

Cuckolding: a phenomenon of sexual evolution essay sample

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The word cuckold has its origins in Old French, from the term *cucu* or *cucualt*, which refers to the Cuckoo bird. While majority of Cuckoos do raise their own offspring, it has been noticed that a significant number are brood parasites. This implies the female bird would lay her eggs in the nest of other birds whose eggs are similar to the cuckoos. The term 'cuckold' came to be used to refer to men whose wives had been unfaithful ('taking up in someone else's nest'), as humans we are culturally usually expected to be monogamous, anything else is deemed as counterintuitive. However, many couples now are now exploring alternatives to monogamy (Haag, 2011). Swinging and various types of polyamory are some of the more popular alternatives, and usually mean the same thing for both or all in the relationship.

Cuckolding is unique in its self, usually initiated by the male partner (Ley, 2009), who is the cuckold, and wants to witness his partner having consensual sex with another male. It piqued my interest because it seems to go against the popular evolutionary themes of male possessive behavior. Theories of evolution have been quite male centric and marred by various degrees of patriarchy. The popular evolutionary model seems to state that men have a biological programmed to have multiple sexual partners, and at the same time supports jealousy at sexual 'infidelity' and mate guarding (Harris, 2002). While the male cuckold is more prevalent, cuckolding is not exclusively restricted to the male. The female counter part of the cuckold is termed 'cuckquean.' Couples who take part in these fantasies or fetishes usually have an intimate relationship that they are committed to (Savage, 2008).

Ley (2010) wrote an article in response to Ryan and Jetha's book, *Sex at Dawn* (2010) stating some reasons for cuckolding. Sperm competition seems to be a biological response, a male watches his female partner having sex with another man and is thereby impelled to have longer, more vigorous sex with her, he is able to have a shorter resting time between erections, ejaculates harder and his ejaculate contains more sperm (Ryan and Jetha, 2010). They have also implied that the penis is shaped to create a vacuum in the female reproductive system so as to 'suck out' any semen from previous sexual partners. Baker (1996) also supported the idea of sperm competition, that the male is prompted by biological urges to copulate with the female in order to 'compete' with the sperm of her previous sexual partners. This could be an indicator that women having multiple sexual partners are as natural and historically significant as men doing the same.

Another reason could be voyeurism, or sexual arousal from watching sexual acts. Ryan and Jetha (2010) have also suggested that women have the capacity of slower building multiple orgasms while "males have evolved the orgasmic response of minutemen accompanied by a sudden disappearance of all interest in sex" because when our female ancestors mated with multiple male partners, the males watched and waited their turn. This seems to support why men are so visually aroused to this day. This could also support the fascination with porn being archaic. From that perspective, a cuckold receiving sexual pleasure from watching his partner having sex with another male could perhaps be regarded an evolution of porn? Emotional

masochism could be another reason for cuckolding., the cuckold deriving pleasure from being humiliated (Rufus, 2010).

Linder (2006) refers to humiliation as “ the nuclear bomb of emotions.” Approaching it from a psychodynamic viewpoint one can perhaps understand humiliation being sexualized as an association formed in childhood, owing to how powerful the emotion of humiliation can be. Cuckolding is an erotic thrill because it also plays on the culturally traditional gender roles and issues of power and control. Leopold van Sacher-Masoch, after whom masochism was named, wrote *Venus in Furs* (1885) about dominant women. Sacher-Masoch was known to put out ads in the newspapers for younger energetic men to pleasure his wife. His main focus of these experiences was the humiliation of being cuckolded. Cuckolding for emotional masochism would imply that the energy created when one is ‘ in a bind’ is where the cuckold finds arousal.

In these situations the women’s sexual satisfaction with the new partner is of paramount importance and could be directly proportional to the humiliation experienced by her original partner. The cuckold desires emotional pain from the humiliation (Cuckold and Mistress, 2008). An exert from a blog written by a cuckold describes this relationship quite clearly: Cuckold is however an emotional masochist. He craves emotional pain the way most submissives crave physical pain, and it doesn’t really hurt him. It fulfills him and gives him joy. The emotional pain Mistress gives him is intense, often extremely intense, but his mind somehow turns that emotional pain into pleasure. Just as physical masochists crave and seek out physical pain, he craves and seeks out emotional pain (Cuckold and Mistress, 2008).

