

Sexuality features

ARTICLE ONE: THE NEW SEXUAL REVOLUTION

BY Ruth Ostrow

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HAVING WORKED AS A SEX JOURNALIST FOR FIVE YEARS AND BROADCAST THE CONTROVERSIAL SEX SHOW ON TRIPLE M, RUTH OSTROW IS JOINING THE AUSTRALIAN NEXT WEEK TO WRITE ABOUT MATTERS MIND, BODY & SOUL. IN HER 'SEXUAL' SWAN SONG SHE ARGUES THAT THE HOWARD GOVERNMENT HAS GOT IT ALL WRONG.

The woman who answers the door at 'Unique Massage' is polite and detached. Like a receptionist in a doctor's surgery. "Come this way," she orders, taking us down a hallway into a waiting room.

Except it isn't a waiting room like any doctor's surgery I've ever been in. The walls are papered with images of women doing erotic things. And instead of ushering in the doctor, she goes away and comes back with several beautiful women.

"I'm Olga," says the first, coming towards us, and grabbing my husband's hand like he is royalty. She is a tall and solid European woman, with a long, blonde wig on.

"I do a mixture of Swedish and erotic massage. I am here for your pleasure," she says with heavy accent, before doing a sort of curtsy and moving away for the next female to parade her wares - a voluptuous dark-haired woman called Susy.

Susy takes quite a shine to us, and gives another startling soliloquy before making way for Anna.

It's an odd feeling, watching the girls on parade. It's a ritual that's been going on in massage parlours and brothels around the world since the beginning of time. But few women consumers have ever been privy to it and I'm not sure whether to laugh or look sombre.

Although the frequenting of place of "ill repute" has been the soul bastion of men, suddenly in Australia the industry is changing to cater for women, and couples.

"Couples are now the biggest growth area of the erotic massage industry," according to claims by manageress of 'Unique Massage', a petite and sophisticated 27-year-old entrepreneur called Fiona Bruce.

"We are seeing more and more women accompanying their men in here," she says of her parlour which provides "Massage Only" but with a guaranteed "Happy ending".

But what am I doing here with my husband in tow? Well, apart from being erotically curious, I am trying to answer the question on everyone's lips: Is Sex Dead in Alston's Australia?

Having written about the sex industry for the past five years, I am feeling very depressed by the current climate. Repression and guilt are back in the air. The Internet has been censored, phone-sex services, TV and radio have come under strict new guidelines which saw the death of the show SexLife, and the film Lolita was almost banned.

As I prepare to leave my old 'beat' to write about broader matters of mind, body & soul, I need to ask: Is this what the average Australian really wants? Have we really become "more conservative" as a society?

The answer is an emphatic "No". In fact, there is a new sexual revolution going on in mainstream Australia.

Despite the protestations of the current Federal Government that 'average' people want protection from the lure of sexuality, over the past few years I have witnessed an unprecedented surge at the grass roots with people desperate to explore, experiment and break free of the confines that religion and Big Brother has imposed - particularly among women, and suburban couples.

According to Fiona Patten of the Eros Foundation, the sex industry governing body, gone is the sleazy, 'men-in-raincoat' image the industry has worn for years.

Couples - of all ages and backgrounds - are now responsible for an amazing 75 per cent of money spent in the Australian sex industry, which turns over \$2-billion per year in sex toys, videos and services. This compares with the 10 per cent they spent just five years ago.

And with organised prostitution now being legalised in Victoria, and decriminalised in the ACT, NT and New South Wales, and laws under review in the other states, a host of reputable establishments have now opened catering to this new mainstream demographics.

The change has been rapid. Two years ago Australia's most visual brothel for women 'The Boardroom' in Melbourne, opened it's doors. In that short time it has been inundated with female clients and couples, tripling its turnover in its first few months of trade.

Traditional massage parlours like the one we are visiting 'Unique' and another called 'Oasis on Oxford' in Sydney's eastern suburbs, are being targeted by curious couples. Meanwhile a host of new boutique-style "pleasure shops" have opened up around the country, fast replacing the sleazy, old, male-orientated sex shops - one even boasting child-care while you shop.

And while the Government, with its paternalistic and over-simplistic views on sex, further seeks to censor what adults view in the privacy of their own homes, sales of Adult videos have gone through the roof with a lofty \$72 million spent on 2.5 million X-rated videos per annum. A recent Eros Foundation survey confirmed that nearly 80 per cent of the purchasers are middle-class couples.

Back at 'Unique Massage', the first thing my husband and I notice is the types of women "on offer".

Probably as a mark of a cleaner sex industry, many of the women now working in reputed establishments like this appear to be well-educated, with feminist leanings and good investment portfolios. Some of Fiona Bruce's workers

are students of law, communications and journalism, choosing to sell sex as a lucrative, short-term career move.

The other thing we most notice is the degree to which the decor is crafted to appeal to the female consumer. Gone are the red satin sheets and clichéd leopard skin rugs.

In the room where we are finally lead for our erotic adventure, warm, glowing candles give the pastel-colored walls a sort of golden hue. With the color of flesh and bath-water glowing a deep, shimmering orange, it's like we're stepping into an exotic painting.

According to Sam, manageress at Melbourne's 'The Boardroom', the percentage of women taking advantage of paid sex - particularly from male sex workers - has soared while the market for couples coming from out of town and taking advantage of fantasy weekends: a limo, a dinner, a show, a spa, and an escort of either sex, has grown beyond all expectations.

She says many women and couples have never been to a brothel before. "We do everything we can to put them at ease."

Why is this happening? Why are Australians becoming more sexually adventurous as we abut the new millennium?

