

Human sexuality around the world

[page i]

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATION IN SEXUALITY	3
THEORIES ABOUT SEXUALITY	6
SEX IN CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE	9
CHILDREN'S SEXUALITY IN OTHER CULTURES	10
SEXUAL RELATIONS BETWEEN ADULTS AND CHILDREN	13
SEX BEFORE MARRIAGE	18
SEX IN MARRIAGE AND OLD AGE	30
SEX IN MARRIAGE	31
SEX AFTER MARRIAGE AND IN OLD AGE	40
SEXUAL ATTRACTIVENESS AND SEXUAL STIMULATION	46
SEXUAL ATTRACTIVENESS	46
SEXUAL STIMULATION	58
HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS	72
MALE HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS	72
TRANVESTISM AND EXCLUSIVE HOMOSEXUALITY	81
FEMALE HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS	85
OTHER SEXUAL MATTERS	91
RAPE	91
PROSTITUTION	94
INCEST	98
PARAPHILIAS (BESTIALITY, NECROPHILIA, SADO-MASOCHISM)	101
VIEWS ON THE BIOLOGY OF SEX	106
CONCLUSION	116
NOTES TO CHAPTERS	120

[page 1]

INTRODUCTION

In a historic decision in July of 1986, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the Georgia sodomy laws punishing, with up to 20 years in prison, unorthodox sexual behavior between consenting adults in private ¹. In justifying the Court's decision, Chief Justice Burger argued that proscriptions against sodomy have very 'ancient roots,' and went on to point out the injunctions against homosexual activities in Roman, English and American law ². To anthropologists, familiar with the sexual customs in a much larger number of societies, including many societies more ancient than Rome, this justification sounds peculiarly hollow. While some societies may indeed be more restrictive of variant sexual practices than the United States, others are much more acceptant. If Chief Justice Berger had only gone one step back in time to ancient Greece he would have discovered a Western culture where homosexuality, far from being proscribed, was actually considered a highly commendable activity. As we shall see, many other societies studied by anthropologists also consider homosexuality, and many other variant sexual practices as well, to be quite normal and acceptable.

In part Chief Justice Berger's reluctance to consider cases other than Rome, England and the United States may have been due to a deliberate unwillingness to consider counterexamples to his argument about historical precedent. In part it may also have been due to a genuine lack of public information about sexual practices around the world. Anthropologists are partially to blame for this. While recent years have seen a number of excellent anthropological studies on human sexuality, there is still a certain reluctance on the part of many anthropologists to study this topic, which is often seen as a frivolous pursuit when compared with "more important" topics like food-getting techniques or religion. In the past, matters were much worse. In a well-known book published in the early sixties, one anthropologist known to

[p2]

this author wrote extensively about some of the sexual practices of the society he studied, but was afraid to mention others considered too taboo for Americans, including anthropologists. As a result of these problems there are very few anthropological field studies devoted to sexual behavior. Most of our information comes from short statements, often only a paragraph or two, made in the course of a more general account of a society's customs. Systematic studies of actual sexual behavior in other societies comparable to the Kinsey studies in the U.S. are very rare.

The lack of more reliable information about sex in other societies is especially regrettable when we consider that many of the most heated public debates in the United States involve sexual issues like homosexuality, prostitution, pornography, rape, or children's exposure to sex. The making of wise decisions about these issues would surely be helped by a more thorough knowledge of how other societies deal with these questions. There may have been a time in U.S. history when it was a major revelation simply to show that a small society somewhere in the world considered as normal a sexual practice that Americans abhorred. Today, the public is sophisticated enough to know that what is good for one society may not be good for another. So anthropologists need to do more than just describe the different sexual practices found around the world. They must explain why cultures have these different customs. It is these explanations (if they are valid!) that can help us to understand sexuality in our own culture and to make better decisions about sexual issues.

As we shall see, some anthropological explanations are fairly successful in distinguishing the societies that have a given sexual practice from those that do not. Other explanations are not at all successful, and should probably be rejected as unsatisfactory. Most explanations, however, have never really been "put to the test" so we do not yet know whether they could actually account for the cross-cultural variation in sexuality. At the end of each section of the book I tried to clarify what, we don't know about human sexuality at least as much as what we do know in the hopes that this will inspire others to engage in more systematic research.

¹ "A Government in the Bedroom," Newsweek July 14, 1986, page 36.

² ."Bowkers v. Hardwick," U.S. Supreme Court Reports 92 L.Ed 2d, no.1 August 27, 1986, pages 148 ff.

[p3]

One valuable resource for research on these questions is the Human Relations Area Files [<http://www.yale.edu/hraf/>]. Most major university libraries possess at least a partial copy of the Human Relations Area Files in their microfilm room, and it would be worth a trip to become acquainted with the files. The files consist of books and articles written by anthropologists, missionaries and other travellers about some 300 different societies around the world. All of the pages in these manuscripts have been indexed and filed according to topic. (The index numbers referring to sexual activities are 830 to 839.) To find information, simply pull out the microfiche for the society and index category you want, and read the marked pages. With over four million pages filed away, the Human Relations Area Files are a treasure house of information. Because most anthropological information on sex is tucked away in paragraphs hidden in the middle of ordinary books about a society, using the Human Relations Area Files is the best way to find this information. In fact, most of the materials for this book derive either directly or indirectly from the files.

CROSS-CULTURAL VARIATION IN SEXUALITY

Ever since the first organisms to reproduce sexually evolved some two billion years ago, sex has been a basic aspect of life on earth, as important to survival (at least across generations) as food. Yet the biological underpinnings for sex do not mean that sex is everywhere the same. Among humans, the variations in sexual practices, sexual urges and sexual ideology, are as great as for any other form of human behavior. Some societies are extraordinarily prudish about sexual contacts of any kind; others extremely permissive of all kinds of sexual practices. In some areas of rural Ireland, considered by several scholars to be one of the most sexually restricted places on earth, children are protected from references to any kind of sexual activity. It is even improper to mention pregnancy in their presence³, and girls are not told about menstruation, which is an unexpected traumatic experience for most of them⁴. Priests preach against such pornographic publications as *Time* and *Life*,⁵ and tell women that sexual relations are a duty⁶,

[p4]

female orgasms being considered deviant⁷. Nudity of any kind is avoided, even during sexual intercourse⁸. In order to avoid being seen naked, adults wash only their faces, necks, lower arms, hands, lower legs and feet, and men are embarrassed to be seen barefoot⁹. There are recorded cases of men who died rather than allow themselves to appear bare-breasted before a nurse¹⁰. Even animal nudity is embarrassing¹¹, and the government actually regulates the breeding of both cattle and horses. In one village, all the horses are either mares or geldings, and only one man was licensed to own a bull. Cows are bred for a fee in the most inaccessible of fields where children and tourists cannot observe them¹². Some people believe that information about sex is unnecessary because "after marriage, nature takes its course," but there are recorded cases of Irish couples who remained childless because of sheer ignorance about sex¹³.

Toward the other end of the sexual spectrum are the Trukese, a Micronesian people living on islands in the western part of the Pacific Ocean. The Trukese seem quite literally to be obsessed with sex. Children begin sexual activities early in life, with little boys putting their fingers in girls' vaginas to

stimulate them¹⁴. The Trukese even believe that menstruation is impossible until a girl has first had sexual intercourse¹⁵. As adolescents, and even in middle age, men sing love songs and write elaborate love letters to their sweethearts, flattering them and expressing undying devotion¹⁶. To further entice potential sexual partners, the men sometimes make pornographic inscriptions on trees and use obscene gestures to attract a women out of a crowd in order to engage in sexual intercourse¹⁷. Trukese women tattoo the upper inside of their thighs to make themselves sexually attractive¹⁸. Since a vagina "with more things in it" is considered more desirable, they also pull on the labia to stretch them, and sometimes they perforate the labia in order to insert objects that tinkle when they walk with their legs apart¹⁹.19 (Women sometimes insult each other by accusing their adversaries of having a vagina with nothing in it. At this point both women strip off their skirts and those present pass judgment on the validity of the accusations.²⁰) At night, boys use specially made, and

[p5]

individualized "love staffs" to push under the huts and up to the beds of their girlfriends. If the girl grabs the staff, this serves as an invitation for the boy to enter. If she pushes it away, this means "go away"²¹. If sex partners are unavailable, men think nothing of masturbating in public. They simply turn their backs to the group. Women and girls also masturbate, sometimes while showing their genitals to other girls²². Men sometimes stimulate themselves watching the women bathe²³, and the women like to fill their vaginas with coconut meat and have dogs perform cunnilingus on them²⁴.

For the Trukese, intercourse between a man and a woman often lasts hours, the man trying to restrain his climax, while giving the woman multiple orgasms²⁵. Some of their sexual activities would make many an American sailor blush. The most popular position is for the man to sit with his legs stretched out, while the woman faces him, seated on the ground or lying back. Rather than place his penis in the woman's vagina, the man simply manipulates it up and down, rubbing it against the woman's clitoris. He mouths her face, breast, neck and ears, and sometimes engages in heavy kissing or cunnilingus or is fellated by the woman²⁶. Although the Trukese normally abhor urine, men prefer for the woman to urinate on them at each of her multiple orgasms and consider this a sign that the woman is enjoying herself²⁷. Women also like it when the man urinates in her vagina²⁸. A certain amount of pain is also considered stimulating. Men like for the women to make small incisions on their arm, or burn them with a lighted cigarette. (In the old days, people used the dry powder in dead breadfruit stumps for burning.) The man sometimes scratches the woman on the cheek with his long thumbnail, although this is much rarer²⁹.29

Impotency is said to be unknown among the Trukese, except for the seriously ill or senile. Even in these cases, people do not forego sex. Old men who can no longer maintain erections often perform cunnilingus on preadolescent girls, an activity the girls are said to like because it is so gentle³⁰.

¹⁴ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 253

¹⁵ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 94

¹⁶ 11: Fisher and Swartz, 218. 12: Swartz, 478

¹⁷ 2: Gladwin, 116-117

¹⁸ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 109

¹⁹ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 109

²⁰ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 110

²¹ 24: Kramer, 316

²² 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 115

²³ 24: Kramer, 315

²⁴ 24: Kramer, 315

²⁵ 2: Sarason and Gladwin, 109

²⁶ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 110

²⁷ 12: Swartz, 482-483

²⁸ 24: Kramer, 315

²⁹ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 114

³⁰ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 115

³ 16: Messenger, 108 [Numbers followed by a colon refer to bibliographic sources in the Human Relations Area Files]

⁴ 16: Messenger, 109

⁵ 16: Messenger, 109

⁶ 16: Messenger, 109

⁷ 17: Messenger, 16

⁸ 16: Messenger, 110

⁹ 17: Messenger, 18

¹⁰ 16: Messenger, 110

¹¹ 16: Messenger, 110

¹² 16: Messenger, 36

¹³ 17: Messenger, 15

The labeling of some societies as sexually restrictive and others as sexually permissive is not entirely adequate. All

[p6]

societies have some restrictions regarding sexual behavior, but just what these restrictions are varies tremendously from one society to another. Although I have characterized the Irish as prudish, in some respects they are more permissive than other societies. For example, in many Middle-Eastern countries women must be completely covered from head to foot when they appear in public. To these women, the Irish must appear exceedingly immodest. Also, while an unmarried Irish woman who is discovered having sex may be banished from her community³¹, her Middle-East counterpart may be killed by her male relatives. On the other hand homosexual activities are much more tolerated in many of the Middle Eastern societies than in Ireland. By the same token, although the Truk are extremely tolerant of some sexual activities, they are not the most permissive about extramarital sex. Married Trukese women are expected to remain faithful to their husbands, although they may also have sex with their husbands' brothers. Given the complexity of human sexuality, most anthropologists have found it more productive to avoid labeling societies as simply "sexually restrictive" or "sexually permissive." Instead they prefer to explain more specific sexual behaviors, attitudes or beliefs.

THEORIES ABOUT SEXUALITY

Most anthropological explanations about sexuality begin with either psychological, socioeconomic, or biological factors. Psychological explanations often begin with personality traits inculcated in childhood. Later sexual development is seen as resulting from these characteristics. For example, one psychological theory about male homosexuality sees it as a result of a particularly close relationship between a young boy and his mother. According to one version of this theory, this close mother-son relationship results in a more feminine identity in the boy which leads him to prefer males for sexual contacts in later adulthood. Indulgent mothering has also been used to explain greater freedom in pre-marital sex, based on the argument that such mothering creates greater trust for people in the child, and this leads to a more trusting attitude toward intimacy during adolescence.

[p7]

Socioeconomic arguments usually attribute cross-cultural differences in sexuality to some feature of a society's economy or social organization. For example, one socioeconomic theory about homosexuality argues that some societies impose a taboo on homosexual practices because they want to encourage people to have more children, and homosexual practices might reduce the number of children women bear. Where people are less concerned about having children, homosexuality would be more acceptable, simply because people would have no reason to taboo the practice. Another socioeconomic theory attributes a more restrictive attitude about pre-marital sex to the presence of social classes. According to this argument, upper-class parents would be cautious about allowing their daughters to have sex with different boys because of the danger that their daughter might get pregnant with a boy below her social status. A subsequent marriage with such a boy might lower the family's social and economic standing. In a more egalitarian society, where everyone has roughly the same social and economic status, there would be less concern over the daughter's sexual partners.

Biological arguments may attribute a sexual behavior to some genetic or other biological factor. For example, many researchers have argued that men who are exclusively homosexual may simply be born with strong tendencies toward homosexuality. However, no anthropologist, to my knowledge, has ever suggested that some societies have more homosexuality than others because they have more genes for homosexuality. Usually, biological arguments about cross-cultural variation in sex see social factors as interacting with biological factors. For example, it has been suggested that a diet deficient in tryptophane (an amino acid found in corn) may make women more irritable during men-

struation. One anthropological theory suggests that a taboo on sex during menstruation may result, at least partially, from a diet low in corn, since this would make a woman more irritable during her period and less interested in sex.

Many sociobiological explanations for human sexuality have also been proposed in recent years. Although they emphasize the role of genes, sociobiologists do not attempt to explain

[p8]

cultural differences in sexuality as due to differences in the genetic make-up of their populations. Rather, sociobiological arguments begin with the proposition that all humans are genetically *alike* in having an inborn desire to pass their genes on to future generations. According to sociobiological arguments, different features of a society's economy or social organization require different sexual strategies in order for individuals to pass the highest number of their genes on to the future. The implications of this are not immediately obvious. For example, having more children is not always the best way to pass on the most genes! Since a man's relatives have many of the same genes as himself, it is sometimes better for a man to forego having children himself if, by doing so, he can help his brothers and sisters raise more offspring. This is the basis for one sociobiological argument about male homosexuality. According to this argument male homosexuality may be more common in societies where males remain closer to their siblings and so can help them raise more children (who would be the homosexual's nephews and nieces). Conversely, in societies where males lose contact with their relatives, male homosexuality should be less common. Since reproductive success is at the core of all sociobiological arguments, it is not surprising that sociobiologists have offered numerous explanations for different types of sexual practices.

Psychological, socioeconomic and biological arguments appear throughout this book to explain different sexual practices. Sometimes more than one explanation is supported by the data; other times none of the explanations receives support. Often we simply cannot tell whether there is any support or not, since no one has carried out the necessary research. It is up to the student to recognize the difference. Hopefully, some will be inspired to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge by carrying out research on their own.

[p9]

SEX IN CHILDHOOD AND ADOLESCENCE

In 1984 criminal charges were brought against 24 adults accused of sexual child abuse in Jordan, Minnesota. The case made immediate headlines in the nation's major news magazines. With the public recognition now given this problem, other child abuse cases began appearing before the courts, and soon sexual molestation of children was linked by the media to child abduction. Milk cartons and advertising brochures began printing photographs of missing children in the hopes that some might be discovered³².

Not everyone, however, was convinced of the efficacy of the new campaign to control child abuse. Some people complained that the whole missing children crusade was really a ploy to build up advertising and noted that it had not help to find a single child³³. Others pointed out that the publicity accorded the Jordan, Minnesota case (in which charges were eventually dropped) had actually made it harder to convict child-abusers. This, because, having discovered a new weapon to use against adults, children could no longer be believed in their testimonies. Accusations of child abuse became a popular weapon for divorced mothers to use in child custody cases³⁴. In one case an elementary school principal, accused of child molesting, had charges against him dropped when it finally became clear that

³² A. Press, H. Hager, P. King, T. Namuth D. Sheraan and S. Walters. 'The Youngest Witnesses,' Newsweek February 18, 1985, pp. 72-75

³³ 'How Many Missing Kids?,' Newsweek October 7, 1985

³⁴ Leo, John, "Men Have Rights Too," Time, Nov.24, 1986, p. 87

³¹ 1: Arensberg and Kiaball, 213

he had simply changed a girl's soiled underwear. Some adults accused of child-molesting and even some who were not are now afraid to hug their children ³⁵.

While most Americans appear violently opposed to any suggestion of sexual contact between adults and children, one organization, the Rene Guyon Society, has managed to express its opposing view in such magazines as *Psychology Today*. Members of this society call for the abolition of laws prohibiting sex between adults and children. They hope that parents may one day be allowed to give their consent for other adults to have sexual relations with their children ³⁶.

[p10]

At least one Nobel Prize winning scientist has also chided Americans for what he feels is an exaggerated fear of sexual contact between children and adults ³⁷.

CHILDREN'S SEXUALITY IN OTHER CULTURES

Cross-culturally, attitudes toward children's sexual behavior vary widely. But, as is often the case in ethnographic accounts about sexuality, there is much more information about sexual permissiveness in childhood than about sexual restrictiveness. This probably reflects the fact that anthropologists find permissiveness more unusual, and thus more interesting to write about. Except for a few comments about people's attitudes, there is often little to say about a sexually restrictive society. Only in the rare cases when people fail to conform to the social norms, do we learn much about how a society actually deals with specific sex offenses.

Some societies provide very harsh punishments to children who engage in sexual activities. Among the Chagga of Tanzania it is considered a most heinous crime for an uncircumcised (uninitiated) boy to have sexual relations. If caught, the boy and his sexual partner are staked to the ground to die without burial ³⁸. Among the Dorobo of Kenya, the boy is beaten by the older males, but not killed ³⁹. Elsewhere, parents attempt to restrict their children's sexual activity but do not mete out such harsh punishments. The Bushmen of southern Africa believe it is terribly harmful for a girl to have sex before maturity, but ethnographers have not specified exactly how transgressors would be punished ⁴⁰. The Cuna of Panama, like the rural Irish, attempt to keep their children ignorant of sex. They do not even allow them to observe animals mate ⁴¹. In one Yugoslavian village, a Bosnian father was so protective of his three-year-old daughter's sexuality that he denied permission for her to be photographed, fearing that the scandal might prevent her from ever obtaining a husband. Because premarital relations are so prohibited, Yugoslavian grooms are sometimes provided with a "bridegroom's man" to instruct them in the "secrets of marriage." ⁴² Children receive ambiguous messages from their parents among the Cagaba of Colombia — fathers condemn the sexual activities

[p11]

of young children, but mothers actually encourage their erotic play ⁴³.

