

THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF CLINICAL SEXOLOGISTS  
AT MAIMONIDES UNIVERSITY

**A STUDY OF SKIN AS TACTILE CONNECTION IN HUMAN SEXUALITY:  
SENSE OF TOUCH VIA OUR LARGEST SEX ORGAN: SKIN**

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BY

SANDRA L. BLANTON

NORTH MIAMI BEACH, FLORIDA

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## Chapter 1

### Rationale for the Study

#### Introduction: The Unique Sexological Nature

The purpose of this Meta analysis is to examine what is known about the need for skin-to-skin touching. Pilot interviews will be conducted to create a foundation for an effective qualitative interview outline. Twenty people will be interviewed and asked to give answers to questions concerning important factors how skin-to-skin touching affects their sex lives. These interviews and questionnaires for this study will also explore the possible influence of sensual touch in both human sexual development and its expression.

We will examine the distinct biochemical differences in how people experience touch in skin- to-skin contact. In an attempt to guide this analysis, at least three questions concerning skin, our largest sexual organ will be a focal point.

1. Why is skin the most important and sensitive organ in the sense of touch?
2. What is the connection between skin-to-skin contact and sex?
3. What are the results of the lack of touch in humans, and how does this factor assist in therapy?

Billions of dollars are spent on skin care to enhance the sexual attraction of men as well as women. There is thus a common acceptance in society of the communication value, for human relations in general and sexual relations in particular, of the need for touching others and for having our own skin touched. Tegu (1998) best highlights one of the purposes of this study, “The human skin, the biggest and the most wonderful of human organs deserves a special recognition, and our highest praise and admiration for

the miraculous functions that it performs and the external and unique beauty that it gives to the human race. Other living things may be covered with scales, furs, or feathers, but the human skin, our exterior dress, the boundary that holds our body, given to us by nature, is a thing of great beauty, a beauty surpassed only by the miraculous tasks it performs”(Tegu,1998).

The Dictionary of Psychology defines touch as the experience aroused by contact with another person or object. The “sense of touch” is properly a part of the cutaneous senses. Cutaneous sense is any sense whose receptors lie beneath the surface of the skin or mucous membranes. Skin eroticism is the obtaining of sexual or erotic pleasures from stroking or rubbing of the skin (Chaplin, 1985).

For size, the skin wins hands down as the largest sexual organ of our body. Skin completely covers the body with nerve endings, providing stimulating possibilities in all sorts of interesting places. We salute the sensual external limits of the human body, the external covering, the beautiful sex organ called the skin, with its multitude of colors, shades and textures, with its softness, toughness and elasticity (Tegu, 1998).

If Tegu were to choose his favorite organ of the human body, it would be the organ that encompasses all the others. It would be the one that covers us, protects from the hostile exterior world, and at the same time, acts as a huge, sensitive antenna that keeps us informed as to what is going on around us. Through it we feel the warm rays of the sun, the coolness of the rain and the freshness of the breezes. Furthermore, it gives man a beauty that distinguishes him from other living things. This organ is the external covering of the human anatomy, the skin” (Tegu, 1998).

Our skin plays a very important role in sex appeal. The human being thrives on the touching of the skin (da Silva, 1984). The skin is the glorious finish that nature has given the sumptuous sculpture of the human anatomy and provides endless erotic intrigue to enrich our sexual lives. Sex appeal involves the beauty of skin. There is an elaborate body language of human solicitation, attraction and courtship that Madison Avenue knows very well how to capture on videotape and use in advertising. Most people use it without analyzing what they are doing, and they do not have a systematized knowledge of either its vocabulary or its syntax (Money, 1980). Although our brain is the ultimate sex organ, our skin is the largest sex organ. The brain is responsible for processing and interpreting all of those delightful sensory inputs (da Silva, 1984).

Our skin is a really exciting organ. Skin is our largest organ with a surface area of about 15 – 20 feet and a weight of several kilograms. Sixteen percent of our body weight is skin. A 150-pound person has 24 pounds of skin; the liver weighs 3.5 pounds; the brain weighs 3 pounds; the lungs 2.5 pounds; the heart and the kidneys weigh less than one half pound each. Our skin is not only the largest organ we have, but it is also one of the most important because we can live with one kidney or one lung, but we cannot survive if fifty percent or more of our skin is destroyed (Siegel, 1986).

Skin is the most important organ in the sense of touch. Through the skin we differentiate warmth, cold, pain and touch. A touch, a kiss and an embrace causes friction to produce electric currents which are transmitted to the brain by millions of nerve endings of the skin. On our skin are produced major electrical storms in the electricity of love (daSilva, 1984).

The skin has very important functions. Just four of these very important functions of the skin are as follows:

- Protection: Skin protects from physical, chemical and biological agents, and also from infections and parasitic organisms.
- Regulation of body temperature: Our body perspires by means of the sweat glands. When perspiration evaporates heat is lost in the process, therefore, lowering body temperature. The superficial blood vessels of the skin, the capillaries contract when exposed to cold to preserve body heat and dilate in warm temperature so that heat is lost by sweating.
- Secretion: Our skin has millions of sebaceous or fatty glands secreting fat which becomes rancid or acid. This acidity called pH5 is necessary to prevent the growth of bacteria on our skin. In order for microbes to multiply over the skin they need a sweet alkaline environment, that is, the pH has to be greater than seven. The sun's action on skin produces Vitamin D which is essential for us to maintain healthy bones. Our skin also has a very important immune function in vaccinations which are the best modern prophylactic medicine against viruses, bacteria and cancer.
- Sensation: Skin is the most important organ in the sense of touch. Through the skin we differentiate warmth, cold, pain and touch. A touch, a kiss and an embrace causes friction to produce electric

currents which are transmitted to the brain my millions of nerve endings of the skin.

In addition to the nerve endings for the sense of touch, the skin has three varieties of little bodies which have specialized functions: (a) for general touch; (b) for light touch; (c) for pressure touch.

The total skin area of a 150 pound person is 20 square feet. Our skin functions like a huge disc antenna collecting and feeding information to our brain which acts as a computer. If the skin is our largest organ, it is also our largest sexual organ (da Silva, 1984).

Proportional to their size, women have more skin area than men, due to their more round contours in the breasts, thighs, and buttocks. Because of this, women need more electricity of love to reach orgasm, but on the other hand, their orgasms last longer and are electrically more intense. Mother Nature did not forget to place these specialized receptors on the penis, clitoris, nipples and lips (da Silva, 1984).

#### Statement of Purpose.

Why the need for touch? There is a need for positive solutions for countering the effects of the growing depersonalization of our times. To all of us with bodies, in an increasingly disembodied world, we need a passionate reminder that touch is essential to health and happiness. We need documentation that the terrain of our touch-starved culture gives concrete suggestions on how to be more in touch with ourselves, and therefore with others. Survival is based on our receiving affection. Only then can we develop, love, survive and thrive. Learning about our need for touch could bring unusual



insight and wisdom to understanding the nature of human and sexual love. There were days when I found myself craving the touch, the feel of skin next to mine, to feel loved, cherished and thoroughly hugged. For nearly ten years the yearning rendered that void as baffling. One night at a Yaya group during a group hug, I realized my hunger was the sensation of skin-to-skin contact.

Can we agree that touch is not just for lovers? What is the comparison between sensual touching and healing touch? Why does bonding matter to human babies who are born helpless? This is an area which requires more investigation in order to answer our need for conducting this Meta analysis.

The function of the skin for the rationale of this analysis will be one of the objectives of sensation and the lack thereof that causes many who are deprived of touch to become mentally ill. Little is known about that void that is created by lack of skin-to-skin contact. Why do we find discomfort and embarrassment in every day touching, the awkwardness of that first massage? The anxiety and discomfort of being touched is ignored at times. We are so unaccustomed to being touched that we associate humiliation and shame at the lingering of skin-to-skin contact with another human being. As babies we are hopefully touched and held, but few people are caressed in this same way until many years later when the sexual act of intercourse is introduced into their lives.

The problem is that in many cases children as well as adults have been misdiagnosed and consequently have been receiving inappropriate and sometimes harmful pharmacotherapy and counseling, simply because of the silent void, their desperate need for nurturing touch has been overlooked. Why are clients dealing with

stress or feeling low physically referred by psychotherapists to get a massage, to experience some skin-to-skin contact, particularly if they have experienced a traumatic event? The massage does not replace the counseling but becomes a necessary addition which results in a very healing experience. An enormous amount of research has been done in recent years, on both human beings and animals in regards to touch. The results show that lack of touching to the skin (cutaneous deprivation) can lead, not only to emotional disturbances but also, to a lessened intellectual ability and physical growth, reduced sexual interest and even a weakness in the immune system (Worwood, 2001).

This study seeks to add to the current knowledge and to investigate an area of research that may have a significant and positive impact on the understanding of our daily need for skin-to-skin sensation. Many people may recall their earliest conscious memories of comforting skin touching skin. From the yet unpublished manuscript of *Real Women Drink from Jars*, Fannie Lee tells us,

The daily longing to be touched but not really knowing the name of the void that needed filled takes me back to my early childhood. Hunger for skin-to-skin contact brings back the memories of a comforting sensation, the softness of my grandmother's aging skin as she brushed the hair from my face, rocking back and forth cuddled in her lap in her big rocking chair. She had just bathed me in her big galvanized tub, rubbing the floating soap between her hands, and then warmly, tenderly and ever so gently she slowly washed each part of my entire body with her hands. The best part was yet to come after she dried me off with the warm, soft towel. The fragrant breeze flowing through her flower garden doused my skin in sweet pea perfume as she warmed the oil and began massaging each finger and toe after my bath. Grandma Anna, with long soft yet firm strokes began to caress with her finger tips, my back, legs and arms with warm baby oil. Just reminiscing about this make me yearn for her loving touch on my face and neck. I can almost feel the smooth, soft skin of that wonderful woman, the only human being who made me feel like she was glad I was born; I was worthwhile and that I was truly loved; I was lovable (Lee, 2003).

Everyone deserves that opportunity to be wrapped in that same sensation of knowing that they know that they know, deep down where their toenails grow, that they are truly loved, that they are truly lovable, and beyond doubt, touchable.

## CHAPTER 2

### A Review of the Literature

#### A Historical and Literary Perspective

History, literature, and folklore, as well as the explosive growth of a multi-billion dollar skin care industry, bear rich testimony to the inevitable interconnection of touch, skin, and seduction, creating boundaries in the minds of small children and grown men and women. From Biblical times, the language of love has endeavored to capture the warm soft feel of skin attracting others and enhancing the likelihood of other's enticement.

The Holy Bible reports in Genesis that Adam and Eve were filled with shame when they discover they are revealing way too much skin. Embarrassed and humiliated, both realize they are bare naked after being tempted by the serpent, eating from the forbidden tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden. *“For Adam also and for his wife the Lord God made long coats or tunics of skins and clothed them both”* (Genesis 3:21 NIV) Among the fairest virgin maidens, Esther was chosen and groomed for her royal betrothal for twelve months, “six months with oil of myrrh and six months with women's cosmetics... and the things for the purifying of the women since this was the regular period for treatments to insure beautiful skin (Esth. 2:11 NIV)

Solomon's Song of Songs to the beloved had deep concerns for her skin because her complexion had not been kept. “Please do not look at me, I am swarthy. I have

worked out in the sun and it has left its mark upon me. My stepbrothers were angry with me, and they made me keeper of the vineyards; but my own vineyard (my complexion) I have not kept". (Song of Sol. 1:6). But the lover says to her "You are the fairest among women, you remind me of my favorite mare...Behold, you are beautiful! You have dove's eyes...Your lips are like a thread of scarlet, and your mouth is lovely. Your cheeks are like halves of a pomegranate...Your neck is like the tower of David...Your two breasts are like two fawns...She surrenders, weakened by her lover's charm, "I can feel his left hand under my head and his right hand embraces and touches me" (Holy Bible, Song of Sol. 2:6 NIV)

Even in ancient Egypt a gorgeous complexion did not last long. To treat wrinkles and freckles oil of fenugreek was recommended, a plant freely available because of its use as animal fodder. No sooner had they stepped outside the dim seclusion of their homes that the Egyptians were exposed to the full impact of the sun. The deep blue sky was seldom hidden by clouds blowing in from the Mediterranean, to be dissipated later over middle Egypt and only rarely reaching into Upper Egypt. The low humidity of the Sahara, the world's largest desert, affected the Nile valley too, so that human body temperature was regulated by the evaporation of sweat even at a time of great physical exertion. From prehistoric times the climate of the country had forced people to wear light, airy clothes. Heavy perspiration led them to take care of their skin and hair not merely by washing, but by a quite elaborate cosmetic routine. The skin color of the men is faithfully reproduced in tomb paintings. On some predynastic palettes men are shown naked with much skin exposed, except for a belt round the loins from which hung either a strip of cloth forming a penis sheath, or else a kilt with a thick fringe made of some plant

material to shield the organs from the elements. It might seem from all this that the Egyptians had achieved high standards of bodily care and hygiene all those thousands of years ago. Alas, this did not apply to the common folk, especially the very poor. (Lowen, 1976).

