

# De · con · struct · ing Sexual Desire and Arousal

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Central problem of  
sexual reproduction:



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Finding a mate  
without *Tinder*®



Sexual reproduction requires

a **neural drive** for sexual opportunity  
to generate the **goal-directed behavior**.

# Sexual reproduction requires

a **neural drive** for sexual opportunity  
to generate the **goal-directed behavior**  
and prepare the body through **sexual arousal**.









Externalization of an internal state





# Externalization of an internal state

Therefore there are 2 biological units of sexual desire:

**Approach**

**Avoidance**



# Sexual reproduction requires

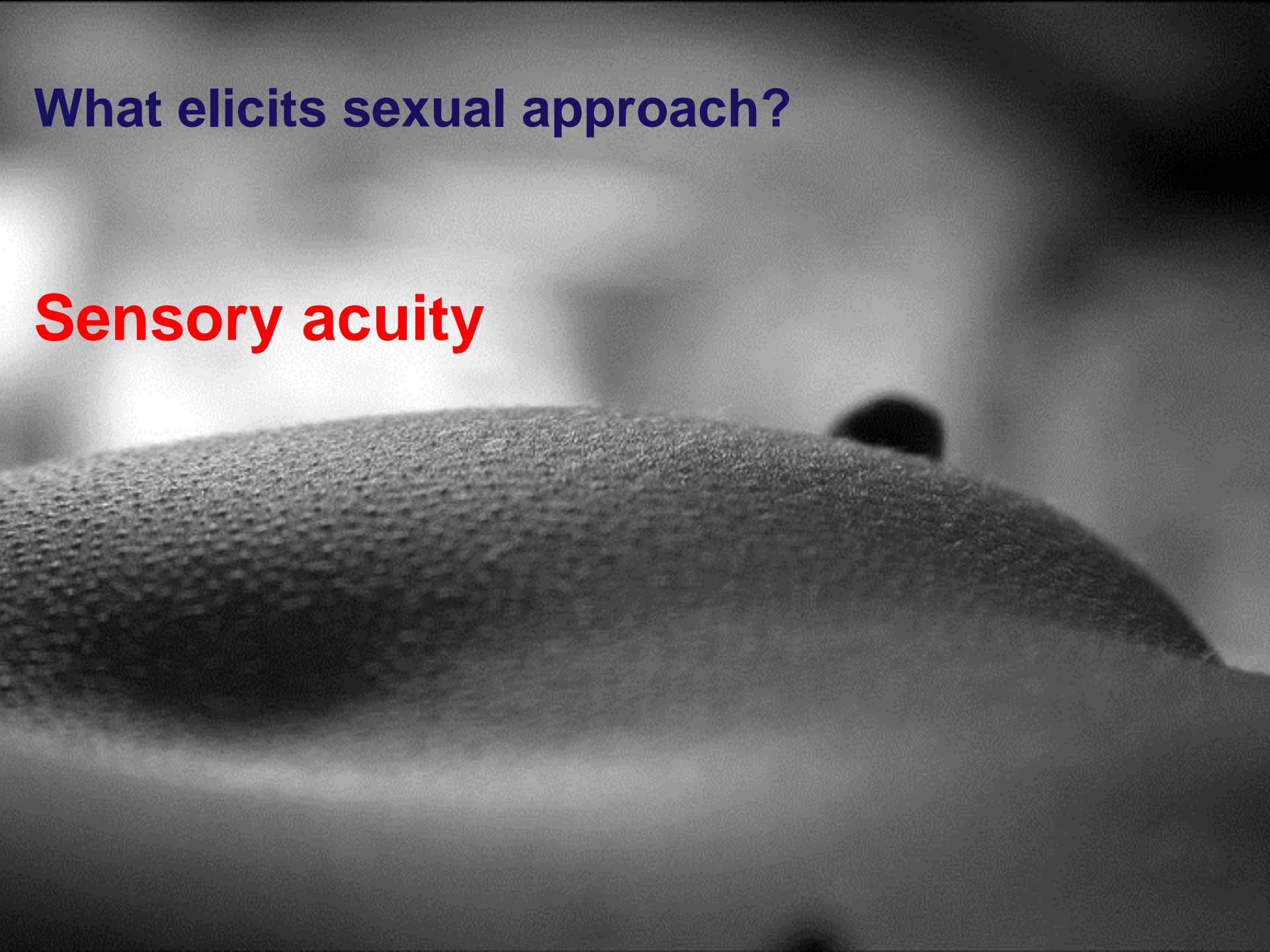
a **neural drive** for sexual opportunity  
to generate the **goal-directed behavior**.