While people in some societies try to repress sexual behavior in their young, in many other societies parents actually encourage their children's sexual activities. In the Marquesans of Polynesia, parents begin masturbating their female children as soon as they are born in order to elongate their labia ⁴⁴. Yanoama mothers of Venezuela deflower their daughters after their first year of life in order

to facilitate intercourse ⁴⁵, and their husbands suck on their daughter's vulva ⁴⁶. Siriono parents of Bolivia frequently masturbate their sons and the boys finger their own genitals without censure ⁴⁷. Hopi men sing boys to sleep while masturbating them to give them pleasure ⁴⁸. Little boys are also taught obscene remarks and actions ⁴⁹. Among the Aymara of Bolivia and Peru, children have sexual experiences long before puberty, while adults look on with amused tolerance ⁵⁰. In southern Brazil, Xokleng mothers masturbate their sons even before they can walk, and children as young as two or three are told in fun to copulate with each other ⁵¹.

Often children's sexual activities take the form of games or other play with other children. Lower class Goajiro children from Colombia play erotic games in which they imitate the sexual acts of turtles and goats, although girls of wealthier classes do not participate ⁵². Children also delight in imitating the sexual life of animals among the Amhara of Ethiopia ⁵³. Elsewhere the erotic games seem to be in imitation of older people. In Melanesia, Trobriand girls are initiated into sex by older children when they are as young as six or eight. Their first sexual experiences are more an attempt to imitate these older children than for sexual arousal ⁵⁴. Among the Marquesans children begin regular sexual intercourse before puberty when two or three girls serve a number of boys in rapid succession, while the others look on ⁵⁵. Fang children from the Cameroons begin "playing parents" when they are eight or nine, although their first sexual experiences usually begin several years earlier. Sometimes it is a boy and a girl who play; other times it is two boys playing homosexually ⁵⁶. Among the Ma of Zambia,

[p12]

pre-pubescent boys and girls go so far as to build play huts and pair off for sex ⁵⁷.

One of the most complete descriptions of children's sexual activities comes from studies made by the Henry's of the Argentinean Toba. Here, sexual activities are carried out quite publicly and so easy to observe. Up to the age of five, Toba boys and girls publicly masturbate and engage in homosexual activities. They pass hours each day in violent sexual games. Boys rub their penises on each others' laps or against each others' penis. Sometimes they pull back another boy's foreskin, or thrust their fingers or their penis up his anus. Boys and girls snatch at each others genitals, with the boys usually chasing the girls, often throwing them down and trying to touch the girl's vagina while she shrieks in excitement. At around five years old, girls begin taking little boys to bed with them, and attempting coitus. And sometimes whole groups of boys and girls attempt coitus at night. All of these activities are considered pre-pubescent play and continue until the children reach around 12 years of age ⁵⁸.

To my knowledge, no one has attempted to explain why some societies restrict the sexual activities of pre-pubescent children while others do not. However, in statistical studies comparing many societies, scholars have noted that where sexuality is restricted in childhood it is also generally restricted at other ages as well. Where attitudes about sex are lenient for children, they are also lenient for older people, especially for adolescents ⁵⁹. Since a good deal of the sexual play in childhood is in

⁴⁵ 2: Becher, 62

⁴⁶ 2: Becher, 137

⁴⁷ 2: Holmberg, 189

⁴⁸ 7: Talayesva, 294

⁴⁹ 1: Titiev, 30

⁵⁰ 2: Tschopik, 167

⁵¹ 2: Henry, 17-19 (listed under the Kaingang file in HRAF)

⁵² 2: Pineda Giraldo, 140

⁵³ 1: Messing, 135

⁵⁴ 11: Malinowski 55

⁵⁵ 10: Linton, 168

⁵⁶ 2: Tessmann, 105

⁵⁷ 2: Smith and Dale, 37-38

⁵⁸ 5: Henry and Henry, 32, 55-56, 74, 79

⁵⁹ Heise, David R. "Cultural Patterning of Sexual Socialization," *American Sociological Review*, 32, 1967, pp. 726-739. Broude, G., "Norms of Premarital Sexual Behavior: A Cross-Cultural Study," *Ethos* 3, 1975, pp. 381-402.

³⁵ Press et al. 'The Youngest Witnesses.' *Newsweek*, February 18, 1985, pp. 72-75

³⁶ Mary De Young. "Ethics and the 'Lunatic Fringe': The Case of Pedophile Organizations." *Human Organization* 43(1): 72-74

³⁷ Carleton Gajdusek, *Omni* 8(6), March 1986, pp. 62-68, 104-106

³⁸ 4: Dundes, 296

³⁹ 4: Huntingford, 42

⁴⁰ 9: Thomas, 89

⁴¹ 12: Marshall, 349

⁴² 15: Ehrlich, 169

⁴³ 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 219

⁴⁴ 10: Linton, 166

imitation of adult or adolescent sexual activities, this is perhaps to be expected. Still, there are enough exceptions to this general tendency to warrant further investigation. Societies are more likely to permit sexual freedom in adolescence than in childhood, so potential explanations might begin with a consideration of why a society would permit sexual freedom to adolescents but not to their younger brothers and sisters. Perhaps the psychological consequences of childhood sexuality might be important.

[p13]

The effects of different attitudes toward childhood sexuality have received some limited attention from anthropologists. One comparative study showed that in societies where people are punished more harshly for childhood sexual behavior, they are more likely as adults to be paranoid, especially about other people ⁶⁰. Others have found that where children are punished more severely for sexual behavior, adults are more likely to observe taboos on sex during menstruation, and pregnancy. They are also more likely to use love magic in order to win sexual partners ⁶¹. This correlation with love magic is interesting, and may tell us something about the psychological consequences of punishing childhood sexuality.

The standard anthropological explanation for magic is that it serves to relieve anxiety in situations that are important, but unpredictable and uncontrollable. In these situations more rational means to control things simply do not work so people are forced to resort to irrational means of control. This explanation has successfully been used to explain the use of magic in curing difficult illnesses, in winning at sports, and in finding water through the use of forked sticks. If this general explanation is correct, then this suggests the use of love magic may reflect a feeling that gaining love is somewhat uncontrollable and unpredictable. When children receive what must appear as arbitrary punishment for sharing pleasurable sexual feelings with others, this may cause them to think of love as unpredictable and uncontrollable. Such arbitrary punishment may also explain why people are more paranoid of others in societies where children are punished more severely for sex.

SEXUAL RELATIONS BETWEEN ADULTS AND CHILDREN

Perhaps because of the very strong taboo on this behavior from our own society, few scholars have ever dealt with the question of sexual relations between adults and children in other cultures, although the ethnographic literature on the subject is fairly extensive. As with other aspects of human sexuality, attitudes toward sex between adults and children vary tremendously from one society to another. But, again, because societies that taboo adult-child sexuality tend to

[p14]

have less of it, anthropologists have less to write about when describing societies that disapprove of these relationships.

Some societies are clear about their abhorrence of sexual activities between adults and children. Among the Cagaba of Colombia, adults sometimes attempted to engage children as young as five or six in sexual relations, but they were severely punished if discovered ⁶². The Igbo of Nigeria warned their daughters to report immediately if a man tried to touch them in any suspicious way ⁶³, although the ethnographic accounts are not clear about what happened to guilty offenders. In some places children were protected even from their parents. In Libya a Bedouin father could fondle his daughter until she reached six years of age, but was prohibited from kissing her or holding her on his knee after she reached eleven ⁶⁴. Similarly, on Polynesian Tikopia, young boys were warned not to accept

the invitations of adult women to have sex, often performed while hidden under a blanket. If a boy succumbed, he was considered dirty ⁶⁵. but it is not clear if the adult woman received any punishment. On the Melanesian Trobriand Islands, a boy felt ashamed if he had accepted one of the sexual invitations from a repulsive high-ranking woman ⁶⁶, but little was done about it. Other societies also disapproved of adult-child sexual relations, but still failed to protect children who were clearly being molested. Among the Canadian Ojibwa, pretty girls were afraid of the shamans who often lusted after them and tried to "ruin" them. To refuse a shaman's advances was thought to expose the girl and her entire family to dreadful sorcery ⁶⁷. The Karadja Indians of Brazil sometimes had sex with pre-pubescent girls captured from enemy tribes, who had no say in their treatment ⁶⁸.

In some places, there may be some disapproval of sex between adults and children, but the practice is not considered serious enough to warrant sanctions against it. Among the Fang of the Cameroons, homosexuality is thought immoral and unnatural, but older men sometimes tell boys they are playing a game and engage them in sexual relations. In these cases, the Fang excuse the boys by saying they are "ignorant" and so not responsible for their acts. They also

[p15]

excuse the older man by saying simply that "he has the heart of boys." ⁶⁹ Similarly, although it is considered taboo, among the Ila of Zambia, adult men are not punished if they have sex with pre-pubescent girls (intercourse between the thighs without penetration) ⁷⁰. Adult men also have sex with girls as young as three years old among the Zulu of South Africa. Although the ethnographer reporting these cases expressed surprise at how little psychological trauma resulted, he provided no information about Zulu attitudes toward such activities ⁷¹. For the Copper Eskimo of northern Canada, sexual relations between a man and a little girl are simply ignored by everyone else so long as there is no trouble and no one complains ⁷².

In other societies sexual relations between adults and children are fully accepted. In several societies adult men marry pre-pubescent girls and sexual relations with their young wives are considered normal and proper. Among the Mongo of Zaire, men may legally have whatever sex they wish with their girl-brides, although most men attempt not to damage their bodies ⁷³. To prepare their bride's vagina for intercourse they insert progressively larger shoots of a plant, and the girl breaks her own hymen ⁷⁴. The Katab of Nigeria also permit adult males to have sex with their pre-pubescent wives. Because sex for them is difficult before marriage, most Katab men have waited a long time to begin sexual relations and are impatient about initiating sexual relations with their immature wives ⁷⁵. Among the Lovedo of southern Africa immature girls sometimes marry old men who manually enlarge the girl's vagina ⁷⁶. Pre-pubescent wives among the Ngonde of Tanzania like sleeping with their much older husbands and having sex with them. The men say this is good, because it accustoms the girl to her husband ⁷⁷. The Bororo Indians of Brazil consider a marriage between an adult male and a small girl to be ideal ⁷⁸.

⁶⁵ 2: Firth, 494

⁶⁶ 5: Malinowski, 293

⁶⁷ 7: Landes, 114

⁶⁸ 2: Becher, 68-70 (from Yanoama source)

⁶⁹ 2: Tessmann, 131

⁷⁰ 2: Smith and Dale, 37-38

⁷¹ 31: Kohler, 41

⁷² 1: Jenness, 238-239

⁷³ 2: Hulstaert, 215

⁷⁴ 2: Hulstaert, 58, 70

⁷⁵ 1: Meek, 65

⁷⁶ 2: Krige and Krige, 290

⁷⁷ 1: Wilson, 88

⁷⁸ 4: Levak, 78

⁶⁰ Whiting, J.W.M. and I.L. Child, Child Training and Personality, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953

⁶¹ Broude, G., "The Cultural Management of Sexuality," IN R. Munroe and R. Munroe (eds.) Handbook of Human Development. 198?, pp. 633-673

⁶² 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 223

⁶³ 14: Okonjo, 146

⁶⁴ 1: Obermeyer, 107

Social approval of sexual relations between adults and children does not always depend upon a marriage tie. Among the Xokleng of southern Brazil, little children are at the beck and call of the adults who often sleep with them and culminate their intimate relationships with sexual activities. Some men even receive humorous nicknames

[p16]

referring to their penchants for deflowering young girls. In general these sexual relations are considered playful and amusing⁷⁹. In the Marquesan Islands of French Polynesia girls as young as 10 used to greet the boats of the first European explorers to visit their islands with lewd expressions and gestures as an invitation to sexual intercourse⁸⁰. The cunnilingus performed by impotent Trukese men on receptive pre-pubescent girls also appear not to have depended upon a marriage tie⁸¹. Among the Toba of Argentina, mothers sometimes used their son's feet to masturbate themselves, and the boys in turn masturbated against the mother's buttocks⁸². Hopi women of the U.S. southwest would sometimes simulate copulation with pre-adolescent boys⁸³. These activities were considered normal, although one Hopi Indian relates an instance from his youth when he was seduced by a clan mother. He was frightened by the sight of the woman's pubic hair and by the blood on his penis. The boy's mother complained, but the complaint seemed to be based more on a taboo against sex with a member of the same clan, than on a taboo against sex between adults and children⁸⁴. Among the Siriono of Bolivia men preferred girls at around the age of puberty, and women often had sex with their husband's pre-pubescent brother⁸⁵. Among the Brazilian Tupinamba, old women who had been discarded by the men, sometimes won young boys' love by giving them presents, teaching them what they did not yet know and staying by them day and night⁸⁶.

Several societies also approve of homosexual relationships between adult males and pre-pubescent boys. Among the Aranda of Australia, an adult unmarried male often took a boy of 10 or 12 who serviced him "as a wife" for several years until the older male eventually married. The boy had to belong to the proper group of people to marry⁸⁷. Among the Siwans of Egypt it was customary for fathers to trade their sons for sexual intercourse, and to "marry" the boys. Men are said to have been much more jealous of their boys than of their women. The boys, who could be as young as 12 served as the active partner in anal intercourse⁸⁸. Among the Mossi of Upper Volta, specially kept attractive young boys between seven and 15 years of age served as sexual partners for chiefs on Fridays, a holy day when women were taboo. The boys

[p17]

were required to remain virgins as far as heterosexual encounters were concerned, under penalty of death. Upon reaching manhood, the boys were given a wife and sent away⁸⁹. In several societies a boy's passage into adulthood required his having sexual relationships with an older woman. Among the Mangaia of Polynesia an older experienced woman provided boys with their first sexual training⁹⁰. Among the Cagaba of Colombia boys were required to have sex with an old woman as part of their initiation ceremony. For some boys this sexual experience was remembered with horror, but other

boys went on to marry older women⁹¹. Among the Polynesian Marquesans, older women also initiated young males and served as the sexual partner for groups of boys⁹². Among the Kanaka Indians of Brazil boys who had just passed puberty were required to have sex with three or four middle-aged women⁹³. Older men also initiated girls into sex. In Cambodia, Buddhist priests were obliged to deflower young girls before they married⁹⁴. Among the Cagaba of Colombia, an elder was designated to deflower a girl after her first menstruation. Coitus was repeated for four days, because people felt the hymen should not be broken all at once. The man would receive gifts from the girl's parents for this service⁹⁵. Among the Tukano of Colombia, an impotent old man was assigned the task of digitally deflowering a girl when she reached about eight years old, although just how sexual this defloration was is unclear from the ethnographic accounts. In any case, at her puberty ceremony a girl would get instruction on matrimonial duties and sexual practice with the shaman or another young man of her choice⁹⁶.

As an indication of just how extensive childhood sexual activities can be, in some groups pre-pubescent sex is considered so normal, that people actually believe puberty comes about because of the earlier sexual activities, especially sexual activities with adults. In New Guinea, several societies, like the Etoro, require pre-pubescent boys to engage in homosexual relationships with older men in order for them to grow up. People believe that without ingesting semen, boys will simply not mature physically⁹⁷. The Bororo Indians of Brazil think that the growth of breasts is the result of the mature husband's handling of his young wife's

[p18]

sexual organs. Menstruation is thought possible only if a man first deflowers the girl⁹⁸. Similarly, the Toba of Argentina think that menstruation is caused by a violent entrance into the vagina⁹⁹. The Himalayan Lepcha do not even recognize a word for physical puberty. The growth of breasts and menstruation are thought to be due to copulation¹⁰⁰. Although they do not believe sex is absolutely necessary for puberty to take place, the Azande of Zaire do think intercourse accelerates a girl's first menstruation¹⁰¹.

Judging by the amount of attention it receives in the media, we could assume the American public is deeply concerned about sexual activity between adults and children. It is surprising, then, that anthropologists have carried out so little research on the topic. I could find no systematic studies about the subject other than those carried out by psychologists and others in Western industrialized cultures. We cannot even tell at this point whether adult-child sexual relationships are related to general sexual freedom for children, and we have no information on the possible psychological or other effects of these relationships in other cultures. Some anthropologists have suggested that large age differences for heterosexual marriage partners and homosexual sex partners might be related to the ways men gain and maintain power in society¹⁰², but it is unclear just what these power relationships might be, or how they might relate to sex between adults and pre-pubescent children. Another possi-

⁹¹ 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 214 ff

⁹² 13: Suggs, 25

⁹³ William Crocker, "Extramarital Sexual Practices of the Ramkokamekra-Canela Indians: An Analysis of Socio-Cultural Factors. IN Lyon, Patricia J., ed. Native South Americans: Ethnology of the Least Known Continent, Boston: Little Brown, pp. 184-194

⁹⁴ Gregerson, Sexual Practices, New York: Franklin Watts, 1983, p. 218

⁹⁵ 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 217-218

⁹⁶ 5: Goldman, 179 4: Silva, 385-386

⁹⁷ Kelly, Raymond. Etoro Social Structure: A Study in Structural Contradiction. Ph.D. dissertation: University of Michigan, 1974. Herdt, Gilbert (ed.), Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984

⁹⁸ 4: Levak, 78

⁹⁹ 5: Henry and Henry, 57

¹⁰⁰ 1: Gorer, 175

¹⁰¹ 20: Czekanowski

¹⁰² Hart and Pilling, The Tiwi of North Australia, N.Y.: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Herdt, G., Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984

⁷⁹ 2: Henry, 17-19 (listed as Kaingang in HRAF)

⁸⁰ 6: Lisiansky, 67

⁸¹ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 115

⁸² 5: Henry and Henry, 74

⁸³ 1: Titiev, 30

⁸⁴ 7: Talayesva, 79

⁸⁵ 2: Holmberg, 180-181

⁸⁶ 8: Soares de Souza, 315

⁸⁷ 25: Strehlow, 98

⁸⁸ Gregerson, Sexual Practices, New York: Franklin Watts, 1983, pp. 202-203

⁸⁹ 6: Tauxier, 108

⁹⁰ Gregerson, Sexual Practices, New York: Franklin Watts, 1983, p. 252

bility is that adult-child sexual relations are simply a reflection of a generally greater intimacy between parents or other adults and their children. Obviously, the topic is wide open for research.

SEX BEFORE MARRIAGE

In some societies marriages take place before or immediately after puberty, so there is no period of premarital adolescent sex. Instead children are plunged immediately into adulthood and parenthood. But in most societies there is a time when adolescents remain unattached. Sexual behaviors and attitudes vary widely during this period.

