

Constructing Sex Acts

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.