Having listened to thousands of people over the last few years, both through my former radio program - the Triple M Sex Show - and my column, I believe we have come to a critical cross-roads in society. Almost one in two marriages are now ending in divorce, and most people who write and talk to me are chronically dissatisfied.

One of the main causes of breakups of relationships is sexual unhappiness, according to Relationships Australia. According to a survey I did two years ago for News Limited, 40 per cent of respondents in long-term partnerships admitted to adultery.

People don't want to end up alone. But they don't want to die of erotic boredom either. In short, the Baby Boomers are still desperately searching for ways to have it all - the comfort of marriage, the thrill of illicit sex - as the thriving trade in sex books attests.

Books that teach couples how to keep their relationships and marriages "hot n' spicy" are literally walking off the shelves. A book called Hot Monogamy did so well in America it became an international best seller.

Hot Sex by Australian author Tracey Cox sold so well in this country, it was snapped up internationally. And even religious leaders have gotten in on the act, with Oxford University's Rabbi Shmuel Boteach writing: 'The Jewish Guide to Adultery - How to turn your marriage into an illicit affair' and promoting the notion of seeing your partner as a sexual creature, not a friend.

According to Relationship's Australia's Elisabeth Shaw, the phenomenon is occurring because as the decade draws to a close, people feel they deserve a good "sexual" quality of life and are voting with their feet to get it.

On top of this there is the sexual liberation of women who - having now become financially fecund - now want to reap the rewards that men have always

had, and are aching with erotic curiosity. They largely comprise this hungry new demographics.

Sociologist Gary Dowsett, an Associate Professor at La Trobe University in Melbourne, and sexuality expert, dispels as a politically-motivated "myth" claims that we have become more conservative as a society. He agrees that sexual openness and experimentation has become more common-place in the suburbs.

"People are now interested in what I call the bits n' pieces of sex: oral sex, sex toys and erotic videos. Even mild fetishism is quite acceptable because prime-time television and advertising has made it all so accessible. What was improper is seen only now as a bit daring," he says, particularly in the wake of Bimbogate.

As proof, the demand for erotica is at an all time high. And in recent times, when the Eros Foundation surveyed sex shops and Canberra's mail order x-rated video businesses to find out who was buying Adult videos, the results were surprising: About 55% of their customers were aged 30-50, while 77.5% of them were couples, or were people buying an x-rated video to share with their husband or wife.

It is this demographics that would have spent up big on Australian-based Internet erotica, and it is these dollars that will, in the wake of Senator Alston's censorship laws, now be channelled overseas and away from our economy. But they will not escape film maker David Haines, former Deputy Chief Censor of Australia, who is angling to cash in on the trend.

Recently Haines crossed the line to become one of the countries more unusual pornographers. His latest video for Redstone Films 'Buffy Down Under' broke box-office sexpectations and he is now in the middle of producing 'Cheeks' and 'Flesh'. "There is a need for good quality porn because the market has changed so much towards couples," he says, on location in Canberra at one of his movies.

Meanwhile, each week on my late-night Triple M Sex Show, I was literally inundated with inquiries from married couples wishing to experiment with the old 70s concept of "swinging". Owner of 'The Couples Club' in Sydney, Peter Cohen, says he has seen this industry expand dramatically over the past six years with a trendier, "middle-to-upper-class clientele" now paying \$120 a couple to frequent his inner-city establishment.

Contemporary sex shops are fast-becoming mainstream, employing the best in modern retailing. At female sex shop The Pleasure Spot in Sydney, we experienced Vivaldi playing on the record player, Klimt mural paintings and champagne. Around the nation soft-core products, playful and sensual, are the big sellers: pink, furry love cuffs, satin restraints, pastel-coloured sex toys, lingerie, aromatherapy massage oils.

John Buckland, General Manager of the Adult Retail Group is very happy with a new concept store called 'Risque' in Sydney's Darlinghurst. Having run traditional sex shops, he says his foray into the erotic couples market has gone so well he now wants to expand the concept nationally.

And it has overwhelmingly been couples who have flocked to the sex industry trade show, Sexpo, in both Melbourne and Sydney over the past two years. With 40,000 people going to each, the number of couples was so high the organisers ordered a separate crèche and child-minding area for visitors.

Both men and women are reportedly calling up phone-sex lines, and even traditional strip-shows are evolving to cater for the female and couples market.

D'Anne has worked as a dancer in erotic revues for 15 years and is now the Managing Director of Australian Fever Entertainment. Her Sydney-based company now runs strip shows devised for couples, which are known for their sophisticated choreography, elaborate fantasies and beautiful costumes.

"Now when we are designing a show we start from the assumption that our audience is going to be made up equally of females and males. It is important to me that this is a night couples can find arousing and enjoy together."

My husband and I, having now observed the changes in the sex industry together at close quarters, can only agree. Female consumers are taking their places besides their men as the erotic creatures that we all are. And Big Brother, in trying to stem the tide, is out of step with its people.

ARTICLE TWO: LOVE - IT'S A CHEMICAL REACTION

By Ruth Ostrow

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It was a black day for romantics last week. Whilst all over the Western world revellers were celebrating the warm, fuzzy joy of Valentine's Day, scientists at the annual meeting for the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Seattle, Washington, were putting a nail in the coffin of romantic love by declaring it no more than a chemical reaction.

Simply put, the scientists and researchers from leading universities and institutions were implying that if one were to inject certain substances into a person whilst they were staring at a slimy toad, that person could theoretically fall passionately in love.

