

# Sexuality - Flexibility in erotic expression

Lecture 21

# How much **biology**, how much **culture**?

- BOTH
- Heterosexual intercourse is universal (produce offspring) but human sexual interests are broad

# Flexibility in sexual expression part of our primate heritage:

- masturbation and same-sex sexual orientation

# Our primate sexual potential is molded by:

- culture
- the environment
- reproductive necessity.

# What is *sexy*?

- only universal - genitalia
- penis size U.S. 98 out of 112 countries
- <http://www.targetmap.com/viewer.aspx?reportId=3073&embed>

# Sexual Orientation:

- a person's habitual sexual attraction to, and sexual activities with, persons of the opposite sex

# 4 kinds:

- Heterosexuality – opposite sex
- Homosexuality – same sex
- Bisexuality – both (Marvin Harris Meat and potatoes)
- Asexuality – indifference toward or lack of attraction to either sex.

# U.S. - view sexual orientation as fixed and biologically based

- DON'T know how much bio
- DO Know at least to some extent all human activities and preferences INCLUDING erotic expression are learned, malleable and culturally constructed.



individuals differ in the nature,  
range and intensity of sexual  
interests and urges.

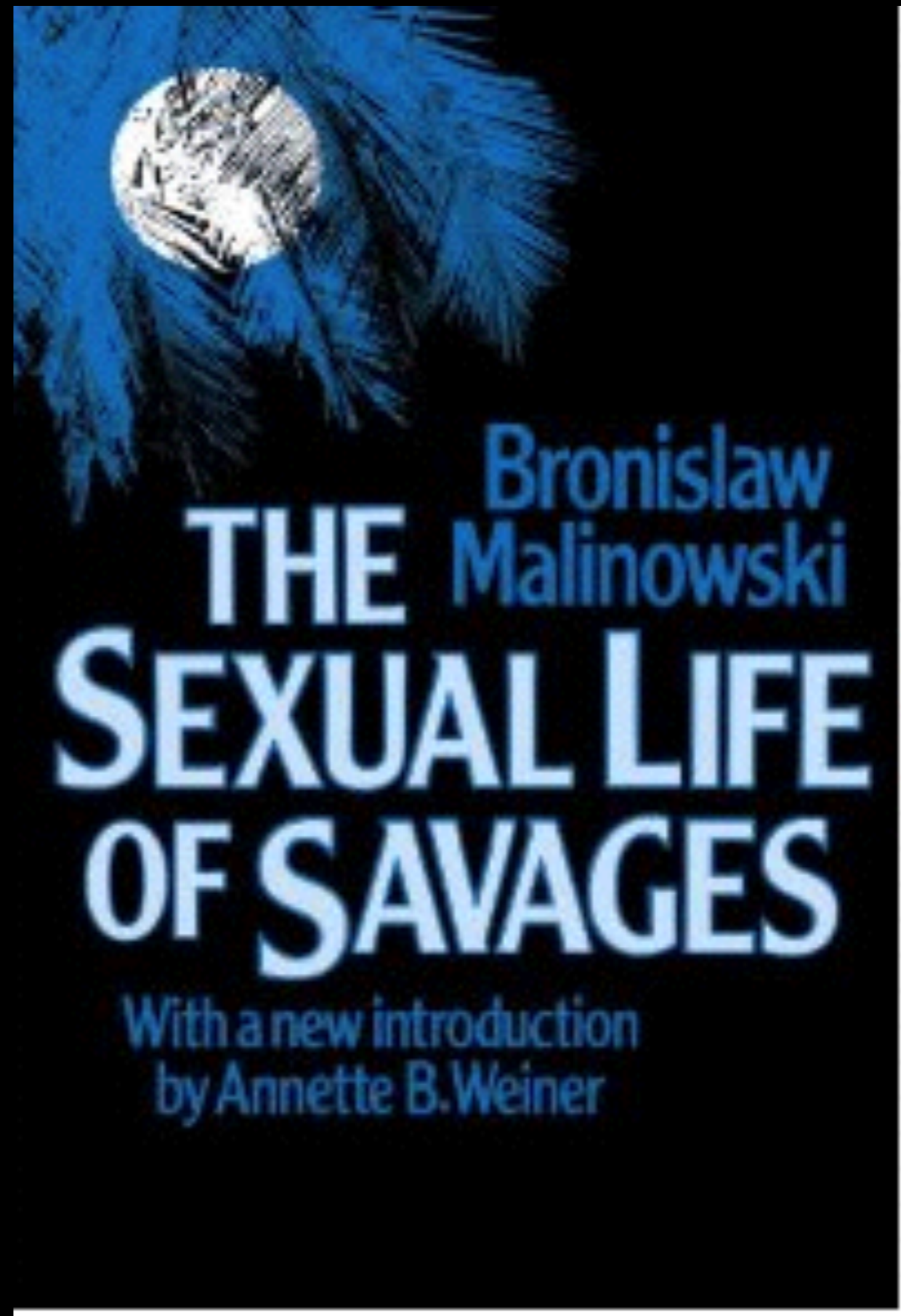
- WHY?
- Genes or hormones
- Experiences during growth and development

