especially among the “old” pornographies, which denigrate women and girls and which may or may not be destructive of the building of trusting sexual relations among people. It also seems that not a few serial sexual murderers, such as Ted Bundy in the United States or Peter Sutcliffe (the “Yorkshire Ripper”) in England, claim to have been avid consumers of this kind of material. Such self-justificatory statements, of course, should not be taken as some kind of “proof” that pornography causes sex crimes. One would, not surprisingly, hypothesize or expect to find that those who commit sexual crimes are consumers of such pornography. Once again, however, these kinds of correlations between mediated sex or violence and real sex and violence are tenuous at best in an indirect-effects kind of way and spurious at worst in terms of avoiding the sources or etiology of the pathways to their sexual violence.

The new pornographies are part of the different sexual lifestyles that were publicly emerging in the West at the turn of the 21st century. As such, these new pornographies service a diverse set of consumers and subcultural tastes. They may also be used as educational tools and, of course, for purposes of masturbation and the arousal of other sexual activities. More specifically, what are some of the meanings, gratifications, and different uses of the new pornographies in general and by those who consume them in particular?

(Continued)

Box 7.1 (Continued)

First, these have been attached to the sexual revolution as it has affected straight and gay men and women. Second, they have been attached to mediated sex and to the associated eroticizing of violence; for example, in the forms of S&M and for the purposes of distinguishing between “real” and “representative” sexual coercion. Third, meanings have ceased to be carriers of uniform, universally agreed-upon connotations; they are now polysemic, shifting signifiers. In short, “gays can read straight porn, and vice versa; images can vary in their meaning according to the social semiotic of their reception; pornography can be decoded or encoded ‘subversively’” (p. 105).

Moreover, with respect to such new pornographies as “porn for women” and to the proliferation of “soft-core” mainstream pornography, from cable to satellite to the Internet to mass advertising, perhaps (a real stretch?) those on the pathways to future sexual violence might desist from and alter their violent courses of behavior as they become compulsive consumers of explicit and mutualistic nonviolent sexuality, rather than of the adversarial or misogynistic kinds. The unlikelihood of such indirect and mediated sexualities altering the behavioral courses of these individuals could be enhanced if they were incorporated into some kind of individual and group therapy. Although I am not necessarily suggesting, let alone arguing for, a “therapeutic pornography” per se, I do believe that such policies of treatment for sexually violent offenders would do more to decrease their negative kinds of behaviors than would policies of “pornographic censorship.”

In summation, while acknowledging and not dismissing the potential use and abuse of pornography in relation to coercive sexual activity, the perspective adopted here has “proceeded from the assumption that, in many of the contexts in which it is used, pornography is neither the cause nor the conduit of antisocial violent behaviour,” but “a form of sexual representation or exposure to which people have freely entered into” (p. 104). Because of the inherent abuse of power and lack of even a semblance of consent on the part of children, child pornography should be regarded as an exception to the general rule that pornographies, depending on their content, can be used in the pursuit of sexual violence or nonviolence. Thus, the notion that all pornography must somehow treat the body as an object to be controlled and dominated for violent purposes, or that there is some kind of inevitable abuse and degradation associated with soft- or hard-core texts and other sexually explicit materials, is simply wrong. Pornography, in other words, like erotica, can also be about autoerotic or mutually gratifying pleasure and, at the same time, be free of sexual conduct that is insulting, disrespectful, or abusive of other people.

Source: McNair, B. (1996). *Mediated sex: Pornography and postmodern culture*. London: Arnold.

Bodies and Sexualities

In discussing sexualities, Foucault showed how bodies come alive through the intervention of historically specific institutional

processes and practices. More specifically, bodies and sexualities are the workings of power in relation to the Self—self-regulation, supervision, and discipline—and the Other—scrutinized, categorized, judged, and even

violated. As both Foucault and Elizabeth Grosz (1994) have contended, sexualities and bodies “cannot be adequately understood as ahistorical, precultural, or natural objects in any simple way; they are not only inscribed, marked, engraved, by social pressures external to them but are the products, the direct effect, of the very social constitution of nature itself” (Grosz, 1994, p. x). In today’s world, of course, images of sex and sexuality—mediated sex—are everywhere: in popular cinema and TV, the press, pop music, advertising (see Chapter 6), and in the proliferation of sexual discourses and the “new pornographies” that cut across sex and gender boundaries.