[p19]

In some places of the world, sex before marriage was prohibited and severely punished if it occurred. In many Middle Eastern societies, such as among the Kurd of the border area in Iraq, Iran and Turkey, a bride who was not a virgin would be killed by one of her male kinsmen¹⁰³. An unmarried girl could also expect death as punishment for having sex on Santa Cruz in the Solomon Islands¹⁰⁴. In Rwanda, unmarried Tutsi and Hutu girls were thought to bring great misfortune on their families if they got pregnant, and were either killed or banished as a consequence¹⁰⁵. In parts of rural Ireland, the elders insisted proudly that premarital sexual activities simply did not occur¹⁰⁶. If an unmarried couple were discovered having sex, they were banished from the community sometimes to America¹⁰⁷. On the Indonesian island of Flores, if a boy so much as squeezed the breast of a girl, her father and brothers would go to his house and ruin him economically by killing his animals¹⁰⁸.

In other cases where adolescents violated premarital sex taboos the penalties were less severe. The Lovedu of Southern Africa considered chastity ideal, but a girl who got pregnant could still maintain her position in society, although she would receive offers of marriage only from old men¹⁰⁹. Similarly, among the Cuna of Panama, an unmarried girl who became pregnant would have her hair cut off and would have to marry an old man, although in earlier times she would have been killed¹¹⁰. In southern Sudan Nuer girls who bore illegitimate children were likely to become concubines for the rest of their lives¹¹¹. Although some premarital sex was permitted her, a Kapauku girl from Indonesian West Irian was forced to suffer an arrow shot into her thigh if she was too promiscuous, since this was thought to lower the brideprice her father would receive on her marriage¹¹². Among the Australian Aranda a single man who had sex with a woman was also speared or struck with a club¹¹³.

Tests of virginity were common in many societies. Among the Kurd, women would accompany the bride on her wedding night and return with a bridal sheet properly stained to verify the rupture of the bride's hymen¹¹⁴. Among the Libyan Bedouin it was the groom who, upon entering the nuptial tent, would wrap a part of his toga around his fingers and insert

[p20]

them into the vagina of his bride to pierce the hymen. The wedding guests outside the tent would listen for the bride's shrieks and wait for the groom to tie the blood-stained cloth to a pole and thrust it out of the tent's corner¹¹⁵. Among the Lau Fijians of Melanesia girls were also required to take

¹⁰³ 4: Hansen, 131

¹⁰⁴ 1: Graebner, 138

¹⁰⁵ 1: Vanhove, 25

¹⁰⁶ 16: Messenger, 110

¹⁰⁷ 1: Arensberg and Kimball, 216

¹⁰⁸ 5: Kennedy, 201

¹⁰⁹ 2: Krige and Krige, 157

¹¹⁰ 12: Marshall, 249

¹¹¹ 2: Evans-Pritchard, 53

¹¹² 1: Pospisil, 47

¹¹³ 25: Strehlow, 92

¹¹⁴ 4: Hansen, 131-134

¹¹⁵ 6: Peters, 122

virginity tests for marriage¹¹⁶. Ngoni girls from good families in Malawi were examined weekly to verify that they were still virgins¹¹⁷. On the other hand, other Ngoni girls went unchaperoned, and, if they failed to attract lovers, were even instructed to have sex with a young man while the girl's grandmothers observed to verify the girl's sexual skills¹¹⁸.

In some cases tests of virginity seemed peculiarly immodest. In Somali, a girl out pasturing sheep would sometimes show her breasts to visiting males to prove her virginity, under the belief that the shape of the breast was a good indicator of a girl's sexual experience¹¹⁹. Among the Goajiro Indians of Colombia males took advantage of a "virginity test" in order to caress the girls they liked. The "virginity test" consisted of tickling the bodies of a group of girls. Those who smiled or laughed were not considered virgins. The others received presents as a reward for their chastity¹²⁰.

To help assure that premarital sex would not occur, some societies attempted to keep boys and girls separate. Most readers are familiar with the practice of secluding women in many Muslim societies, but there are other places in the world as well where women were kept away from men. In Korea girls were secluded when they reached 12 years of age, and not permitted to leave their household¹²¹. On the Melanesian island of Santa Cruz, the sexes were also kept strictly separate. Men were not permitted even to speak the name of a girl or woman¹²². Among the Tlingit of southern Alaska girls were carefully watched, and were prohibited from speaking to any men, including their own brothers¹²³. Among the Blackfoot Indians of southern Canada girls were not allowed to go out at night, and could go out during the day only when accompanied by their mother or some other old woman¹²⁴.

A double standard with regard to premarital sex is common in many societies -- boys are usually permitted greater

[p21]

freedom than girls. Among the Libyan Bedouin, although boys cannot have sex with unmarried girls, some of them do manage to engage in sex with married women¹²⁵. While unmarried Pawnee girls are expected to remain virgins, their brothers are permitted sexual relations with their mother's brother's wife up until the time they marry¹²⁶. On the Indonesian island of Flores, boys cannot have sex with unmarried girls, but they may have sex with widows¹²⁷. Among the Amhara of Ethiopia, although boys and girls are both told to remain virgins until marriage, a boy who actually remains a virgin is insultingly referred to as "a castrated one."¹²⁸ On the Melanesian island of Santa Cruz, most unmarried girls may be killed if they are caught having sex, but the boys sometimes "buy" a girl from her relatives in order to use her as a prostitute until they tire of her, at which time they take her to another village to "sell" her at an "auction."¹²⁹ The idea that sex is more praiseworthy for males than for females is also reflected in the attitudes of Tikopian males who, after deflowering a young girl, stain their foreheads with her blood and boast about their conquest while belittling the girl¹³⁰.

¹¹⁶ 3: Thompson, 48

¹¹⁷ 2: Read, 148

¹¹⁸ 4: Barnes

¹¹⁹ 31: Lewis, 13

¹²⁰ 2: Pineda-Giraldo, 177

¹²¹ 23: Hulbert, 530-531

¹²² 2: Speiser, 110

¹²³ 6: Jones, 126

¹²⁴ 33: Bradley

¹²⁵ 6: Peters, 129

¹²⁶ 5: Dorsey and Murie, 96

¹²⁷ 5: Kennedy, 242

¹²⁸ 11: Levine, 99

¹²⁹ 1: Graebner, 138

¹³⁰ 2: Firth, 519

Other societies also have different attitudes about premarital sex for different people. In Korea, upper and middle class girls are carefully secluded and their virginity is protected, but lower classes girls are much freer to do as they please ¹³¹. Among the Fang of the Cameroons, most people are free to engage in a great deal of premarital sex, but sometimes a boy or girl is "consecrated" and required to remain sexually chaste. Periodically this special child's loincloth is removed and he or she must parade about naked ¹³².

A few societies normally taboo premarital sexual relations, but on special ceremonies these relations may actually be encouraged. The Goajiro of Colombia are fairly strict about premarital sex, but during special ceremonies the unmarried are expected to carry out full sexual intercourse ¹³³. The Nupe of Nigeria also normally frown upon pre- and extramarital sex, but for one ceremony, after a long period of enforced chastity for all, people engage in erotic dancing and bathing prior to having sexually promiscuous relations ¹³⁴.

[p22]

In many societies people find nothing wrong with premarital sex as long as pregnancy does not result. The Trobrianders of Melanesia feel that a girl should not become pregnant until after she marries, although premarital sex is quite highly regarded ¹³⁵. The Aymara of Bolivia and Peru look on their children's sexuality with amused tolerance, and merely warn their daughters not to have too many affairs, and their sons not to get the girls pregnant ¹³⁶. For the Chagga of Tanzania, "sexual purity" refers to premarital pregnancy not to chastity, as virginity is not particularly valued ¹³⁷. Although the neighboring Masai are quite promiscuous generally, they practice only coitus interruptus and think it shameful for a man to impregnate an uninitiated girl. If a man impregnates a girl, he is required to kill an enemy to wipe out his shame, a custom said to be the cause of occasional murders ¹³⁸. Among the Yapese of Micronesia, premarital sex is considered fine, so long as the young people do not have too much sex, since this is thought to weaken them ¹³⁹.

In many places the idea of "virginity" referred specifically to maintaining an intact hymen. Thus, sexual activities that did not involve insertion into the vagina did not jeopardize virginity. Among the Tallensi of Ghana, girls, at special dances, selected boys from another village to spend the night with, sometimes choosing more than one. But they could not have full sexual intercourse with their lovers ¹⁴⁰. The Kikuyu of Kenya required a girl to be a virgin upon marriage, but permitted young men and women to sleep together, so long as they did not have full sexual intercourse. This was also true of other cultures in Kenya like the Dorobo ¹⁴¹ and the Luo. The Luo had a special name, *cedo*, to refer to the love-making that took place in the bachelor's hut, in which boys had intercourse between the thighs ("intracural intercourse") with the girls ¹⁴². The Zulu of South Africa also permitted intracural sex but a girl discovered having full sexual intercourse was beaten by her age-mates, and her male partner was either fined or beaten ¹⁴³. The Zulu also required that girls get special permission from a "girl queen" before having sex with their boyfriends. The "queen" demanded beads from the girls when

[p23]

they started receiving gifts from their lovers ¹⁴⁴. Among the Highland Scots, after betrothal and before marriage, a young couple was allowed to "bundle," meaning they could sleep together, but not have sexual relations.

A good number of societies actually encouraged sexual relationships among adolescents. Young Andamanese islanders, living off the coast of India, spent a good deal of their time making themselves sexually attractive with garlands of fruit and flowers, and engaging in promiscuous intercourse which was considered harmless ¹⁴⁵. Among the Lapps of northern Scandinavia a boy was supposed to have a girl for sexual relations in every place that he took his reindeer herds ¹⁴⁶. Among the Ila of Zambia, girls counted their lovers by the score ¹⁴⁷. Fang girls (from the Cameroons) were actually required to keep count of a night's sexual partners on special sticks of raffia ¹⁴⁸. The Tukano of Colombia and the Pukapuka of New Zealand did not even have a concept of virginity ¹⁴⁹. In several places adolescents who did not engage in premarital sexual relations were chided by their parents. Fang parents, concerned about their son's good behavior, would sometimes give him aphrodisiacs to stimulate his love-making ¹⁵⁰. Among the Philippine Ifugao, a boy who failed to begin his sex life when he became of age was scolded by his father, and told that his classificatory sisters would help him find a trysting place and potential sex partners ¹⁵¹. During colonial times among the Bolivian Aymara it was the most promiscuous and "shameless" girls who were most sought after in marriage ¹⁵². In the Marquesan Islands, an adolescent girl was looked down upon if she did not "run wild" for a few years in search of amusement and sex ¹⁵³. In some places girls were expected to get pregnant before marriage. The Iban of Borneo considered premarital sex necessary in order to guarantee that a woman was fertile. But if a girl got pregnant and her partner subsequently refused to marry her, he would be fined, and she might commit suicide ¹⁵⁴. The Hopi of the American Southwest also considered premarital pregnancy as a typical prelude to marriage ¹⁵⁵. Among the Xokleng of southern Brazil, a girl's first child was always given to her mother to raise, whether the girl was married or not. But an unmarried girl's

[p24]

subsequent pregnancy had to be followed by marriage. This custom continues today and the Brazilian Indian Foundation typically registers a girl's first child as having been born to the child's grandmother ¹⁵⁶. The Siberian Chukchee rejoiced in the birth of all children, whether legitimate or not ¹⁵⁷. For single Himalayan Lepcha girls, pregnancy was seen as a sign of fertility, and actually improved a girl's chances of making a good marriage ¹⁵⁸. Among the Fang of the Cameroons, illegitimate children were raised by a girl's father who welcomed the child since it became part of a marriage deal, and raised the girl's brideprice ¹⁵⁹.

The easy-going attitude some cultures have toward premarital sex does not mean adolescents can always find sexual partners. Among the Argentinean Toba young men are eager to marry because

¹⁴⁴ 1: Krige, 106

¹⁴⁵ 1: Radcliffe-Brown, 70. 11: Cipriani, 22

¹⁴⁶ 6: Pehrson, 55

¹⁴⁷ 1: Salth and Dole, 16

¹⁴⁸ 2: Tessmann, 110

¹⁴⁹ 5: Goldmann, 122 (Tukano). 1: Beaglehole and Beaglehole, 284 (Pukapuka)

¹⁵⁰ 6: Alexandre and Binet, 123

¹⁵¹ 13: Barton

¹⁵² 3: La Barre, 130

¹⁵³ 1: Handy, 39

¹⁵⁴ 4: Path, 130

¹⁵⁵ 2: Titiev, 161

¹⁵⁶ Werner (fieldnotes, 1983)

¹⁵⁷ 1: Bogoras, 572

¹⁵⁸ 1: Gorer, 174

¹⁵⁹ 2: Tessmann, 114

¹³¹ 23: Hulbert, 532

¹³² 2: Tessmann, 127-126

¹³³ 2: Pineda-Giraldo, 177

¹³⁴ 2: Nadel, 113

¹³⁵ 2: Malinowski, 202

¹³⁶ 2: Tschopik, 167

¹³⁷ 2: Raum, 68

¹³⁸ 12: Fox, 451. 18: Merker, 110

¹³⁹ 1: Hunt, 88

¹⁴⁰ 1: Rattray, 392

¹⁴¹ 3: Huntingford, 351

¹⁴² 3: Evans-Pritchard, 132

¹⁴³ 1: Krige, 106

they outnumber the available girls and find getting sex partners difficult. On the other hand, the girls enjoy being unmarried, although they are very jealous of their sex partners and will sometimes engage in boxing matches with their rivals¹⁶⁰. In some valleys of the Marquesan Islands, the population is so small that available sex partners are extremely limited. One valley had a total population of 35 people, with only five or six adolescent boys and two unmarried girls who were sisters to two of the boys. To find sex partners the boys were required to travel long distances to other valleys¹⁶¹. On the Trobriand Islands off the coast of New Guinea, groups of boys would make themselves attractive and travel en masse to another village in search of sexual adventures. The boys were met by the girls just outside the village where they had sexual intercourse. The girls also joined together to go on expeditions for sex, although not quite so often¹⁶².

Several societies provide special places for young people to have sex. Among the Shilluk of southern Sudan, the boys normally slept together in the cattle barns, while adolescent girls were given an empty house in the village which they used as a sexual trysting place when a boy struck their fancy¹⁶³. Among the Brazilian Bororo, it was the girls who were invited for sex by the boys into the men's house in the village center¹⁶⁴. Similarly, among the Hopi of the American Southwest, boys began sleeping in a separate dwelling when

[p25]

they turned 12 or 13. Free from adult supervision, they could more easily engage in sexual relations in their sleeping quarters¹⁶⁵. Among the Philippine Ifugao there were special sleeping places for both boys and girls which could be used for sexual relations¹⁶⁶. Among the Luo of Kenya, adolescents also had sex in the special bachelors' or girls' huts. While a couple had sex inside, the others who lived there would dance and sing obscene songs from the outside¹⁶⁷. The Muria Gond of Central India had a special co-ed dormitory where premarital sex was encouraged¹⁶⁸. Among the Masai of Tanzania it was considered wrong for a bachelor to have sex with a girl unless there were also other young couples sleeping on the same bed. Jealousy was said to be quite rare¹⁶⁹. The Ngonde of Tanzania lived in villages composed of people all of roughly the same age. This meant adolescents actually lived in a different village from their parents and enjoyed a great deal of sexual freedom¹⁷⁰.

Elsewhere, there may be no special construction for sexual trysts, but adolescents are fairly free to innovate. Young Trobrianders often go on "love picnics." They search for a pleasant place on their island, such as a coral ridge or a forest clearing, and play games like hide and seek which allow for a good deal of erotic play. They usually end up having full intercourse¹⁷¹. Similarly, Mbuti Pygmy boys and girls sometimes follow the same forest trail, and end up having an orgy in the jungle. If a couple is surprised having sex in the forest, they make no attempt to hide their activities, and the intruder simply continues on his way¹⁷². In many places in Oceania, boys follow a custom known as "night-crawling" in the anthropological literature. This consists of sneaking into the hut where a girl sleeps at night and having sex with her while her parents sleep nearby. Boys on the Micronesian island of Truk make special personalized "love staves" that they push under the hut to a girl's sleeping place in the

hopes that she will accept his entry. The girl can tell by feeling the staff who the boy is, and either give it a tug or push it away to indicate whether she wants sex or not¹⁷³.

Some anthropologists have suggested that easy access to sex makes it difficult to develop romantic sentiments. For

[p26]

example, Kahn argued that the indulgent and immediate satisfaction of sexual desires among the Bush Negroes of Guyana made it impossible for them to develop more spiritual sentiments¹⁷⁴. However, another extremely permissive society, the Micronesian Truk, were quite romantic in the many love letters boys sent to their girlfriends¹⁷⁵. By the same token, some societies, such as the Taiwanese, that are relatively repressive of premarital sex, consider romantic sentiments as totally irrelevant to marriage¹⁷⁶. Among the sexually repressive Blackfoot Indians of southern Canada, there was no form of courtship at all, and girls had little choice in selecting their husbands. Many Blackfoot girls ended up committing suicide when they could not marry the man they liked¹⁷⁷. Suicide also appears to have been a reaction to unrequited love among the Polynesian Tikopia, although, in the case of a girl who refused the invitations of a member of the chief's family, it was the girl, not the boy, who was forced to commit suicide by going out to sea on a boat.¹⁷⁸

Anthropologists have discovered several factors that are related to premarital sexual permissiveness. As mentioned above, societies that approve of childhood sexuality are also likely to approve of adolescent sexuality, while those that disapprove of childhood sexuality are also more likely to disapprove of adolescent sexuality. In terms of geographical distribution, one study of 456 societies found premarital sexual permissiveness most likely in the Pacific Island societies and least likely in Mediterranean cultures¹⁷⁹.

One factor that distinguishes between sexually permissive and restrictive societies is the amount of body contact babies have with their mother. Where infants are in contact with their mother's body for less than half the day premarital sex is likely to be taboo. Where infants spend more time in direct bodily contact with their mother, people are generally more lenient about premarital sex¹⁸⁰. Perhaps this is because having a mother who is less accessible makes an infant more mistrustful of others, and less willing to become close to the opposite sex. Conversely, a more intimate relationship with the mother while small may make a person expect more intimacy when older as well.