So whilst many of us believe ourselves to have a deep spiritual link to our partners, never to be duplicated, something profound, poetic, indefinable and unique, it is more likely to be the love drugs kicking in.

In other words it is all in the mind. And worse, that gooey, passionate feeling can be duplicated in a test tube.

Prominent Sydney gynaecologist and specialist in this field Dr Tony Frumar agrees that falling in love is largely a chemical experience.

"We are subconsciously driven by a biological imperative to procreate. When we find a suitable partner this causes a physiological reaction, and chemicals are released."

He believes feelings of love or sexual arousal are governed as much by our brains as our hearts. "The mind and the pelvis go hand in glove, because of the hormones and chemicals travelling between the two."

American magazine the US News & World Report this week joined the throng of those putting love under the microscope, reporting that experiments with a

small rodent called a prairie vole have proved that when deprived of certain "love" chemicals, voles didn't bond.

Meanwhile when the female vole was injected with a hormone called oxytocin - the cuddle chemical - an narcotic-like substance which helps mothers bond with babies, and couples nuzzle together - it inspired great ardour.

According to experts and biologists attending the Seattle conference, in particular the prominent anthropologist at Rutgers University in New York, Dr Helen Fisher, who wrote "Anatomy of Love", there are two different types of chemicals that the body releases when we set our eyes upon a partner that our subconscious minds decide has good genetic potential for reproduction, parenting, nurturing or security.

These chemicals are amphetamines and opiates.

During the first flush of love - what we describe as "falling in love"- we experience quite literally a feeling of falling, as the body succumbs to a rush of chemicals with a similar structure to amphetamines or Speed. These include adrenalin, dopamine, norepinephrine and especially phenylethylamine (PEA).

Such a hit has been described as the rose-colored glasses that biology provides to get us over the psychological hurdles of marrying and settling down into a monogamous union - where we can care for a child and ensure the continuation of the species.

Prominent Melbourne clinical psychologist, Dr Marta Frid, who did her thesis on the body's natural chemicals, says we can actually see the chemicals of love at work.

"When we fall in love the hands get sweaty, the face flushed, the breathing gets heavy, a primitive reaction like fight or flight, as the neurotransmitters send chemicals into our nervous system."

"Love is a natural high," observed Anthony Walsh author of 'The Science of Love: Understanding Love and its Effects on Mind and Body' in a recent Time Magazine article. "When we meet someone who is attractive to us, the whistle blows at the PEA factory," he said.

But like all drugs, the amphetamines and PEA highs don't last forever and the body builds up a tolerance, which could explain why Eros or hot and passionate romantic love is so often short-lived.

It also explains the newly identified phenomenon of sex addict or love junkie where people get hooked on the hit of "falling in love". Like any junkies love addicts can't let go of the chemical euphoria, walking away from perfectly good relationships for the rush.

Dr Marta Frid says: "They want the excitatory effect to remain forever. When they feel that they are in a more predictable, secure relationship that has become somewhat routine, somewhat habit, they look for something that will excite them again and get that discharge of adrenalin into their bloodstream."

While it is clear to see why many people get roped into marriage and procreation by the first hit of love, it does not explain why some romances do endure beyond a few years. And this is where the second set of chemicals kick in.

After a period of time with a partner, the brain steps up production of endorphins. Don't laugh but these are nature's pain killers.

Whereas amphetamines get a person hyped up and help people go down the aisle, opiates kick in later in the relationship and have a soothing, Valium-like effect on the body. This creates a sense of well-being harmony and even lethargy to help people stay put.

As more is being understood about the extent to which chemicals flow through the body during the many phases of love, it is becoming clearer why the loss of a partner through breakup or death can lead to feelings of deep depression, withdrawal and even illness, researchers say.

Concurrent with research being done overseas and in Australia on natural chemicals, there is also much work being done on the effects hormones have on the whole sexual, reproductive process.

The US News & World Report says that biologists and scientists are looking closely at the hormone oxytocin which floods female mammals when they give birth. It was known since 1906 as a hormone that stimulates the let down of milk, and was later shown to have strong impact on helping animals bond with their young.

For instance, a virgin female rodent when injected with oxytocin, will nuzzle another female's pups and protect them as vehemently as if they were her own. Male rodents will respond similarly to the male equivalent hormone vasopressin, the magazine said.

Now oxytocin is being touted as one of the main ingredients in the potent cocktail of human love.

But as with amphetamines, opiates like oxytocin also seem to wear off over time, and according to Dr Helen Fisher this is generally once child rearing is done.

Dr Fisher, airing her theories in a Time Magazine article on love, said that primitive pairs stayed together just long enough to rear one child through infancy. Then each would find a new partner and start all over again. She claims that this process can be translated into today's divorce rates. In most of the 62 cultures Fisher has studied, divorce rates peak around the fourth year of marriage.

Dr Fisher says additional offspring help keep pairs together longer, again in four year lots. With a large percentage of families having an average of two kids, this explains the "Seven-Year Itch" phenomenon.

Our own Great Australian Sex and Relationships Survey confirmed that the level of happiness declined sharply the longer people were married, with those claiming to be happiest proving to be married for the least amount of time.

Furthermore, only 46 per cent of those in long-term relationships or marriages enjoyed orgasms compared with 71 per cent of singles.

Dr Fisher says that from earliest days, it has been common for humans to have secret affairs. In biological terms these affairs increased the chances that new combinations of genes would be passed on to the next generation.

Men who sought new partners had more children. Women also benefited from adultery. "They would garner extra resources, life insurance, better genes and more varied DNA for their biological futures," Fisher argues in Time Magazine.