Take a look at Shakespear's poem, *A Lover's Complaint* published in 1609 with "Sonnets". Passion here is not merely stripped to the skin but stripped to the bones...

'Small show of man was yet upon his chin;  
His phoenix down began but to appear  
Like unshorn velvet on that termless skin  
Whose bare out-bragg'd the web it seem'd to wear:  
Yet show'd his visage by that cost more dear;  
And nice affections wavering stood in doubt  
If best were as it was, or best without (Cross & Brooks, 1993).

Quoting anthropological studies of his day, Havelock Ellis (1936) marvels at the sheer variety of practices among world cultures regarding fairness of skin and sexuality. The rich materials on human sexual choice collected by Havelock Ellis may here again be drawn upon. Of particular interest are some of his findings on fair skin coloring as a sexually attractive trait among the peoples of Europe. The admiration for blondness may be traced, he reports, back to ancient Greek and Roman times, and may be understood by the tendency to-ward fairness of the population of Europe, thus illustrating again the rule of preference for the prevailing racial types. Even in Italy there is evidence of this preference: among the painters, poets, and "the aesthetic writers on beauty from the Renaissance onward, the admiration for fair hair and skin is unqualified . . ." In France and England the admiration for fair hair and skin is well established; Ellis points out that in English the word "fair" itself is synonymous with the beautiful. On the whole, while

the standard in Europe allows a darker coloring in the more southerly peoples in accord with their greater racial tendency toward the brunette, the very brunette type is "al-ways excluded" (Ellis,1936).

Freud makes the activity of the skin-to-skin experience of the infant's lips at the breast of its mother a foundation stone of his theory of sexuality. He writes: "It was a child's first and most vital activity, his sucking at his mother's breast, or at substitutes for it, that must have familiarized him with this pleasure of rhythmic sucking. The child's lips behave like an erotogenic zone, and no doubt stimulation by the warm flow of milk is the cause of the pleasurable sensation." This should reassure us of the existence of a profound relationship between oral experiences in infancy and later sexual competencies. Freud was convinced that there could not be any doubt of the intimate connection between the skin, and all its appendages, including hair, glands, neural elements, and sexual behavior (Freud, 1963). Is love the harmony of two souls and the contact of two epidermises? Once a French wit said, "Love as it exists in society is merely the mingling of two fantasies and the contact of two skins." In his poem, *On Being Human*, C.S. Lewis gives pity to the angel because without skin, she cannot enjoy the beauty of nature...

But never an angel knows the knife-edged severance; Of sun from shadow  
where the trees begin, The blessed cool at every pore caressing us; -An  
angel has no skin.

Next to classical mythology, the medieval tradition of chivalry and knights in armor was dearest to Lewis's heart. Narnia developed into a realm where courtly ideals flourished under its stately kings and queens. In *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, Lewis

introduces the idea of the skeptic, the non-believer, in the form of Eustace Clarence Scrubb. Eustace is turned into a dragon through his own greed and ignorance. However, Aslan peels away the layers of dragon skin until the real boy underneath is revealed. By this, the reader comes to understand the process of conversion and sanctification (Bane, 1989).

Folklore: "Skin gives these skin folk their human shape. When the skin comes off, their true selves emerge. They may be owls. They may be vampire balls of fire. And always, whatever the burden their skins bear, once they remove them — once they get under their own skins — they can fly." Jamaican-born author of *Skin Folk*, Nalo Hopkinson is typically categorized as a science fiction/fantasy writer, but many of her tales are spun from the myths of the Caribbean. So what are "Skin Folk"? Hopkinson explains. "Throughout the Caribbean, under different names, you'll find stories about people who aren't what they seem," she says (Hopkinson, 2001).

Another Indian folklore example of skin being the essence of beauty is seen in *The Skin Shifting old Woman, A Wichita Legend* where a very evil wicked old woman tricked the chief's young wife with ravishingly beautiful skin into helping her into the woods for four days to chop wood in order to steal her skin. The purpose of stealing a beautiful woman's skin was so that she could wear the young skin, disguise herself as the young woman and fool the men in the tribe (Dorsey, 2000).

## Modern Perspectives

Our neglected senses are just beginning to be discovered here in the Western world. There is a primitive awe in describing this growing awareness that represents something of an overdue insurgency against the painful deprivation of sensory experience suffered in our technologized world. Are we to believe that the skin has a mind of its own? The mind of the skin, in contrast to the psychosomatic or centrifugal approach is the somatopsychic or centripetal approach, the manner in which tactile experience or its lack affects the development of behavior (Montagu, 1989).

Touch is not just for lovers; it's a vital communication tool, and in the right hands can even help heal the sick. Your arms around your lover's back, a teacher's reassuring pat on the shoulder, the way a baby snuggles into his mother's breast; these are the tools for essential communication. Our most meaningful communion with each other is experienced through touch, that most mysterious of the senses. Unlike sight, smell, hearing and taste, touch is not centered on a single body part. It envelopes us, factually from head to toe, and we rely on it for much of our experience of our environment (Caplan, 1998).

How important are touching, caressing, and foreplay? Foreplay can be thought of as the foundation for emotionally meaningful lovemaking. Touching, especially sensual touching which conveys the erotic spirit that is in the hearts of loving partners (Stone, 2001).

“Our skin is what stands between us and the world”, says Diane Ackerman. Our skin imprisons us, but it also gives us individual shape, protects us from invaders, cools



us down or heats us up as need be, produces vitamin D, and holds in our body fluids (Ackerman, 1990).

Our sense of touch is not situated in the top layer of skin, the epidermis, but further down in the dermis where specialized skin cells act as receptors for stimuli. The stimuli such as pressure, temperature and pain, together sending a complex network of sensations that the brain adds to information from other senses and finally interprets as 'chocolate sauce on finger' or 'skin cut from paper' (Ackerman, 1990).

The Galvanic Skin Response is measured by the simple psycho-galvanometer that is one of the earliest tools of psychological research. A psycho-galvanometer measures the resistance of the skin to the passage of a very small electric current. It has been known for decades that the magnitude of this electrical resistance is affected, not only by the subject's general mood, but also by immediate emotional reactions. Although these facts have been known for over a hundred years and the first paper to be presented on the subject of the psycho-galvanometer was written by Tarchanoff in 1890, it has only been within the last 25 years that the underlying causes of this change in skin resistance have been discovered. Galvanic Skin Response is a feedback instrument that measures skin conductivity from fingers and or palms of the hands and is highly sensitive to emotions in some people. Used as an index and easily measured, this is relatively reliable for measuring a person's internal "state" where changes in skin's conductivity can indicate whether a person is lying (Shepherd, 1997).

Biologically, galvanic skin response is a change in the electrical resistance of the skin. It is determined by passing a weak current through the skin and measuring changes in electricity flow or by measuring the current generated by the body itself. It has been

correlated with emotion, attention, and stress. Educationally, GSR is a generalized measure of autonomic arousal and also a measure of attention (Fry, 1963). Correlations between GSR and attitude, empathy, and social interactions, especially when associated with small group interactions, have also been shown (Clariana, 1992).

There has been a long history of electrodermal activity research dealing with spontaneous fluctuations. Most investigators accept the phenomenon without understanding exactly what it means. The two techniques of measurement is a current passed through the skin and the resistance to passage is measured. In the other technique, no current is used externally and the skin itself is the source of electrical activity (Shepherd, 1977).

Bonding matters. Human babies are born helpless, needing to be entirely cared for and protected. Think about the chemistry of this attachment. The ingrained neural and hormonal interactions provided for parent and child to assist them in this process are among the most powerful in nature. Once born, baby's hormonal control systems and brain synapses begin to permanently organize according to the human interactions the child experiences. Oxytocin is a chemical messenger released in the brain chiefly in response to social contact, but its release is especially pronounced with skin-to-skin contact. In addition to providing health benefits, this hormone-like substance promotes bonding patterns and creates desire further contact with the individuals inciting its release (Palmer, 2002).

Equally, there needs some understanding of the histology of skin.

We gain knowledge of what happens when stimulants speed up the sympathetic system. The tiny muscles of the surface of the skin (musculi arrectori) contract and cause the hairs to stand on end and create what we call goose bumps. These tiny skin muscles are especially numerous in the scrotum, nipples, eyelids and clitoris. Young people love to take hot long showers because it slows down their over stimulated sympathetic system. The hot water on the skin stimulates the parasympathetic system causing these tiny muscles to relax. At the same time the entire body also relaxes. Our body has 92 nerves and 20 percent of them are sexual nerves. The two types of nerves our body possesses accelerate the action and the other type reduces the action. Sympathetic system is the nervous system that accelerates the body functions and is analogous to the gas pedal or accelerator of an automobile. Parasympathetic system is the nervous system that reduces the body functions and is similar to the brake pedal in that same car. To maintain healthy sexual life equilibrium between the two systems must exist. Any defect in this equilibrium will result in sexual stalling or disappointment. Touching of the skin goes both ways through giving and receiving. It does not take much to bring another person as well as ourselves into that realm of “feel good” stuff. Even the slightest level or amount of skin-to-skin contact makes a difference in gratifying the basic human need for touch (da Silva, 1984).

But ever and always is the tendency to expand the orchestration of attraction with the addition of the sensory nerve endings of skin. How we celebrate sex describes how we focus on sensual feeling, learning to relax and get comfortable with touching and

being touched, and then comes the sensuous massage, just one more way of enjoying a one-flesh companionship (Rosenau,1994).

The psychology of human touch is the field where intimacy, love and sex all come together is in the world of touch (Worwood, 2001). Touch is such a basic need that people easily forget it or do not see it as a separate distinct essential need.

Touch is one of the most essential elements of human development, a profound method of communication, a critical component of the health and growth of infants, and a powerful healing force (Bowlby, 1973). Ample research has demonstrated that tactile stimulation is extremely important for development and maintenance of physiological and psychological regulation in infants, children and adults (Field, 1995; Montagu, 1978). Touch has been an essential part of ancient healing practices. Touch has roots in shamanic and religious practices, and is reported to have been an integral part of health care practices and medicine since their emergence from the realms of religion and magic (Smith, Clance & Imes, 1997).

#### Touch and Human Development

There has been a vast array of studies shedding light on the role of skin and physical touch in human development. The sensory system, the skin, is the most important organ system of the body, because unlike other senses, a human being cannot survive without the physical and behavioral functions performed by the skin. Among all the senses, touch stands paramount (Montagu, 1967). Before Montagu published his classic book, Harlow set the stage for our understanding of the importance of touch for

emotional, physiological and interpersonal development in human and non-human infants. Dr. Harry Harlow (1905-1981) was a psychologist who specialized in primate studies and whose life's work was the study of love. In Harlow's studies of rhesus monkeys in the 1950's, he found that those monkey babies who were nursed using a wire "mother" were less affectionate than those nursed by a cloth "mother." Touch and early affection were the factors that influenced their differences. Even a banana-munching chimp got more than just bottled milk from leaning up against a figure covered with fabric!" (Britton, 2002). In line with Harlow, Montagu concludes: "When the need for touch remains unsatisfied, abnormal behavior will result". Primarily Euro-American cultures in general, particularly that of North American white-Anglos, have developed a set of unspoken taboos in regard to touch. Hyperactive children tend to have negative reactions to being touched and clinicians are alerted to be aware of the profound social implications of this sensitivity. Harlow's research shows us that even at its most primal, touch can feel good. From cradle to grave, humans need to touch and be touched (Britton, 2002).