- Pelvic vasocongestion
- Vaginal lubrication
- Labia minora darken
- Clitoral tumescence
- Vulva lengthens and widens
- Areolae harden & nipples become erect
- Breast tumescence

What elicits sexual approach?

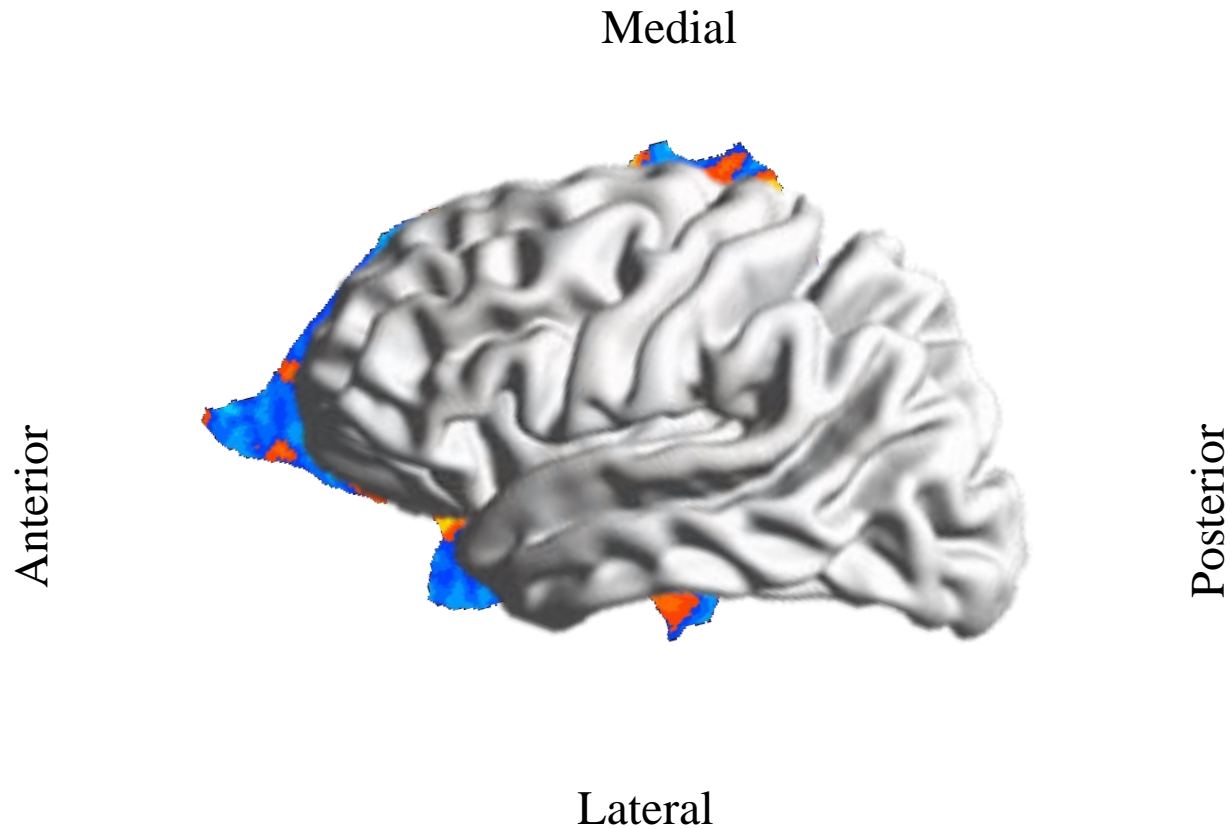
**What elicits sexual approach?**

**Sensory acuity**





# Beginning at Neutral (Resting State)





**What elicits sexual approach?