Our survey confirms her theory. We found that almost half the respondents admitted to engaging in sex outside of their exclusive relationships or marriages, and on average the number of affairs they had was "four" per person. Many other people attested to being sexually attracted to someone outside their primary relationship.

Dr Tony Frumar says we can't overlook the powerful effect hormones like testosterone and oestrogen have in the process of love.

"You can see how hormones effect human behaviour when we look at menopause - a time when some women lose their libidos. If we replace their hormones with even small dosages of testosterone, we can turn their libido around to a large degree."

HQ magazine confirmed in an article in 1995, that testosterone supplements had a dramatic effect on sex drive. One woman who used the oestrogen-testosterone pill to counteract the symptoms of an early menopause said her sex drive returned from "nothing" to "waking up horny every morning".

Another woman talked of her sexual desire increasing so intensely that she had to stop herself lunging at people. Her brave testimonial confirmed the degree to which our feelings of attraction to others are inspired by what is happening internally rather than anything to do with the external world, and reinforces the theory that we are very much victims of chemicals.

Perhaps the worse news for romantics is that love couldn't even exist without a small nerve called the vagus. According to US News and World, the vagus conveys signals between our internal organs and our brains. If it vanished we wouldn't even know we were in love.

But while chemicals clearly help explain the feelings of passion and compassion we feel for our mates, it doesn't really explain why we fall in love with one particular person and not a million others.

Evolutionary biologist Professor Randy Thornhill from the University of New Mexico aired his theory at the Seattle conference. He and his collaborators reckon it's all in levels of physical perfection, with studies finding that women consistently found men whose faces and other body parts are most symmetrical, to be most attractive.

Apparently women whose partners were most symmetrical reported a significantly higher frequency of orgasms during sexual intercourse, whilst symmetrical males had more partners.

Seems we're all just chasing good genes and good health, which would also explain why men tend to find young, and presumably the most fertile women, so attractive.

Dr Fisher and Dr Gregory Simpson at the New York's Albert Einstein College of Medicine, want more answers and are planning to study the brains of people in love using magnetic resonance imagine to see what role chemicals and hormones really do play in passion and infatuation.

However, not everyone is impressed. In fact, Melbourne clinical psychologist Desiree Saddik is very depressed.

She believes that people have become too clinical and cynical about love. "We're terrified to yearn, and we're terrified to desire," says Saddik. "The only way we can tolerate desire is to say that it's amphetamines that get released into our blood."

She says that there is no acknowledgment of the true power of love, and that's a very sad development in human history.

ARTICLE THREE: "NOT TONIGHT, JOSEPHINE"

By Ruth Ostrow

published News Limited 1996

There is a new social epidemic sweeping the world - the "Male Headache". As a new twist on an old theme it is men, not women, who are turning to their wives and partners in bedrooms across the world and uttering the immortal line: "Not tonight dear, I've got a headache."

According to sex therapists and researchers, the "Not-Tonight Josephine" syndrome, or "Male Headache" has grown so acute over the past few years, it is having a crushing impact on the way men and women relate.

Several of the sex therapists I spoke to in Australia confirmed the findings overseas - that frustrated women are bombarding them with complaints that they are not getting enough sex from tired or reluctant husbands and partners.

Contrary to popular myths about women not wanting as much sex as their husbands, it is married females who are now presenting as the highest growth-rate statistic in infidelity, according to Ian Macdonald executive director of Relationships Australia in Queensland, and marriages every where are beginning to feel the strain.

Where ever you look someone is tackling the whys and wherefores of this problem. Articles on male sexuality and books like What To Do When He Has A Headache, are pouring out of America whilst researchers in Europe, America and here are battling with the dilemma.

Only last month a major survey presented to the Association of European Psychiatrists in London showed women's libidos were on the rise as men's were declining. From ages 28 to 35 men's libido dropped 11 per cent whilst women interviewed showed far more sexual desire at ages 30 to 40 than at age 20.

Whilst the imbalances of male-female libidos is nothing new, theorists are at a loss to explain why it seems that men en masse are suddenly going as far as actually saying "no" to sex.

Some say that there has not been a sudden dip in male potency, rather women's libidos have increased.

They point to HRT (Hormone Replacement Therapy) as the cause. Traditionally women have peaked sexually in their 30s and then experienced a natural decline. But because of hormone replacement they are now able to sustain a healthy sexual appetite and response, well into their twilight years. The same cannot be said for men.

Although there are a plethora of new clinics around treating symptoms of flagging male libido - such as erection loss - few in the medical profession are looking at the total biological picture and cause. Only recently has attention been drawn to the possibility of an "andropause" - the male equivalent to menopause - and the potential for testosterone-based treatments.

Other sexperts and theorists say that whilst women's libidos have increased, men's have also dropped because of sociological factors relating to changing women's roles.

Traditionally, women have had their sexual peaks whilst stuck at home, burdened with children and bogged down in domestica. The environmental "curb" on women's sexuality generally suited the declining male.

Now more women are out in the workforce, exposed to attractive and stimulating people. Or they are freer in general as a result of child support, and hormonal intervention. Thus they are able to fully enjoy and indulge in their libidinous urges. They are feeling sexier, longer.

They are further spurred on by economic prosperity. In many cases women are now out-stripping their husbands financially. A recent article in the reputable publication Psychology Today says we can no longer sweep female power under the cultural rug. "Seven million American women earned more than their mates in 1993 and last year almost a quarter of all working wives out-earned their husbands."

The fact is that women have changed profoundly as a result of economic independence, women's magazines, readily-available child-care and hormonal treatments.