Adolescents may be particularly sensitive to dimensions of control with regard to touch and may react negatively to touch that could be interpreted as patronizing or unduly familiar. A growing body of literature has linked aggressive, violent, and antisocial behaviors to early childhood touch deprivation. These children grow up with a diminished ability to feel, and a reduced ability to initiate or receive touch. In one study, the staff of an adolescent treatment program modeled nonsexual, nonviolent touch to incorporate physical contact as an acceptable aspect of the milieu. They found that the

adolescents demonstrated a marked decrease in violent and sexual behaviors ((Hunter & Struve, 1997)

Virginia Satir, family therapist prescribes the following: We need 4 hugs a day for survival. We need 8 hugs a day for maintenance. We need 12 hugs a day for growth  
”I believe the greatest gift I can conceive of having from anyone is to be seen by them, heard by them, to be understood and touched by them. The greatest gift I can give is to see, hear, understand, and to touch another person. When this is done I feel contact has been made” (Worwood, 1991).

#### Psychological Perspectives on Touch and Sexuality: Influence of Sensual Touch

*Skin touching skin—arousing all the other senses in my body... Eyes closed, I drink in erotic notions as sensual finger tips trace the length of my inner thigh. The continuous soft stroking of my skin takes me to heights of desire, waking my libido as never before. Every inch of skin on my body hungers (Lee, unpublished).*

At the very heart of sex is our need for touch. The secret connection between touch and sex is crucial to understand for it is here that humanity falls into a ravine of terrible suffering. Touch and sex are different ends of a spectrum; one represents the intensification of the other. Touch moves energy and depending on the type of touch, where the touch, and the motive and intent of the touch, the amount of energy that moves varies. The human body is electric and needs grounding through physical touch. The activity of the billions of nerve cells in the brain and the central and peripheral nerve systems are all highly electric in nature and all have their grounding points in the skin, which is the largest organ of the body, as we mentioned before. When we touch or are touched we ground some of our surplus energies and this calms the nervous system

(Worwood ,1991). Touch goes both ways, too – through giving and receiving. It doesn't take much to bring you into that realm of “feel good” stuff. Even the slightest level or amount of skin-to-skin contact makes a difference in gratifying the basic human need for touch (Britton, 2002).

Lovemaking is obviously a good time to touch each other for this is often the only time when we are completely naked and have our entire naked skin available, ready and willing to be touched in any erogenous zone. Erogenous means “arouses sexual desire.” Men and women should know and understand their own erogenous zones and the erogenous zones of their partners. The word erogenous comes from the mythological Greek god, Eros, the God of Love and son of Aphrodite, the Goddess of Love. The Romans called him Cupid, usually depicted as the little cherub with white wings and a bow and arrow taking aim at the hearts of lovers (daSilva, 1984).

This vital knowledge about the very sensitive parts of the body will enable them to sexually “turn on” their partners and to perform much better themselves, resulting in deeply gratifying high wattage orgasms. If we know where the sexual switches are located, we can turn them on. Men's erogenous zones that are known as maximum sensitivity are the genital organ, lips and tongue and the nose and eyelids. Other highly sensitive zones for men are the ear lobes, neck, shoulders, nipples, navel, lower back and the inner sides of the thighs (Janus, 1992).

The erogenous zones in women also are gauged as maximum sensitivity and high sensitivity. The maximum sensitivity zones for women are genital organs, lips and tongue, eyelids and nose, breasts and nipples. The high sensitivity erogenous zones in women are her cheeks, her ears, her neck, shoulders, waist, hands buttocks and of course

her inner thighs. These erogenous zones have a very high concentration of nerve endings and special receptors. The electric sensations of the erogenous zones are transmitted to the brain sexual centers which return the messages to the respective sexual organs (Kaplan, 1974).

Sexual touch tends to gravitate to the well known erogenous zones like the neck, ears, shoulders, back, breasts, nipples, thighs, buttocks, the genitals, hips and sides of the body. How we touch is very important. As when we loose touch because we are too lustful, with the more delicate and sensuous aspects of touch. Touch for many is simply a form of foreplay which leads to the main event where mind gets ahead of the heart because we concentrate too much on the goal of intercourse and eventual orgasm (Levand, 1991).

The three phases of eroticism and sexuality are proception, acception, and conception. In the proception phase the activities are solicitation, using the sense of sight; attraction, using the sense of smell, and courtship, using the sense of touch through skin-to-skin contact. In human mating, Money tells us that proception goes under the name of courtship when it lasts over a long period of time prior to the acceptive phase. Shorter duration of time in the proception phase would include flirting, necking, petting and foreplay and them perhaps on to sexual intercourse. Proception is the phase of invitation, of solicitation and seduction. The communications that constitute proception may be vocal or may be expressed in body language with direct cues that include pressure of the touch which a lover indicates that seduction has been completed; the time for sexual copulation has begun (Money, 1980).



When we look and pay too much attention to the end results of intercourse/orgasm we really lose much of the potential joy and pleasure of simple touch. When we touch with the intent to stimulate and excite we are adding our thoughts and desires into our touch and play. Touch is a form of sensuality, the wholesome enjoyment of the body's senses. The universal intelligence gave us our senses and the ability to enjoy them and feel pleasure through them for health reasons and for the benefit of our emotional and physical well-being (Rolf, 1978).

What's love got to do with it? Can we live without touch? Can we live without love? Sexuality, intense touch, offers even greater pleasure with enhanced effect especially if it is accompanied by love. "What do you mean, you can't live without love?" Albert Ellis would cry. "Utter nonsense. Love comes rarely in life, and if you waste your life mooning over its all too ordinary absence, you are bringing on your own depression. You are living under a tyranny of *should's*. Stop '*should-ing*' on yourself" (Ellis, 1966). Touch, on the other hand is a very necessary element in nurturing ourselves and others.

Touching, according to Masters and Johnson, is how intimacy is born. Long before sexual attraction exists as anything more than natural curiosity about anatomical differences, little boys and girls know that the mysterious feelings drawing them into the adventure of mutual exploration are excitingly, frighteningly wrong. To be naked is to be avoided at any cost. The degree of discomfort may vary as embarrassment for some, shame for others, guilt for the rest, but the children have absorbed from the adult world the idea that the human body is indecent. While looking or being looked at is bad enough,

worse by far is touching or being touched. "Don't touch!" This lesson is taught early in life and remains deeply ingrained (Masters & Johnson, 1974).

Our culture is highly sexual but not very sensual. For many adults, only two kinds of touching seem acceptable: the superficial and ritualized and the sexual. We have sensualised touching to the point where all but the most superficial types are thought to be sexual invitations. One of the sad consequences of this is that couples complain they don't cuddle anymore (Masters & Johnson, 1966)

As this Zilbergeld poem portrays, hugging is good:

Hugging  
Feels good  
Dispels loneliness  
Overcomes tears  
Opens doors to feelings  
Builds self esteem (Wow, she actually wants to hug me!)  
Fosters altruism (I can't believe it, but I actually want to hug that old son of a gun.)  
Slows down ageing; huggers stay younger longer  
Helps curb appetite; we eat less when we are nourished by hugs...and when our arms are  
busy wrapped around others"

This is further illustrated by Bernie Zilbergeld in one story he relates:

"Sex is fine and that's great. But there's more. This closeness and cuddling stuff is really something. I never would have believed that I, of all people would like it. Never even occurred to me to try it. Our lives are better because of it. I've gotten addicted to having my feet rubbed and licked and its great. And this you'll never believe; it's helped us with our kids. They were shocked when I started touching them, but they've gotten used to it and we all touch more now. ... Makes us feel closer" (Zilbergeld, 1993).

In *The Hite Report*, one of the participants sums up the value of touching. "Touch brings feelings of warmth, security, comfort, and tenderness. It makes me feel more human, and gives me a sense of kinship, belonging and acceptance. Besides it feels good! But where are all these people that let you touch them like that?!! As Johnson and Masters say "Touch is an end in itself. It is a primary form of communication, a silent voice that avoids the pitfall of words while expressing the feelings of the moment. It bridges the physical separateness from which no human being is spared, literally establishing a sense of solidarity between two individuals." (Hite, 1996)

Healthy attitudes to ourselves as sexual beings should be provided by our families. If they have difficulty showing warmth or understanding towards us, or touch inappropriately, from what message does that give to us to learn?

For many women with disabilities, touching has often been abusive. 53 percent of women born with disabilities in Canada have been abused. This is a staggering and very sad figure. But what is being done about it? The UN Standard Rules states the responsibility as an individual responsibility but I believe it needs to go further with some governmental legislative protection. The Rules state: "Persons with disabilities and their families need to be fully informed about taking precautions against sexual and other forms of abuse. Persons with disabilities are particularly vulnerable to abuse in the family, community or institutions and need to be educated on how to avoid the occurrence of abuse, recognize when abuse has occurred and report on such acts." This takes courage (Hite, 1996).

Hite tells us about a wheelchair bound author who writes of her fantasy.

I dream of an attractive (Kris Kristofferson), well built (Dustin Hoffman) type of man loving and making love to me. I need a romantic man who will carry me in his arms to bed with gentle softness. I need a man who can accept the idea that my sexual pleasure lies with sincerity in touching where I have sensation, rather than manual craftsmanship. I need a man who can gain personal pleasure from my body without fear of giving me physical or mental pain. I am a strong young woman, not a feeble cripple. I have the basic sexual desires of other women my age. I have goals and dreams, just as everyone else. Undoubtedly, a man who decides to have a relationship with me will have to be in a class all of his own. He will need a very special kind of understanding, patience, acceptance and love. This is current fantasy, my future reality" (Hite, 1996).

For some, intercourse is rarely, or never, possible. But it can be a great mistake to see the goal of intercourse as the only reason for making love. Sadly, for many able-bodied couples it is all there is; two or three minutes of mechanical activity. They miss the delight of gentle and prolonged love making with no essential, predictable goal, centered on shared pleasuring rather than tumultuous release. Such expression is a joy in itself and is valid whether or not it culminates in intercourse. "A loving, determined and resourceful couple, regardless of the disability of one or both partners, can find ways to fulfill their sexual needs and give them both maximum pleasure" (Hite, 1996).

People Magazine ran an article September, 2004 about 'cuddling parties' called *Group Hug*, where brave souls across the country get cozy. Cuddle parties, where everyone snuggles, prove that you don't have to be sexual to get love and affection. The latest craze will cost an entry fee of \$30.00 for the privilege of rubbing shoulders and feet and elbows. Sex and booze free hugfests is where about a dozen people get cozy with the help of a "lifeguard" who monitors the tactile fulfillment mass snuggling. Many participants say this really beats Prozac. It is rehab for lonely skin hungry people with a website. Cuddle parties, the brainchild of an amateur masseur, has its own peculiar etiquette and ambience. Music is mellow, stuffed animals are permitted but fooling

around isn't. "Cuddle-snuggle monsters", as the participants are called say they feel safe because there are boundaries and it is nice to get to know somebody lying down (Bohnert, 2004).

Despite all brave talk of a permissive society, the sad fact is that the world is still shrouded in a fog of sexual ignorance" (Delvin, 1998).