**

**Salience (novelty)**







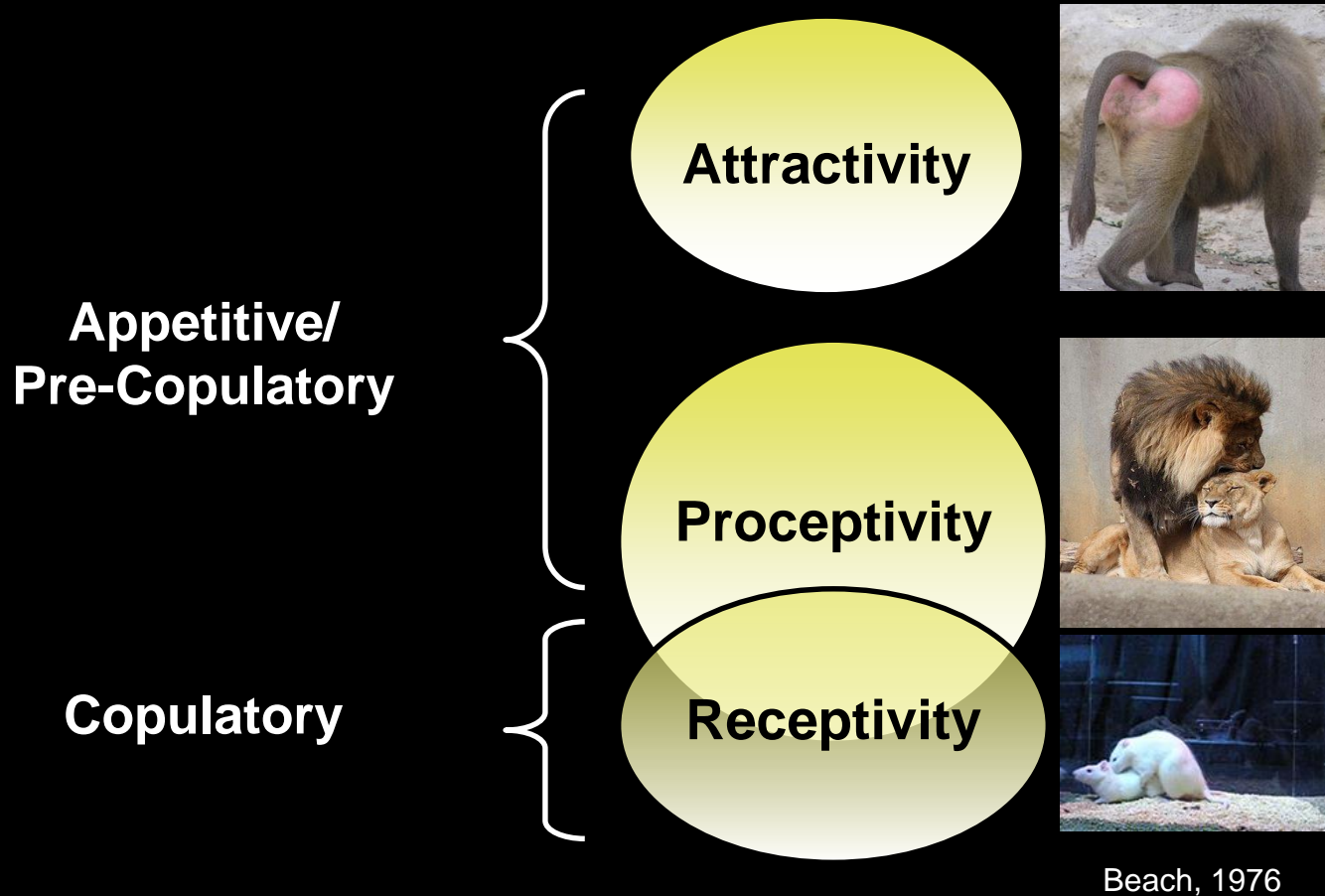
**Positive  
Emotion**



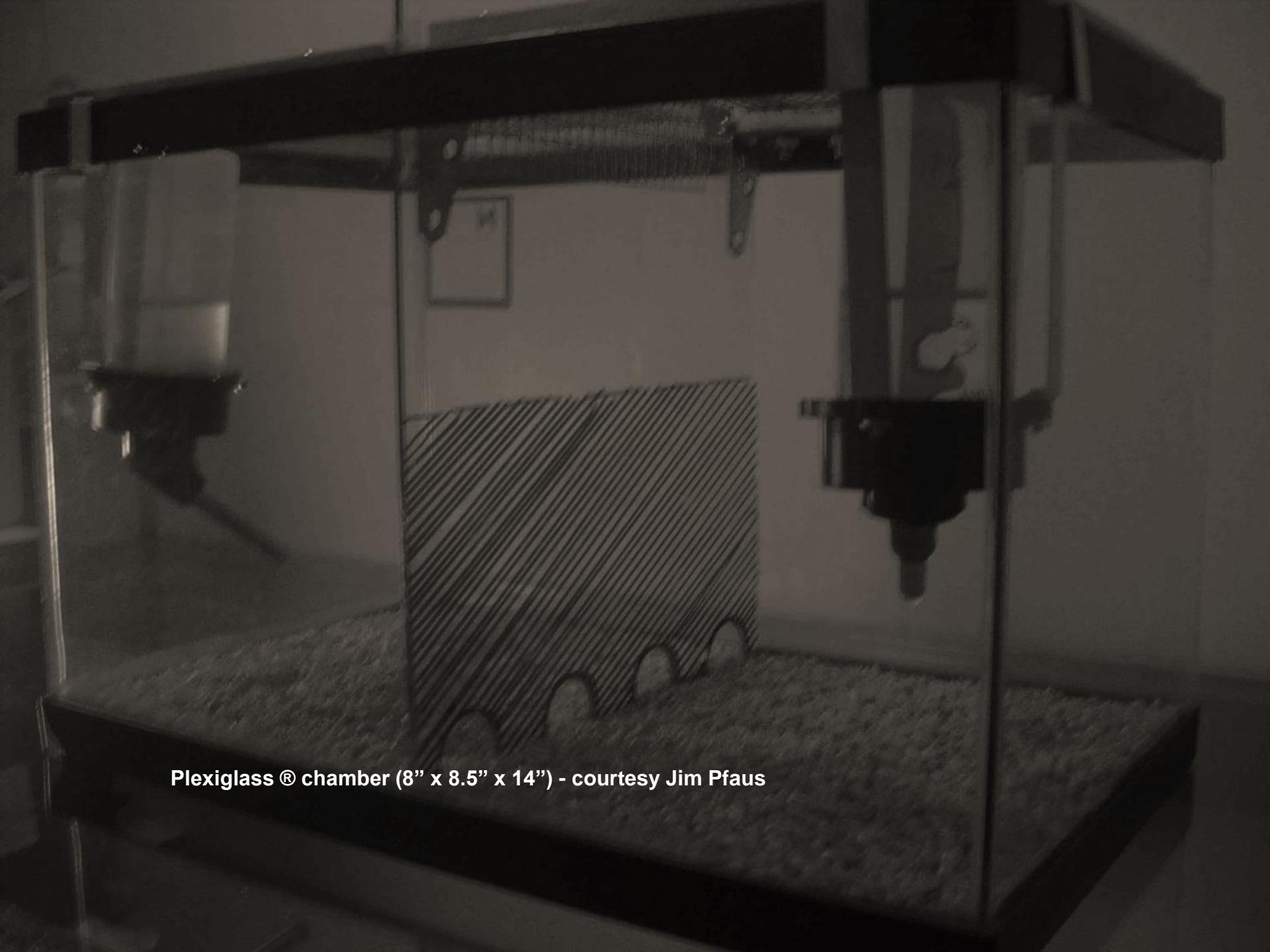




# Sexually Motivated Behavior in Mammals





A black and white photograph of a Plexiglass chamber. The chamber is rectangular and made of clear Plexiglass. Inside, there is a central barrier with diagonal stripes. On either side of the barrier, there is a mechanical assembly that looks like a nozzle or a probe, mounted on a track. The bottom of the chamber is covered with a layer of small, light-colored particles, possibly bedding or substrate. The chamber is mounted on a dark frame.