Historically, male bodies have often been depicted as instruments acting in the service of some kind of political or social end. This is why men in the public sector are often shown as “talking heads,” divorced from their physicality and sexual desires. In addition, male bodies have often been thought of as weapons. The very meaning of *masculinity* conjures up the embodiment of force (Connell, 1983). In fact, violence or the threat thereof has always been wrapped around masculinity: Men have been “taught to occupy space in ways that connote strength, potency, and assertiveness” (Hatty, 2000, p. 120).

In many ways, the male body becomes a project subject to the will and motivation of its “possessor.” In turn, body-reflexive practices such as bodybuilding lead to an achievement-oriented approach to masculinity that includes, among other things, sports, military combat, and sexual assault (Connell, 1995). Accordingly, the ideal male body becomes one that is hard as a rock, free of looseness and flaccidity (Bordo, 1996). As part of an achievement-oriented masculinity, the ideal (“hegemonic”) male body is one that is solid, resistant, and self-sufficient. It is also a body to be desired and feared. With respect to the presentation of the “naturalized” heterosexual

male body, Jackson (1990) has noted how heterosexual relations have shaped him “to embody superiority over women in [his] bodily relations. Practically, this means holding [his] body in a firmly decisive way that marks [him] off from an imaginary woman” (p. 57). These bodily actions may involve such means as thrusting, driving, and pushing, and such ends as angry presentations of controlling behaviors and animated selves. At the cultural extreme of masculinity in the United States are the images associated with the black male body as an icon of danger, conjuring up extreme levels of personal harm against others, creating high levels of social anxiety and fear, and threatening the overturn of social order (Gray, 1995; Hutchinson, 1996; Russell, 1998).

In reality, male bodies have proven over and over to be fragile creations, marked by their own failures to measure up (Connell, 1995). The discourses of the self-built and carefully engineered male body, from classical Greece onward, have often clashed head on with the lived experiences of unpredictable and undisciplined physicality. Related to the differences between ideal and real male bodies is the fact that living in a male body can often be a semidetached or “out of body” experience. “Men’s experience of the body is often epitomized by feelings of alienation and absence. Indeed, men will frequently speak of the foreign character of their own bodies, as if they are referring to a physical entity that is not integral to their identity as male subjects” (Hatty, 2000, p. 120).

In a very general way, males may be little invested in their bodies and view them as low-maintenance propositions (Updike, 1996). At the same time, even if the male body and penis do measure up and perform well, in other ways, both will always be a source of great anxiety when compared to the mythical or symbolic power of the phallus and the masculine ideal that “dominates, restricts,

prohibits, and controls representations of the male body” (Lehman, 1993, p. 71). In terms of sexuality, the alienation from the body may manifest itself in a strange kind of way. On the one hand, there can be a sense of the semiautonomous penis, often with a physicality and a mind of its own. On the other hand, in preparation for sexual activities there can be a sense of coconspiracy. In fact, many men have been known to name this part of their anatomy and to engage the penis in silent or private conversations before and during sexual acts. These conversations about “body parts” differ in both form and substance from those typically engaged in verbally by participants involved in sexual intimacies.

Like men, women are alienated from their bodies. However, their estrangements are of a different kind, as, historically, the personal and social experiences of female bodies have been of a different nature. Although there is some debate over Laqueur’s (1990) theory of a one-sex model in pre-Renaissance Europe, in which male and female bodies were simply viewed as mirror images of each other, there is little disagreement over the lack of a precise medical nomenclature for female genitals and the reproductive system until well after the Middle Ages. Before the Renaissance, males were considered to be “the measure of all things,” and femaleness did not exist as an ontologically distinct category. Finally, when the female body emerged in its “own right,” it did so in terms of an incorporation of the male gaze.

As the Other of the male gaze, women’s bodies as experienced become severed from the social meanings attributed to their bodies. The rupture between the lived body for females and the female body as object of desire and/or repulsion renders women’s perceptions of their bodies problematic: “The body is transformed into a foreign entity, one *inside* social relations but *outside* the self” (Hatty, 2000, p. 124). In the scheme of

things, maleness and the male body become the healthy norm, and femaleness and the female body become the “diseased” norm. In terms of this “difference as pathology,” a woman’s reproductive capacity transforms her body into a public abnormality, where it is viewed as assembled bits and pieces that can never measure up to some ideal female body.