The consequences are two fold. Women have become more demanding both in bed and out. This in turn is causing men to experience feelings of inadequacy, anger and resentment, fear, apprehension, confusion and stress which is directly impacting on their sex lives, according to observers .

Psychologists quoted in Psychology Today say that many men are feeling "castrated" or "demoralised by changing roles". Says one: "I see in my practice an increase in the number of men who are reporting impotence and loss of sexual desire because they don't know how to behave any more."

One of the most out-spoken social commentators on this topic is Dr Sandra Pertot author of A Commonsense Guide to Sex and an expert on sexual desire.

Dr Pertot who has been a sex therapist since the 70s says: "Although historically it has been women who have had the headache, in at least half the couples I now see it is the men with the headache. The truth is that across the western world men are avoiding sex in droves. I think it is because women have become too demanding."

Dr Pertot feels there has been no decline in male libido rather men are choosing to masturbate quietly in the privacy of their bathrooms. "They can

relax, retreat into their fantasies. They don't have to talk a woman into bed, perform and go through the criticism afterwards.

"In my clinical work I have found that the majority of men avoiding sex are still randy but they say sex with their partners is just not worth the effort."

She says it is true that women are flocking to therapists and grizzling that their husbands don't want to have sex. But she says this is not a symptom of the problem. It is the cause of it.

Whether a woman is working, or whether she has just fallen victim to the things she reads in women's magazines or sees at the movies, she is overwhelming men with her expectations. "Women want too much," she says.

"Men are being forced to compete with vibrators. One woman came to see me recently and criticised her man because he could only have sex for 20 minutes!

"She didn't realise 20 minutes is very good. Most men have sex from two to 10 minutes before there is an erection loss or ejaculation. Six minutes is quite normal.

"The average erection comes and goes - waxes and wanes. But women today aren't satisfied with this. They are taking more responsibility for their own sexual satisfaction but then they hold up their vibrators to their husbands and say: "Why can't you do this?" as if it is really his job.

"Nowadays women want orgasms with a cherry on top."

Dr Pertot says she is disturbed by women regularly coming to see her complaining in front of their partners. "This only creates a spotlight effect. The focus decreases male performance. And it is all wrong. What are we doing to our men? They feel like failures and inadequate because they can't last an hour."

She says that many women have forgotten what sex is for. The biological imperative for the male is to ejaculate to impregnate the female. "It is very hard for men to stop themselves ejaculating. Men are striving for physiological control all the time, whilst women strive to let go. We are putting unrealistic demands on men."

Dr Debbie Then, sexpert and psychology Ph. D from Stanford University in the USA, who was recently in Australia doing research on strip clubs and male-female relationships, agrees that more men are choosing alternatives to sleeping with their wives or partners.

"There has been a dramatic increase around the western world in men seeing "professional girlfriends" (as call-girls and prostitutes are now known), or frequenting lap-dancing and strip clubs. Men are losing interest in making it with their wives. Professional girlfriends are even replacing mistresses and affairs in many instances."

She agrees with Dr Pertot that women may be inadvertently intimidating men. "When women have their own money and independence it changes their whole way of behaving.

"The greatest male fantasy is two women together. But the second most popular is the 'Conquering' fantasy, deflowering the virgin, the man in charge, sweeping the woman off her feet.

"When a woman becomes more confident and starts saying "move over there" or "I want it this way" it scares the shit out of men. They feel they are back under mummy's control and this is not very sexual for most men."

She says, "Men have always seen sex as their ground. They were the aggressors. Although some men do like forth-right women who instigate sex, in general the men I've interviewed don't find it feminine or appealing, particularly in Australia which is a very macho culture."

She says female sexual experience is also terrifying men and leading to performance anxiety. "Before, only men were sexually experienced. Now men fear that a woman will judge him and find him incompetent or think that he's not doing it "right". With the stripper or "professional girlfriend" this is not the case. She is totally into him with no strings attached, no demands and no emotions. He doesn't have to perform."

"Bob" a patient of one of the sex therapists interviewed, agrees he is suffering performance anxiety at home.

"I do feel horny but not as often as my wife. But she makes me feel so bad about it, I end up avoiding sex, going to bed early or staying up watching TV once she's gone to bed. If we're in bed together I get overwhelmed with this feeling of tiredness and I just want to sleep. The doctor says this is an escape mechanism, because I get anxious that I'm not going to be able to satisfy her."

Other men just feel resentful in general. A letter I received last week from one of my readers gave a brief insight into what men are feeling.

"Given that the vast majority of men can only have one orgasm per act of intercourse, and many women experience multiple orgasms, it is obvious that men get a raw deal."

He says that men have to do so much talking to get women into bed. "And then women get more pleasure than men. Is it any wonder that so many women are having difficulty finding partners? It just isn't worth the effort."

Dr Pertot says women's expectations in and out of bed are creating bitterness. "We take the moral high ground and are very critical of our partners. It's women who have become sexist and as difficult as men have been. Women should be taking responsibility for their own bodies but instead they are putting pressure on men.

"If women want equality then they have to take more of the sexual responsibility."

Dr Debbie Then thinks that part of the problem lies with confusion men are feeling over no longer being the sole breadwinner.

"For men, sex has as much to do with power and control as it does with pleasure and orgasm. Many men can't have sex unless they feel in control.

"The increase in women in the workforce is stripping men of this control. Men are used to saying: "I make money, I make the rules." Now they are doing

what women used to do. They are saying "no" to sex to recoup the power and recover control in relationships where they feel they have lost their status.

"Turning you down means that they are calling the shots."

She also thinks that conflicting demands on men out of bed are freaking men out in bed. "Women still want a man who is ambitious and powerful, and they tend to chastise men who are not as successful as they are. On the other hand they also want more out of a man than a pay cheque.

