Men and Sex

Stoltenberg’s “How Man Have (A) Sex”

Stoltenberg takes a social constructionist position toward the sexes and also sex. He argues that differences between male and female eroticism and sexuality are socially constructed, not biological.

He argues that the sex lives of men (“people with penises”) are shaped by the desire to belong “to a sex that is male and not female.” Sexuality creates gender: “So much of most men’s sexuality is tied up with gender-actualizing—with feeling like a real man—that they can scarcely recall an erotic sensation that had no gender-specific cultural meaning.”

Many men think the following are sexy: pressuring someone to have sex, believing women want to be raped, treating women as objects, being aroused by rape and pornography, violence, making yourself important and the other person unimportant, etc.

“When you use sex to have a sex, the sex you have is likely to make you feel crummy about yourself. But when you have sex in which you are not struggling with your partner in order to act out ‘real manhood,’ the sex you have is more likely to bring you close.”

Practical sex tips for men: (1) Consent is absolutely essential, (2) mutuality is absolutely essential, (3) respect is absolutely essential. Also, don’t let your sexuality be manipulated by the pornography industry, don’t let drugs and alcohol numb your sex life, and don’t become fixated on coitus.
Don Sabo’s “The Myth of the Sexual Athlete”
Sabo discusses connections between sports and male sexuality.
1. Locker-room sex talk promotes sexual behavior but stigmatizes intimacy with women.
2. Sex as sport: dating is defined in terms of “scoring.” Having sex with no emotional involvement is “a mark of masculine achievement.” “Sexual relationships are games in which women are seen as opponents, and his scoring means her defeat.”
3. Performance and patriarchy: “Many athletes organize their energies and perceptions about a performance ethic that influences sexual relations. Men apply their goal-directedness and preoccupation with performance to their lovemaking.”
Sabo argues that many men are suffering from “sexual schizophrenia”: “Their minds lead them toward eroticism while their hearts pull them toward emotional intimacy. What they think they want rarely coincides with what they need.”

Sean Michael Gilmore’s “Sport Sex”
Gilmore describes two differences between how men and women talk about sex.
1. Sexual promiscuity was viewed as positive for men but not women. “The ‘mythology of the stud’ is constructed through the discourse of ‘scoring’; that is, men bragging about the number of women they sexually conquered.” Men were rewarded for having sex with different women in different ways; monogamy is stigmatized.
2. Men discussed sex in terms of games and contests.
Gilmore argues that the language men use to talk about sex defines women as “things that are to be owned and dominated by males.”