The focus on the female body as fragmented and diseased is matched by an obsession with the surface area of the female body. This cultural construction or objectification of the female body translates into a vocabulary of deficiency and desire and into a social project of corrective actions to shore up the lack. Corrective actions include a wide range of normalized practices, such as efforts to reduce body size and to contain female desire so it will not overwhelm the woman’s body or encroach on other, male bodies. Anorexic women, for example, have taken extreme corrective steps, to the point of extinguishing their female desire altogether, represented by the absence of hunger. At the same time, many anorexics still experience physical hunger; they just ruthlessly suppress it. They also may believe (consciously, at least) that their bodies are sexy (although their libidos are virtually nonexistent). They may even claim that their avowed reason for starving themselves is about being attractive and (theoretically, if not practically) desirable. This form of repressed sexuality, however, rarely if ever expresses itself in sexual mutualism. More generally, social institutions such as psychiatric facilities, prisons, hospitals, and the health and diet industries have historically extolled or shaped the female body by force—confining, constraining, watching, and categorizing it. In the process, the female body has been reorganized again and again into themes that have resonated with patriarchal and chauvinistic narratives.

Historically, the female body and its interior and exterior have continually been

the object and subject of the male's (Other) project. Today, it seems as though the male body, at least with respect to its exterior, is becoming less of a "talking head," as it increasingly has become the object and subject of the Other's (female) gaze, as in, "He's a hunk." The growing universality of sexed bodies and the tendency to sexually

objectify and exploit the ideal of both female and male bodies over the past quarter century are reflective of an emerging process of transgenering in which the traditionally drawn public lines between *m/f* have started to blur, and sexualities have become more fluid and flexible (see Box 7.2).

Box 7.2 Sexualities, Androgyny, and Sadomasochism

When it comes to sexualities, people often think about the various traits or characteristics associated with the identities of *m/f* as oppositional. Studies, however, have demonstrated that men and women generally overlap in regard to many gender stereotypes, especially as these are related to sexual paraphernalia (e.g., body piercing, sex toys, S&M) and sexual orientations (e.g., heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual, transsexual). Among all of these sexual groups, for example, there can be found persons who are assertive or passive, independent or dependent, emotional or unemotional, nurturing or non-nurturing, and so on and so forth. In short, within and across sex and gender, connections exist among sexualities and between those attributes traditionally associated with women ("femininity") and with men ("masculinity").

Sandra Bem (1975), who did some of the pioneering work on measuring androgyny, developed the Bem Sex Role Inventory scales. Depending on the differences in one's masculinity and femininity scores, one can be considered to be "more masculine," "more feminine," "undifferentiated," or "androgynous." In actuality, however, Bem's inventory was not a true measurement of *m/f* but at best only a reflection of gender stereotypes. Some have argued that her scales were really measuring expressive and instrumental personality traits rather than gender roles. So, like other forms and expressions of sexuality, androgyny is a loose concept involving social, psychological, and biological dimensions.

Androgyny is an ancient word taken from the Greek "andro" (male) and "gyn" (female). It refers to a condition under which the human impulses expressed by men and women and the characteristics of the sexes are not rigidly differentiated. More generally, "androgynous" has come to be understood as referring to an individual of either the male or female sex who is capable of calling forth elements of both masculinity and femininity. Others have maintained that androgynous persons are those who identify with the desirable characteristics of both masculinity and femininity and who are also comfortable with the behavioral aspects of these across a wide variety of social conditions (Jones, Chernovitz, & Hanson, 1978). In short, one can think of androgyny as a blending of both masculine and feminine traits and behaviors.

For example, male and female bodily alterations are common fare throughout North America, Britain, Europe, and most places throughout the world, past and present. In the

(Continued)

Box 7.2 (Continued)

modern nation-states of the West, such as Germany or the United States, tattooing and piercing establishments no longer restrict themselves to simple ear piercing but specialize in tongue, nipple, scrotum, labia, and more. It is estimated that throughout Britain there are a few thousand erotic piercings weekly, including some 600 genital piercings performed in London alone, with a 50/50 gender split (Presdee, 2000). The connections between sexuality, tattooing, and erotic piercings are made visible not only in magazines such as *Savage* and in sex shops and lingerie stores alike, such as Victoria's Secret and Frederick's of Hollywood, but in mass marketing as well. Moreover, these and other emerging unisexual trends and customs are expressive of a growing androgynous sensibility in both popular culture and mass communications.

Popular tastes in the "new" sexualities, involving both pleasure and pain, are also indicative that "S&M activities are now firmly embedded in the cultural fabric of everyday life at an international level and have become part of the consciousness and life experiences of millions of citizens" (Presdee, 2000, p. 98). The use of handcuffs, whips, and restraints or the infliction of pain and humiliation, for example, between consenting or nonconsenting sexual dyads for the purposes of mutual or self-gratification have moved from the domains of "art" or "battered chic" and into the mainstreams of commercial advertising and mass communications.