"In general I think men feel like they are losing control and will often become passive aggressive and sexually depriving, withholding sex as a way of getting back at women."

Not all agree that women are impacting so strongly on men. Dr Michael Lowy of the Australian Centre for Sexual Health suggests that the high rate of men presenting with sexual problems could simply be because there are so many impotency clinics springing up. This means that more men and their partners are now talking openly about, and dealing with, problems that have always existed.

Whatever the case, all therapists agree there is a problem that needs a solution. But they equally agree it will take time for the ripples caused by changing gender roles to iron out and for both sexes to find some sort of balance and equilibrium.

In the meantime Dr Sandra Pertot has a word of advice for both men and women: "Lighten up, for gods sake. Have some fun. It's only sex."

ARTICLE FOUR: THE NATIONAL SEX AND RELATIONSHIPS SURVEY

by Ruth Ostrow

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SUB-HEAD: SEX IN AUSTRALIA

Australian men are amongst the hottest in the world according to our Great Australian Sex and Relationships Survey.

Despite the world-wide trend of males losing interest in sex to the disappointment of sexually-frustrated women, Australian men have proved to be a virile and active bunch. And far from being the under-performers portrayed in so many folk stories and myths, Australian men have been voted excellent lovers by the majority of their women.

Close examination of the survey responses show Australian men to be highly libidinous and potent. Male respondents are three times more likely than females to have masturbated in the past week, and they also masturbate two-to-three times more than American men who answered a similar question.

Men think about sex twice as often as females, are more likely to have had a short-term affair, or to indulge in an office romance, are less committed to the notion of monogamy and are three times more likely than females to crave multiple sexual partners.

Meanwhile Australian women have shown a great deal of confidence in their men's sexual performance, with well over two-thirds (almost 70 per cent) of Australian women surveyed rating their men as "great" in bed. This is double what American women said of their men in a recent U.S study.

But the big shock of the survey is that whilst women respondents roar their approval of men in several of the questions, unfortunately and most sadly, men do not have the same high opinion of Australian women.

Not even half of Australian men rated us as "great" in the sack, exploding the myth that says: "Men will sleep with anything", whilst women have unrealistically high expectations. And it gets worse. Well over twice as many men as women accused their partners of being "lousy" lovers.

Women consistently rated their partners better in bed than males rated women. And most surprising of all, Australian females perceive their male partners as vastly more responsive to their sexual requests and fantasies than men perceive them.

Basically, the survey has revealed that men tend not to feel comfortable confiding in us about their sexual fantasies, or in experimenting with us.

I felt very hurt by the results until I examined the answers in detail. And to my surprise I discovered that Australian women have proved more conservative than I would have imagined. Which made me wonder if Australian women aren't, in fact, lagging behind their American and European sisters in terms of sexual confidence and the sense of adventure we bring to a relationship.

Despite the bad news for some women, I am happy to report that according to Mr Derek Jones, of D&M Research, who has spent the past month crunching the numbers for us, in general Australians are a very horny, playful, and sexy bunch.

It may amuse some to discover that on average Australians think about sex five times a day with males thinking about sex (7.5 times) which is twice as much as females. In a similar British survey more women than men thought about sex in this category.

We have sex on average 1.6 times per week. And just over 70 percent of respondents are happy with their sex lives saying sex meets their expectations. This is across the board with the only exception being those in long-term marriages or relationships, with children.

In fact, as I discuss later in the piece, "married with kids" is a far bigger squelch to libido and sexual satisfaction than I ever imagined.

It seems marriage and long-term relationships fare quite poorly overall in the sex stakes with only 46 per cent of married people surveyed enjoying orgasms compared with 71 per cent of singles. Furthermore statistics do confirm that sex goes off the boil with time.

Back to the good news now, and although we are a bit miserly on foreplay with both men and women reckoning that ten minutes is "a good effort", we are not too bad in terms of time spent on the sex act.

The average sex act is half-an-hour in duration. Before anyone laughs, this is double the figure for Americans as quoted in the respected U.S publication Journal of Marriage and the Family. It must be noted that single people, homosexuals and bisexuals had greater longevity of sex than married people - in fact almost double. And predictably those without children go for it longer compared to those with.

A surprise for me: close to half of all respondents have experienced a one-night-stand with an average number of "empties" (as they are jokingly called) per person in this category identified as an incredible "six".

In terms of where we make love, we are a little on the conservative side with two-thirds of people preferring the bedroom. However, as a secondary thrill a host of exotic places were mentioned with a significant one-in-five (almost 20 per cent) prepared to have sex "anywhere". Other big raters were the bathroom, car, beach, at the office, outdoors, and movie theatre.

Intercourse is still the dominant overall preferred way to reach orgasm although amongst females, oral sex rates a very close number two. And the favourite Aussie sexual fantasy is two women with one man, or two men one woman. This is followed by sex in public; sex with a stranger; and being tied up or blind-folded - which are also favourite fantasies of the British.

This one amused me. Around 39 percent of respondents didn't masturbate in the last week, but the 51 per cent who did indulge in the unspeakable "M" word, did it so much (5 times a week) it dragged the aggregate up to an average masturbation time of twice a week. Noticeably men and singles were more likely to indulge than married people.

We seem to enjoy different and varied sexual practises with almost two-in-ten people (16 per cent) getting into anal sex, one-in-ten into phone sex and two-thirds of the population, mainly male, into either porn magazines or sexy videos. Men also register significant frequency of visiting strip clubs (half the male's surveyed) or massage parlours. Females registering a high endorsement for vibrators and sex toys - with 31 per cent of women using them.