Sexuality is much more than sexual feelings or sexual intercourse. It is an important part of who a person is and what she/he will become. It includes all the feelings, thoughts and behaviors associated with being female or male, being attractive and being in love, as well as being in relationships that include sexual intimacy and sensual and sexual activity. It also includes enjoyment of the world as we know it through the five senses: taste, touch, smell, hearing, and sight. Sensuality, the awareness and feeling about your own body, allows us to enjoy the pleasure our bodies can give us and others. This part of our sexuality affects our behavior in satisfying skin hunger—the need to be touched and held by others in loving, caring ways is often referred to as skin hunger. Adolescents typically receive considerably less touch from their parents than do younger children. Many teens satisfy their skin hunger through close physical contact with peers. Sexual intercourse may sometimes result from a teen's need to be held, rather than from sexual desire (Heller, M., 1991).

What's going on under the skin? What touch can trigger. Is it real love, or just the feeling of powerful brain chemicals stoked by the touch of that special someone? Neurologists have studied the biological and chemical changes that can be brought about by sexual desire, infatuation or love—all of which can be intensified by touch. Skin-to-

skin touching, hugging and kissing help fire up “nature’s” love cocktail – a powerful chemical concoction that drastically and dramatically changes our brain chemistry. This puts a person under the influence and works marvelously when handled correctly and depressingly if not handed correctly (Love, 1994).

The connection between skin-to-skin contact and sex are neurobiological effects of touch. We don’t need a slew of studies to convince us that sexual energy runs high in the infatuated state, but neurologists report that the sexual euphoria accompanying infatuation is a direct result of the love cocktail (Love, 1994).

Although our culture teaches us there is something wrong with us if we can’t keep our sex life at its original fever pitch our need for skin-to-skin contact becomes more apparent at this time in life. At midlife, more and more women become comfortable with telling the truth about their sexuality to themselves and with others. Touching becomes more important and much more meaningful. Psychiatrist Helen Singer Kaplan, a pioneer in the field of human sexuality, originated the term “hot monogamy,” using it to refer to the potential for enduring sexual passion in a committed, monogamous relationship. Dr. Patricia Love has identified nine factors that help sustain that state of desire. These nine factors interconnect with each other, so that progress in one of the nine steps to rekindling libido will have beneficial effects in the other (Northrop, 1994).

To enhance the libido, women in mid-life must be willing to relax and involve all the senses in their lovemaking. Sensual touch can be achieved by the practice of giving each other foot and shoulder rubs. Learn to receive. Due to the learned discomfort and shame of touch that was mentioned early, many women have difficulty lying still and

receiving pleasure in this way. It may be necessary to cultivate a sensual relationship with yourself if no partner is in the picture (Northrop, 2001).

Tantric Sex: "Sensuality" refers to our senses and their corresponding organs: physical touch/skin, visual-sight/eyes, auditory-hearing/ears, olfactory-smell/nose, and gustatory-taste/taste buds. We might also include the mysterious intuitive and instinctual sixth sense. Often the developmental road from infancy to adulthood is rough and uneven, leaving us less than fully functional. Someone who suffers from the effects of abuse, attack or neglect may lose their ability to feel, see, hear, etc, or may tune out stimuli as an unconscious attempt to feel safe and in control of life's challenges. "Sensate Focus" therapy and conscious breathing may help. Another kind of sensual imbalance caused by fearfulness or anxiety is to focus outwardly to the exclusion of the inner world, or vice versa, to be shy, withdrawn and a loner to the point of isolation. On the up side, you may be functioning well and desire to expand and deepen your sensitivities. You would choose a teacher or mentor to help you enhance your intuitive imaginable faculties, and your body's natural "gut" knowing. You might also seek to learn Tantric practices to develop your sensing abilities for lovemaking. Sensual wholeness is very necessary to sexual fulfillment, but is not exactly the same thing. We can define "Sexuality" as everything pertaining to engaging in sex or physical lovemaking; but this is only a piece of the field or what qualified therapy, healing and even enhancement training is about. Sexuality refers to our male and female bodies, self esteem, our masculine and feminine gender identities, how we deeply feel about ourselves as men and women. Wholeness also includes how we communicate about all this (Love, 1994).

Sensual touch is touch for the pleasure it gives – lavishing in touch for its own sake or to bring two people closer together. Sensual touch can lead to the next two levels of touch along the continuum, erotic and sexual. Erotic touch is usually associated with good old foreplay to sex—it is those kinds of intimate touches, such as deep kissing or petting that lead to skin-to-skin contact of sexual intercourse. Sexual touch can be as simple as kissing, but also can involve anything two naked bodies might do together, including petting, oralgenital contact, penile-vaginal intercourse, Gspot stimulation, anal sex, or whatever else couples can dream of. Using your bodies – including your genitals – for sexual pleasure is what distinguishes skin-to-skin contact sexual touch from other kinds of touch (Berman & Berman, 1999).

Sex should be pleasure sharing at its best when it flows without obstruction and with love. But so strong is the need for touch and intimacy (desperation) that many get obsessed to sex without love for there is still an intense short term effect with loveless sex that makes up, seemingly, for the lack of love, intimacy and tender touch we often have to face in normal daily family life (Levand, 1991).

How a man pleases a woman starts with foreplay. Body, hers: “Keep in mind that skin is our largest sexual organ, and the entire body, from head to toe, is one big erogenous zone. This is especially true of women, as the female body is generally smaller than the male and the same numbers of nerves are consequently dispersed across a smaller surface area; hence the number of sensitive receptors is proportionally larger on the female body. Second, the female skin is generally thinner and less hairy than the male, so sensations are more clearly felt. Sex researchers have observed that some women can reach orgasm by simply having their eyebrows stroked or their earlobes



kissed. As Voltaire wrote, ‘love is a canvas furnished by Nature and embroidered by imagination.’ (Kerner, 2003)

Perhaps today’s young couples are looking for a better chance to avoid living out their lives in married celibacy. They seem to be more free to talk about sex and, if recent indications are credited, free to express themselves physically as well. Whether this development is a passing fashion or a lasting change in style remains to be seen as these very young men and women pair off to create a future together. Perhaps they will succeed in incorporating into their sexual lives a new philosophy of touch. Hopefully they will understand that touching, like seeing, hearing, tasting and smelling, nourishes the pleasure of being alive; that touching another human being satisfies that profound creature need not to feel alone; that being touched by another being satisfies the need to be desired as a physical presence; and that in touching and being touched by a trusted and trusting person of the opposite sex, one experiences not only the pleasure of being alive but the joy of being a sexual creature – a joy that ultimately and inevitable, as a natural extension of life itself, expresses itself in the sexual embrace (Masters & Johnson, 1986).

### The Use of Touch in Therapy

#### Cutaneous Deprivation and Other Pathologies

Can anyone really ever get used to not being touched? Can the consequences of touch deprivation ever be overcome without touch? We are born with an intense skin hunger. The hunger for touch is a real human need. As babies we have a deep need for touch. Our healthy development is interfered with if that touch is not forthcoming. When an infant does not receive regular oxytocin-producing responsive care, the resultant stress responses cause elevated levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Chronic cortisol elevations

in infants and the hormonal and functional adjustments that go along with it are shown in biochemical studies to be associated with permanent brain changes that lead to elevated responses to stress throughout life, such as higher blood pressure and heart rate. Touch is a God given need that we never outgrow and it can be enjoyed for its own sake. Holding hands, being held in someone's arms, to hug, receive a nonsexual massage, our face and arms stroked, be cuddled have actual physiological effects on our biochemical and bio-energetic systems. Brain wave activity is increased resulting in an increased alertness. The amount of insulin needed in diabetics is reduced, hormone levels increase and sleep patterns are enhanced. Therefore, touch is physically necessary and beneficial to our entire sense of well-being (Palmer, 2002).

The proven power of touch is evident in study after study which has shown that therapeutic touch can make a profound difference to the healing process of a variety of different ailments. In a 1999 study of agitated patients with Alzheimer's disease, it was shown that the more physical expressions of the patient's state would be calmed with long-stroke massage. A previous study had shown massage to be similarly effective in reducing fidgeting in children who have been diagnosed with ADHD (Montagu, 1976).

Though there are spiritual, religious and psychological pathways which ignore the psychology of touch and model life without warmth and tenderness, we can safely doubt these life courses and whether they serve the maturation of our beings. The cold clinical no touch fifty-minute hour is only one example of this lack of warmth and tenderness of touch. Perhaps one of the reasons clinical psychology and many forms of therapy are so slow and expensive is that even the most innocent and tender touches are avoided with

great fear. Many therapists are trained to greatly fear meeting their patients on the streets. To actually touch the clients, to hold a hand is equivalent with acts punishable by excommunication from their own professional church. The importance and need for touch cannot be overstated. The words of Father X, a Catholic Priest convicted and treated for child sexual abuse brings this all home.

“Physical touch was often all that I needed or wanted. Just some closeness, skin-to-skin contact. My arms around him. But then the sexual need or lust, I am not sure how to explain it, would just kick in, and I would find myself touching and fondling genitals.” “My reaching to them was not to harm them. I was reaching for affection, for intimacy, reaching out to belong, to have someone who would be my friend.”

This is an obvious case of cutaneous deprivation, a deep hole in this man’s being, a severe hunger for touch, closeness and affection that was not being provided to him through normal means. This was a man cut off from touch, intimacy, information, and love. He was being set up for a big fall, through desperation, he reached out inappropriately to children to satisfy his emotional needs (Ackerman, 1990).

The hunger for touch is a real human need and those who put people on starvation diets of touch are abusing a being’s real need as well as setting the stage for emotional disturbances, suffering, and possible future cases of abuse. The need for touch is not a sickness; it only becomes a sickness when we are deprived of normal levels of touch and physical affection. Abuse comes from the separate space, from the feeling of loneliness and isolation, and from the desperate space of need. To touch is to heal but abusive touch is a sickness for it causes only pain (Worwood, 1991).

When a person has not been touched in along while a simple and tender touch can send a person into a flood of tears for the heart feels the release of tension abruptly (Cutler, 1999).

The skin hunger or cutaneous deprivation is a documented physiological condition recognized by the medical and psychiatric community. Essentially this cutaneous deprivation is a ‘failure to thrive’ syndrome. Social workers at city orphanages discovered earlier in this century, that babies who received no physical contact such as cuddling, rocking, kisses, swaddling, eye to eye contact—beyond the minimum of daily maintenance became withdrawn, sickly, and some finally died. The conclusion of their discovery seemed to be that human beings require a certain level of daily skin-to-skin contact in order to survive. A massage therapist recalls a nun with a back problem who would often cry with joy during treatment for a back problem. She simply enjoyed the feeling of the hands on her bare back – a feeling she had not had much opportunity to experience before. She would walk out afterwards feeling happy, simply from having been touched. An expert massage, even when not done to heal specific problem, helps promote better overall health by stimulating circulation, relaxing tense muscles and encouraging efficient lymph drainage (Krieger,1992)

Many people actually become sick because they are touch-starved. Unconsciously seeking a similar type of attention and healing, their pain comes out in the form of physical illness. Their fondest memories of childhood are those of their mother rubbing their forehead, the skin-to-skin contact of their caregiver. Studies performed at the University of Miami Medical School’s Touch Research Institute, indicate that physical

touch reduces stress. Modern medicine generally tends to treat the symptom and not the disease since an estimated 80% of Americans suffer from stress-related disorders. Even if the patient has his symptoms cured, there may be underlying causes including touch-starvation which are not addressed. The disease will manifest sooner or later in another form even though the symptoms were treated (Caplan, 1998).

Touch starvation or skin hunger is also the condition that applies to our later years. Older children and adults may have received adequate contact as babies but, for many and various reasons of neglect, no longer receive that same level of touch. This causes them to become isolated and defensive, suffer intense feelings of loneliness, and may develop a number of neuroses and personality disorders such as schizophrenia or multiple personality disorders. Their blood circulation deteriorates which causes them to become hypersensitive to temperature changes and a loss of tactile sensitivity is not uncommon. This same deprivation is very common in victims of physical and sexual abuse. The most effective therapy along with mental health counseling is a regular schedule of full body massage by a monitored, licensed masseur. Trust is a very big issue with skin hunger patients and therapists usually have to prove their trustworthiness before any progress is made. This condition can also be caused by social isolation. Anyone who has withdrawn from the world due to disease or major accident or breaking up with a loved one suddenly feels as if there's this aching void between empty arms. This is rudimentary skin hunger (Dawn Lee, 2002).