Cuckolding could have roots in the paradox of the power in the relationship. Culturally, males in the relationship are expected to be more dominant while the females more submissive. Cuckolding relationships are usually defined by a dominant female and a submissive male. The erotic appeal of reversing the power dynamic of a couple could be precisely what draws in the cuckolding couple. There may be an eroticization for the male in relinquishing control instead of having to hold onto it (as is expected of him by society). Viewing this from a feminist lens, one could also proposition that perhaps, hand in hand with the humiliation, there is a pleasure that males receive to see women in dominant, more empowering roles. It perhaps could be seen as a metaphor for encouraging female sexual empowerment. It is important to understand the complexities involved in relationships like this. The word cuckold has culturally many negative connotations. A Google search would show how the world ' unfaithful' and ' infidelity' is thrown around freely.

However, this relationship is one that is usually more cooperative and gratifying than what is implied. These relationships take a lot of work and communication, and above all, trust. The cuckold or cuckquean willingly grants their partner to exhibit control over them by having sex with another partner. This situation is a consensual process and is played out with a common base in trust and respect. However, because of the emotional complexities involved, as well as our culturally ingrained ideas of sexuality and love, couples who dabble in cuckolding without the necessary emotional

commitment or communication could find themselves suffering from feelings of inadequacy or jealousy at the cost of their relationship.

For therapists whose clients are thinking about getting into a cuckolding relationship, it is important not to disregard it and stifle this fantasy, but rather to allow the couple space to explore it, while constantly encouraging respectful and thorough communication. It is also paramount for therapists to understand love and sex and two autonomous functions which could cross over in different degrees. For therapists whose clients are already in a cuckolding relationship, it is important to deal with any issues of transference the therapist may face while working with the couple. Of course it is important that the therapist not focus on this aspect of the relationship unless the couple specifically wants to. Furthermore, therapists should be mindful of trying to use the cuckold relationship as a way to answer other problems in the marriage.

While it could be that the marriage is suffering from the cuckold relationship, therapists should be incredibly aware that they do not bring in their own transference or preconceived notions into the therapeutic alliance. If the therapist does think the cuckolding could be affecting the couple negatively, it would be thoughtful to first screen for what emotions are spilling over, to screen for feelings of emotional safety and belonging. Or perhaps, every now and then it would be beneficial for the therapist to ask the couple about how their sex life is, straightforward, as a means to check up, or to give the couple space to think about it and mention anything that has been playing

on their mind, or they could assure the therapist that everything in that area is fine, thereby letting the therapist know to move on to the real issues.

It is important to ensure that both in the couple are empowered by their sexual play, rather than oppressed in anyway. My own personal concerns are with couples where the satisfaction comes from watching the degradation of their female partner. Ley (2009) mentioned that in his research for his book, *Women Who Stray and the Men Who Love them*, he witnessed males encouraging their partners to have sex with other men as a way of treating her as 'a piece of meat' or 'taking her down a peg.' I understand that both in the couple, not exclusively just the male, could propagate these negatively driven fantasies.

However, it is also my understanding that fantasies and fetishes played out with only an illusion of safety (if any at all) will doubtlessly not be eventually satisfying for both partners. I have also found that within the cuckolding culture there is a prevalent aspect of race, the white man fantasizing about the black man having sex with his female mate. I am keen to explore this aspect of cuckolding, and its roots in the slavery of Africans in the United States. It would be an interesting dialogue to see how aspects of privilege or guilt could permeate into the cuckolding situation. There could be multiple different reasons for cuckolding, however could it also be a cue that human behavior is rising above present social and evolutionary programming?

Ogas and Gaddam (2012) discovered that when they analyzed online search terms. 'cuckold porn' is second only to 'youth' in heterosexual porn

searches (Lehmiller, 2014). While the academic literature on cuckolding is not that extensive just yet, Internet searches for forums, blogs or porn will show that the cuckolding phenomenon is quite common and perhaps growing. The debate over the normalcy of monogamy could go on forever, however facts constantly show infidelity being a main reason for divorce. Non-monogamy promotes the autonomy of sex and love, and is based to strongly in trust and communication; it leaves very little room for infidelity. It is undoubted that different types of non-monogamy work very well for some couples; it could likely be a more widespread phenomenon in the future.

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