Whether marginal or conventional, "playing with power" seems to be an essential ingredient of S&M relationships, as does consensus, sexual arousal, and an unequal sharing of a balance of power (Taylor & Ussher, 2001). As Lynn Chancer (1992) has explained, S&M can be about pleasure, diversity, and mutual self-exploration between consenting persons, based on extreme need and a trust not usually found in the wider society. S&M can also be placed on a continuum from extreme violence to extreme nonviolence. Sadomasochism, like destructive (adversarial) and constructive (mutualistic) pornography, can also be about the reification of or the resistance to patriarchy, sexism, and inequality. On converging contradictory pathways, then, pornography and S&M can, at one end of the continuum, be repressive and conducive to violence, and at the other end, liberating and conducive to nonviolence.

S&M relations that are primarily consensual in nature may also share some aspects in common with other abusive and nonabusive behaviors. However, what differentiates S&M expressions of sexuality from their exploitative counterparts is the presence of mutual consent (or love) rather than intimidation, manipulation, and degradation. In the context of trying to understand the pathways toward and away from violence and nonviolence, it is useful to briefly characterize these emerging democratic forms of sexuality, aggression, power, and control as they converge and blend with the older and established forms of patriarchal sexuality.

To say the least, there is much confusion, misunderstanding, and a lack of basic knowledge of the area of S&M. For example, sadomasochism as a form of sex play is about the mutual pleasure of both the "dominant" and "submissive" partners. Often times, partners switch roles, possessing control in one encounter and being controlled in the next encounter. Another common misconception is that S&M is some kind of male

power game. In practice, however, there are women who dominate men, men who dominate women, women who dominate women, and men who dominate men.

Despite the recent democratization of the practices of S&M, they are still viewed by the medical establishment primarily as some kind of sexual pathology. As for the prevailing sexual discourse on the subject, the World Health Organization, for example, lists S&M as a mental disorder, even though the psychiatric community's knowledge of sadomasochism, as well as empirical data on the subject, remain virtually nonexistent (Presdee, 2000). In the same vein, S&M is described in the current psychological textbooks as a mental illness, often discussed alongside behaviors such as child sexual abuse and rape. This "illness" is regarded in the most general way as some kind of intrapsychic conflict related to the sexual drive. In one of the few empirical studies, researchers questioned 24 self-identified sadomasochists and found that the motivations and purposes between S&M and other sexual practices were essentially the same: intrapsychic, dissidence, pleasure, escape, transcendence, learning, and so on (Taylor & Ussher, 2001).

SEXUAL DIFFERENCE, GENDER IDENTITY, AND VIOLENCE

In this book, the examination of sexuality and violence employs a social relations or interactive approach. If nothing else, this perspective has revealed the importance of the "context-specific approach" to the study of mediated sex and violence—sexual and nonsexual—and to the value of an "indirect-effects" approach to both media and sexuality as these are blended from the real and reel pathways of violence or nonviolence. Apart from the mediated natures of sex and violence, Dobash and Dobash (1998a) have appropriately commented about the material nature of sexual violence in particular:

While accumulating evidence does suggest the existence of "male" violence against women in all societies and across time, which might in turn suggest an inherent, universal male characteristic, research also shows variation in both the nature and level

of this violence between men and women across [and within] different societies and/or cultures. This variation suggests cultural specificity and the importance of different contexts rather than an unvaried, universal behavior. (p. 16; see also Dobash & Dobash, 1983)

In the context of gender differences and sexuality, the rest of this chapter explores some of the similarities and dissimilarities of males and females engaged in a variety of violent activities. These types of violence include (a) nonlethal relationship violence, (b) familiar and unfamiliar lethal violence, (c) gang violence, (d) child sexual abuse, and (e) serial murder. Before turning to these comparative pathways to violence, it is important to underscore the cultural differences of male and female violence in relation to *m/f* identities, sexually scripted roles, and the sex-gender systems more generally.