Dr. Winnifred Cutler, director of the Athena Institute for Women's Wellness Research in Pennsylvania tells us that our hands can also literally act as extensions of our

heart. With our heart and hands working together we can reach directly into another person's being through the surface of their skin. We can touch someone very deeply and when we do we are touched equally. The laws of receiving work perfectly in the world of touch. When we forget about technique and just make love to tension spots, without worry or care as to the outcome, we enter the magic of touch. We enter the field of healing for when we put our full heart into our hands our skin becomes a healing instrument (Cutler, 1991)

Touching and being touched is a basic human need. Skin hunger is something that happens to people who are unable to reach out for what they need. So basic a human need is touch that neither children nor adults can live without it. Children who live in abusive homes, deprived of touch, have been known to wither and die. The need for touch is real, and persists throughout our lives. Touch tells us we are safe, cared for and have value. People who are sure of a warm embrace are happier, more alert, more willing and able to communicate. Hunger. That is what it feels like. A craving for human contact—an aching need to be touched by a compassionate human being, be it a hug, warm skin-to-skin contact, a hand on an arm, or gentle back massage. However, unlike belly hunger, skin hunger doesn't rumble for attention. It may even masquerade as depression, hallucinations, moodiness, anxiety irritability, boredom, pain and many other symptoms or states of mind that can be mistakenly attributed to disease or physical conditions (Montagu, 1967).

The continuum of sensual touch moves from lesser to greater levels of intimacy and personal exposure where sensual massage fits in. Healing is the kind of touch that

you might pay massage therapist for, but healing touches can also come from a friend for his or her own gratification or from a nurse during a hospital stay. Your mate can administer healing touch if he or she knows how to channel healing energy with their hands (Palmer, 2002).

Affection is where touch is used to show friendship, caring, and nurturance. Touch can be playful, light or silly. Guys patting each other's butts on a football field is a sign of affection, support and encouragement (Colton, 1983).

Irvan D. Yalom's unique belief that the clinician and client must develop an intimate relationship before therapy can be beneficial dispelled the no touching rule. As fellow travelers he acknowledged that all have something to bear and the simple act of touching a patient (holding hands) moved Dr. Yalom and the boundaries of doctor/patient that had previously stifled therapy were suddenly gone. Dr. Yalom ends each session with some type of touch: a handshake, a clasp of the shoulder, and in some cases a hug (Yalom, p188). Referring to Yalom's method of therapy, a client shared, "During a time when I felt there were no answers to who I was, and felt so alone, I sought therapy. The woman counselor, at the end of a very emotional session, leaned forward from her chair and touched the back of my hand. The powerful act brought us both to tears. At that moment, I felt like someone was truly concerned about me. I will cherish that moment forever; I was no longer alone". Alexander Lowen and Ida Rolf, building on Reich's body armour concepts, began to access early traumatic material through body pain and dysfunction. The notion of touch as a therapeutic tool was born (Yalom, 1980).

The most beautiful forms of touch possible are actually healing techniques. Healing with the hands brings to on of the most beautiful aspects of touch. When we tune our consciousness to healing, we can do wonderful things with our hands. Massage is both a healing and relaxing anti stress type of touch. The quality of massage has much more to do with the quality of the practitioner's consciousness than on the particular technique they are using. How much they are able to get out of there minds and into their hands and into the feeling of the body is mission critical for a good massage. The more the practitioner is able to relax internally the deeper the relaxation transmitted and received through the massage. There are other healing approaches that take us into the subtle realms of touch. Healing and health systems like Reiki and Polarity are what used to be called "Laying on of the Hands." These approaches basically have us touch a person without any movement at all of the hands. There is no pressure applied, no technique, just the pure application of touch. Though each system gives different instructions to the minds that study them, the end technique is basically the same. Just simply put warm hands on certain areas of the body and just hold them there. Reiki has become effective enough to get the attention of some medical people and hospitals that understand that it can help their patients through some trying moments. If touch is defined as love then love is healing and loving touch is super healing. Touch is the transmission from one person to another and it always communicates something. Our hands can become the conduit of not only our good intentions, but on the actual vibration of being (Worwood, 1991).

Attachment and bonding books talk about holding your child. Re-parenting is holding your child. Attachment therapists may hold your child as vital part of healing therapy. Out-of-control children may need to be firmly held. Touching, patting, and skin-



to-skin contact help create the most important connection between parent and child (Ward, 2001).

Attachment has been defined as the “lasting psychological connectedness between human beings” (Bowlby, 1969, p. 164). Bowlby’s (1969) ethological-evolutionary theory of attachment proposes that attachment is one of the most vital building blocks for normal human development. It begins in-utero (Verny & Kelly, 1981) between mother and child, helping the “child to develop a sense of self and identity”. Besides providing necessary safety and protection for the young, it is through attachment that a child learns basic trust, and regulation of impulses and emotions. The development of a sense of competence, empathy, and resilience results from secure attachment and forms the base for balance between autonomy and dependence (Heller, S., 1997).

Henry Ford Health System as well as LaLeche League recommends Kangaroo care (or skin-to-skin). This is a way of holding your baby to allow him or her to be closer to you. The infant is held naked (except for a diaper) between the mothers breasts or next to the father’s chest. What are the advantages?

For the baby:

Being soothed by listening to the sound of the parent’s heartbeat

- Being calmed by the gentle rocking of a parent’s breathing
- A more stable heart rate and more regular breathing
- Stimulation to breastfeed and gain the benefits of human milk
- Improved circulation and better use of oxygen throughout the body
- Longer periods of alertness and longer periods of sleep
- More rapid weight gain
- Increased likelihood of being discharged from the hospital earlier

For the parents

- Feeling of special closeness with the infant
- Mother feels more confident in her ability to care for the baby
- A sense of control over caring for their infant
- Stimulates production of breastmilk
- Parents are more relaxed in the high-tech atmosphere of the NICU (Natal Intensive Care Unit)
- Parents are more comfortable in taking the baby home. (Field, 1995)

*Attached. Connected. Bonded.* Even the words used to describe intimacy imply touch. Influenced by Freud's identification of the first year of life as the oral stage, we believed for decades that our babies attach to us because we feed them. In the late 1950's Harlow's research was a turning point that fundamentally changed how we view the mother-baby relationship (Heller, 1997).

There is a serious need for genuine affection in an impersonal world. We are famished for the most basic needs for human contact and closeness. We are living with a feeling of deep disconnection and fear. We sense that something has gone very wrong, but we have no idea what. We are the touch-starved, love-starved products of the material world (Caplan, 1998).

“When a child is hit on the buttocks...this kind of violent touch can be sexualized in the child's mind not only because of a real flow of blood into the genitalia, but also because of a longing for intimacy with the parent: if painful physical touch is the only fulfillment of that longing, then this can ‘feel good’ (Hite, 1995). Being beaten excites children sexually because it is an intense excitation of the erogenous zones of the skin of the buttocks and of the muscles below the skin (Fenichel, 1945).

The hunger for touch is a real human need almost as important as food. And just as intimacy can be seen differently from love and sex, though they often combine the

two, touch is also an activity in itself and can be a wholly satisfying experience (Simon, et al, 1976).

Touch is not a means to an end, it is an end in itself. Touch is a primary form of communication, a silent voice that avoids the pitfall of words while expressing feelings of the moment. It bridges the physical separateness from which no human being is spared, literally establishing a sense of solidarity between two individuals. Touching is sensual pleasure, exploring the texture of skin, the suppleness of muscle, the contours of the body, with no further goal than enjoyment of tactile perceptions. And yet such is the nature of the sense of touch, which can simultaneously give and receive impressions, that the very pleasure a woman may experience in stroking her husband's face, for example, is relayed back through her fingertips to give him the pleasure of being aware of her pleasure in him (Masters & Johnson, 1974).

. “We need to share ourselves with each other as surely as we need to breathe. But just as surely, that sharing cannot be accomplished on a merely verbal level. What we need to communicate is more primal, more basic, than language. We need to touch; feel skin on our skin, and feel it often. Every human being needs to touch and be touched. Each of us has thoughts and feelings so deep and personal that words will simply not bear their weight. And yet, we long to communicate them, to share them with another. Our most intense joy is amplified and given permanence by being shared” (Young, 1995). Our deepest fears and anxieties are made enduring and manageable by being shared. But they can only be truly shared in their full depth and significance when they are shared in the totality of who we are. They cry out for touch.

*I would like you to touch me as if you were blind,  
Knowing that you love me, but unable to see me.*

*Touch my face, my breasts, my belly, my toes...  
Learn what I “look” like, imagine me in your  
Mind as your hands explore my shape (Levand, 1991).*

Our hands can literally act as extensions of our heart. With our heart and hands working together we can reach directly into another person’s being through the surface of their skin. We can touch someone very deeply and when we do we are touched equally. The laws of giving and receiving work perfectly in the world of touch (Levand, 1991)

Touch is an activity in itself, and is wholly satisfying, healing and a necessary life experience. Touch does not need to lead to sex and it helps all of us to realize that. Touch in the form of massage, affection, hugs, cuddles and plain pure tenderness diffuses emotional tension. It grounds the entire system and touches our souls (Levand, 1991).

All humans hunger for touch skin-to-skin: The greatest sense in our body is our touch sense. It is probably the chief sense in the processes of sleeping and waking; it gives knowledge of depth or thickness and form; we feel, we love and hate, are touchy and are touched, through the touch corpuscles of our skin (Montagu, 1976).

*Beings in union love each other, touch each other,  
Need each other, heal each other.  
We are here on earth to touch each other physically,  
As well as spiritually, emotionally and mentally.*

## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology

The goal of our research is to go from the general to the specific without losing sight of what makes the subject of a study unique. This study utilizes grounded theory qualitative research. The primary objective of grounded theory is to expand upon an

explanation of a phenomenon by identifying the key elements of that phenomenon, and then categorizing the relationships of those elements to the context and process of the experiment. Grounded theory contains many unique characteristics that are designed to maintain the "groundedness" of the approach. Strauss & Corbin, authors of *Basics of Qualitative research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* are two of the model's greatest advocates, and define it as follows: "The grounded theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop an inductively derived grounded theory about a phenomenon". This method of research is intended to provide the researcher with opportunities to increase the "density" and "saturation" of recurring categories, as well as to assist in providing follow-up procedures in regards to unanticipated results. Data collection and analysis are consciously combined, and initial data analysis is used to shape continuing data collection. Interlacing data collection and analysis in this manner is also designed to increase insights and clarify the parameters of the emerging theory. Simultaneously, the method supports the actions of initial data collection and preliminary analyses before attempting to incorporate previous research literature. This is anticipated to guarantee that the analysis is based in the data and that pre-existing constructs do not influence the analysis and/or the subsequent formation of the theory. If existing theoretical constructs are utilized, they must be justified in the data.

Grounded theory provides detailed and systematic procedures for data collection, analysis and theorizing, but it is also concerned with the quality of emergent theory. Strauss & Corbin state that there are four primary requirements for judging a good grounded theory: 1) It should fit the phenomenon, provided it has been carefully derived

from diverse data and is adherent to the common reality of the area; 2) It should provide understanding, and be understandable; 3) Because the data is comprehensive, it should provide generality, in that the theory includes extensive variation and is abstract enough to be applicable to a wide variety of contexts; and 4) It should provide control, in the sense of stating the conditions under which the theory applies and describing a reasonable basis for action (Strauss, 1987).

The nature of this study lends itself naturally to a qualitative analysis of the data collected because it entails an examination of the impact of skin-to-skin tactile on the sexual lives of selected individuals. Material was generated to provide the necessary data for examination through the kind of “pragmatic analytic operations used by everybody in thinking about everyday problems.” The material was generated by using a variety of specialized nonmathematical techniques described by Strauss (1987). Some of those techniques included interviews, tape recordings, transcripts, observations and letters.