[p27]

Two socioeconomic factors related to premarital sex have also appeared in several studies. First, matrilineal and matrilocal societies are more likely to permit premarital sexual relationships than are patrilineal and patrilocal societies¹⁸¹. This means that people are more permissive about adolescent sex when newly married couples live with the wife's family, and when names, property and other rights are inherited from the mother's side of the family. Conversely, people tend to be more intolerant of premarital sex when couples live with the husband's family, or inherit rights from the father's side of the family. The explanation for this may have to do with who is responsible for raising a child. In a matrilocal society a girl never has to leave home. If she gets pregnant while still unmarried, her child will be raised by her mother and her other relatives. Later, if the girl does get married, neither

¹⁶⁰ 5: Henry and Henry, 12. 3: Metraux, 15

¹⁶¹ 13: Suggs, 39

¹⁶² 5: Malinowski, 325 ff

¹⁶³ 2: Seligmann and Seligmann

¹⁶⁴ 5: Baldus, 18

¹⁶⁵ 1: Titiev, 30

¹⁶⁶ 13: Bargon, 88

¹⁶⁷ 3: Evans-Pritchard, 30

¹⁶⁸ Gregerson, E. *Sexual Practices*. New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 224

¹⁶⁹ 1: Leakey, 193. 6: Thomson, 252

¹⁷⁰ 1: Wilson, 85 ff

¹⁷¹ 5: Malinowski, 326

¹⁷² 2: Turnbull, 121

¹⁷³ 24: Kramer, 316

¹⁷⁴ 2: Kahn, 58

¹⁷⁵ 12: Swartz, 478

¹⁷⁶ 3: Wolf, 132

¹⁷⁷ 5: Grinnell, 216

¹⁷⁸ 2: Firth, 513-514

¹⁷⁹ Bourguignon, E. and L. S. Greenbaum. *Diversity and Homogeneity in World Societies*. New Haven: HRAF Press, 1973, p. 60

¹⁸⁰ Broude, G., "Norms of Premarital Sexual Behavior," *Ethos* 3, 1975, pp. 381-402

¹⁸¹ Broude, G., "Norms of Premarital Sexual Behavior," *Ethos* 3, 1975, pp. 381-402

she nor her child will have to move. Both can continue where they are, and the changes are minimum. If the society is matrilineal there is also no problem about inheritance. It is very clear that the child will inherit its rights from its mother's family. With patrilocal societies there is a greater problem if an unmarried girl becomes pregnant. First, it is not clear who should take care of the newborn child. If the girl later gets married she will have to move to her husband's home, and the child may have to go with her. Because a boy cannot be sure that a child born out of wedlock is his own, he may be reluctant to take responsibility for his girlfriend's baby. Also, in a patrilineal society it is more difficult to determine what the child's inheritance rights might be, because people may be unsure of who the father is.

The association of matrilineality with premarital permissiveness might be explained in a similar way by sociobiologists, who would point out that where there is greater sexual promiscuity, men are less sure about who their children are. In such cases it would be unwise (in terms of reproductive success) for a man to devote a lot of energy to a child he cannot be sure is his own. It would make more sense to devote this energy to his sister's children who he knows share at least some of his genes. Since a man's sister's children belong to his own matrilineage, in sexually

[p28]

permissive societies men should prefer to pass along their rights matrilineally.

The second socioeconomic factor related to premarital permissiveness is social class. In more egalitarian societies (where people are economically more equal) people are more acceptant of sex before marriage. Societies with greater class differences are more likely to taboo premarital sex. The greater sexual restrictiveness of stratified societies has been explained as due to the danger of a girl having to marry a man below her social class if she gets pregnant. In simpler societies without classes this danger is nonexistent¹⁸².

Some of the more specific features of premarital sexual activities have also been examined by anthropologists. One study looked at the question of a double standard in punishments meted out to violators of premarital sex taboos. In 37 % of the societies examined it was the girls who received the more severe punishments, while in 26 % of societies boys received the harsher punishment. African societies were particularly likely to punish the male, although no explanation was given of why this should be so¹⁸³.

Another study looked at the question of romantic love. As the examples above suggest, romantic love may be equally as likely in sexually permissive as in sexually restrictive societies. Thus it cannot be attributed to sexual repression. But there is an association between romantic love and residence patterns. Where newly married couples live neolocally (that is where they move away from both sets of parents upon marriage), romantic love is less likely to occur¹⁸⁴. The reason may be that romantic love is a kind of impractical idealization of one's mate. This kind of idealization is possible when a couple lives near old friends and relatives who can give more practical kinds of support when needed. With neolocal residence a husband and wife are on their own. They have no choice but to rely on each other for practical as well as moral support. This makes idealization difficult, and forces potential spouses to examine each others' virtues and faults as realistically as possible.

[p29]

Another question concerns the focus of adolescent initiation rites. One study showed that initiation rites for both boys and girls tend to emphasize sexuality and fertility in societies where males have more authority than females in the household. Where males and females share authority more equally, responsibility is the main theme in initiation rites. Possibly, a woman's economic contribution

to the household is regarded more highly in the more sexually egalitarian societies, and so their responsibility is perceived as more important than their sexuality. In sexually unequal societies men and women may see each other more in their sexual than in their economic capacities¹⁸⁵.

There are many other aspects of premarital sex that might merit additional study. We do not know why some societies prohibit premarital sex throughout most of the year, but then permit "binges" of sexual activity during special ceremonies. Nor do we know why some societies taboo premarital sex altogether while others are concerned only about pregnancy. Perhaps psychological factors, rather than economic or social factors, play a role. Sex education also differs from one society to another. In some places special people are assigned the task of telling people what to do. In other cases instruction is of the "hands-on" type, as when young people have their first sexual experience with an older more experienced adult. Could the difference be related to a general difference in educational techniques?

Although we have learned a good deal about sexuality in childhood and adolescence in recent years, we still have a great deal more to learn. Sexuality is a particularly consuming interest during adolescence in many societies, and it is only fitting that it receive a good proportion of the research. But other areas of human sexuality also deserve attention. Let us turn then to questions of sex in marriage and in old age.

[p30]

SEX IN MARRIAGE AND OLD AGE

"Biblical Times," reads the title of an ad in New York's liberal weekly newspaper the *Village Voice*¹⁸⁶. Hidden amongst other ads of singles seeking potential spouses and of married couples interested in "swinging," the ad describes a new kind of dating service catering to old men seeking younger women and old women seeking younger men. Public attitudes toward adult sexuality appear to have changed a good deal since the days prior to the "make love, not war" period of the late 1960's. That was a period when sexual radicals preached the virtues of nudism, multiple lovers, bisexuality and interracial matings¹⁸⁷, and studies of swingers uncovered people who engaged in mate-swapping, not so much for the sexual fun of it, but because they sincerely believed that "swinging" would help to bring about a freer and more peaceful world¹⁸⁸.

But not all the dreams of the sexual radicals turned out as planned. The high divorce rate created problems about child custody. In 1983 only 50 % of the women who were supposed to receive child support actually got the full amount due them, and their estranged husbands, grieving over the loss of their children, formed fathers' rights groups to give fathers more equal custody of their offspring, or at least visitation rights often denied them¹⁸⁹. More and more children were raised by single parents. In 1980 32 % of all births in the United States were to single mothers¹⁹⁰. And new sexually transmitted diseases made people a lot more cautious about the kinds of sexual activities they engaged in, or who their sexual partners were¹⁹¹.

Contemporary American attitudes about adult sexuality vary greatly, perhaps more so than in any other period of our history. Yet, as we shall see, the cross-cultural variation in sexual attitudes and practices may be even greater.

¹⁸⁵ Schiegel, A. and H. Barry, "The Evolutionary Significance of Adolescent Initiation Ceremonies," *American Ethnologist*, 1980, pp. 698-715

¹⁸⁶ "The Personals," *Village Voice*, December 23, 1986, p. 150, col. 4

¹⁸⁷ Poland, J. and S. Sloan, *Sex Marchers*, Los Angeles: Elysium Inc Publishers, 1968

¹⁸⁸ Bartell, G.D., *Group Sex*, New York: Peter H. Wyden, Publisher, 1971, p. 21

¹⁸⁹ Leo, J. "Men Have Rights Too," *Time*, Nov. 24, 1986, p. 87

¹⁹⁰ "Death of the Family," *Newsweek*, January 17, 1984, pp. 10-11

¹⁹¹ Bruno, M., "Campus Sex: New Fears," *Newsweek*, October 28, 1985. pp. 81-82

¹⁸² Broude, G., "Norms of Premarital Sexual Behavior," *Ethos* 3, 1975, pp. 381-402

¹⁸³ Frayser, S. G., *Varieties of Sexual Experience: An Anthropological Perspective on Human Sexuality*, New Haven: HRAF press, 1985, pp. 205-206

¹⁸⁴ Rosenblatt, P.C., "A Cross-Cultural Study of Child Rearing and Romantic Love," *Ethnology* 6, 1967, pp. 471-480

[p31]

SEX IN MARRIAGE

In some societies a couple gains its first sexual experience on the wedding night. This experience must be traumatic in many cases. Among the Amhara of Ethiopia the bride leaves her family's village, often for the first time ever, on her wedding night. All she knows about sex is that it is a "rude" activity and that she is supposed to resist her husband's advances as fiercely as possible. After her first sexual relationship, her bridal sheet, properly stained with her blood, will be exhibited as proof of her virginity¹⁹². Among the Burusho of Northwest India, the bridegroom's mother actually shares the bed with her son on his wedding night. She sleeps between him and his bride until they are ready to consummate their marriage as she "helps" them with any difficulties they may encounter¹⁹³. Because of the seclusion women undergo in many Moslem cultures as well as in Korea, a man's first view of his wife is often on his wedding night¹⁹⁴.

In many societies marriage marks the end of sexual adventures. Girls who were otherwise quite free to do as they pleased now had to remain faithful to one man. Among the Ngoni of Malawi unmarried girls were free to go about unescorted, but as soon as they married, they were chaperoned whenever their husbands were away¹⁹⁵. Although the Lapps expected premarital sex among the unmarried, adultery was thought extremely distasteful, and wives were faithful to their husbands, even during long absences¹⁹⁶. On the Marquesan Islands of Polynesia premarital sex was a major preoccupation of the young, but infidelity of wives was severely punished¹⁹⁷. The same was true of the Melanesian Trobriand Islands¹⁹⁸, and of the Argentine Matabo¹⁹⁹. The Brazilian Tupinamba were rarely virgins at their marriage, but once they accepted a husband, they were jealously guarded and might be killed if found to be adulterous²⁰⁰.

In several societies, wealthy men maintained eunuch slaves entrusted to maintain the sexual fidelity of their wives. Igbo kings had their wives guarded by "naked slaves," formerly eunuchs but later pre-pubescent boys. If a man or woman touched one another, a human sacrifice was needed to "calm the house." Some of the slaves were killed when a king died²⁰¹. Other Nigerian groups, like the Yoruba, Nupe and

[p32]

Hausa also maintained eunuchs to guard over the king's household²⁰². The tendency for higher class women to be more closely guarded than lower class women in societies such as Korea²⁰³, and the Nigerian Hausa, may be due to the fact that guarding women not only requires hiring people to watch over them, but also takes the women away from much productive labor. Among the Hausa the introduction of cash crops has actually increased wife seclusion by permitting some men to pay others to fetch firewood and water²⁰⁴.

The penalties for adulterous relationships could be quite severe. Among the Klamath of the U.S. Northwest, a man had to kill his wife's lover²⁰⁵. Before marriage, an Aymara woman from Bolivia

could engage freely in sex, but after marriage, she could be killed for infidelity²⁰⁶. Among the Twi of Ghana, it was only adultery with the wife of a reigning monarch that resulted in death²⁰⁷. At one time Kapauku men from Indonesian West Irian killed their adulterous wives, but because the women cost so much, they later decided only to beat them²⁰⁸.

In several societies men and women were mutilated if caught in an adulterous affair. The Azande of Zaire castrated adulterous men and cut off their hands and ears as well. Adulterous Azande women received a similar treatment²⁰⁹. The Fang of the Cameroons exposed an adulterous woman before the entire village, tied her to an ant tree, cut her clitoris and used pimento torture, in addition to other mutilations. However, only the wife was punished in adultery. Her accomplice simply paid an indemnity²¹⁰. Among the Ojibwa of Ontario the husband disfigured his adulterous wife's face so that other men would no longer find her attractive. In some cases the men would cut gashes in their wife's face with flint stones and then press out the flesh to create large scars²¹¹. The Blackfoot Indians of Manitoba and Saskatchewan either killed an adulterous woman or else cut off her nose or ears²¹². Nuer men from the southern Sudan beat their wives with a spiked bracelet if they suspected them of going with other men²¹³. Among the Ona from the southern tip of South America, a cuckolded man also beat his adulterous wife and fought her lover²¹⁴.

Elsewhere the sanctions against adultery were mostly magical. Among the Zulu of southern Africa a man mixed a

[p33]

potion made from animal blood clots and rubbed it into incisions made in the veins of his penis and his buttocks. This supposedly infected his wife, who would not get sick herself, but would make her lovers ill²¹⁵. Among the Katab of Nigeria a guilty person had to drink a mixture of beer, human and dog feces and menstrual blood in order to purge the "dirt" of adultery²¹⁶.

Sometimes the children of adulterous relationships also suffered. Among the Mossi of Upper Volta (Birkina Faso) if a woman confessed her adultery, her newborn would be killed immediately upon birth by her co-wives who would twist its neck and strangle it or else put it in lukewarm water to drown²¹⁷. Among the Cuna Indians of Panama, a child born out of wedlock was also immediately put to death²¹⁸.

In some places the sanctions against adultery appear more magical or psychological than physical. The Lozi of Zambia believe that a man's adultery during his wife's pregnancy will cause a miscarriage²¹⁹. The Ngonde of Tanzania think that a woman's adultery will cause diarrhea in her husband, although the practice of coitus interruptus prevents this²²⁰. Among the Thonga of Mozambique, a man may commit suicide if his wife has adulterous relationships²²¹.

²⁰⁶ 3: LaBarre, 130

²⁰⁷ 3: Rattray, 306

²⁰⁸ 1: Pospisil, 285

²⁰⁹ 1: Seligman, 516

²¹⁰ 5: Balandier, 61. 3: Trezenem, 30

²¹¹ 15: Hilger, 162

²¹² 11: Goldfrank, 51

²¹³ 14: Hoffman, 42

²¹⁴ 1: Gusinde, 463

²¹⁵ 7: Kohler

²¹⁶ 1: Meek, 121

²¹⁷ 1: Delobson, 89

²¹⁸ 27: Murray, 2

²¹⁹ 8: Gluckman

²²⁰ 1: Wilson, 224

²²¹ 2: Junod, 191

¹⁹² 11: Levine, 102

¹⁹³ Gregerson, E. *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin Watts, 1983, p. 214

¹⁹⁴ 46: Bishop, 117

¹⁹⁵ 4: Barnes

¹⁹⁶ 4: Whitaker, 48. 6: Pehrson, 68

¹⁹⁷ 6: Lisiansky, 82

¹⁹⁸ 5: Malinowski, 115-120

¹⁹⁹ 4: Metraux, 4

²⁰⁰ 2: Thevet, 212. 7: Evreux, 48-56

²⁰¹ 22: Henderson, 284

²⁰² 26: Johnson, 60 (Yoruba). 1: Nadel, 179 (Nupe). 15: Smith, 38 (Hausa)

²⁰³ 23: Hulbert, 532

²⁰⁴ 3: Smith, 272

²⁰⁵ 1: Spier, 51

Apparently, these taboos and beliefs about adultery are effective in many societies. Marital fidelity appears to be fact as well as ideal among the Rural Irish ²²². Among the Lapps of northern Scandinavia, informants could cite no known instance of adultery.

In many societies a double standard about adultery prevails — men are permitted greater freedom than women. Among the Korean nobility a wife's fidelity is jealously guarded, but her husband actually makes a point of leaving her for a long period of time soon after their marriage in order to prove that he does not care too much for her. He spends his time with concubines ²²³. Similarly, in Taiwan men, but not women, are expected to engage in extramarital affairs with prostitutes ²²⁴. Among the Kanuri of Nigeria, married men can engage in extramarital affairs with divorced women, but their wives cannot ²²⁵. For the Brazilian Tupinamba wives were expected to remain faithful to their husbands but the husbands were actually encouraged by their wives to engage in

[p34]

extramarital affairs. In fact, a good wife would sometimes bribe a young girl to go to her husband's hammock to make him happy ²²⁶. Similarly, among the Bambara of Mali, a woman often encouraged her husband's extramarital affairs on the theory that this would attach him more to herself ²²⁷. Among the North American Crow Indians, a husband could beat and slash the face of an adulterous wife, but he was scorned if he did not engage in outside affairs himself, which his wife proudly interpreted as a positive indication that she had married an attractive man ²²⁸.

In other places extramarital affairs are easier for both husbands and wives. The Dogon of Mali consider adultery perfectly fine up until the time the first child is born ²²⁹. Although their husbands may have some misgivings, a woman's casual adultery among the Toba of Argentina is rarely cause for separation or other sanctions ²³⁰. Among the Kikuyu of Kenya, a wife had the right to invite a lover to her hut, so long as the man was a member of her husband's age set, and so long as she told her husband about the affair ²³¹. Among the Somali men try not to show too much dependence on their wives and may deliberately restrain their sexual activities with her in order to prevent too strong an attachment. In turn, following an Arab proverb, "the newcomer filleth the eye," Somali women prefer sexual affairs with strangers ²³². Among the Rundi of Rwanda and Burundi, girls are expected to be chaste before marriage, but afterwards they may have sex with both their husbands and privileged sex partners. After marriage a Rundi man has sex with all his wives, the wives of his brothers and of his parallel cousins, his female cross-cousins, the sisters and female cousins of his wife, and various other women ²³³. Among the Lovedu sex is considered a relatively unimportant part of marriage, and spouses can freely engage in extramarital affairs ²³⁴. Similarly, among the Bush Negroes of Guyana sex is not particularly associated with marriage, which is thought to be more an economic institution. The bonds of marriage are loose and adultery is "customary." ²³⁵ The Hopi Indians of the American Southwest have formal moments when people mention the names of their lovers. Any expression of jealousy at these moments is considered in poor taste ²³⁶.