- Despite individual differences, **CULTURE** always plays a role in modeling individual sexual urges toward a collective norm.

# Sexual norms:

- vary greatly from culture to culture
- Kissing is NOT universal
- kissing/smelling allow women to pick genetically compatible partners
- Sexual positions differ cross-culturally

1929



# Trobriand Islanders

- Kissing “insipid and silly form of amusement.”
- Erotic scratches (women more)
- biting off of eyelashes = eye erotic, bite noses & chins
- caress armpit
- catching each others lice and eating them
- The “European position” = “unpractical and improper” (“not know how to carry out intercourse effectively”)

# Ford & Beach - 76 societies

- homosexuality secret in 37%, “normal” 63%
- greater than bestiality & masturbation

- U.S. masturbation - 92% M, 54% F
- Kinsey report - 37% M, 26% F homosexual experience
- Kottak - Arembepe, Brazil

# bestiality

- Kottak - Arembepe, Brazil
- Van Gennep - *The Rites of Passage* - (sex with a cat)



# Institutionalized homosexuality

- associated with war

# Ritualized homosexuality in Papua New Guinea

- Patrilineal-patrilocal complex (patrilineality, patrilocality, warfare, and male supremacy)
- keeps male relatives together
- Exogamy
- Sharp domestic-public dichotomy
- = sexual antagonism

# Kaluli

# Etero

- Kelly (1976)
- 400 people
- Hame = spiritual essence or life force; concentrated in a man's semen. Limited quantity.

# Why?

- warfare, keep population low

# Other examples of institutionalized male homosexuality:

- ancient Greece
- Thebes (the Sacred Band)
- Azande - southern Sudan (Evans-Pichard 1970) (boy-bride)

# Institutionalized forms of female homosexuality?

- Dahomey of West Africa
- Caribbean island of Carriacou
- Early 20th Century China

# why SO interesting?

- 1) Early homosexual behavior NOT necessarily imprint the sexual desires of the adult years.
- 2) malleability of the sex drive and the importance of culture in molding sexual desires (older - younger - hetero)



Some cultures  
view  
participants  
differently  
depending on  
their role:

Roberta Close

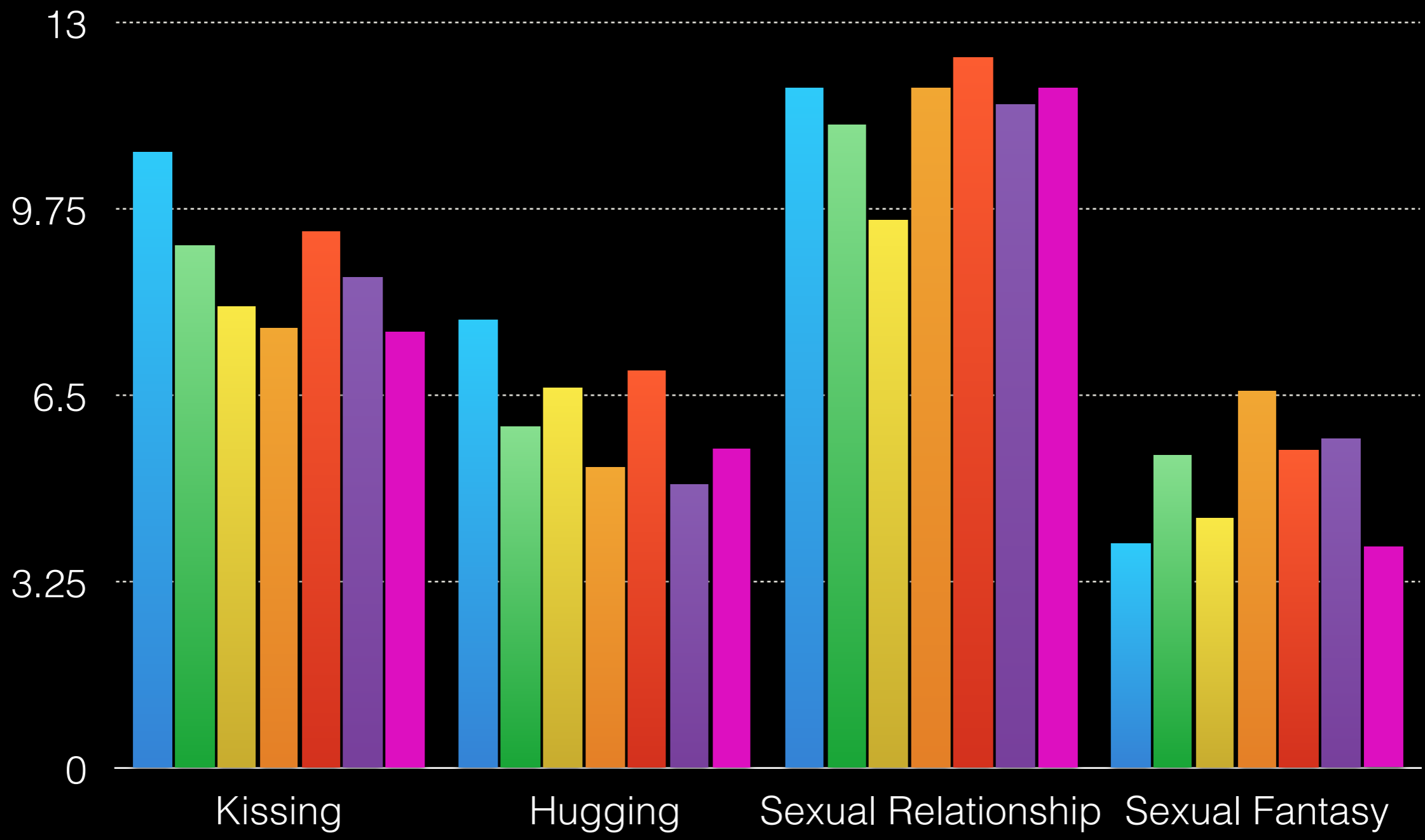


# *Cross-Cultural Differences in the Elicitation of Sexual Jealousy (Buunk & Hupka 1987)*

- acceptance of extramarital sex: Denmark less than 10% unqualified disapproval, American Midwest 90%, Belgium 50%.
- 2,079 University students
- Hungary, Ireland, Mexico, Netherlands, Soviet Union, U.S.

# Universals

- Kissing, flirting, sexual involvement = more jealousy
- Dancing, hugging, sexual fantasies = less jealousy
- Women more bothered by partner kissing another
- Men more bothered by partner having sexual fantasies about another



# Romance

- assumed romantic love was unique to the modern West
- Jankowiak (1991) 166 cultures - evidence of romantic love in 89% of societies
- others probably oversight

# what **is** different

- Appears that romantic love is a human universal
- idea that infatuation should have anything to do with the choice of a spouse.

# Changes

- With exposure to movies and popular songs about romantic love + delays in marriage = want to marry for love.
- Ex: .Australian aborigines

# Reading:

- Nicholas and Kristof, Chapters 4, 5, & 6