In most cultures around the world, the propensity to use lethal and other forms of violence has been greater among boys and

men than among girls and women. From a culture of gender perspective, violence and aggression are more accessible to men than to women because of the embedded nature of violence “in a net of physicality, experience, and male culture such that it is more easily used and more readily available as a resource” (Dobash and Dobash, 1998c, p. 164). Simply stated, in many cultures of masculinity, past and present, aggressive and violent behavior have been highly valued and rewarded. In a few words, contemporary boys and young men learn to “do” violence in a number of formal and informal arenas that allow them to cultivate aggression and to use their bodies as instruments of force, intimidation, and success. Some of these expressions of male violence cannot be disconnected from their social places nor from the vital roles they play in the formation of masculine identities (Newburn & Stanko, 1994; Toch, 1992).

When it comes to male violence, the Dobashes and others have documented meaningful distinctions in the acts of violence between men and in the acts of violence against women. The former have been characterized as involving valor, heroism, masculine pride, and a focus on the act. Win or lose, these are righteous or “heroic” acts that possess reaffirming qualities about personal identity. By contrast, the latter acts of violence have been characterized as involving masculine power, control, domination, and a focus on the outcome. These acts of violence are not about process but about conquest (“winning”) or defeating women whether the purpose is one of shutting her up, getting a meal, or having sex. These acts of violence do not bring a sense of masculine pride and status, but they do reconfirm a masculine identity to the extent that the male is not subordinated to the female.

Although there may be some commonality between male and female violence, especially in terms of the costs and benefits to the

individuals concerned, “in a wider cultural sense, feminine identity is not valorized by female-to-female violence or by violence to men” (Dobash & Dobash, 1998c, p. 168). Of course, this does not mean to imply that women are innately incapable of aggression and violence. Rather, it simply underscores that males and females have both been objects and subjects of the cultural differences of *m/f*, gendered behavior, and identity formation. In short, girls and young women have been nurtured or socialized away from violence. In spite of these cultural biases against female violence, women’s capacities for, initiated actions, and perpetrations of intimate violence, especially involving the least serious levels of violence, tend to equal or surpass those of men (Bland & Orn, 1986; Brinkerhoff & Lupri, 1988; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Kwong, Bartholomew, & Dutton, 1999; Stets & Straus, 1990). Also, both genders have reported that women do initiate violence and are sometimes the sole perpetrators of aggression in relationships. Thus, it appears that a sizable proportion of women’s violence against men cannot be explained merely as acts of self-defense against physically assaultive males. Nevertheless, in terms of serious injuries, danger, and victimizations, men are the predominant offenders and women the predominant victims.

Nonlethal Relationship Violence: Heterosexual Battering

In marital and marital-like relations, men and women have interests and conflicts in common. In the context of families, although parents and children, as well as husbands and wives, share goals, they are also in competition for the resources of the domestic arena, including time, physical space, freedom of movement, and the fruits of domestic labor. In intimate heterosexual relationships generally, there is relative parity when it

comes to the number of incidences of battering between the sexes, if not in the severity of those acts of violence. Women rarely, if ever, beat to death their heterosexual partners. As for sex-related violence, this is essentially a male problem, as sexually based abuse of men by women is virtually nonexistent. Even if one were to include S&M dominatrixes, the argument can be made that these are consensual rather than exploitative sexual relations.

When it comes to the use, frequency, type, and prevalence of violence used between men and women, several studies in the United States, Canada, and Britain (already cited in Chapters 1 or 2) confirm "that a large minority of both men and women commit violent acts within their intimate relations" (Kwong et al., 1999, p. 156). The Violence Aggressive Index, for example, reveals little difference between the sexes regarding the less serious rates of violence (e.g., pushing and grabbing, slapping face or body, restraining her or him, punching walls, and throwing objects). In other words, men and women report similar acts of petty violence perpetration and victimization. The greatest differences are found in the context of the more serious types of interpersonal violence, including rape and forced sex, punching and kicking the body or face, choking, using or threatening to use weapons, and attempting to kill a person. Men are the more prevalent and frequent perpetrators of these acts of violence, but women are more likely to be the persons who suffer serious injuries as a consequence of their abuse.

In studies on relationship violence that the Dobashes and their colleagues have carried out for more than 20 years, they have consistently found that conflicts or arguments between men and women revolve around four major themes. Each of these is related to patriarchal notions of masculinity: men's possessiveness and jealousy, men's sense of the right to punish "their" women for

perceived wrongdoing, and the importance to men of maintaining or exercising their power and authority. Other sources of conflict include money, sex, the man's use of alcohol, and children.

Lethal Violence: Familiar and Unfamiliar Homicide

When it comes to both familiar and unfamiliar killings, men are as likely to be perpetrators as they are to be victims. Women are more likely to be victims of current or former sexual intimates than of strangers. Women are also more likely to be murderers of their own children than men are. When it comes to the murders of other people's children, however, men account for more than 80% of those killings. The world of stranger homicide, then, is truly a man's world. Women perpetrators of unfamiliar lethal violence are relatively rare.