²²² 1: Arensberg and Kimball, 213

²²³ 49: Dallet, 122-123

²²⁴ 3: Wolf, 133

²²⁵ 3: Cohen, 138

²²⁶ 8: Soares de Souza, 316. 7: Evreux, 48-56

²²⁷ 2: Monteil, 226

²²⁸ Broude, G. "Extramarital Sex Norms in Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Behavior Science Research* 15(3), 1980, pp. 181-218

²²⁹ 2: Paulme, 376

²³⁰ 1: Karsten, 19

²³¹ 3: Leakey, 18

²³² 31: Lewis, 30. 11: Burton, 14

²³³ 9: Maquet, 67. 10: Albert, 193

²³⁴ 2: Krige and Krige, 123

²³⁵ 2: Kahn, 121-122

²³⁶ 1: Titiev, 192

[p35]

The loaning of a spouse for sexual purposes is customary in some places. On the Truk Islands, men sometimes loan their wives to their brothers for their initiation into sexual life ²³⁷. Although they are normally punished for adultery, the Fang of the Cameroons also sometimes loan their wives to guests ²³⁸. A similar custom occurs among the Marquesan Islanders where wives, who are normally punished for adultery, may be loaned to friends or prestigious men for sexual purposes ²³⁹. The masters of a house among the Goajiro Indians of Colombia do not need to loan their wives to guests. Instead they give them one of their female slaves ²⁴⁰. Exchange of spouses was common in many places. In Brazil Timbira men were expected to exchange wives after hunting anteaters, armadillos, peccaries and other special animals ²⁴¹. Among the Rundi, blood brothers and friends sometimes traded their wives for a night ²⁴². Hottentot men from southern Africa could sometimes simply enter a woman's hut and spend the night with her, forcing her husband to sleep elsewhere. On the following night the situation would be reversed ²⁴³. Among the Tarahumara Indians of Mexico people would trade spouses for a night or two at special church festivals ²⁴⁴. Dorobo couples from Kenya sometimes exchanged spouses for a period of time lasting from half year to a full year. These exchanges did not result in eventual remarriages, and a woman who felt herself pregnant would return to her husband ²⁴⁵.⁶⁰

One of the best known examples of wife exchange comes from the Copper Eskimo of northern Canada. Here, spouse exchange was most likely when groups of people joined together again after a long absence. At this point a woman might decide she would like to accompany another man for a while so that she could visit relatives in a distant region. The couples would then agree to exchange spouses until their next meeting. To some extent the mate sharing appeared to be dictated more by social than by sexual desires. Still, the sexual element was present. Sometimes groups of men and women would all get naked together in a sleeping bag ²⁴⁶. Eskimo wife exchange led to a kind of group marriage since people were regarded as wed to those they had lived with. A man might be married to women in half a dozen different bands, some of whom he would see only once in his entire lifetime. Still, this marriage tie

[p36]

enabled the man to hunt for caribou and seals in the territory of any of his wives. Curiously, even though people must usually have known who the real fathers were, the children of any of a man's "wives" were also considered his own children, and they were forbidden from marrying one another just as brothers and sisters were forbidden marriage ²⁴⁷.⁶²

The Chukchee of Siberia, had customs very similar to those of the Copper Eskimo. Wife exchange led to lasting bonds of marriage among groups of people. Sometimes Chukchee group marriages included up to ten married couples. All of the men who belonged to such a group marriage were called "companions-in-wives" and had the right of sexual access to all of the group's wives. But sexuality was not quite so promiscuous as it might appear, simply because most group marriages involved people living far away from each other so that sexual encounters were not that easy ²⁴⁸.

²³⁷ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 102

²³⁸ 8: Bennett, 79

²³⁹ 13: Suggs, 62

²⁴⁰ 7: Bolinder, 62

²⁴¹ Gregerson, E. *Sexual Practices*. New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 266

²⁴² 1: Vanhove, 25

²⁴³ 2: Schapera, 253

²⁴⁴ 1: Bennett and Zingg, 296

²⁴⁵ 18: Merker, 317

²⁴⁶ 1: Jenness, 85-86, 238-239

²⁴⁷ 1: Jenness, 53, 85

²⁴⁸ 1: Bogoras, 602-603

Although they did not refer to their relationships as "group marriage," the Masai of Tanzania had customs similar to those of the Chukchee and Copper Eskimo. Masai men who belonged to the same age set had the right of sexual access to the wives of all the men in their age set. When in a different village, a male visitor would go to the hut of a man in his age set and sleep with his wife, while the husband was forced to spend the night elsewhere ²⁴⁹. Group marriage among the Xokleng of Brazil had a more haphazard character. Marriage and divorce were fairly easy for the Xokleng. A man might marry a woman, and then take a second wife. The second wife might subsequently marry another man, while continuing her marriage to the first man. A third man might then enter the relationship as a second husband to the first wife, and so forth. Spouses would come and go and people simply decided to join a band or leave it ²⁵⁰. ⁶⁵ One Christian sect founded in 1841 and based at Oneida, New York, also practiced group marriage in which every member of the community was married to every other member, at least until 1879 when hostility from neighboring communities caused the group's founder to recommend its abandonment ²⁵¹.

Although group marriages are extremely rare in the cross-cultural record, polyandry (the marriage of one woman to more

[p37]

than one man) is somewhat more common, and polygyny (one man married to more than one woman) is very common — occurring in 70 % of the world's societies according to one cross-cultural study ²⁵². As might be expected, jealousy is often a problem between co-wives or co-husbands. Among the Goajiro Indians of Colombia a polygynously married man slept apart from his wives (who all slept together). He received in his hammock whichever wife came to him, and rigorously avoided expressing a preference for one wife over another ²⁵³. Among the Canadian Ojibwa, a woman who disapproved of her husband's other wives would simply abandon him ²⁵⁴. De facto polygyny occurs even in some societies where it is officially disapproved of. In Jamaica it was common for a man to have a wife in one community and mistresses elsewhere ²⁵⁵.

Although anthropologists speak of the rarity of polyandry, it is in fact found in a fair number of societies. The Toda of southern India, the Tibetans, and the Pacific Island Marquesans are the classic examples, but there are many others as well, such as the Lesu and the Trukese of Oceania ²⁵⁶, and the Yanomama Indians of Venezuela and Brazil ²⁵⁷. Among the Sinhalese of Sri Lanka if two men both put grain in the same granary, they both had access to the same wife, with exactly the same rights and obligations. Although their children spoke of having two fathers, they usually knew which one was their own ²⁵⁸. Among the Tlingit Indians of southern Alaska a woman was permitted extramarital relations with a man belonging to her husband's clan, but if she had an affair with an outsider she had to endure the social stigma attached to the relationship unless she formally took on her lover as a second husband. In this case the other man was not permitted a second wife ²⁵⁹.

Although it does not constitute formal polyandry, several societies permit a woman in special circumstances to have sexual relations with a man other than her husband. The Mende of Sierra Leone permit a woman to have extramarital sexual relations provided her lover is willing to work for her husband. Sometimes men arrange "friends" for the wives as a way of providing cheap labor ²⁶⁰. In

traditional Korea women could find sexual outlets by visiting priests in the temple ²⁶¹. Several societies permit a woman outside affairs

[p38]

when her husband is incapable of giving her children. Sterile Serbian men appreciate men who have sex with their wives in order to impregnate them. In one case a man actually gave a party in honor of a monk who helped his wife give birth to two sons ²⁶². Sterile Libyan Bedouin men delegate a relative to service their wives for procreative purposes ²⁶³. Among the Tallensi of Ghana a sterile or impotent man first consults with the elders of his lineage before giving his wife permission to seek a lover ²⁶⁴.

It is not uncommon for a society to have several different arrangements to permit adults multiple sex partners. Most, if not all, of the societies with polyandry also have polygyny. The Ila of Zambia have several different arrangements. First, they allow men to engage in direct agreements to exchange wives. Second, they typically loan their wives to visitors for a night, and third, they practice a kind of polyandry which consists of a public ceremony to formally recognize a woman's paramours ²⁶⁵.

Although extramarital sex has not received quite as much research attention as premarital sex, there are a few studies that have attempted to distinguish between permissive and restrictive societies. Several researchers have noted that where people restrict premarital sexual relations they are also likely to restrict extramarital affairs. On the other hand, many societies that are permissive about premarital sex are restrictive about adultery, which is generally judged more severely ²⁶⁶. Societies that restrict the husband's extramarital sex are also likely to restrict the wife's, although a double standard about extramarital sex is quite common — husbands are almost always treated more leniently than wives. In one study of a sample of 116 societies, 63 approved of extramarital sex for men, but only 13 approved of these affairs for women ²⁶⁷.

A few factors can also distinguish restrictive from permissive societies. In terms of geography, men are more likely to receive severe punishment for adultery in Africa and the Insular Pacific ²⁶⁸. There is also a slight tendency for women to be permitted greater extramarital freedom in endogamous societies (where the bride and groom are both from

[p39]

the same community and remain there after marriage). Sociobiologists have explained this as due to the fact that in most endogamous societies everyone is related to everyone else. This means a man would be less worried that his wife might get pregnant with another man. This is because the other man would probably be a relative of his, and his wife's child would still have many of his genes ²⁶⁹. However, unlike the case for premarital sex, other residence and descent patterns, women's relative economic contribution to the household, and social complexity are unrelated to extramarital sex restrictions ²⁷⁰. Still, one economic factor is important. Where men have paid a higher brideprice for

²⁴⁹ 1: Hollis, 288. 3: Hollis, 480

²⁵⁰ 2: Henry

²⁵¹ Gregerson, E. *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 134

²⁵² Murdock, G.P. and White, D.R. "Standard Cross-Cultural Sample," *Ethnology* 8, 1969, pp. 329-369

²⁵³ 1: Butierrez-Pineda, 135

²⁵⁴ 8: Landes, viii

²⁵⁵ 5: Davenport, 262

²⁵⁶ Gregerson, E. *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983. p. 250

²⁵⁷ 10: Chagnon

²⁵⁸ 4: Yahman, 111

²⁵⁹ 4: Oberg, 148

²⁶⁰ 2: Little, 152, 166

²⁶¹ 22: Osgood, 112-113

²⁶² 8: Filipovic, 156, 161

²⁶³ 6: Peters, 127

²⁶⁴ 3: Fortes, 23

²⁶⁵ 2: Smith and Dale, 68. 1: Smith and Dale, 308, 365

²⁶⁶ Broude, G. "The Cultural Management of Sexuality," IN Munroe, R.H., R.L. Munroe and B.B. Whiting, *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Human Development*, New York: Garland Press, 1980, pp. 633-673. Frayser, S. *Varieties of Sexual Experience*, New Haven: HRAF press, 1985, pp. 216-218. Brown, J. "A Comparative Study of Deviations from Sexual Mores," *American Sociological Review* 17, 1952. pp. 135-146

²⁶⁷ Broude, G. J. "Extramarital Sex Norms In Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Behavior Science Research* 15(3), 1980, pp. 181-218

²⁶⁸ Frayser, S., *Varieties of Sexual Experience*, New Haven: HRAF press, 1985. p. 214

²⁶⁹ Greene, P.J., "Promiscuity, Paternity and Culture," *American Ethnologist* 5(1), 1978, pp. 151-159

²⁷⁰ Broude, G.J., "Extramarital Sex Norms In Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Behavior Science Research* 15(3), 1980, pp. 181-218

their wife, restrictions on a woman's sexual activities are more likely to increase upon marriage. This is probably because the high expenditures make men feel more possessive about their spouses ²⁷¹.

One set of factors clearly distinguishes between societies with and without a double standard for extramarital sex. These factors are all concerned with machismo and a general separation of males from females. A double standard about extramarital sex is more likely in societies where males boast more, where men congregate in specialized men's houses, where the sexes are physically kept separate, where fathers participate little in child care, and where men stay away from their wives after they have just given birth ²⁷². Perhaps this segregation encourages men to believe they are intrinsically different from females with intrinsically different rights with regard to sexual behaviors.

In a similar vein, one comparative study showed that, although it does not account for all cases of wife-beating, sexual jealousy or adultery are used to justify wife-abuse in 45.5 % of the world's cultures. This same study noted that several aspects of a woman's economic status are related to physical wife-abuse. Specifically, wife-beating is less likely where women enjoy more authority in the home, work in groups with other women, control more of the fruits of their labor, acquire their own wealth independently of their husbands, and own their own house ²⁷³. Other studies have also shown that wife-beating is more common in societies with a good deal of other forms of aggression such as homicide,

[p40]

feuding, theft, and other personal crimes like assault, rape, suicide, sorcery, murder and the making of false accusations ²⁷⁴.

Several researchers have studied polygyny, noting that it is more common where marriageable women outnumber marriageable men. This may occur because females outnumber males in the society (often because men are killed off in war), or because there is a larger age difference between husbands and wives ²⁷⁵. This latter finding can be explained as follows: Since people may die at any age, there are generally fewer older people in a society than younger people. This is even more true if a society has a high fertility rate. If women marry at a younger age than men, this means there are always more marriageable women in a society than marriageable men. Thus, in order for everyone to get married, some women have to share the same husband.

There is very little research on other types of spouse-sharing. Polyandry, for example, may be related to a shortage of marriageable females, but no one has carried out the research needed to confirm or refute this. Nor do we know why some societies accept the exchange of spouses while others abhor this practice, or why hospitality in some societies includes the sharing of sexual partners.

SEX AFTER MARRIAGE AND IN OLD AGE.

In most of the societies anthropologists have studied marriage is considered so important that those who remain single throughout their lives are looked down upon or pitied. The Ojibwa of Canada believe that those few people who remain bachelors or spinsters throughout their lives must have dreamed of an evil and jealous spirit with whom they had sex, and who forbade their subsequent marriage ²⁷⁶. The Santal of India cannot imagine how a normal man or woman would remain unmarried, and they look upon their bachelors with pity ²⁷⁷. Among the Philippine Ifugao it is only poor girls or those with skin diseases who have difficulty getting married ²⁷⁸.

²⁷¹ Rosenblatt, P.C., S.S. Fugita and K.V. McDowell, "Wealth Transfer and Restrictions on Sexual Relations during Betrothal," *Ethnology* 8, 1969, pp.319-328

²⁷² Broude, G.J. " Extramarital Sex Norms In Cross-Cultural Perspective," *Behavior Science Research* 15(3), 1980. pp. 181-218

²⁷³ Levinson, D., "Family Violence in Cross-Cultural Perspective," IN Van Hasselt, V.B. et al, (eds.) New York: Plenum Publishing, in press

²⁷⁴ Masumura, W.T. "Wife Abuse and other Forms of Aggression," *Victimology: An International Journal* 4(1), 1979, pp. 46-59

²⁷⁵ Ember, M. and C.R. Ember, *Marriage, Family and Kinship*, New Haven: HRAF Press, 1983

²⁷⁶ 2: Hallowell, 300

²⁷⁷ 3: Mukherjee, 409

²⁷⁸ 9: Lambrecht, 172

With the high importance attached to marriage in many societies it is not surprising that the death of a spouse engenders a great deal of concern. In the Korean upper and middle classes if a woman outlived her husband she was

[p41]

expected to remain chaste for the rest of her life. At the death of her husband some loving widows flung themselves into their husband's grave. However, they did not actually commit suicide as sometimes occurs in India where widows even today sometimes throw themselves on their husband's funeral pyre ²⁷⁹. Widows also oftentimes had themselves killed at the funeral of an Ashanti ruler from Ghana, although women from other classes did not do this ²⁸⁰. In order to guarantee that his wife would remain faithful even after death, a dying man among the Blackfoot Indians of Canada would sometimes threaten to kill his wife. Such a death would guarantee that she would accompany him to the afterworld ²⁸¹.

Elsewhere widows received somewhat better treatment. Among the Bororo Indians of Brazil widows, as well as women who had been abandoned by their husbands, became prostitutes for a time, as they waited for a chance to remarry ²⁸². Among the Hopi of the American Southwest divorced men and women were expected to remarry soon, but it was considered improper for them to wed a never-married person, in part serving to restrict marriages between people of very different ages ²⁸³.

In some societies it was considered important for a widow to have sexual relations soon after her husband's death. Among the Thonga of Mozambique a widow would go around from house to house looking for a lover, performing lascivious dances and making obscene comments and gestures. She could not, however have sex during the period of mourning ²⁸⁴. Among the Igbo of Nigeria widows attempted to have sex with a stranger in order to do away the "bad luck" of their husband's death. If the stranger discovered his partner was a widow he would try to kill her ²⁸⁵. The Cagaba of Colombia also considered sex with a widow as somewhat dangerous. Therefore, the widow was required to have sex with the village's shaman in order to "open the way" to the other world for her dead husband. By the same token Cagaba widowers had to have sex with an old woman designated by the shaman ²⁸⁶. Among the Ngonde of Tanzania a dead man's heir had to devote a night to having sexual relations with all of the deceased's wives. Otherwise it was thought the women would lose all their bodily and mental strength. Although the man was required to have sex only once with the old women, he

[p42]

drink a lot of milk before his sexual evening in order to produce more semen ²⁸⁷.

While people in all societies need to cope with the death of a spouse, divorce is not universal. Among the Lapps of northern Scandinavia, divorce is unheard of and does not appear in parish archives ²⁸⁸. Divorce is also unheard of among the Cagaba of Colombia ²⁸⁹, and is uncommon among the Korean upper class, although it is easy for lower class Koreans ²⁹⁰. Among the Bush Negroes

²⁷⁹ 19: Hewes and Kim, 9-10

²⁸⁰ 2: Rattray, 105-160

²⁸¹ 11: Goldfrank, 51

²⁸² 8: Cook, 389

²⁸³ 1 : Titiev, 36

²⁸⁴ 1: Junod, 160

²⁸⁵ 16: Ottenberg, 99

²⁸⁶ 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 239

²⁸⁷ 2: Wilson, 54

²⁸⁸ 4: Whitaker, 48. 6: Pehrson, 68

²⁸⁹ 1: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 229

²⁹⁰ 24: Hulbert, 156-157

divorce is described as "instantaneous and easy,"²⁹¹ and among the Ojibwa as "easy and often whimsical."²⁹² Among the Lozi of Zambia it is the men who can call for divorce at a moment's notice, depriving their wives of everything, even their clothes, and telling them to go.²⁹³ On the other hand, among the Wolof of Senegal most divorces are initiated by the women who simply pick up their belongings and small children and leave.²⁹⁴ One of the most popular reasons for divorce among the Wolof is that a man fails to accomplish his marital duty at least once every four months, a failure which can permit a woman to take her husband to court and petition for divorce. The courts may award the husband a period of treatment before granting the woman's request, and may require that the woman provide for the man's support.²⁹⁵ The Nigerian Igbo also grant divorce in the case of a man's failure to satisfy his wife sexually.²⁹⁶ As the Santal of India put it, "Failure to satisfy the sexual passion is the primary reason for divorces. Women can stand starvation in food as she [sic] can work and earn it."²⁹⁷

Elsewhere sexual failure is taken for granted in a marriage. Santal couples who have already had many children speak with sadness about how the mystery of their sex life has vanished with the economic problems they confront, and many men of 40 and 45 state they actually come to hate sexual intercourse as a "dull business."²⁹⁸

Different societies treat the problem of aging differently. Among the Serbs of Yugoslavia old men gather to boast about their past sexual adventures. The younger men laugh while the elders complain that "It is easy for you children. You can still perform and don't have to talk about it, but when you get old as we, you will remember us."²⁹⁹ Among the Ila of Zambia, the most common request old men made

[p43]

to Westerners was for aphrodisiacs.³⁰⁰ The Taiwanese expect to continue sexual intercourse as long as physically possible, but after they have become grandparents they are ridiculed for their sexual activities.³⁰¹ Similarly, among the Lepcha of the Himalayas, although people are said to enjoy sex up to advanced old age, the sexual activities of the elderly are considered funny.³⁰² Still, it is not uncommon among the Lepcha for a young man to find an old woman more attractive than a young one. In the few cases where men could choose their own brides they often chose older women, a preference perhaps related to the fact that many young men enjoyed their first sexual experience with an older woman.³⁰³

The Lepcha are not the only society to value the sexuality of elderly people. Among the Lovedo of southern Africa men also often seek out older women for sex.³⁰⁴ Cubeo women from Colombia become progressively more licentious with age and urge men to have coitus with them, remarking that "we are more satisfying than young girls because we have more sexual power."³⁰⁵ Similarly, Taiwanese women are said to achieve a peak of sexual interest only after they reach 30 years old. Normally they are quite shy, but the shyness disappears the older they get, and once past 60 they become the

village clowns with their "dirty" talk.³⁰⁶ Perhaps some of the sexual attraction of the elderly stems from their willingness to engage in sexual practices frowned upon by younger people. Among the Truk of Micronesia it is the elderly and the unmarried adolescents who are most inclined to practice variant sexual techniques like cunnilingus.³⁰⁷ Oral sex is also characteristic of the elderly among the Marquesans of Polynesia where men, who continue their sexual activities into their sixties and seventies, often seek out younger women as sexual partners.³⁰⁸

Comparative studies of singlehood, widowhood and divorce are rare in anthropology. To my knowledge no one has attempted to isolate the factors that distinguish between societies with a higher or lower percentage of unmarried adults. A few inquiries have dealt with the treatment of widows and widowers. One study showed that widows are more

[p44]

likely to remarry and more likely to marry their deceased husband's brother if the society has mourning customs that require her to break her psychological ties with her former husband. These ties are reinforced by physical reminders of her former relationship such as her deceased husband's personal property, or his dwelling place. When this property is destroyed and the dwelling place abandoned, it is apparently easier for the widow to forget her former relationship and adjust to a new life with a new husband.³⁰⁹

Cross-cultural studies of divorce have shown that it is less likely where a man has to pay the bride's family a larger price for his wife, or where a woman's family has to provide the couple with a larger dowry. Apparently, the large financial investments required for a remarriage make couples more cautious about breaking up their relationship. Divorce is also less likely if the couple does not live matrilocally or with an extended family. It seems that when a woman lives with her own family after marriage a divorce is easier, because it does not involve major changes in a her lifestyle.³¹⁰ Another factor related to divorce is adultery. Where adultery is more permissible, people are less likely to divorce because of childlessness.³¹¹ The reason is fairly simple. Where a woman can have sexual relations with another man, it is easier for her to become pregnant if her husband is sterile. Thus there is no need to file for divorce in order to bear children. By the same token, a man with a sterile wife can bear children with other women.