This natural analysis approach applies the principles of Strauss’ grounded theory to the collected data and thus reporting on it at a more “complex, systematic, and interpretive level.” Strauss’s concepts of induction, deduction, and verification based on researcher experience and systematic analysis of the gathered data provided a model for this study.

A better understanding was proposed for the sex/skin-to-skin touch linkage by the use of “certain distinct features, such as theoretical sampling, and certain methodological guidelines, such as the making of constant comparisons, and the use of a coding paradigm, to ensure conceptual development and density” (Strauss 1987, 3,4).

A pilot interview (see Appendix B) is used as possibly our only defense against mistaken expectations. These pilot interviews seemed essential in order to create a foundation for an effective qualitative interview outline. Robert S. Weiss advocates the value of qualitative interviewing. He maintains in his book, *Learning from Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies* “Most of the significant events of people can become known to others only through interview” (1987, 3). The pilot interviews proved to provide an opportunity not only explore content, but also to learn about process and finding suitable language. The pilot interviews helped to generate lush open questions, and provide the basis for the emerging categories posited by Strauss’s grounded theory methodology. These categories included the impact of early memories, socialization restraints, and defining incidents. The initial conversations provided an avenue for the exciting possibilities of what Strauss (1987) terms the “main story.” A sample of the interview questionnaire is located in the Appendix C. Appendix A provides a participant consent form to maintain ethical consideration of all those who not only willingly participated, but shared some of their most glorious memories as well as a new found thrill in reliving some great moments in their lives.

## CHAPTER 4

### Results

#### Research findings:

A primary goal of this study was to consider the impact of skin-to-skin contact on the sex lives of individuals. Marshall (1995), in an argument for the generalizability of convenience samples said this, “Underneath the accidents of individuality lies an identity in structure and functioning among all members of our species.”

Seeking to reach the goals of this study and to consider the impact of skin-to-skin contact on the sex lives of individuals who were chosen to be a representative of professional men and women who work and make their home in the southern United States of American during the age of the new millennium.

The participant profiles were created from the demographic information sheet (Appendix B). The profiles were intended to give some idea of the social and early sexual as well as nurturing background so that the quotes from their personal interviews would be made more meaningful as well to confirm the requirements that made them eligible for this study. Some of the members of the study had such intuitive remarks that they were added as part of the response to enhance this study.

Rose, an intellect and entrepreneur, is a 54 year old twice-married, white female with two grown children and two grandchildren. She is still trying to recover from a two year divorce battle, rejected for another woman. This bitter divorce, initiated by the husband was a complete surprise after thirty four years of marriage. To escape the insanity of loneliness, she went back to college for another degree, this time a Master’s Degree in psychology. She considers herself as very spiritual but not necessarily



religious. At times she is very angry with God because of her loneliness and rejection. She considers her sex life during marriage as being inadequate at best, being blamed for the husband's impotency.

Rodney is a fifty year old white male who just recently reunited with his wife after a separation of nearly three years. He and his wife have a daughter under the age of six. He has been teaching English in Alternative schools for nearly twenty years. He considers himself to be somewhat religious and attends church with his family a few times a year. He was very active sexually as a teenager and throughout his college years. His growing up years were void of much affection or masculine role modeling and he appears very effeminate in his demeanor. He makes claims that he is not opposed to bi sexual encounters if the partner can be trusted.

Ken is close to sixty years old. He married for the second time to a Native American girl who is seventeen years younger than him. Together they have had seven children, the youngest child now being three years of age. He has two grown children from the first marriage. He attends a Baptist church with his family. Ken is a mental health professional but his passion is in drama and mass media. During his college years, he starred in several musicals. He remembers being aroused at a very early age but became very inhibited through guilt and shame as a result of his upbringing. His parents were not the "hands on" type, he says and he often sought out his grandmother who held him and sang to him. His father said she babied him too much.

Maria is of Cuban descent and is a self proclaimed lesbian. At age forty five, she is well read and a very successful business woman and grant writer. She spends much of her time finding the funds to assist wonderful causes and gets much satisfaction from her

work. She is very active sexually and has had the same partner for many years. She remembers masturbating at a very early age. Her first experience with sexual encounters with a male began at age 15 and she was not impressed. Her parents were very “huggy”, “touchy”, “feely” and she was bathed with her two sisters until she started her period at age eleven.

Sharon is an African American female, an only child who has been married once and then divorced. The marriage lasted only a short time. Until recently she has lived with her elderly parents while she completed her graduate degree. She recently purchased a home of her own and is in the process of moving. As a child, she was forced to practice piano for hours, took dance lessons and was a debutante when the time came. She was very protected by her doting parents and became very confused about her sexuality when her strict Christian Fundamentalist parents convinced her that only bad girls touched and allowed others to touch her. There was evidence of sexual abuse in her early childhood from her piano teacher, but the secret was kept and no one was to ever tell. Her sexual experience as a young woman became jaded when she began prostituting her self and lived the life of a drug addict.

Naomi is a retired professional who enjoys traveling to exotic places when she is not reading about exotic places. She has been widowed twice and has grown children who are forever trying to keep up with her. She sometimes speaks before women’s groups about investments to avoid loneliness. Her first sexual experience was with her first husband. They were both virgins when they married because that was the standard back then. She remembers sex being very frustrating and very messy and says that it took

years before she and her libido were one. Her “bathtub” has been her “best friend” for many years since her last husband’s death.

Randolph, a 55 year old male has been married only once and is now divorced. He has two grown daughters and a grandson. He has no formal education but enjoys a stable career and does well financially. He lives alone, considers himself to be somewhat spiritual but still angry at God because his life has not turned out as he would have liked. He is very concrete in his thinking and blames his lack of being nurtured enough on his mother who placed his step father’s need before his own. He cannot recall outward emotion shown in his family when he was a child. He is searching for a physical relationship but not able to let down the walls he has built to protect himself. His first sexual experience was with an older female who taught him much about his own masculinity.

The content of the questions asked during these interviews guided the coding of the qualitative categories used for data analysis. The number of topics covered depended primarily on the receptiveness, the openness and the candid responses of the one being interviewed.

Categories as a result of the interviews:

The effect of touch on sex life

*From intense identification*

*To cautious association*

The effect of touch in the initial attraction to others

*Clean is crucial*

*Skin texture is important*

*Tender touch is essential*

The effect of touch on erotic response

*Massaging with oils*

*Touch other than hands*

Sexuality and Sensuality

*Body Language*

*Rubbing*

*Licking and tongue movement*

Other thoughts on sex and skin-to-skin contact

*Response to touch*

*Energy from skin contact*

When the chapter was completed, the sorting of these categories were finally finished. Categories were crossed over by those being interviews into related sub-categories because the respondents felt free to associate with one topic more often and without being prompted.

Distinction in Sensitivity to the Effect of touch on Sex

Respondent's replies to first pilot question, "Has touch ever affected your sex life?" were all answered in the affirmative, but the degree of identification and level of intensity created divisive answers.

*From intense identification*

A resounding "Yes, of course" and "absolutely" came from Rodney and Randolph, "Oh Yeah", was Naomi's reply. Ken added to his loud "yes, in every way. I have orgasm just from touching m partner!" Maria and Rose added to their positive

answer with, “in every way, all over please”, “And how! Without touch there can be no foreplay. Massage my feet and toes to my buttocks and I’m all yours.”

#### *To cautious connection*

A hesitant “I guess”, response from Sharon who confessed that being touched was not a comfortable place she wanted to encounter for many years of her life. Randolph reflected with surprise, “I really never thought about this aspect before,” and then admitted, “I’m a very private person”.

#### The effect of skin contact

##### *Clean is crucial*

The thought of unwashed skin was a real turn off for everyone. Cleanliness was the most recurring theme for all those being interviewed.

Ken responded with, “Nothing turns me on like freshly scrubbed skin. I would be destitute without touch”.

Randolph makes showering part of foreplay so that he can experience the sweet taste of showered skin.

Rodney on the other hand likes the idea of giving his partner a bath, using his hand in order to feel the skin-to-skin contact on all parts of her body.

The gals were adamantly insulted about disgustingly dirty skin. “What a turnoff”, was Rose’s response. Maria chimed in with a quick answer of, “How gross, just the thought of unwashed stinky skin disgusts me”. Naomi could not image anyone preparing for sex or even being close without being “squeaky clean” and smelling good. Sharon not only insists on cleanliness but freshly shaved and rubbed with lotion or oil to insure softness of the skin”.

### *Skin texture is important*

Skin texture varies from person to person. Some have very coarse textured skin, with wide, easily seen skin ridges. Others have a very fine skin, with ridges that can be difficult to see without the aid of a very good light or a magnifying glass. And between these two extremes are many variations. Analysts tend to categorize skin into the texture grades such as: Very coarse, coarse, coarse/medium, medium, medium/fine, fine and very fine. On the face there may be many deeper wrinkles, particularly around the eyes. These become more marked with age and are significantly deepened by sun exposure and smoking. In skin heavily affected by the sun, patterns emerge, both coarse and fine. When we look at skin under a microscope it looks almost like a moon landscape, with hairs growing out of it. The patterns are more obvious and flakes of dead skin can be seen (Lowen, 1976).

“Rough hands on my body are not my idea of good foreplay”, Rose says. Ken replied, “Silky skin, almost heaven”. Rodney has experienced bad burns on the palms of his hands but insists that using the back of his hands along with arms and shoulders to enjoy the softness and smooth texture of a woman’s skin is very erotic to him. Maria could hardly contain herself when she piped up with, “I want her body to feel like a baby’s behind all over”. Naomi brought up some interesting remarks, “Older women have thinner skin, but usually much softer, maybe because we have finally taken the time to use lots of lotion and oils by this phase of our life. The skin may not be as subtle as it once was but the silkiness and softness make up for that. I think we also have a more tender touch.”

Sharon had to give herself a mini massage to come up with an answer about the texture of skin, “The back of the hand has a rougher feel than the palm of the hand on my neck and shoulders. I like my face being palmed in a very gentle way, with soft hands”.

### *Tender touch is essential*

All the respondents were in agreement that a passionate touch generates specialized sensations and that the touch of a loved one is indeed special. Tender caresses stimulate a different part of the nervous system than that activated by the everyday sensation of touch. Along with many researchers, we have long suspected that that specialized nerves are involved in transmitting information to the brain when the skin is being touched in a passionate or sensitive way. This is because these types of touches generate such a different response.

Rose, the intellect uses psychoanalysis on her need for tender touch this way, “the sense of touch is highly complex and triggers a multitude of nervous responses in me. I’m always trying to analyze and not just relax and enjoy”. Rodney expounded with, “Sexual energy is released with tender touch. I like to massage. I like to be massaged. I encourage my lover to breathe in a deep and relaxing manner as I gently massage her neck, making small circles over the release points on the upper neck and about halfway up the ears. Sometimes the massage is a prelude to lovemaking, so now I let the kissing begin. Be assured that a woman's breasts are highly charged with erotic energy and can create a dramatic arousal response when massaged or caressed”. Naomi, in her wisdom gave this sage advice, “Improvise! Relax, improvise and be creative, but always keep it tender. Gentle does it better every time”! Randolph is impatient, he says, “I sometimes forget to be tender when I want to get to the sex part. But on the other hand, I want to be tenderly touched and touched very slowly all over my body, preferable with her tongue and finger

tips. This has really given me so much food for thought. I had no idea there was so much to pleasuring a woman”.

Ken responded in a prolific, “Tender touching raises facial temperature and excites nervous loci in the back of my neck. There really is no where on my body that is off limits.” Maria closes her eyes as she contemplates the phantom touch. Her body movement becomes sensual and as her face softens, a smile lifts her lip. She moans and says, “Umm, umm... I can sense the tenderness of my lovers touch; her skin feels like rich warm oil on my thigh, my ass and now my breasts. I think I could have an orgasm just imagining this sensation right now”.

Cautious association left Sharon rigid and sad, “I have to force myself to allow any form of touch. It scares me and causes me to become really frigid. When I was a little girl, my aunt used what she called “tender touches” as she abused me sexually. She would get so aroused as she tenderly touched me all over my body, like rubbing her entire body with my naked body, slowly but very gently, it was freaky. She was naked too”.