When it comes to lethal violence, gender affects not only who the perpetrators are likely to be in a given type of homicide scenario but the means by which the victims are likely to die. Generally, men are as likely to be involved in familiar as in unfamiliar ("stranger") murders. Men's involvement in homicide is "total": It extends across all relational boundaries in society. By contrast, women's involvement in homicide is primarily limited to the relational spheres of family and/or sexual intimacy.

For example, an examination of homicide incidents in England and Wales (1986-1996) revealed that 27% of male victims were killed in the context of familiar or sexual intimacy, compared to 68% of female victims. Moreover, almost 2 out of 3 (64%) male victims knew their killer; among women, nearly 7 of 8 (84%) did (Smith & Stanko, 1999). In fact, this examination found that the most common homicides against females were perpetrated either by their parents when they were young girls or by their current or

former partners or boyfriends when they were adult women. Among adults, a current or ex-partner accounted for 6 out of every 10 women killed. Similarly, when women killed adult males, 65% of killings involved the murder of a current sexual partner.

As discussed in Chapter 2, gender is also related to the means of lethal violence selected by men and women. Men kill with guns, fists, and knives. Women kill mostly with knives. In terms of intergender homicide, the analysis by Smith and Stanko (1999) found that nearly 3 out of 4 (73%) women used knives on their current or ex-partners, as compared to 3 out of 10 (29%) men.

Finally, the motivations associated with male and female homicides involving familiar and sexual situations may overlap, especially where histories of violent domestic conflict exist. However, the “battered women’s syndrome” murder defense underscores at least one motivational difference in relationship lethal violence. Another gender dissimilarity is that men’s motives for killing at home and away from home are more diversified and encompassing than women’s. These motives have been identified as involving sexual dominance, jealousy, proprietariness, saving of face, and masculine honor (Polk, 1994; Wilson & Daly, 1998).

Gangs and Violence-Related Behavior

Traditionally, gangs and gang violence in particular were associated with adolescent males and “masculine” acts of vandalism, violence, and other serious threats. Not until the late 1980s and early 1990s did adolescent females and gang behavior become a topic in their own right. Before then, female gang members were viewed primarily in terms of their relations to male gang members. Images of female gang members focused almost exclusively on their sexual activities,

portraying them as “bad girls,” meaning that they were neither modest nor feminine (Campbell, 1984, 1990). These female gang members were regarded as threatening and shocking because they not only engaged in real deviance like the boys, but in the process, they also seriously challenged gender-role norms for girls.

Nationwide surveys and estimates of the percentage of girls involved in gang behavior in the United States have varied from a low of 3% to a high of 11% over the past three decades. Today, females may belong to all-female gangs allied or not allied with other male gangs, or they may belong to fully integrated male-female gangs. Although males and females may both join gangs for friendship, family, and self-affirmation as well as for the economic gains to be made, gangs also seem to provide a place of refuge and protection for young women who have been sexually abused at home and/or subjected to drug dealing and other illicit activities (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

As with male gang members, not all female gang members are involved in some kind of delinquency and criminality. Nevertheless, youth surveys have consistently shown that delinquency rates for female gang members are higher than those of nongang females or males (Bjerregard & Smith, 1993; Esbensen & Huizinga, 1993; Fagan, 1990). Overall, “female gang members commit fewer violent crimes than male gang members and are more inclined to property crimes and status offenses” (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001, p. 5). Keeping in mind that girls constitute around 7% of all gang members nationwide, male-to-female ratios based on arrest records from 1965 to 1994 reveal that boys accounted for about 94% of the non-lethal violence, 96% of drug offenses, and 99% of gang-related homicides (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001, p. 5).

Although these statistics suggest that female gang violence is at most a nuisance to

police and authorities, and certainly more than a nuisance to victims, an 11-city survey of eighth-grade gang members conducted in the mid 1990s suggested more violent activity than the official arrests would indicate. In a previous 12-month period, for example, 90% of both male and female gang members reported having engaged in one or more violent acts. Moreover, it was reported that 78% of female gang members had been involved in gang fights, 65% had carried weapons for protection, and 39% had attacked someone with a weapon (Deschenes & Esbensen, 1999; Esbensen & Osgood, 1997).