I know of no comparative studies on the sexual activities of the elderly. There are many factors that theoretically might be related to their sexual behavior. Possibly the general health of the population has something to do with maintaining sexual vigor. Possibly, too, sexual interest in old age is related to sexual interest when younger. Then again, a tolerance for the sexual activities of the elderly may have something to do with the general influence the elderly wield in a society. Without more research we simply cannot say why the elderly maintain a strong interest in sex in some societies but not others.

[p45]

Up to this point we have talked about the general sexual behavior of children, adolescents and adults, mostly with regard to who their sexual partners might be. We have not yet looked at the more specific sexual practices people engage in in different societies. This is the topic of the following chapters.

[p46]

²⁹¹ 2: Kahn, 121-122

²⁹² 8: Landes, viii

²⁹³ 6: Gluckman, 181

²⁹⁴ 43: Irvine, 140

²⁹⁵ 3: Chabas, 52. 4: Fayet, 8

²⁹⁶ 11: Ottenberg, 228

²⁹⁷ 3: Mukherjea, 407

²⁹⁸ 3: Mukherjea, 408

²⁹⁹ 19: Pavlovic, 244

³⁰⁰ 2: Smith and Dale, 35

³⁰¹ 4: Barnett, 416

³⁰² 11: Gorer, 331

³⁰³ 1: Gorer, 326

³⁰⁴ 2: Krige and Krige, 157

³⁰⁵ 5: Goldman, 182

³⁰⁶ 4: Barnett, 446-450

³⁰⁷ 12: Swartz, 477

³⁰⁸ 13: Suggs, 52

³⁰⁹ Rosenblatt, P.C., R. P. Walsh and D.A. Jackson, Grief and Mourning. New Haven: HRAF press, 1976

³¹⁰ Levinson, D. and M.J. Malone, Toward Explaining Human Culture, New Haven: HRAF press, 1980

³¹¹ Levinson, D. and M. Malone, Toward Explaining Human Culture, New Haven: HRAF press, 1980

SEXUAL ATTRACTIVENESS AND SEXUAL STIMULATION

In February of 1983 another addiction took the life of an American celebrity. This time, though, it was not drugs or alcohol that killed the famous singer, but dieting. Karen Carpenter was considered a typical sufferer of anorexia nervosa, "the starving disease." She was middle class, talented and ambitious, and like many young women in our society highly worried about becoming overweight³¹². This concern with fatness is thought to be at least partly responsible for afflicting "the starving disease" on an estimated one percent of all U.S. women between the ages of 12 and 25.³¹³ But things have not always been so grim. There was a time in U.S. history when sexual tastes allowed women to eat a more healthy diet. One researcher noted that the women modeling for Playboy centerfolds have grown progressively thinner ever since the magazine first started publishing. Sex symbols from the 1950's, like Marilyn Monroe, would be considered far too chunky for today's tastes³¹⁴.

Cross-culturally ideas about physical beauty vary tremendously, as do other ideas about what is sexually attractive or stimulating.

SEXUAL ATTRACTIVENESS

Opinions about what is sexually attractive or not vary tremendously, and not all societies place equal value on sexual charms. On the one hand, some cultures value physical beauty. Probably no twentieth century society has so many beauty contests as Thailand, a country where pinups abound, and where poor women hope to gain entry into the upper classes on the basis of their physical virtues³¹⁵. Similarly, among the Marquesans a woman's physical attractiveness has a great deal to do with her marriage prospects, often permitting her to rise socially to a higher rank³¹⁶. Among the Ona of Patagonia perfect beauty is thought possible only in

[p47]

males, who are highly valued for their youthful, agile, robust, tall and handsome bodies³¹⁷. The Bororo Fulani of the Sahara hold beauty contests for males, in which young men don various ornaments and a somewhat effeminate style of makeup that emphasizes the whites of their eyes. The ancient Greeks were great admirers of physical beauty which they associated with moral character. They held numerous beauty contests for both males and females, although the male contests were more common³¹⁸.

Elsewhere, as among the Alaskan Tlingit, beauty was of little importance. Men sought in their wives such qualities as modesty, high social status, and the ability to sew or weave³¹⁹. On the Polynesian Island of Tikopia, people recognized physical beauty, but felt that personality, dancing skills and other personal qualities counted at least as much as physical attractiveness³²⁰. In many places, such as among the Trobrianders off the coast of New Guinea, lovers were chosen for their erotic value, while wives were chosen on the basis of their character and personality³²¹. Among the Cagaba of Colombia men valued good judgment, hard work and affection toward children above physical beauty, and many men actually thought it better to marry an ugly woman because this guaranteed that she would be less prone to adultery³²².

Attitudes toward modesty in public may reflect a society's concern or lack of concern with sexual attractiveness. One of the cultures that most plays down physical beauty is Korea. Korean men pride

themselves on their disregard for their wife's sexual charms, avoiding sex as much as possible³²³. They also rarely see the women. Among middle and upper class Koreans, girls are separated from boys from the time they are about 12 years old. Women must conceal their faces in public, and even Christian churches in Korea were built in an L-shape so that women could not be seen by the men. The preacher who stood at the apex of the L, had a cloth in front of his face so that he could not gaze out upon the women. As a result, a man often got his first glimpse of his wife on his wedding night. After marriage, a Korean woman was sometimes confined to her apartments and could not even look out on the street without special permission. Men were so protective of their wives that there were even cases where a father killed his

[p48]

daughter or a husband killed his wife if a stranger accidentally touched them. In one incident a man stopped attempts to rescue his mistress from a fire because in the confusion a man had touched her, making her not worth saving³²⁴. Other cultures where women must cover their faces in public include many Islamic societies, The Tonga of Zambia³²⁵, and the Santa Cruz Islanders in the southern Pacific³²⁶.

In some places ideals about modesty extend to sexual acts themselves. In several societies it is considered improper to become totally nude, even during sex. In Taiwan a married couple has sex only at night while their children, who share the same bed, look away. Under these conditions the couple feels uneasy about removing all of their clothing³²⁷. While rural Irish couples seek absolute privacy at night before engaging in sexual relations they also still refrain from completely removing their underclothes³²⁸. The Ojibwa of southern Canada and the Tarahumara of Mexico also do not remove their clothes when engaging in sexual intercourse at night³²⁹. The Menomini Indians of the Great Lakes region were so modest about seeing each other nude that they used a soft deerskin blanket with a hole in the middle to separate the couple during sexual intercourse³³⁰.

While extreme modesty would preclude an interest in physical or sexual attractiveness, it is unclear whether nudity in general is related to sexual matters. The Dogon of Mali, for example, find a woman more attractive when clothed³³¹. Among the sexually permissive Yap Islanders, women avoid exposing their genitals, not out of sexual prudishness, but because they see their genitals as a source of power over men, and are afraid other women, who are considered competitors, will see them³³². On the other hand, some sexually restrictive societies permit full nudity. The Shavante Indians of Brazil, for example, are intolerant of premarital and extramarital sex, but their women go about naked, and the men wear only a penis sheath that holds the foreskin over the glans of the penis, leaving the rest of the genitals exposed³³³. In some places nudity may even be associated with sexual chastity. Somali girls may expose their breasts and vagina to a man in order to prove that they

[p49]

are virgins³³⁴. Among the Fang of the Cameroons, specially consecrated children who remained sexually chaste, were required periodically to go about naked³³⁵.

³¹² Seligmann, J., "A Deadly Feast and Famine," Newsweek, March 7, 1983, pp. 59-60

³¹³ "Anorexia, The 'Starving Disease' Epidemic," U.S. News and World Report, Aug. 30, 1982. pp. 47-48

³¹⁴ Seligmann, J., "A Deadly Feast and Famine," Newsweek, March 7, 1983, pp. 59-60

³¹⁵ 41: Somchintana, 30

³¹⁶ 10: Linton, 174

³¹⁷ 1 : Gusinde, 1127

³¹⁸ Gregerson, E. Sexual Practices, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, pp. 99-100

³¹⁹ 6: Jones, 131

³²⁰ 2: Firth, 518

³²¹ 5: Malinowski, 287

³²² 21: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 241

³²³ 22: Osgood, 110

³²⁴ 2: Griffis, 245. 23: Hulbert, 530-531. 25: Brunner, 41-42. 46: Bishop, 341

³²⁵ 3: Reynolds, 206

³²⁶ 1: Graebner, 26

³²⁷ 4: Barnett, 446

³²⁸ 16: Messenger, 110

³²⁹ 21: Hallowell, 301. 10: Fried, 148

³³⁰ Gregerson, E., Sexual Practices, New York: Franklin Watts, 1983, p. 111

³³¹ 3: Griaule, 82

³³² 9: Schneider

³³³ Maybury-Lewis, D. Akwe-Shavante Society, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974

³³⁴ 31: Lewis, 13

Even when people value physical beauty, they do not always agree on what makes people attractive. Although virtually everyone prefers a healthy body over a diseased one, there are great variations in other characteristics considered good-looking. The Masai of Kenya prefer a woman with a slender body, small bones, erect breasts, and slightly rounded forms. She cannot be too heavy, but must have a somewhat protruding buttocks, and robust hips, with a deep umbilical cavity. Her face should be oval, she should have white teeth and thin, dark lips, and her gums should be black³³⁶. The Somali like women with long necks and very small waists³³⁷. The Hopi of the American Southwest consider ideal a woman who is young, of medium height and weight. Preferably, she should be a skinny girl, rather than a fat one "who nearly sleeps." She should also have a light complexion. Some men even expressed a keen interest in albinos. In any case, hair under the arms is considered undesirable, although pubic hair is appreciated³³⁸. Among the Trobriand Islanders off the coast of New Guinea men also liked women to be slim. Some young men liked firm and well-developed breasts in their girlfriends; others preferred small girlish breasts³³⁹.²⁸

Elsewhere men prefer larger women. The Siberian Chukchee rate physical strength high in their criteria of feminine beauty³⁴⁰. The Tarahumara of Mexico appreciate women with fat thighs, an erect carriage, and eyes "like those of a mouse."³⁴¹ The Cagaba of Colombia like women to be fat, with a rounded broad face and large eyes³⁴². The Baganda also like women to be fat, with a large protruding buttocks, and breasts that hang³⁴³. The Mbuti Pygmies of Zaire also appreciate large breasts³⁴⁴. The Rundi of Rwanda and Burundi think an ideal woman should be well-fleshed and "somewhat like a cow."³⁴⁵ The Goajiro of Colombia think a woman should have small and upright breasts, but wide and robust hips. Although women should be plump, their flesh should be firm, and a flabby wife may be replaced with another³⁴⁶. The Tucano of Amazonia think plumpness is elegant in a woman, and slim women are derided³⁴⁷.

[p50]

Ideals of masculine beauty also vary, although perhaps not quite so much as ideals of feminine beauty, at least in terms of body shape. A survey of English women showed that they preferred men with a slight paunch since this was associated with a higher social status³⁴⁸. Usually, however, men are expected to be somewhat trimmer. The Kikuyu of Kenya like men with low foreheads, long necks and a slightly protruding navel. A straight figure is especially admired among the warriors³⁴⁹. Although the Zulu like plump women with a large buttocks, they think men should have a sleek muscular frame and a small buttocks³⁵⁰. The Trobrianders also admire a slim and straight body in men. Supposedly, an ugly Trobriander is debarred from sexual intercourse, and can only masturbate³⁵¹. The Kapauku of West Irian in Indonesia like men to have black hair, dark skin and an athletic build. Men should also be good dancers and singers and joke a lot. Reddish hair and a lighter skin are

mocked by the others. Evidently, male beauty is quite important to Kapauku women, since the men complain that the women are too selective and irrational in their evaluations of the men³⁵². Male beauty is also taken quite seriously by the Tiv of Nigeria. A man who is particularly good-looking runs the danger of being killed and having his skin made into a "bag" that another man wears to magically make him more desirable at dances³⁵³.

Opinions about facial characteristics and body hair seem to vary a bit more. Among the Yao of Mozambique a beard is greatly prized in a man, and a moustache is appreciated even in women³⁵⁴. Among the Kurd of Iran, Iraq and Turkey, a moustache is essential to male beauty, and a full beard is a sign of age and piety. However, men are expected to shave their armpits and their groins³⁵⁵. The Ona of Patagonia avoided all hair, except on top of the head, and were especially careful about removing pubic hair. This was because all foot races and wrestling matches were carried out in the nude, and men's skin was expected to be unblemished³⁵⁶. The Truk of Micronesia liked both men and women to have a lot of pubic hair³⁵⁷. Facially, Tlingit women from Alaska preferred men with large mouths, thick lips and coarse features, which would be considered extremely ugly in Western

[p51]

societies³⁵⁸. The Ona of Patagonia preferred the men to have smooth, feminine faces³⁵⁹.

A concern with genital size and appearance is common in many societies. The Ila of Zambia like men with bright eyes, long eyebrows, a built and straight headdress, and a large penis³⁶⁰. The Marquesans of French Polynesia often compare penis size, always while erect, and they have developed a complex vocabulary to describe different kinds of penises³⁶¹. Tarahumara men from Mexico similarly like to compare their genitals while urinating³⁶². The Santal of India also prefer men with a large penis, while the women are expected to have a tight vagina³⁶³. The Truk Islanders like men to have a large penis and women to have a vagina "with a lot of things in it."³⁶⁴ The Siriono Indians of Bolivia like their women to be plump and sing songs of praise about a woman's fat vulva³⁶⁵. Yao boys from Mozambique sometimes climb a tree and stick their penis in a fruit, which they later eat, under the belief that this will make their members grow larger³⁶⁶. The Ngoni from Malawi emphasize large testicles, and boys sometimes brew themselves a special medicine to achieve this³⁶⁷.

Making oneself beautiful occupies a good deal of time for people in many societies. The Andaman Islanders off the coast of India spend hours every day painting each other in elaborate designs, and decorating themselves with garlands of fruit and flowers. They are delighted with their own beauty and fear illness if they fail to maintain fresh paint on their bodies³⁶⁸. The Yao of Mozambique paint their hair black if it begins to grey, and the men are not above fashioning wigs for themselves out of plants to cover up baldness or grey hair³⁶⁹. The Marquesans think it shameful to have a vulva with a

³³⁵ 2: Tessmann, 127-128

³³⁶ 18: Merker, 125

³³⁷ 25: Cerulli, 25-28

³³⁸ 7: Talayeva, 281-282

³³⁹ 5: Malinowski, 301

³⁴⁰ 1: Bogoras, 571

³⁴¹ 2: Lumholtz, 266

³⁴² 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 241

³⁴³ 2: Roscoe, 89, 93, 443

³⁴⁴ 3: Turnbull, 188

³⁴⁵ 10: Albert, 203

³⁴⁶ 1: Gutierrez de Pineda, 77

³⁴⁷ 4: Silva, 106

³⁴⁸ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 93

³⁴⁹ 7: Routledge and Routledge, 190. 4: Kenyatta, 100

³⁵⁰ 4: Bryant

³⁵¹ 5: Malinowski, 301

³⁵² 1: Pospisil, 46

³⁵³ 30: Bohannon and Bohannon, 194

³⁵⁴ 3: Stannus, 350

³⁵⁵ 2: Masters, 156

³⁵⁶ 1: Gusinde, 1128

³⁵⁷ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 109

³⁵⁸ 6: Jones, 70

³⁵⁹ 1: Gusinde, 1128

³⁶⁰ 2: Smith and Dole, 45

³⁶¹ 13: Suggs, 36-38

³⁶² 10: Fried, 104

³⁶³ 3: Mukherjee, 410-412

³⁶⁴ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 109

³⁶⁵ 2: Holmberg, 181

³⁶⁶ 4: Stannus, 346

³⁶⁷ 4: Barnes, 32

³⁶⁸ 11: Cipriani, 22

³⁶⁹ 3: Stannus, 349

ruddy color. Consequently, women make a preparation from chopped young coconut meat to apply to their vagina. A secondary effect of the ointment is to make the pubic hair softer ³⁷⁰. To make themselves sexier at dances, the Lau Fijians perfume and oil their entire bodies ³⁷¹. Goajiro girls from Colombia go into seclusion and apply paint to their faces in order to avoid the sun and make their skin paler ³⁷².