#### The effect of touch on erotic response

The effect of touch on erotic response is basically how we communicate love in an effective way, a way that doesn't involve having to discuss the subject a great deal. It also works wonderfully on a basic physical level. There are a lot of nerve endings being stimulated in an erotic response.

Ken didn't have to think too long before responding, “I have been stimulated to orgasm by touching the naked vagina”.



Rodney admitted that he got very turned on as he reacted,

“I like creating a strong sense of expectation. A little goes a long way; the smallest gestures can imbue the banal with erotic energy and electrify the mundane. Gestures such as a glancing touch on the nape of the neck, furtive whispers, eye to eye contact while stroking her leg or thigh with my leg or bare feet under the table during a candlelit dinner, is just a beginning”.

Randolph, quiet and sheepish, speaks of stimulating touching on the genitals causing distraction to staying attuned to the nuances of sexual response, focusing only on getting his own needs met.

Maria rolls the word “erotic” slowly off her tongue in her Cuban accent, “just saying that word makes my skin tingle, wakes up my libido and I begin thinking about touching myself”.

Knowing Rose’s response would be fertile,” I would like to get lost in the depth of sexual passion, knowing that the skin of the other has the quality of a treasure to be searched for and then found.”

The wisdom of those in later years is seldom unnoticed. Wise and bold Naomi certainly goes unnoticed with,

Balzac says it best, ‘to awaken a longing, to nourish it, to develop it, to increase it, to stimulate it and then to gratify it,’ the genital kiss is the most erotic touch I know. I just wish I had spent more time enjoying. I was serving a tray of goodies at a friend’s birthday party and as a young man reached for a pastry he brushed the back of my hand with his hand. I got such a jolt of unfamiliar feelings-physical awareness and goose-bumpy feelings that it startled me. I looked up and he was staring at me as though something had startled him. Then he touched my arm and again, I had the same shock. I was only a teenager and was frightened by these new feelings. I disappeared into another room and went home as soon as I could. Never saw the fellow again-by choice.

Sharon had problems with connecting erotic response and the effect of touching.

## *Massaging with oils*

To give and receive a massage with essential oils is bonding for friends and families. Children can receive care and love through this method. Partners show their caring and love, friends can enhance their friendships. Not everyone feels that they are competent to give a massage even though it is a most natural thing to do. Massage has somehow been surrounded with mystique when associated with erotic touching.

Rose is all about aromatherapy and using warm oils for massaging as a tool for relaxation and especially for an erotic massage, “Getting totally naked and lathering up each other with massage oil can set the mood and add to the excitement”.

Maria likes to sit with her legs apart and have her partner sit or lie between her legs, “As I start with the neck, slowly massaging the oil into the partner's skin by rubbing in slow, circular motions. Then moving down the arms and rubbing into fingertips and palms. Continue down the sides of the torso, around the stomach and over the chest. Oil the partner's back, and then switch positions so the legs, feet and toes may be oiled. I oil the genitals also, but not to stimulate too long because there is more fun to come! Once my partner is sufficiently oiled, it's now my turn”.

Rodney has the process down to a science; sounds like he has done this many times.

“My finger tips follow along the path of the spine. As I massage, the touching brings the blood to the surface speeding the absorption of the oils into the skin. I have learned that this bring up the level of Oxytocin, the hormone needed in high levels for the process of sexual arousal”.

Naomi has enjoyed massages for many years and finds the skin-to-skin contact very arousing and stimulating. She remarked,

“The combination of scent of massage oil and touch is extremely effective in opening up intimacy between two people. Sure does spice up old married folk’s sex lives; I especially like the various scented oils and have tried many”.

Ken, who has some training in massage therapy, says this,

“Massage is an especially good thing for men like me to focus on. Women often need the kind of attention it gives them to feel comfortable with proceeding on to more intimate activities. I like to get a backrub, that’s a good place to start. Using oils make it quite a different, and far more exciting, turns it into an erotic experience. Begin the massage with a small amount of your chosen aromatherapy oil, just a teaspoon or so. Rub the oil in the palms of your hands to warm it up before it touches your partner’s skin. This is a seduction ritual! Be creative and playful”.

Sharon likes the idea of massage but not sure how she could incorporate massage with foreplay and sex.

“There are certain basic massage techniques designed to relieve tension that are very effective for me. Tension tends to accumulate in my neck, shoulders and upper back. I don’t think I could get turned on by this”.

#### *Touch other than hands*

Randolph says he loves to nuzzle, using his nose and forehead to caress a woman’s breast and thighs. Ken’s favorite skin-to-skin contact is his penis on the inside of his partners slightly squeezed thighs. Rodney likes his wife’s legs wrapped around his neck, “I also like my toes in her mouth and rubbing her butt with the bottoms of my bare feet”.

Maria really enjoys bare butt to butt contact. Rose is a shoulder to shoulder person. Naomi fondly reminisces about the “spooning” position for sleeping nude. Sharon likes her back scratched or rubbed with an elbow.

### Sexuality and Sensuality

Sexuality is a normal condition of the sex nature. Sensuality is partly inherited, but more largely acquired by voluntary sexual excitement, oft repeated, greatly intensified and long persisted in. Naomi explains sensuality, “It means being completely at home in one's body, trusting and living through the senses”. Rodney is excited that, “sensuality coupled with sexuality is tasting-savoring the flavors that life offers through touching, exploring, the body, the tongue, and erotic feelings”.

### *Body language*

Rodney tells us, “Eye contact is the most common initiation of interest. The eyes reveal myriad emotions - interest, excitement, anger and even disinterest”.

Ken knows when his partner is in the mood for being touched sexually by the way she tilts her head and becomes flirty. Sometimes if she knows he is watching she bends over and presents full view, always looking back to see his reaction.

Rose is aware of the difference in her gait when she is aroused. Maria cups her breasts in response to what might be a flirtatious come-on.

Randolph lowers his head slightly and then looks upward. .

Naomi recalls the male posturing, as if the male species were claiming his territory with his ritual “peeing on the bushes” so to speak. Her response was to tilt her head with nose in the air and maybe place a hand on her hip as to appear to be ignoring him.

Sharon says that one only need observe a dance floor to see that men are usually very conservative, bobbing back and forth, while she as a woman is very expressive with her body, making exaggerated moves – not afraid to offer sexual connotation to her dancing.

*Rubbing, sucking and tongue movement.*

In this area all of the women were, in general, more knowledgeable about sex and tended to be much more willing to discuss sexual issues freely and candidly. In describing sexual activities, principally using sucking and tongue movement, the women were significantly more aware of the qualitative aspects and technical details that are related to their own sexual response. The men were not as knowledgeable about sexuality and tended to describe activities such as cunnilingus in more graphic, objectifying detail. Sadly, Ken, Rodney and Randolph, have relied on pornography and firsthand experience when seeking guidance regarding female sexuality and how a man pleases a woman.

Randolph confessed for the men, “Just couldn’t bring myself to seek this information from male friends or family members; that would make me seem less of a man, that I did not already know this stuff”.

Naomi summed it up pretty well, “Unfortunately we all end up suffering from men’s pride and their ignorance about a woman’s body, with a man flicking his tongue like a porno star, using sexual positions that have nothing to do with stimulating a woman. It’s sad to say but men are generally clueless about the female anatomy and the process of sexual response”.

#### Other thoughts on skin-to-skin contact

All interviewees agreed that touch is an important form of social interaction, and one that can have powerful emotional consequences. As we have discovered during these interviews, appropriate touch can be calming, while inappropriate touch can be anxiety provoking.

#### *Response to skin-to-skin contact*

Rodney says, “At my house we now have family hugs. My dad was not a touch person and we missed a whole lot. I don’t want my children to experience that craving void that I did”.

Rose’s relates thoughts of loneliness with craving touch especially when too much time has passed since she has had physical contact with someone.

Ken says that touch has always been so essential that it would be difficult for him to consider survival without it.

Naomi believes that sometimes if she closes her eyes and goes back into her memory that she can actually feel the touch of her husband's large hands as he holds her closely.

“He was such a good hugger; just pulled me right into his body and wrapped his arms around me with his hands on my back and just holding me for the longest time, making me feel safe and loved. I remember wanting (needing) skin-to-skin contact with my husband following the birth of my first child. He had been overseas with the Marines for six months and I wanted to feel his skin against mine so badly. I lay in the hospital bed and cried while my whole body ached for his touch. Not just any touch, but for his. The physical yearning lasted for several hours until, finally, I willed myself back to reality”.

Thoughts on the death of her husband,

“There is a loneliness that sets in following the death of a spouse that becomes a physical longing to hold and embrace that person again. Sometimes the feeling becomes unbearable and serious depression can set in. The feeling must be recognized as a sensation that will, in time, go away to become a memory. I wonder if this feeling contributes to the fact that some women (or men) become so promiscuous after their spouse dies”.

Randolph says he used to become rigid when someone would touch him, but has learned to soften up a little. He has made a serious attempt to hug longer, touch more and enjoy”.

Maria just needs to feel the presence of that person around and notices the longing of touch.

Sharon notices that even when strangers touch her in crowded situations, she wants to respond at least by giving them eye contact. She is not sure if she is embarrassed or insulted when this happens.

### *Energy from skin contact*

Rose indicates that skin-to-skin contact, because of its soothing effects, will increase sleep, lower activity level, and reduce heart rate.

Randolph says he comes to life when he responds to his grandsons hugs. “The sensation is as exhilarating as any high I’ve ever experienced and it brings tears to my eyes”.

The fire of living a long life glowed in their eyes and scorched the intensity of their words as those interviewed responded with their most closely guarded secret fantasy around skin-to-skin contact and sex. Their sexual arousal was heightened as they remembered many pleasures and treasured joys that had been placed in the archives of memory. Not all the interviewees met strict criteria for the originally intended group of professionals but they all had the same opportunity to live through a sexual revolution in their earlier years. Now at the edge of the new millennium, they comfortably reminisce, being candid about their own sexual dynamics, and sharing their discoveries about themselves. This researcher found each interviewee to be delightful and frank and full of wonder, discovering the powerful revelation about the role that skin contact with sex had made and still makes in each of their lives.



## CHAPTER 5:

### Discussion of Results

We have examined what is known about the need for skin-to-skin touching. Our literature review took us down and around and through possible influences of sensual touch in sexual development and its expression. We are still counting our erogenous zones. To add to the review, we have asked many people, through interview, why skin is the most important and sensitive organ in their sense of touch. Touching and skin-to-skin contact, we have discovered, is not at all completely about sex, although we have examined the connection between skin-to-skin contact and sex. Sadly, we were jolted into recognizing deep seeded consequences from the results of the lack of touch in humans, and how the deficit plays out in therapy as well as sexual sensations and satisfaction. For the man and woman who value each other as individuals and who want the satisfactions of a sustained relationship, it is important, according to Masters and Johnson, to avoid the fundamental error of believing that touch is a means to an end. It is not.

The results of our digging into what is not known, carries a healing message that is easy to apply and full of realizable promises. For those of us who have been failed during the earlier years of our lives, this is happily rewarding. Those of us who bear the scars of that trying mis-adventured called “rearing of the child” .It is no secret that many adults who become bad parents have been adulterated by their own caregivers. And unaware of their own victimization, but have had best intentions to be devoted to doing their best as parents, began a new cycle of failing their charges. The cycle continues. The professional authorities which include psychiatrists, psychologists, pediatricians, educators and other non-swimmers acting as lifeguards, like the parents, have

perpetuated the errors of their own predecessors by overlooking the essential fundamental biosocial requirements for the healthy growth and development, the ability to love, to work, to play and to use one's mind soundly. Hopefully this study helps us to re-examine the basic beliefs which normally form our daily routine of living. We must listen, we must hear the crying need for affection that in a world of untouchability, is so seldom understood, and so seldom reaps the hungered response.