In terms of promiscuity it is a bit of a mixed bag. Whilst 46 per cent of those surveyed had five or less partners in their lives, more than half (54 per cent) had had more than five partners with the average being 13.4 lovers, and men having nearly twice as many partners as women.

The figure was yanked up by the relatively small number of people who have had a comparatively larger number of partners than the general population including the people of Perth (an average of 18.5 lovers) and the Northern Territory (21.5 lovers), homosexuals and bisexuals (30 and 35 respectively), singles and interestingly older respondents 51 to 65 years old (both groups registered approx 20 partners each).

What would improve your sex life? Around 55 per cent of respondents want to use more varied sexual techniques, with half the surveyed population wanting sex more often. Around 12 per cent wanted sex with more partners, with three times as many men than women wanting this.

The greatest sexual difficulty registered by the majority of Australians was being too tired and overworked. Females were more likely to experience this as were married couples. Boredom was the next killer to sex although a healthy two-thirds of people in marriages or long-term commitments made an effort to

keep the spice in their relationships by using massage, erotic weekends away, or sharing fantasies.

Great news was that over two-thirds (67 per cent) of singles now appear to be using condoms and practising safe sex.

SHOCKERS AND THRILLERS

- . Australia's sexiest male: Mel Gibson; female: Elle McPherson.
- . Favourite sexual time: males: "Anytime"; females: "Bedtime".
- . Favourite sexual fantasy: Two women or two men with the respondent.
- . Overall horniest group: Bisexuals
- . Almost 20 per cent of respondents preferred sport to sex
- . Australians think about sex on average 5 times a day.
- . Average number of sex partners per Australian is 13.4
- . As many as one-in-five people are running around the office attracted to someone they are working with.
- . An estimated one-third of all people have had workplace sex at some stage.
- . Around 73 per cent of office affairs are responsible for one party leaving the organisation.

SUB-HEAD: MONOGAMY AND AFFAIRS

The topic of monogamy is a veritable minefield. It is full of contradictions with attitudes showing the torment and confusion the question of fidelity brings up. The first thing to point out is that in Australia there is widespread agreement with the concept of monogamy with 83 per cent of people surveyed believing in this principal.

Females have a greater commitment to this concept (88 per cent) than males (73 per cent). Interestingly of all the states, Sydney-siders showed a significantly higher than average of commitment to monogamy compared to the other states, with the lowest states being Melbourne and Adelaide.

That was the good news. The bad news is that despite lofty pro-monogamy sentiments, close to four-in-ten respondents, or half of those who believed in monogamy, indicated some preparedness to consider an affair if it were a secret.

More significantly, around 40 per cent had actually engaged in sex outside of their exclusive relationships. Males, and older respondents (of both genders) were the greatest cheaters. On average the number of affairs experienced by this group was "four" per person.

One-third of all respondents (33 per cent) had been embroiled in a short-term affair with males, older respondents and bisexuals more likely to have done so. The average number of short-term affairs was "three" with average length around 6 months.

A-quarter of respondents (25 per cent) had been involved in a long-term emotionally-based relationship with these characterised by a lower number of liaisons - the average length of time was three years with no gender difference (females as likely) but bisexuals and older respondents most likely to have indulged.

One-in-ten respondents is currently involved in an affair. Interesting to note that most of these are in the higher income bracket of \$76,000-plus per annum. Wealthy or professional people are also many times more likely to be

serial adulterers rather than have a one-off fling. Meanwhile a whopping third of all survey respondents currently know someone they would like to have an affair with.

When faced with infidelity most respondents would adopt a strategy of confrontation. Three-in-ten would leave - mainly females. Those with most time invested in the relationship are more likely to stay and find a solution than the recently married or committed.

The most important factor with infidelity, in terms of what bothers the innocent party, is loss of love and rejection, rather than the sex. This is consistent with the high priority given to the notion of "love" by respondents.

This fear is borne out by marital statistics in the next section which prove that people who have had affairs are far more likely to be unhappy with their long-term partners than those who have remained faithful. However, it is not clear whether those unhappy souls have affairs because they are disenchanted or whether having an affair contributes to the dissonance within their primary relationship.

The main reason for having an affair relates more to novelty value rather than desire for a particular person, with half of those responding citing experimentation as the most important feature, and 30 per cent attracted to someone specific. Just under two-thirds (60 per cent) of those who want an affair also cite problems with their current relationships. Lack of sexual interest from their partner is the main gripe.

In just over a quarter (28 per cent) of affairs, the innocent partner has found out, with serial adulterers having an increased risk of being discovered.

SHOCKERS AND THRILLERS

- . The older you are, the more likely you are to have had extra-relationship sex.
- . The richer you are, the more likely you are to be a repeat offender.
- . Men cheat for sexual reasons, women for emotional reasons.
- . Almost 90 per cent of women believe in monogamy, whereas only 73 per cent of men feel the same.
- . Half of those who believe in monogamy (40 per cent) have had an affair, with males respondents more likely to cheat than females.
- . The average number of affairs per cheat is "four" .
- . Experimentation is the main reason people cheat.

SUB-HEAD: MARRIAGE AND PERMANENT RELATIONSHIPS

On first glance, marriage in this country looks healthy enough with most people marrying, and staying married (70 to 80 per cent) for the strong values of love and happiness with one's partner, as opposed to the need for money or security. Indeed 71 per cent of respondents claim that marriage has met their expectations.

However, a closer inspection of the statistics shows the chinks in the armour that are contributing - at least in part - to the fact that in Australia nearly one-in-two marriages is now ending in divorce.