Plexiglass® chamber (8" x 8.5" x 14") - courtesy Jim Pfaus









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Subjective perception of **sensory Hot Spots** requires:

- the nuanced **awareness** of physical stimulation
- its **positive** appraisal
- awareness of how one's **body reacts**  
(warmth, aching, “getting wet,” “getting hard,” etc)



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Erotic awareness  
of sensation  
**enhances**  
excitatory factors

**Approach**



Lack of awareness  
(or abnormal sensation)  
**facilitates**  
inhibitory factors

**Avoidance**

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- Intact **perceptual/sensory** systems
- **Adequacy** of the stimulus
- **Linear correlations** between a stimulus and response



Neutral

Foreplay

Intercourse

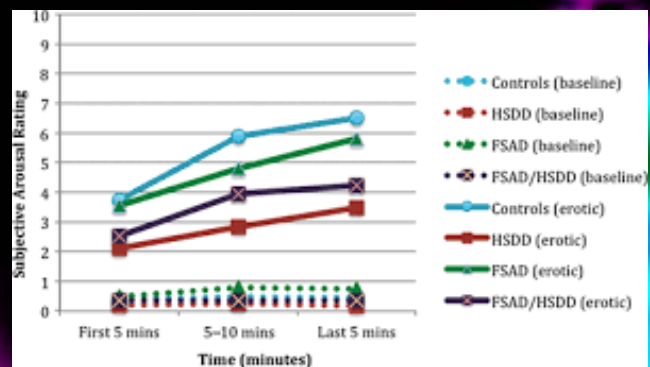


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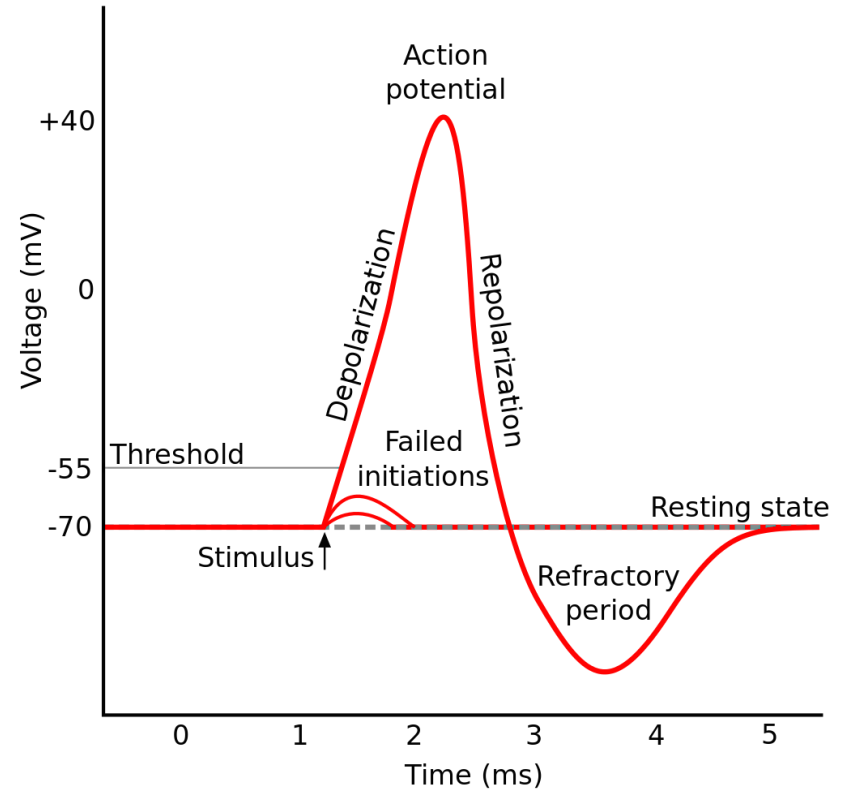
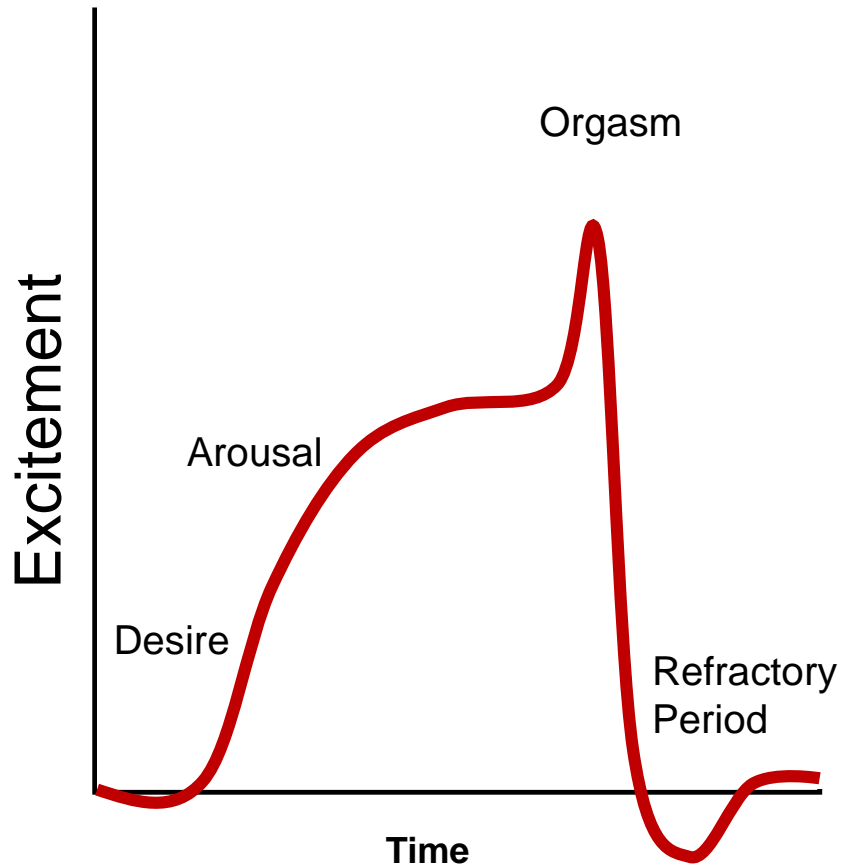


99.2 °F

83.8



# Masters and Johnson Model of Sexual Response

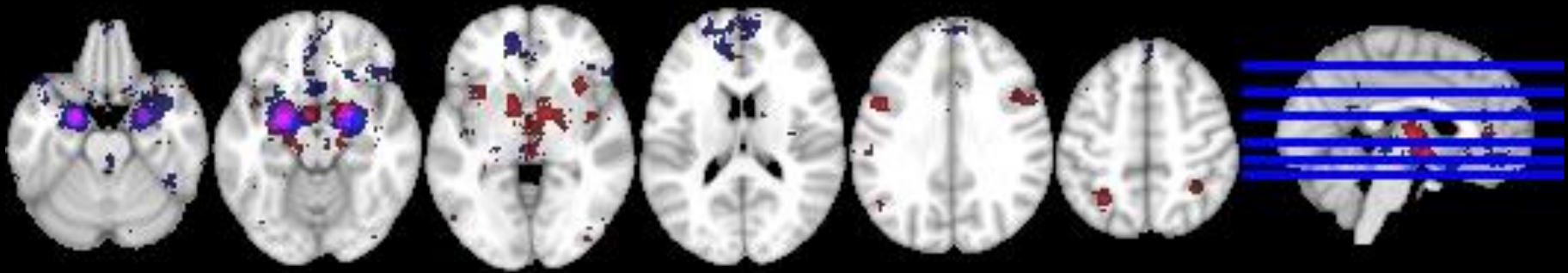


# Nonspecific proxies of sexual desire/arousal

Sexual Arousal

overlaps with

Positive Emotion



# Parting Thoughts....

- Do our answers match our questions?
- Are we measuring what we believe we are measuring?

My perspective: **NO** and **NO**