In the formative years of female gang delinquency (1970s), female gangs tended to be more autonomous from male gangs. For example, female gang members would fight rival female gang members, but they did not fight side by side with males as they more commonly do today. Hard drug use among contemporary female gang members also seems to be more likely than it was in the past. Finally, gangs seem to have become more integral or central to female gang members' lives today, much the same as they have always been for male gang members (Moore & Hagedorn, 2001).

Child Sex Abusers

Gender and sexual representations of males and females suggest that men are sexually more aggressive than women and that women are more emotionally demanding.

Such gender-differentiating norms allegedly encourage women to value emotional intimacy over sexual intimacy and to attach less significance than men to direct sexual satisfaction. These same norms allegedly encourage men to value such masculine characteristics as sexual competence and the satisfaction of intimacy needs through direct sexual pleasure. These gender-differentiating perspectives have also been

used to explain why men, more than women, sexually abuse children. Typically, the arguments are that

Men, sexually aggressive and dominant, are motivated to use children to satisfy their sexual needs when they fail to have these needs met in relationships with adult partners. Blocked in their access to socially accepted outlets for meeting their sexual needs, men turn to children, who are easily dominated and coerced. Women, on the other hand, are passive and sexually receptive . . . [they are] oriented towards older, not younger, sexual partners. Warm and nurturant, women, unlike men, have no sexual motives or tendencies toward children. (Allen & Pothast, 1994, p. 74)

Certainly, as Chapter 2 described, many more males than females sexually abuse young children. These facts, however, should not allow us to deny the fact that women do also sexually molest children. And, in terms of explanatory power, it should be kept in mind that most men will complain at one or more times during the course of their lives that their sexual satisfaction is not what they would like it to be. Yet the overwhelming majority of men do not sexually abuse children.

To test various gender-stereotyping biases and to distinguish between the characteristics of male and female child sex abusers, Allen and Pothast (1994) explored relationships among gender, role identity, and the emotional and sexual needs of child abusers and nonabusers in their adult relationships. In trying to sort out the relations of sex, gender, and role identity, their scores for masculinity and femininity were derived from the Bem Sex Role Inventory; emotional and sexual needs were measured by the Partner Relationship Inventory (Richmond-Abbott, 1992). Their sample consisted of 71 male and 58 female offenders and 38 male and 52 female nonoffenders.

As expected, the findings revealed that abusers in general had higher levels of emotional and sexual need than nonabusers. Contrary to expectations, however, female abusers and nonabusers had higher levels of both emotional and sexual need than their male counterparts. From the point of view of gender stereotypes, the most interesting results were that “higher levels of masculinity were associated with *lower*, not higher, levels of sexual need for all groups, men and women as well as abusers and nonabusers” (Allen & Pothast, 1994, p. 85).

Serial Murderers

Serial murderers, serial rapist-killers, and to a lesser extent, serial violent offenders are sensationalist creations of mass media and the collective imagination more than they are a representative reflection of the severity or prevalence of these particular forms of violence. In fact, by the end of the 20th century, these socially constructed cold-blooded, predominantly white and male murderers had become a cultural and media phenomenon well beyond any tangible harm and injury they might have actually inflicted. Serial killers as icons of danger and fascination have certainly become staples of books, film, and television (see Chapter 6).

Just as there are differences in the means, kinds, and motives of female and male homicide, differences by gender seem to be even more dramatic when it comes to serial murderers. As with homicides in general, for which females constitute only about 10% of those arrested, the representation of females among serial killers seems to be even smaller. In fact, some researchers (Egger, 1990; Leyton, 1986) in the area have stated that serial murder is an almost exclusively male behavior. Hickey's (1991) research has suggested otherwise and that female representation for homicide and serial homicide is about the same.

Definitions might have something to do with this discrepancy, as well as the reluctance of law enforcement and the general public to suspect women as perpetrators of serial killing. One comparative study on gender differences in serial murder defined it “as the premeditated murder of three or more victims committed over time, in separate incidents, in a civilian context, with the murder activity being chosen by the offender” (Keeney & Heide, 1994, p. 384). Like the FBI's definition, this one excludes killing by military or police personnel as part of their jobs, as well as assassinations by political terrorist groups. However, this definition does include health-care workers who murder their patients, parents who murder their children, professional assassins who operate under the confines of organized crime syndicates, and persons who kill multiple spouses or lovers.