Certainly a sizeable portion of the surveyed population - almost one-third - did not think marriage met their expectations. Meanwhile of the 71 per

cent who were happy, it was those who were married for the least amount of time and without children who dragged the aggregate up.

Whilst a healthy three-quarters of respondents would marry same person again (74 per cent) it was those with least experience of their partner and without kids who pushed this figure up. So too were the 55 per cent of those who thought their marriages fared better when compared with other couples, made up mostly of the newly-married and the childless. The same demographic group were more likely to compliment their partners and were apt to consider their partners their best friend.

It seems that despite old fashion notions, love does not deepen and grow over time in the 90s. It may grow for a few years but suddenly something terrible seems to happen as time moves on and children come along.

Whilst a significant proportion of people (58 per cent) said kids undoubtedly created a greater meaning to life, only a comparatively small 40 per cent said children had deepened their intimate relationship with their partner. Respondents were more apt to grizzle that having kids had ruined sex lives, got in the way of spontaneity, weakened communication, and lead to a marked overall disappointment with partner performance.

In fact, almost two-thirds of all respondents (64 per cent) refer to some detraction in partner relationship as a result of children - particularly having less time together, less money, or experiencing a shortfall in sex and romance.

However, it must be noted that a huge 87 per cent would have kids again denoting that children are more important to people than the quality of their primary relationships.

Sex too played an important factor in the marriage or permanent relationship equation. It clearly comes off the boil as time progresses with two-thirds of married people experience less sexual frequency later in marriages than when first together, and a further one-in-five complaining about sex being less passionate. An amazing 10 per cent - or one-in-ten married people surveyed - do not have a sexual relationship at all.

Meanwhile whilst over half of the respondents believed their marriage and long-term relationship to be better or more stable than others, only a negligible 2 per cent felt their marriages were more sexually exciting than others, which means 98 per cent of people were not sufficiently motivated to see their marriages as hot.

The problem the survey revealed was that as sex decreases in frequency and/or passion, so too does general satisfaction within the marriage plummet. Those with fulfilling sex lives were doubly as satisfied with their marriages and relationships than those who didn't have a good sex life. So too were those who experienced extra-marital sex, significantly less happy in their relationships and less confident in their choice of partners than the faithful.

Close to half of all people surveyed have thought about leaving the marriage or union. Again this was highest for those longest married, those with children (in this instance teenage kids) and those whose relationships were not sexually gratifying.

SHOCKERS AND THRILLERS.

- . About 80 per cent of respondents cited love and happiness as the single most important reason for remaining married or with partner.
- . Three-quarters of people would marry same person again.
- . Half of respondents had thought about leaving the marriage or partnership.
- . Close to one-third didn't think marriage met their expectations
- . Two-thirds said children detracted from the relationship in some way.
- . Only 2 per cent thought their marriages more sexually exciting than others.
- . Two-thirds noted a decrease in sexual frequency as time progressed.
- . A startling one-in-ten married Australians who were surveyed, don't have sex.
- . Almost double the number of singles enjoyed orgasms compared to married people.
- . Money is the subjects of most fights.

GRAPHS:CREDIT D&M Research

FAVOURITE PLACE FOR SEX

BEDROOM: 66 PER CENT
 BATH/SPA/SHOWER: 9 PER CENT
 OUTDOORS: 6 PER CENT
 ANYWHERE: 19 PER CENT
 BEACH: 3 PER CENT
 CAR: 1 PER CENT
 AT OFFICE: 1 PER CENT
 MOVIE THEATRE: .3 PER CENT

FAVOURITE SEXUAL FANTASY

TWO WOMEN WITH ME: 24 PER CENT
 TWO MEN WITH ME: 12 PER CENT
 SEX IN A PUBLIC PLACE: 11 PER CENT
 SEX WITH A STRANGER: 10 PER CENT
 BEING TIED UP: 9 PER CENT
 CONQUER DEFLOWER SCENARIO: 6 PER CENT
 SAME SEX EXPERIENCE: 8 PER CENT
 BEING BLINDFOLDED: 2 PER CENT

RANKING PARTNER IN BED

GREAT: 61 PER CENT
 NEEDS IMPROVEMENT: 29 PER CENT
 TERRIBLE BEYOND BELIEF: 4 PER CENT
 OTHER: 6 PER CENT

FIVE SEXIEST AUSTRALIAN FEMALES

ELLE McPHERSON
 NICOLE KIDMAN
 KIMBERLEY DAVIES
 KATE FISCHER
 KATE CEBRANO

FIVE SEXIEST AUSTRALIAN GUYS

MEL GIBSON
 GUY PIERCE
 GARRY SWEET

ANDREW ETTINGHAUSEN
JOHN FARNHAM

REASONS FOR STAYING IN MARRIAGE/PARTNERSHIP

LOVE/HAPPY WITH PARTNER: 80 PER CENT
FOR THE KIDS: 29 PER CENT
REGULAR SEX: 18 PER CENT
BETTER THAN BEING SINGLE: 17 PER CENT
TOO EXPENSIVE TO DIVORCE: 12 PER CENT
NO ONE BETTER AVAILABLE: 9 PER CENT
SOCIAL/FAMILY PRESSURE: 6 PER CENT
STIGMA TO DIVORCE: 5 PER CENT

HAD SEX OUTSIDE THE RELATIONSHIP

NEVER: 61 PER CENT
ONCE: 14 PER CENT
TWICE: 6 PER CENT
THREE TIMES OR MORE: 13 PER CENT
REGULARLY- TEN TIMES OR MORE: 6 PER CENT.