Removing body hair also occupies a good deal of time in many societies. The Mongo of Zaire depilate the genital

[p52]

organs and armpits, and in the past also removed all facial hair, including eyebrows, eyelashes, mustaches and beards ³⁷³. The Pawnee Indians of the midwest also plucked out all the genital hairs and buried them to avoid uncleanness ³⁷⁴. Like many South American Indian societies, the Bororo of Brazil removed all of their body hairs, including eyebrows and eyelashes, in order to make themselves less "animal-like." ³⁷⁵

In several societies women were fattened up to make themselves more desirable. The Baganda of Uganda made girls plump before their marriage ³⁷⁶. The Dogon of Mali both whitened the skin and fattened women up to make them beautiful ³⁷⁷. The Igbo of Nigeria required girls to enter into seclusion before marriage, and eat enough to become grossly overweight. The heavier they became, the more they were honored ³⁷⁸.

Attempts to control the shape of the breasts are also a popular beauty treatment. The Yaka of the Congo tied their breasts down in order to lengthen them ³⁷⁹. Wolof girls from Senegal sometimes crushed their breasts to make themselves appear more fertile ³⁸⁰. Among the Marquesans of French Polynesia, women avoided nursing their children, feeling that this ruined the shape of their breasts, so that children's feeding times were quite irregular ³⁸¹. Among the Goajiro of Colombia, women used birth control and abortifacients to avoid pregnancy, which they felt ruined their figures ³⁸².

In many places, people make permanent modifications of their body in order to enhance its attractiveness. Probably the most common modifications are piercing, tattooing and scarification of the skin. The Kayapo Indians of Brazil pierce a boy's ears and his lower lip soon after he is born. At first a small sliver of wood is inserted into the holes, but gradually, as the boy grows, the wood objects become larger, until in adulthood he is using a lip-disk the size of a hockey puck and earplugs as much as an inch in diameter ³⁸³. Elsewhere, other parts of the body are pierced, such as the nose among women from India, or the nasal septum as among Nambikwara males from Brazil ³⁸⁴. Tattooing the face with blue lines was popular among the Copper Eskimo ³⁸⁵. Truk girls tattooed the upper insides of their thighs in order to arouse men sexually ³⁸⁶. Instead of tattooing, the hongo of Zaire made

[p53]

decorative scars around a girl's vulva to sexually stimulate males. The scars followed the fold of the groin and continued in concentric circles on the thighs ³⁸⁷. The Ila of Zambia also scarified a girl's loins. Since the scars were seen only during sexual relationships, their erotic purpose was clear ³⁸⁸. The Tiv of Nigeria scarified the face, neck, shoulders, back and arms of both sexes, and the women were scarified on the calves and stomach as well ³⁸⁹.

Some of the permanent beauty treatments are more than just skin deep. The Yap of Micronesia consider white teeth to be quite ugly, so they artificially blacken them ³⁹⁰. Among the Toradja girls have some of their teeth knocked out by placing a piece of iron in the mouth and banging on it, although it is not clear if this is a beauty treatment, since people explain the custom as originating when a woman once bit off a man's penis ³⁹¹. The Mende of Sierra Leone rupture the navel in order to make it protrude in the way they consider most attractive ³⁹². The Aymara of Bolivia artificially elongate the heads of their children ³⁹³. The Padaung women of Burma use coiled brass rings to elongate their necks, stretching them to as much as 15 inches long. Aristocratic Chinese girls once had their feet bound to make them sexually more attractive. As the foot grew, the bones were so distorted that walking was difficult, and work impossible ³⁹⁴.

Perhaps the most common body mutilations that go beyond the skin involve the genitals. Sometimes these modifications are fairly simple. One of the most popular ways for girls to make themselves more attractive is to extend the labia minora of their vaginas. Among the Rundi girls masturbate to extend the labia so that they become yellow and protrude ³⁹⁵. The same is true of the Lovedo of southern Africa ³⁹⁶. For the Hottentot, also of southern Africa, the elongated labia are said to be natural ³⁹⁷. Among the Thonga of Mozambique girls pull on their labia until they extend as much as 15 centimeters. They measure their labia and boast of their length ³⁹⁸. The Truk of Micronesia also pull on the labia to stretch them, in order to make their vaginas "have more things" inside. Sometimes they also perforate the labia in order to insert objects that tinkle when they walk with their legs apart ³⁹⁹.

[p54]

In some societies the male's genitals are also pierced. Among the Iban of Borneo, the men perforate the glans of their penis in order to insert a rod made of slivers of rattan, wood, bone or brass. To insert the rod the penis is first immersed in cold water to numb it. The glans is then compressed sideways between a pair of perforated bamboo stalks, and a pointed peg is driven through the head, usually piercing the urethra. The women encourage the men to insert the rod because they think it more sexually stimulating ⁴⁰⁰. The Toradja of the Celebes perform a similar operation. They insert little marbles made of shells under the skin of the glans penis which is pierced to allow for insertion of

³⁷⁰ 13: Suggs, 24

³⁷¹ 2: Thompson, 204

³⁷² 1: Gutierrez de Pineda, 78

³⁷³ 2: Hulstaert, 62-63

³⁷⁴ 5: Dorsey and Murie

³⁷⁵ 4: Levak, 178

³⁷⁶ 2: Roscoe, 89

³⁷⁷ 2: Pauline, 465

³⁷⁸ 6: Basden, 78

³⁷⁹ 4: Bryant, 115-116 (Zulu file)

³⁸⁰ 11: Gorer, 60

³⁸¹ 10: Linton, 165

³⁸² 1: Gutierrez de Pineda, 78

³⁸³ Werner, D. Amazon Journey, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984

³⁸⁴ Levi-Strauss, C. Tristes Tropiques, New York: Atheneum, 1970

³⁸⁵ 29: Jenness, 215

³⁸⁶ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 109

³⁸⁷ 1: Maes, 148

³⁸⁸ 1: Smith and Dale, 16

³⁸⁹ 19: Bohannon and Bohannon, 66-67

³⁹⁰ 2: Salesius, 33

³⁹¹ 3: Adriani and Kruyt, 636

³⁹² 1: Staub, 30

³⁹³ 3: LaBarre, 129

³⁹⁴ Gregerson, E., Sexual Practices, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, pp. 97-98

³⁹⁵ 2: Meyer, 174

³⁹⁶ 2: Krige and Krige

³⁹⁷ 2: Schapera

³⁹⁸ 1: Junod, 516-517

³⁹⁹ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 109

⁴⁰⁰ 5: Roth, 45. 9: Griffith, 327

the small balls, some five millimeters in diameter⁴⁰¹. In ancient Rome musicians, actors and others sometimes had a hole pierced in their foreskins and a ring or clasp was inserted⁴⁰².

Other societies have performed different operations on male genitals. In order to increase the size of their penises, the Tupinamba Indians would sometimes expose their members to the bites of poisonous animals or to the hairs of a scorpion. The penis would then swell up painfully. After several months the swelling would go away but the penis would be permanently altered⁴⁰³. Perhaps one of the most gruesome of male genital operations was the subincision performed by several Australian Aboriginal groups and by the Samburu of Kenya as part of initiation. This operation consisted in slitting open the urethra from the meatus down to the scrotum. As a result of this operation a man would have to sit to urinate and his penis would "butterfly" when erect. The aborigines' interest in this operation has been explained by reference to the kangaroo's penis which looks like a subincised human penis. The kangaroo's sex life is enviable since the animal can copulate for hours on end. Of course the subincision of the Samburu, could not be explained by "kangaroo penis envy."⁴⁰⁴ The Micronesian Ponapeans and the Ethiopian Janjero required men to have one of their testicles removed. Girls on Ponape would scorn a young man's sexual advances until he consented to be operated upon by the village's experienced surgeon⁴⁰⁵. Among the Ethiopian Janjero all men except for the aristocracy also had one testicle

[p55]

removed as well as one nipple excised when they were still babies⁴⁰⁶. The hemi-castration of the Ponapeans and the Janjero may have more to do with symbolic submission to upper class males than to aesthetic ideals since in both societies the aristocracy did not need to undergo the operation.

The most common genital operation for males is circumcision, practiced throughout much of the Middle East and Africa. The related custom of superincision, in which the foreskin is not removed but split, is common in Oceania⁴⁰⁷. These operations occur at various times in a male's life, normally some time between infancy and early adolescence, although one group, the Konso of Ethiopia, perform circumcision only on old men to mark the end of their sexual lives⁴⁰⁸.

The most common female genital mutilations consist in the removal of the clitoris, the labia minor, and/or the labia majora. Another female genital mutilation is infibulation in which the labia majora are scarified and sewn together to permit only a small opening for urination. These mutilations are limited primarily to Africa⁴⁰⁹, although the Shipibo Indians of Peru also practice clitoridectomy⁴¹⁰. Often these various operations are combined. For example, Somali girls are infibulated sometime between 11 and 12 years of age. The vulva is scarified and then drawn together and held until its sides have healed shut except for a small hole. At the same time a portion of the clitoris is also removed⁴¹¹. Female genital mutilations are much less common than male circumcision.

The emotions people feel toward these operations are strong. Among the Tiv, for example, no woman would ever consent to having sex with an uncircumcised male⁴¹². Among the Mossi of Birkina Faso (Upper Volta) even the Christians scorn uncircumcised men, and men despise women who have

not had their clitoris removed⁴¹³. Among the Chagga of Tanzania, a girl and her lover are killed if the lover is uncircumcised⁴¹⁴. The Igbo of Nigeria consider it an abomination for a girl with her clitoris intact to become pregnant⁴¹⁵.

The justifications given for these operations vary. In some places, such as among the Nupe⁴¹⁶ the operations are

[p56]

performed in a business-like manner with no ceremony, and the operation could not be considered as part of a rite of passage. Similarly, in the United States newborn boys are routinely circumcised in hospitals with "hygiene" given as the justification. Elsewhere a great deal of symbolic significance is given to the operations. Among the Bambara of Mali all men and women are thought to have both a male and a female soul. The female soul in the man rests in the foreskin; the male soul in the female lies in her clitoris. Circumcision and clitoridectomy serve to reaffirm the masculinity of men and the femininity of women. But the operation involves somewhat more than a simple removal of a boy's feminine nature. After a boy's foreskin has been removed, a small hole is made under the penis and pepper and tomato juice are placed inside. This is supposed to guarantee well-formed foreskins and clitorises in the boy's future children⁴¹⁷. Apparently, there is some feeling that young children at least, should have both a male and a female soul. Perhaps one of the most common justifications given for clitoridectomy is that it reduces a female's sexual desire. The Amhara of Ethiopia believe that women who have not had their clitoris removed are too egotistical and too difficult to satisfy sexually. They are thought to be too concerned with their own sexual gratification and not sufficiently concerned about their husband's desires⁴¹⁸.

Studies comparing numerous societies have shown that females are generally expected to be more modest in cultures where a woman's adultery is viewed more seriously, and where males are more restricted about premarital and extramarital sex. These same cultures also generally expect couples to engage in sex more privately, and discourage talk about sex⁴¹⁹.

Anthropologists have carried out very little systematic research on physical attractiveness. Some scholars have suggested that people find sexually attractive those features that are the "average" for the society. Although interesting, this argument would not help us distinguish the factors that might account for such cross-cultural differences as a preference for fat or skinny women. Edgar Gregerson has

[p57]

suggested that people may find sexually attractive those physical features that are most in demand for economic reasons. For example, if spear-throwing is important in a society, then women might prefer men to have long and agile arms. An emphasis on archery might create a desire for men with broad shoulders and more muscular arms. And high status given to bureaucratic jobs might encourage women to find paunches attractive⁴²⁰. This same argument might account for preferences for fatter men and women in a society. If food is a problem so that only the wealthy can become overweight, then fatter people may be more sexually desirable. On the other hand, this argument would not account for the fact that many societies prefer women to be fat, but like their men to be slim. Still, since no systematic study has been carried out, it deserves research attention.

⁴⁰¹ 3: Adriani and Kruyt, 392

⁴⁰² Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 107

⁴⁰³ 8: Soares de Souza, 316. 15: Ancieta, 147

⁴⁰⁴ 1: Spencer and Gillen, 210-212 (Aranda). Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p.108-109

⁴⁰⁵ Pereira, A.C., *La Isla de Ponape*, Manila: Junta Superior Consultiva da Guerra, 1895

⁴⁰⁶ Cipriani, L. "Sul Monorchidismo rituale dei Gangeri," Istituto di Antropologia della R. Università di Firenze. Huntingford, G.U.B. *The Gall of Ethiopia: The Kingdoms of Kafa and Janjero*. London: International African Institute, 1955

⁴⁰⁷ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, pp. 100-104

⁴⁰⁸ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 103

⁴⁰⁹ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, pp. 100-107

⁴¹⁰ Abeloff, J., personal communication

⁴¹¹ 31: Lewis, 13

⁴¹² 23: Bohannon, 26

⁴¹³ 1: Delobson, 143

⁴¹⁴ 4: Dundas, 296

⁴¹⁵ 9: Nzimiro, 176

⁴¹⁶ 2: Nadel, 118

⁴¹⁷ 1: Dieterlen, 19, 237

⁴¹⁸ 1: Messing, 420

⁴¹⁹ Broude, G., "Cross-Cultural Correlates of Some Sexual Attitudes and Practices," *Behavior Science Research* 4, 1976, pp. 227-262

⁴²⁰ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 93

In one study carried out in Brazil, Muraro also suggested that preferences about body types might be related to work activities. She noted that upper class women from Rio prefer to keep themselves thin, while peasant men and women from the poor Northeast region of the country like women to be fatter, and find a pregnant woman's body especially attractive. Urban working class women are caught in the middle of these esthetic values and feel ambiguous about their bodies ⁴²¹.

The preference of some men for pregnant women's bodies suggests a related argument about body preferences. There is a fair amount of evidence that fat women are more fertile than thin ones ⁴²². Perhaps, then, a craving for fatter women is related to a desire for more children in a society. This argument might account for the recent changes in U.S. tastes regarding women's bodies. Americans today want both fewer children and thinner women than in the period following World War II. Of course this explanation would require some systematic research before it could be confirmed or refuted.

Other esthetic preferences such as a desire for abundant body hair or for its removal, or a desire for different articles of clothing and jewelry have received practically no attention, although the cross-cultural variation is great. Only if people carry out research on these topics will we be able to tell whether such fashions are truly arbitrary or not.

[p58]

Some anthropologists have studied harsh initiation rites that sometimes, but not always, involve genital mutilations, and others have looked into infant stress factors that may also include circumcision or similar operations ⁴²³. But there are no systematic studies specific enough to distinguish between societies that do or do not practice genital mutilations. Gregerson suggests that circumcision and clitoridectomies may be related to an emphasize on the differences between males and females. In this case the operations serve to accentuate one's "maleness" or "femaleness." On the other hand, superincision (where the foreskin is slit, but not removed) may reflect a desire to minimize sex differences. In this case the operation may reflect "vagina envy" on the part of males, as is evidenced by the fact that some societies refer to the blood from the superincised penis with the same term used for menstrual blood ⁴²⁴. Of course systematic research will be needed to confirm or refute these ideas.

SEXUAL STIMULATION

People have invented many techniques to communicate their interest in sexual matters, and to maximize their sexual enjoyment. Finding a willing sex partner is usually the first step. Trukese men from Micronesia begin their courting with love songs, and love letters that flatter their amour ⁴²⁵. Among the Tucano of Amazonia a ceremony often serves as a prelude to sex ⁴²⁶. Among the Iban of Borneo it is considered fine for a man, while joking, to grab a women around the waist and squeeze her breasts ⁴²⁷. Among the Azande of Zaire men simply wink or pout their lips and stick out their tongues to get women to have sex with them ⁴²⁸. Among the Hataco of Argentina a young man who wants a sweetheart paints a distinct pattern on his face which lets everyone know he is seeking a girl. The next day an interested young woman paints a design on her face to indicate that she would accept the boy's offer ⁴²⁹. Some Marquesan boys in French Polynesia are in an almost constant state of

sexual excitation, maintaining partial erections for hours, and leaving no doubt to others about their sexual interests ⁴³⁰.

[p59]

Sometimes it is the women who initiate the courting process. Among the Argentinean Toba tradition dictates that at dances the woman pick the man who will be her lover for the night. At these dances the women beat the men and jerk them around violently by the hair ⁴³¹. Aranda women from Australia like to tease the men by lying down on their backs and exposing their vaginas. When the men are excited the women refuse to grant their desires ⁴³². Girls are more coy among the Mbundu of Angola. Since a boy is thought to disapprove of a girl who confesses her love, most girls pretend to dislike their suitors ⁴³³. Among the Tarahumara of Mexico, women throw pebbles at a man to attract his attention, and then walk off to a secluded place, hoping he will follow. Women are especially forward about their interests during drunken ceremonies ⁴³⁴.

Alcohol and drugs are a popular prelude to sexual license. Among the Tucano, drunkenness is encouraged in order to promote sexual activities, including some considered incestuous. This is thought to ensure the happiness of the people and the fecundity of nature ⁴³⁵. A woman may go so far as to expose herself when drunk among the Lepcha, and no one considers this abnormal ⁴³⁶. Among the Cagaba of Colombia it is coca chewing rather than alcohol that is thought to stimulate the sexual instinct, although people feel this holds true only in the first years of its consumption. Afterwards coca is thought to suppress sexual urges and even cause impotence ⁴³⁷.

In some places people resort to love magic to capture a partner. Among the Toradja of the Celebes, a boy took "skin dirt" from his feces and put it in food, which he fed to a girl to win her love ⁴³⁸. To induce sexual interest the Hopi used a "penis plant" that, together with its roots, looked like a real penis and scrotum and that even "ejaculated" when touched ⁴³⁹. An Ojibwa woman from Canada once described how her husband had used love magic when they were young. Her account illustrates how love magic may actually produce results. One day when she was still unmarried, the Ojibwa girl discovered a piece of her shawl hidden in a small bag a male friend normally carried in his jacket. At that point, as she put it, "I knew then that he was charming me, and that's

[p60]

how I began to like him." ⁴⁴⁰ Love magic was considered so powerful among the Central Thai that, if it cannot be undone by another means, the victim of such magic may be chained and watched closely to assure everyone that he or she will not run off and marry someone the family does not welcome ⁴⁴¹. Of course magic can also be used to destroy love. The Cuna possess a medicine consisting of cockroaches in water that a man can drink in order to forget his loved one or make himself angry with her ⁴⁴².

