

Sexology. “So What is it that you Actually do?”

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ABSTRACT

This article details the principles and practices of the scientific discipline Sexology. The purpose of this article is to provide the reader with an in-depth understanding of Sexology as an academia as well as its professional applications. Sexology is defined as the multidisciplinary scientific study of human sexuality, but few individuals know exactly what a Sexologist does. Often the assumption is solely sex therapy as treatment for sexual dysfunctions, however, the field of Sexology is far more expansive with multitudinous diverse specializations. Sexology covers a broad spectrum of theory and practice and Sexologists integrate many methods, concepts and interventions into their work. Through education, research and therapy, human sexual difficulties maybe successfully resolved through the commitment and dedication of Sexologists.

Keywords: Sex, Sexology, Sexuality

INTRODUCTION

Human sexuality is a true complexity, as complex and multifaceted as human nature itself, there exists very few general similarities in human sexuality, rather a multitude of unique and diverse tendencies.¹ Sexology is more than just the study of sexual intercourse.¹ Psychological, cultural, spiritual, social, political and physical dimensions of sexuality play a role in Sexology. A Sexologist is a person who has advanced academic knowledge in sexual science and is committed to the objective, empirical study of sexuality and employs numerous academia's, scientific disciplines and therapeutic practices that may be medical, psychotherapeutic or educational.² The general population have minimal knowledge of the role of a Sexologist outside of sex therapy when in actual fact the profession is extremely multifaceted and maintains an extensive area of expert practices.

DISCUSSION

In its historical origination, Sexology dates back to the ancient Greeks when physicians such as Hippocrates and the philosophers Plato and Aristotle conducted extensive observations and offered the first elaborate theories

regarding sexual responses, dysfunctions, practices and ethics.¹ In the 1800's, Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing published *Psychopathia Sexualis*, considered to be the establishment of Sexology as a scientific discipline.³ Other important contributors of the eras to follow were Sigmund Freud, Magnus Hirschfield and Havelock Ellis who challenged the sexual taboos of his era by documenting that sex was not merely a method of procreation but also a source of pleasure.⁴

Sexology took a more scientific influence throughout the 1940's and 50's through the works of scholars such as Alfred Kinsey who founded the Institute for Sex Research in 1947.⁵ Kinsey and his staff collected over 18,000 interviews, and published *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* in 1948 and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* in 1953.⁵ In 1966 and 1970, Masters and Johnson released their works *Human Sexual Response* and *Human Sexual Inadequacy*, respectively.⁶ The Masters and Johnson Institute was founded in 1978. Their sometimes controversial methods have been appropriately revised and many are still applied to this day.

Today Sexology is the term to describe the multidisciplinary scientific study of human sexuality.² In its application as an academia Sexologists study sexual functions, relationships, behaviors, gender roles, activities, development, sexual health and many more. Sexuality is a vast array of actions, thoughts and attitudes most often influenced by our societal values and expectations, education, socioeconomic status, culture, religion, laws, politics as well as an individual's personal values, morals and ethics.⁷ The study of sexuality is constantly changing and progressing along

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with societies values regarding sexuality making it a very progressive and dynamic mode of study.

As profession, there are three generalized pathways that Sexologists most usually follow into; research, education and therapy.

Sexological research is essential to the continued expansion of knowledge of human sexuality, to the evaluation and improvement of sexuality programs.⁸ Research can cover many areas and generally involves studies on specific human sexual behaviors or dysfunctions through the collection of statistical data in order to create specialised treatment implementations, policy reviews and rationales for practices.⁸ Medical research is also a Sexological area, sexual health, STIs and BBV's and sexual dysfunctions are the common fields of clinical research. Studies are vast and varied but lead to improved methods for the treatment of sexuality-related issues.

Education is a vital aspect of Sexology and consists of both education and promotion. Health education can be defined as learning experiences designed to facilitate actions conducive to health.⁹ Health promotion can be defined as educational, environmental, ecological and strategically adapted approaches to positively influence individuals and their environments, including families, social networks, organizations, and public policy frameworks.⁹ Sexuality education can range from programs for children, teens and adults, to specialised education for individuals with intellectual disabilities. Sex education and promotion is aimed at equipping individuals with information and behavioral skills to enable them to avoid sex-related problems and to achieve sexual well-being.¹⁰

Sex therapy is a popular mode of treatment for those wishing to avoid medicalisation of their sexual issues. The public holds an interest in new ways to enhance sexual performance and relationships and cure common sexual dysfunctions.¹¹ Sexual dysfunctions are defined as problems that interfere with a person's ability to engage in, enjoy, or achieve satisfaction from sexual interaction.¹² Most therapists practice a combination of cognitive-behavioral therapy, psychotherapy and systemic interventions including, sexual education, communication training, assertiveness practices, physical awareness techniques and sensuality exercises. Sex Therapy may also focus on exploration of past trauma, sexual abuse or negative events that may be contributing to, or maintaining, current sexual problems.¹³

A Sexologist must be highly adaptable, extremely open-minded and comfortable regarding the use of what may be considered graphic language, using words a client may more easily relate to such as wanking, fucking, cock and

pussy as compared to masturbation, intercourse, penis and vagina. A Sexologist must be able to talk in detail about highly explicit sexual acts as there exists a very dark side to sexuality; sexual assault, abuse, paedophilia, incest, bestiality.⁴ The Sexologist must disengage from one's own belief systems and personal opinions in order to treat certain clients which can be highly challenging. To fully engage with a client and gain trust as well as build strong rapport it is important to be able to adopt such techniques which requires determination and strength of character.¹⁴

In contrast to the darkness, there is also light in Sexology.¹ Educating people how to lead satisfying, safe and fulfilling sex lives, teaching people to become orgasmic for the first time in their lives, resolving sexual dysfunctions, introducing sensuality, restoring intimacy in relationships and increasing sexual enhancement are all highly positive and rewarding aspects of the profession.

CONCLUSION

Sexology covers a broad spectrum of theory and practice and Sexologists integrate expansive methods, concepts and interventions into their work. The study of sexuality is incredibly diverse, and rapidly advancing. The field is highly multi-disciplinary including academics, researchers, educators and clinicians working inside the many branches of science, public health, medicine and within the social, cultural, and political spectrums. Sex and sexuality play an enormous role in society, how it shapes us as individuals and couples, how we see ourselves and others and how our morals, ethics and values are formed. Sexology should never be overlooked in its importance, situations such as trauma, abuse, sexual dysfunction, orientation and gender confusion and many other sexual difficulties can severely affect a person's emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing. These issues can now be overcome due to the commitment and dedication of Sexologists.

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