Using a sample of 14 women serial killers and comparing them to composite analyses of 11 serial killer studies, Keeney and Heide were able to find useful information on 14 variables. With respect to behavior patterns, psychosocial history, and demographics, there were fewer similarities than there were differences. Similarities between male and female serial murderers included broken homes, childhood abuse, race (i.e., white), education level (i.e., low to average), and occupation (i.e., nonprofessional). Differences between the two groups included victim damage, victim torture, weapon and method, stalking versus luring behavior, crime-scene organization, motive, substance abuse history, psychiatric diagnosis, and household composition.

As groups of violent offenders go, male serial killers tend to be “sicker” individuals than female serial killers: male motives revolve around emotional issues of power and domination; female motives are divided between affective or emotional issues and instrumental goals (e.g., collecting insurance).

For example, unlike males who commonly engage in “overkill” or in actions above and beyond what is necessary to cause death, there were no females from the sample who sexually assaulted, mutilated, or dismembered their victims. Moreover, none of the female serial murderers tortured their victims, nor did they experience their victims’ suffering as some kind of sexual turn-on or release.

Male serial killers tend to be “loners,” as contrasted with females, who tend to be living with others at the time of their murders. Women serial killers use poisons as their first weapon of choice (57%), smothering as their second (29%), and firearms as their third (11%). By contrast, males tend to be almost exclusively “hands-on” killers, using knives, blunt objects, and their hands to kill their victims. Male serial killers tend to be quite mobile during their killing sprees; female serial killers tend to be sedentary and confine their killings to the same geographical area. Similarly, unlike males, females rarely moved their victims’ bodies, cannibalized them, or fetishized any of their body parts. Also, unlike male serial killers, whose crime scenes tend to be either “organized” or “disorganized” affairs, females’ crime scenes often appear to have characteristics of both.

Finally, there are differences between male and female serial murderers and their relationships to their victims. Comparatively, females killed few persons that they did not know. Their victims are typically family members or other persons in their charge, such as patients or infants. By contrast, males often kill strangers or casual acquaintances who satisfy some kind of fantasy-world criteria.

SUMMARY

This chapter extended and incorporated the mass-mediated sex and violence analyses from Chapter 6 by providing an overview of the

“battle of the sexes” as it has physiologically and cross culturally evolved over some 6 million years. In the process, common properties and pathways within and between sexual and nonsexual violent behaviors were discussed. Examination shifted between sexuality and violence and the social relations of sex, aggression, and gender as these revealed differential pathways to violence.

Philosophically, anthropologically, and psychoanalytically situated, this chapter concluded that the differences between the levels of aggression in general and in relation to sexual violence in particular between men and women are primarily social and cultural phenomena and only secondarily a biological phenomenon. Sexualities of difference and hierarchy, for example, were presented at different points in history to reveal the cultural pathways of sexual interaction. These in turn were directly related to sexual differences and gender identities in relation to assault, rape, murder, gang violence, and child abuse. The conclusion reached was that both violence and sexual violence are predominantly problems related to issues of masculinity and male sexual identity.

In the “close-ups” for this chapter, one on pornography and one on androgyny and S&M, the dialectics of sexuality were explored in the context of postmodern culture and the political economy of mass consumption. Although not spelled out in the body of this chapter, I would argue that sexual violence is primarily the product of an unhealthy sexual development that cannot be separated from cultural production. I also agree with those ideas first raised more than a half century ago by Reich (1945/1961) and Marcuse (1955/1966) of the Frankfurt School, and more recently by Lichtman (1982) and Fellman (1998), who have attempted to connect or integrate the models of Marx and Freud as these have pertained to both fascism and everyday life in relation to “sexual alienation” and “sexual repression.”

Each of these analysts, and others, have tied these particular sexual maladies to political and economic domination, and each has

called for some form of sexual revolution of liberation in which Eros would triumph over Thanatos. Once again: Make love, not war!

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REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In the context of sexual violence against women, discuss the similarities and dissimilarities between the motives of "culturally normative" and "mentally ill" offenders.
2. Regarding philosophies of sex and sexuality, whose ideas do you agree and disagree with from the following list? C. Gilligan, Foucault, Fromm, Freud, Jung, MacKinnon, and Rubin. Explain why.
3. What are the parallels between Jeffrey Goldstein's relational model of aggression and Barbara Smuts' evolutionary perspective on sexual aggression?
4. Explain the differences in point of view on sexuality, gender, and *m/f* from the traditional (modernist) and the revisionist (postmodernist) perspectives.
5. In terms of the differences between the old and new pornographies (Box 7.1) or between the violent and nonviolent practices of S&M (Box 7.2), what do you think about these late-20th-century developments in sexuality and violence?