

Explore your own unique body and sexual pleasure: affordance analysis of the lion...

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



Doctor Masters was a gynecologist and a pioneer in the study of human sexuality from 1957 until the 1990s. His life and his controversial study of sexuality, where he recorded physiological changes in human bodies while participating in sexual activities, are portrayed in the series Masters of Sex. The various studies, as conducted by Dr. Masters, took place in an academic hospital not only for the obvious reason that it was an academic study, but also because of the fact that the technologies that were used (like EEGs, heart rate monitors, and so on) were, at the time, only available in hospitals. Now, a few decades later, technologies for measuring physiological reactions are easily available in various forms and are used by many in everyday life. This phenomenon is often referred to as quantifying- or tracking the self.

A particularly recent and socially relevant technology where biosensors are used to measure and quantify physiological reactions is the Lioness. Lioness offers a so-called “ smart” vibrator for tracking sexual activity. The developers claim that by using the vibrator, the user will explore her “ own unique body” and sexual pleasure. The Lioness technology and the promise of getting to know your body and sexual pleasure through numbers will be the subject of this bachelor thesis.

In this bachelor thesis, the affordances of the Lioness vibrator and the linked application (app) will be critically analyzed. The question I will answer in this bachelor thesis is: Which ideas and (social) meanings are translated by the affordances of the Lioness?

Before I answer this question, I will first discuss the academic discourses surrounding the phenomenon of quantifying the self, quantified sex, and

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vibrators. In this section, I will also discuss how my bachelor thesis will fit into the discussed academic discourses. Secondly, I will build a theoretical framework where I will discuss the theories and concepts relevant for my analysis of the Lioness. Here, I will discuss how meanings and ideas can be translated into technologies, the biopolitics of quantifying the self, and the utopian promise of objectivity of data and its critics. Thirdly, I will discuss the method I will use for my analysis of the Lioness, namely an affordance analysis. In the analysis, I will first discuss how the Lioness can be seen as an instantiation of the biopolitics of the self, and how the affordances of the Lioness translate the idea that sexual pleasure can and should be explored and improved. Secondly, I will engage with a critical data studies perspective to show that the visualizations in the Lioness app cannot capture sexual pleasure, per se. Then I will discuss the affordances that allow the user to add personal notes, and the contradictory ideas translated by the app on how knowledge about the body and sexual pleasure can be gained.