What is the challenge that is not dealt with satisfactorily and effectively? The challenge is that need for love, and to love others, which takes physical expression through touch, in a hug, an embrace, a touch of the hand, a kiss, and more, that constitutes our principal demonstration of connectedness, involvement, and caring. Undeniably touch becomes the touchstone, the true measure of our humanity, our seasoning of health, and the enrichment of our being. Montagu gives authority to this hunger of a touch starved nation.

“In our crowded and urban world, we have battled on in this way, further and further from a state of loving, personal intimacy, until the cracks have begun to show. Then, sucking our metaphorical thumbs and mouthing sophisticated philosophies to convince ourselves that all is well, we try to sit it out. We laugh at educated adults who pay large sums to go and play childish games of touch and hug in scientific institutes, and we fail to see the signs. How much easier it would all be if we could accept the fact that tender loving is not a weakly thing, only for infants and young lovers, if we could release our feelings, and indulge ourselves in an occasional, and magical, return to intimacy (1978).

We discovered in our literary review that skin-to-skin contact is our silent and most potent language. Touch is the medium through which we communicate, where parent and infant become attached, where lovers become one flesh. Each tender touch strengthens the bond between humans. Touch nurtures us as infants. Without touch we

lack psychological growth. Touch stimulates both physical and mental growth. It assures smoothness of physiological functions like breathing, heart rate, and digestion. Touch enhances our self-concept, our body awareness, and sexual identity, Skin-to-skin contact boosts our immune system and even enhances the grace and stability of our movement. Experiments done with infant rats, cats, and Harlow's monkeys show that, if cuddled, stroked, and licked, these animals grow up more gentle, peaceful, smarter, bigger, and healthier. If deprived of gentle touch, they grow up antisocial, miserable, sicker, smaller, less able to remember, less able to cope, and less able to be nurturing. Why should we believe that humans are different? Touch is not an emotional fringe benefit. Touch is as necessary as the air we breathe.

Sensual touch or nurturing skin-to-skin contact never loses its force.

Encompassing the gamut of human emotions, it guides us through life's emotional maze and unleashes emotional blockages. We may be able to hide our feelings when spoken to or looked at, but when we are touched, feelings gush out. Touch never loses its force nor does it lie. Touch can not lie to infants who arch their backs to protest or stiffen up when touched by awkward hands, nor to adolescents and adults, for whom uneasy hands feel claw like, making our skin taut, while loathsome hands make our skin crawl. This touch neither wanes as we age, as do our vision, our taste, our sense of smell and hearing.

Touch continues to communicate caring, pleasure, love and healing all our lives. Why do we know this? The deep solace of our mother's embrace, that "oceanic feeling" as Freud called it, remains buried deep in our psyche, leaving us with a very raw need for skin-to-skin contact. As we experience sorrow, there is an especially primitive longing for our mother. Witness Tolstoy, old and disconsolate:

Felt dull and sad all day...I wanted, as when I was a child, to nestle against some tender and compassionate being and weep with love and be consoled...become a tiny boy, close to my mother, the way I imagine her. Yes, yes, my Maman, whom I was never able to call that because I did not know who to talk when she died...Maman, hold me, baby me!

New research urges mental-health practitioners to reassess their traditional reluctance to include physical touch in the therapeutic process for fear of arousing sexual feelings. We need to promote the use of touch as an adjunct to talk therapy no matter what the theoretical orientation of the treatment provider because touch is that crucial to healing.

We hug ourselves when another's arms are unavailable, we masturbate for self fulfillment, we stroke our pets and somehow we cope even though it is just not the same. We reclaim our wholeness only in the embrace of another, touching skin-to-skin, fulfilling that primitive hunger.

While few of us would express such extreme sentiments, poet Rod McKuen laments, "The need to touch someone can be so great at times that it's as close to madness as I ever hope to come." Touch, skin-to-skin contact, has power to mellow us when agitated, reconnect us when we are isolated, and renew our spirit when desperate hopelessness leaves most of us clamoring for more.

The study has shown that human touch is crucially important. If we could relate to the teachings of Christ who regularly reached out and physically touched not only His friends, but also strangers. He even healed when he touched those considered untouchable because of their leprosy and other body ailments.

Many Americans go through life rarely touching others or being touched because of various fears. Yet many kinds of touch are healthy and appropriate and available to

each of us. Most children would love to be touched and held more than they are. Many spouses would enjoy more touch than they presently receive. Shaking hands with those we meet deepens a sense of relationship more than a verbal greeting alone. A pat on the back, a hand on the shoulder or arm, or even a hug is often an appropriate gesture of warmth. We have learned through exploring touching in American culture that children who are touched physically and emotionally by an adult authority figure are more considerate, altruistic, loving, and sharing. Frequency of touch is positively correlated with warmth, empathy, generosity, concern for others, and a positive self image; people who touch others are more likely to be touched in return. As we noted early, Virginia Satir, famed marriage and family therapist, believes, “We all need about eight hugs a day to feel healthy.” Some of the research makes it clear that people who touch are consistently viewed as warmer than those who do not touch.

Skin-to-skin contact during massage was a favorite of those interviewed. Some shared that one of the most underestimated and underutilized forms of erotic stimulation, is a good solid foot massage. This skin-to-skin contact floods the bloodstream with endorphins and energizes the entire body even if the partner is not a professional masseur. The secret is concentrating on one foot at a time and slowly maintaining persistent contact between hand and foot. Rose says she experiences the heights of sexual pleasure during this form of foreplay.

Many of those who were interviewed shared the same fondness of skin-to-skin touching of the lips. As Shelley wrote, “Soul meets soul on lover’s lips.” Our study revealed that a kiss is like the contact of two chemical substances: if there is any reaction, both are transformed. A kiss is a unique and versatile expression of the soul. A kiss can

be playful, patient, and coy; or ravenous, forceful, and violent. Creating its own language, there is virtually no emotion that cannot be expressed with a kiss. According to the teachings of Tantra, a woman's upper lip is considered one of the most erogenous areas on her body because of a special nerve that connects it to the clitoris, and is said to channel erotic energy. Tantra begs to tell us that cunnilingus can simply be the art of extending a kiss into a complete act of lovemaking.

When Naomi expressed her hunger for skin-to-skin contact she expressed the need we have to hold and touch each other. Intimacy begs for affection and contact. In the early stages of love, there is a great touching, holding hands, hugging, embracing, kissing and love making. Each one interviewed impressed on this area of yearning for perpetual intimacy. In many cases, what happens once love is established, the love mates grow distant, separate and apart. There is less holding and touching. In Sharon's idea of perfect love, love mates would find perpetual ways to hold and touch each other. Touching, holding, and embracing each other would continue affirming your love for each other. Touching is contagious. She brought up a very valid point in seeing how easily we shake hands during the day as we meet person after person. Thinking how easily we hug a good friend. This is how easily love-mates should touch and hold and hug and kiss and embrace each other, if only it were a perfect world.

Could we ever imagine living in full communication with our sense of skin-to-skin contact—touch which leads us through the gamut of physical contact with external reality? Have we realized how impoverished most of us let ourselves be, as we under-use this marvelous sense? We let ourselves be numb to so much, abandoning the invitation to engage in this sense of touch fully.

The lack of skin-to-skin contact can create the worst of loneliness, as Naomi shared in her interview. Loneliness is epidemic, culturally frowned on, and completely curable, whether the ache for skin-to-skin contact is chronic or a seasonal twinge. In a culture where everyone wants a happy family, a sizzling sexual relationship, the phrase “I’m lonely” rings like the medieval leper’s shout of “Unclean! Unclean!” Loneliness is a chief component as a vehicle driven down that road to mental illness. Fortunately, we now treat mental disease as other diseases get treated, not by isolating its victims but by diagnosing and healing them. The healing touch is far more effective over time and in many instances, than any amount of medication.

One of the goals of this study on the need for skin-to-skin connection in human sexual behavior was to investigate historical, literary, and scientific observations on the subject. Many unchanged clarifications that have come to light in examining the relevance of the sex/skin-to-skin link in daily lives of average individuals who were not only anxious to be interviewed, but overwhelmingly surprised at their own enlightenment about their needs. Some even displayed or confessed sexual arousal in response to searching for answers to sensual questions. There were also many tears shed at the sadness of some of their findings. Many of the interviewees expressed a new revelation about themselves and were excited about the knowledge they had garnered along the interview process. Some were remorseful for all the times they had taken for granted the needs of their loved ones or how they had cheated themselves because of their own pride or ignorance.

Although the sampling size and the age range of the group studied may limit the conclusion of this study, the participants perception of the questions used in the interview

provided an honest and in depth view. The participants closely identified with the issue of the need for skin-to-skin contact in all areas of their lives. Continued research in the area of the need for skin-to-skin contact, using a larger and more widely representative population pool is strongly supported. Human beings of all ages are affected by the function of fundamental tactile stimulation of skin-to-skin with sex, nurturing, healing, loving and being loved and all other connections in human sexual development and expression.



## APPENDIX A

### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Title: A STUDY OF SKIN AS TACTILE CONNECTION IN HUMAN SEXUALITY:  
SENSE OF TOUCH VIA OUR LARGEST SEX ORGAN: SKIN

Researcher:  
Sandra L. Blanton, Ph.D. Candidate  
Maimonides University  
North Miami Beach  
Florida, 33162  
(305) 949-1103

Committee Chairman:  
William Granzig, Ph.D., MPH, FAACS  
Professor and Dean  
120 W. Lake Sue Avenue  
Winter Park, FL 32789

**Explanation:** The purpose of this research is to fulfill the requirements for my dissertation and completion of a Ph.D. degree in Clinical Sexology at Maimonides University. To collect the data for this Meta Analysis a grounded theory method included pilot interviews with selected individuals who met the criteria. These interviews were recorded or video taped to acquire a qualitative textual analysis of each interview. Information garnered from personal interviews will provide data for this dissertation on the skin-to-skin contact link to sexuality and human sexual expression.

Volunteers will be informed that no payment will be received in return for their participation and involvement in this study. All volunteers have the right to refuse to participate at any time during this study.

**Consent:** Upon signing this consent form I am agreeing that any information that I give is for the purpose of academic research which may be published. My interview will be held in strictest confidentiality and my name will not be used in print. After reading all the above, I understand that I am participating in this study on a volunteer basis and can

withdraw at any time. Any questions I may have during or after this study will be answered by the candidate. My signature reaffirms consent and states that I agree to be audio-taped.

Participant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date. \_\_\_\_\_

Witness Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date. \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDEX B

Demographic Information of Participant

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Female: \_\_\_\_ Male: \_\_\_\_  
Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Place of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Marital Status \_\_\_\_\_ How old were you when you got married? \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship, present: \_\_\_\_\_  
Age of Children: \_\_\_\_\_  
Career choice \_\_\_\_\_  
Highest education: \_\_\_\_\_  
Religious Affiliation \_\_\_\_\_

Sexual Experiences Childhood, Adolescence, Adult

At what age did you have your first sexual experience (arousal, erection, nocturnal emission, other.)

How old were you when you began to experiment with any skin to skin sexual activity?  
(Masturbation, cunnilingus, other)

At what age did you first participate in penis/vagina intercourse experiencing orgasm?

## APPENDIX C

### GUIDED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Describe to me how skin-to-skin contact has affected your life?

Can you describe a significant example of the effect of touch in your initial attraction to someone?

Can you describe something about touch/skin-to-skin contact that has specifically affected your sex life?

Can you describe your worst or last experience with touch and sex?

Can you remember and describe a significant event that was particularly important for you regarding sex and touch?

Can you think of a time when you were completely turned off by someone's touch?

What type of touch sensation turns you on specifically?

What about the touching skin-to-skin during sex?

Do you remember a time when you craved or hungered skin-to-skin contact with another person?

Is there a place on your body that you specifically like to be touched?

Is there anything you do specifically to prepare yourself for a sexual encounter?

Where on your body is completely off limits? And Why?

Your earliest touch- skin-to-skin memory?

Any other thoughts of sex and touch?

Any other thoughts about craving touch and loneliness?

Any other thoughts on the touch from family members? Past? Present?

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