Sexual stimulation may also take a more verbal form. The Himalayan Lepchas are reported to talk constantly about sex in the presence of both men and women ⁴⁴³. On the Andaman Islands off the

⁴²¹ Muraro, R.M. *Sexualidade da Mulher Brasileira*, Petropolis, Vozes, 1983

⁴²² Frisch, R., "Fatness, Puberty and Fertility," *Natural History*, October, 1980, pp. 16-27

⁴²³ Schlegel, A., and H. Barry, "The Evolutionary Significance of Adolescent Initiation Ceremonies," *American Ethnologist*, 1980, pp. 696-715. Whiting, J.W.M., R. Kluckhohn, and A.S. Anthony, "The Function of Male Initiation Ceremonies at Puberty," IN E.E. Maccoby, T.M. Newcomb, and E.L. Hartley (eds.), *Readings in Social Psychology*, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1958, pp. 359-370. Landauer, T.K., and J.W.M. Whiting, "Correlates and Consequences of Stress in Infancy," IN R. Munroe and R. Munroe (eds.), *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Human Development*, New York: Garland Press, 1980, pp. 355-375

⁴²⁴ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 110

⁴²⁵ 11: Fisher and Swartz, 218. 12: Swartz, 478

⁴²⁶ 5: Goldman, 235, ff

⁴²⁷ 4: Roth, 131

⁴²⁸ 59: Evans-Pritchard, 220

⁴²⁹ 5: Fock, 92

⁴³⁰ 13: Suggs, 36-38

⁴³¹ 5: Henry and Henry, 10

⁴³² 28: Roheim, 241

⁴³³ 3: Hambly, 180

⁴³⁴ 10: Fried, 149

⁴³⁵ 4: Silva, 527

⁴³⁶ 2: Morris, 291

⁴³⁷ 1: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 77

⁴³⁸ 3: Adriani and Krut, 297

⁴³⁹ 7: Talayeva, 271

⁴⁴⁰ 15: Hilger, 161

⁴⁴¹ 41: Somchentanana, 24

⁴⁴² 12: Marshall, 248-249

⁴⁴³ 1: Gorer, 260

coast of India the exchange of obscenities is a sign of friendship and a sure source of amusement ⁴⁴⁴. The Trobriand Islanders off the coast of New Guinea also delight in telling sexual stories and jokes ⁴⁴⁵. Although they normally do not permit graffiti or invectives, older men among the Ona of Patagonia enjoy entertaining the men with lascivious and obscene remarks ⁴⁴⁶. Similarly, among the Bambara of Mali stories of fornication and adultery are a favorite topic in the men's discussions, even when children are around to hear ⁴⁴⁷. On Tikopia in the Solomon Islands talk about women is one of the most common causes of masturbation ⁴⁴⁸. In Taiwan it is the old women who "talk dirty" and act as the village clowns ⁴⁴⁹. While swearing is normally punished with fines, sexual obscenities are given special place in some rituals among the Lovedu of southern Africa ⁴⁵⁰. Similarly, at weddings of the Libyan Bedouin young men delight in singing lewd songs and shouting obscenities ⁴⁵¹. Among the Nuer a man can talk about sex to unrelated females, who are potential wives, but not to relatives ⁴⁵².

Sexual matters are treated with more seriousness or reserve in other places. Many of the curses and oaths among the Hottentot of southern Africa refer to sexual matters. People may shout such insulting phrases as "you with a penis like the swelling around a baboon's genitals." ⁴⁵³ The Bushmen of southern Africa diligently avoid talking about sexual matters in the presence of women and children ⁴⁵⁴. The rural Irish even avoid talking about sexual matters in all-male

[p61]

groups. One ethnographer reported an incident when men became terribly embarrassed because a silly song made mention of the hairs on a man's chest ⁴⁵⁵.

In many societies erotic songs are considered an effective way to arouse sexual interest. Goajiro men from Colombia sing tunes praising their masculinity and the charms of their beloved in order to interest them in sex ⁴⁵⁶. Among the Trobrianders a good singer is highly praised and can easily seduce women into sex ⁴⁵⁷. Often the line between sexual excitement and humor is difficult to distinguish. When a Luo boy and girl engage in sexual relations in the bachelor's hut, the others sing obscene songs outside ⁴⁵⁸. The songs performed by young Pawnee men when drunk are thought by the older men to express a "lack of respect" for the women ⁴⁵⁹. Among the Hopi Indians, the men also sing bawdy songs about the women, commenting humorously on the shapes of their vaginas or the quantity of their pubic hairs. But here, the women retaliate by pouring water, urine and other filth on the serenaders ⁴⁶⁰. The Ila of Zambia also perform grossly obscene songs and dances in order to excite people sexually as much as possible ⁴⁶¹.

Dances are an even more effective way to arouse erotic feelings. Among the Aymara of Bolivia alcohol and dancing put people in the proper frame of mind for erotic dalliances which the performers

⁴⁴⁴ 11: Cipriani, 22
⁴⁴⁵ 5: Malinowski, 483
⁴⁴⁶ 1: Gusinde, 533
⁴⁴⁷ 4: Henry, 170
⁴⁴⁸ 2: Firth, 496
⁴⁴⁹ 4: Barnett, 450
⁴⁵⁰ 2: Krige and Krige, 120
⁴⁵¹ 6: Peters, 122
⁴⁵² 1: Evans-Pritchard, 55
⁴⁵³ 1: Schutze, 119
⁴⁵⁴ 3: Lebzelter, 38
⁴⁵⁵ 16: Messenger, 119
⁴⁵⁶ 2: Pineda-Giraldo, 140
⁴⁵⁷ 5: Malinowski, 305
⁴⁵⁸ 10: Roscoe, 281
⁴⁵⁹ 3: Densmore, 93
⁴⁶⁰ 2: Titiev, 302-303
⁴⁶¹ 2: Smith and Dale, 272

and the audience indulge in as soon as the presentation is over ⁴⁶². The Lau Fijians put perfume and oil on the male and female dancers to enhance their erotic appeal ⁴⁶³. Dances among the Bush Negroes of Guyana often include simulated coital movements ⁴⁶⁴. Among the Santal of India it is the males who engage in wild dances with much leaping in the air, and with some of the men stripped of their clothing ⁴⁶⁵. Among the Andaman Islanders off the coast of India it is the women who perform obscene dances to please the crowd ⁴⁶⁶. The same is true of the Wolof of Senegal. Here the men sometimes comically imitate the women's sexually suggestive dance steps ⁴⁶⁷. In at least two societies, the Ngonde of Tanzania and the Thonga of Mozambique, funerals are a time for erotic display. Thonga widows must travel from door to door to perform lascivious dances ⁴⁶⁸.157

[p62]

Some societies forbid erotic artwork. In many Islamic societies all representations of human beings are taboo. But elsewhere visual pornography is a major preoccupation. In almost all the important temples of the Toradja of the Celebes, there were carvings on the posts of women's breasts and of male and female sex organs, sometimes in the act of coitus. The Toradjans reported that these did not mean anything but were there simply "to delight the eye." ⁴⁶⁹ Among the Bush Negroes of Guyana, men, women and animals in the act of copulation were the dominant art motif, especially in the carvings men made for their women ⁴⁷⁰. Fang men from the Cameroons liked to carve wooden penises and wrap them in leaves to show the women ⁴⁷¹. Hopi men sometimes drew figures on rocks to represent the sexual organs as a way of bragging about their exploits ⁴⁷². Among the Central Thai young boys sculpted "coital statues" normally used in rain-making rituals. The boys delighted in placing the statues along paths and waiting to see the reactions of the girls as they passed by ⁴⁷³. Tucano boys from Amazonia also liked to play sexual jokes, this time with barkcloth penises that they made ⁴⁷⁴. For similar reasons, on the Truk Islands of Micronesia the men made pornographic designs on tree trunks ⁴⁷⁵. Among the Aranda of Australia, people performed libidinous dances around the image of a man lying on his back with a huge wooden penis, and a woman with an enormous exposed vagina ⁴⁷⁶. One unusual form of pornography comes from the Trobriand Islands off the coast of New Guinea. Here people played a string game (cat's cradle) in which they chanted about the designs of sexual organs that they were making ⁴⁷⁷.

Even when people are sufficiently aroused to engage in sexual relations, there are still problems about when and where to satisfy one's desires. In many societies, sex is taboo during part of the day. The Central Thai think that, because the ancestors and the house spirit may be watching, sexual relations should only take place at night ⁴⁷⁸. The Bambara of Mali are convinced that sex during the

⁴⁶² 10: Bouroncle Carreon, 84
⁴⁶³ 2: Thompson, 204
⁴⁶⁴ 2: Kahn, 58
⁴⁶⁵ 5: Culshaw, 39
⁴⁶⁶ 11: Cipriani, 22
⁴⁶⁷ 43: Irvine, 301
⁴⁶⁸ 2: Wilson, 26 (Ngonde). 1: Junod, 160 (Thonga)
⁴⁶⁹ 2: Adriani and Kruyt, 287
⁴⁷⁰ 1: Herskovits and Herskovits, 282
⁴⁷¹ 2: Tessmann, 110
⁴⁷² 7: Talayesva, 76
⁴⁷³ 11: Textor, 827
⁴⁷⁴ 5: Goldman, 238
⁴⁷⁵ 21: Goodenough, 616
⁴⁷⁶ 9: Roheim, 160-161
⁴⁷⁷ 5: Malinowski, 398
⁴⁷⁸ 12: Kaufman, 156

day would cause a woman to bear an albino child ⁴⁷⁹. Similarly, the Kikuyu of Kenya, the Fang of the Cameroons, Polynesian Tikopians, and the Panamanian Cuna Indians also think that

[p63]

people should engage in sexual intercourse only at night ⁴⁸⁰. On the other hand, among the Kapauku of West Irian most sex takes place in the fields during the day ⁴⁸¹.

Sexual taboos also extend to other times. In many places it is taboo for men to have intercourse before engaging in warfare. Among the Nuer of the Sudan, sex was taboo during raids, and, although enemy women were captured and eventually used for sexual purposes, the men had to wait until they returned home ⁴⁸². The Azande of Zaire also tabooed sex with women during military campaigns, but did permit men to take along their "boy-wives" with whom they were permitted sexual relations ⁴⁸³. It is also common to taboo sex with a woman who is menstruating. Highland New Guinea societies are especially noted for the tremendous fear men have about menstruating women ⁴⁸⁴. Among the Mae Enga, for example, men fear that contact with menstrual blood will cause vomiting, blackening of the blood, physical and mental debilitation and death. As a result, women are required to hide in a special hut and stay out of men's view during the four days after menstruation begins ⁴⁸⁵. But the taboo is also common elsewhere, such as among the Tiv of Nigeria ⁴⁸⁶. It is extremely rare for people to actually prefer sex during a woman's menstrual period, but the Mbuti pygmies of Zaire think this is the best time to get pregnant ⁴⁸⁷.

Another common time when sex is tabooed is after a woman has just given birth. For the Dogon of Mali this taboo extended anywhere from four months to three years ⁴⁸⁸. For the Tallensi of Ghana it lasted approximately three years ⁴⁸⁹. The Mataco of Argentina extended the taboo until the baby grew teeth ⁴⁹⁰. For the Kayapo of Brazil, the criterion was whether the child could walk or not ⁴⁹¹. Among the Igbo of Nigeria, if a couple had sex before a woman began menstruating again and she conceived, the child would be thrown away and the man and woman buried alive ⁴⁹². One less common taboo on sex occurred whenever a king died among the Rundi ⁴⁹³.

There are also taboos about where to have sex. The Bambara of Mali strongly taboo sexual activities out of doors. If a couple is caught they are stripped of their clothing, marched naked around the village and then banished from the community ⁴⁹⁴. Among the Twi of Ghana a couple caught having

[p64]

sex outside instantly become the slaves of the person who discovered them ⁴⁹⁵. On the other hand, the Cagaba Indians of Colombia insist that sex should take place outside. A child conceived indoors is

thought likely to be either blind or lazy ⁴⁹⁶. The Bushmen of southern Africa feel that sex should take place discretely at night under an animal skin covering and in one's own sleeping place ⁴⁹⁷.

Elsewhere people are much freer about where sex can take place. The Mbuti pygmies think sex is fine in the forest or in a hut. If surprised in the forest, a copulating couple simply says hello and the intruder continues on his way ⁴⁹⁸. The Goajiro of Colombia feel that sex acts do not need to be hidden, and people often copulate quite openly in public ⁴⁹⁹. The Siriono of Bolivia also feel that husbands and wives can publicly indulge in sexual intimacy, if not copulation, without problems ⁵⁰⁰. Among the Marquesans of French Polynesia at the close of certain feasts women took pride in the number of men they could sexually satisfy in public before tiring ⁵⁰¹. Picnics that took place after dances among the Hopi Indians were to a large extent public sexual events ⁵⁰². Once a time and place have been arranged a couple can begin sexual relationships. In some places there is very little foreplay. The Ojibwa of Ontario feel that the goal of sex is male orgasm and the faster it is achieved the better, so foreplay is extremely limited ⁵⁰³. The Cuna of Panama also feel that sexual relations should be carried out at night in a hammock covered with a cloth screen to insure privacy, and with very little preliminary kissing or fondling ⁵⁰⁴. The rural Irish limit their foreplay to a rough handling of the woman's lower body. Typically, the man attempts to orgasm rapidly and subsequently he falls asleep ⁵⁰⁵. The Wolof of Senegal also often dispense with foreplay ⁵⁰⁶. For the Central Thai, foreplay occurs only during the first year of marriage, and consists of mutual tickling, fondling the woman's breast and "kissing" with the nose ⁵⁰⁷.

Elsewhere foreplay plays a more important part in sexual intercourse. The Bororo Indians of Brazil tickle each other under the arms and in the genitals as a prelude to intercourse ⁵⁰⁸. The Santal of India like to fondle the woman's breasts ⁵⁰⁹. Taiwanese typically nibble, blow and

[p65]

touch each other's bodies prior to intercourse ⁵¹⁰. Among the Aranda of Australia the man often rubs the woman's clitoris, and she rubs her partner's penis or fellates him ⁵¹¹. The Zulu like to Kiss and lick each others' bodies ⁵¹².

The positions people prefer to assume during coitus vary somewhat. The "missionary position" consisting of the man lying on top of the woman, is common in such places as Taiwan, Central Thailand, and among the Hopi Indians ⁵¹³. Gregerson reports that it is the most common position found around the world ⁵¹⁴. Having intercourse while on one's side, with the man and woman facing each other is common among such groups as the Dogon of Mali (where the man must be on his *right* side)

⁴⁷⁹ 1: Dieterlin, 125-126

⁴⁸⁰ 4: Kenyatta, 83 (Kikuyu). 2: Tessman, 56 (Fang). 2: Firth, 494 (Tikopia). 3: Stout, 39 (Cuna)

⁴⁸¹ 1: Pospisil, 136

⁴⁸² 1: Evans-Pritchard, 129

⁴⁸³ 57: Evans-Pritchard, 256

⁴⁸⁴ see for example, Kelly, R., Etoro Social Structure: A Study In Structural Contradiction, Ph.D. dissertation: University of Michigan, 1974

⁴⁸⁵ Meggitt, M., "Male-Female Relationships in the Highlands of Australian New Guinea," American Anthropologist, 56, 1964, pp. 801-824

⁴⁸⁶ 30: Bohannon and Bohannon, 194

⁴⁸⁷ 2: Turnbull, 122

⁴⁸⁸ 2: Paulo Marti

⁴⁸⁹ 1: Rattray, 371

⁴⁹⁰ 4: Metraux, 4

⁴⁹¹ Werner, D., Amazon Journey, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984

⁴⁹² 3: Green, 101

⁴⁹³ 9: Maquet, 79

⁴⁹⁴ 1: Dieterlin, 185

⁴⁹⁵ 3: Rattray, 319

⁴⁹⁶ 5: Park, 882

⁴⁹⁷ 1: Marshall, 346

⁴⁹⁸ 2: Turnbull, 121

⁴⁹⁹ 7: Bolinder, 86

⁵⁰⁰ 1: Holmberg, 56-57

⁵⁰¹ 10: Linton, 168

⁵⁰² 2: Titiev, 43

⁵⁰³ 21: Hallowell, 301

⁵⁰⁴ 12: Stout, 39

⁵⁰⁵ 16: Messenger, 110

⁵⁰⁶ 8: Ames, 140

⁵⁰⁷ 12: Kaufman, 156

⁵⁰⁸ 5: Baldus, 30

⁵⁰⁹ 3: Mukherjea, 416

⁵¹⁰ 4: Barnett, 447

⁵¹¹ 28: Roheim, 238

⁵¹² 25: Krige, 193

⁵¹³ 4: Barnett, 447 (Taiwan). 12: Kaufmann, 156 (Thailand). 7: Talayesva, 281-282 (Hopi)

⁵¹⁴ Gregerson, E. Sexual Practices, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 58

the Kikuyu of Kenya, the Klamath Indians of the northwestern states, and the Bororo Indians of Brazil⁵¹⁵. The Zulu, who also prefer this position, think the "missionary position" is disgustingly "like animals."⁵¹⁶ In his survey of sexual positions worldwide, Gregerson reports that this position is most common in Africa, and might well be called "the African position."⁵¹⁷ The preferred posture for the Truk Islanders is for the man to sit with his legs out and for the woman to squat facing him⁵¹⁸. A position common among Pacific Islanders and labeled the "Oceanic Position" by Gregerson consists in the woman lying back with the man squatting or kneeling in front of her⁵¹⁹. While some societies are fairly rigid about the proper position people should assume, others allow for greater freedom to experiment. Still, even here there may be some taboos. The Kanuri of Nigeria allow for many different positions, but do not approve of the man remaining underneath the woman, since they believe that this may cause the man's semen to return to his body and "go bad" causing disease⁵²⁰. Similarly, the Central Thai also feel it is dangerous for a woman's genitals to be higher than a man's head⁵²¹. Often different sexual positions are used for sexual relations under different circumstances. The Buku normally use the "missionary position" for sex while in their huts, but out in the forest they copulate standing with the man behind the woman who bends forward⁵²². The Trukese normally prefer for the woman to squat in front of the seated man, but if they want to be

[p66]

discreet about their relationship they assume the "African position."⁵²³

The kinds of sexual acts people perform also vary. Although oral-genital sex is quite common in many oceanic societies, and is quite highly regarded in some places, such as among the Truk or the Aranda⁵²⁴, it is held in abomination in other places. The Ila of Zambia abhor oral-genital contacts. They think that if a man licks the female genitals she will become sterile, so the man is fined 10 or 12 head of cattle for his crime. If an Ila woman commits fellatio on a man, he has the right to claim her as his slave⁵²⁵. Among the Fang of the Cameroons, fellatio is grounds for divorce⁵²⁶. Among the Lozi, cunnilingus is associated with sorcery since a man sticks his tongue in his wife's vagina and removes blood from between her breasts to use for black magic⁵²⁷.

Attitudes toward anal sex also vary. In many societies it is the preferred form of homosexual contact, although it is less common in heterosexual relations. One contemporary society that values heterosexual anal sex is Brazil. While Americans seem fixated on women's breasts, Brazilians seem much more fixated on the buttocks. American women, for example "shimmy" (shake their breasts) to excite men sexually, while Brazilian women "remolam" (shake their buttocks) as a sexual come-on. One survey of sexual practices among 5000 Brazilians found that over 40 % of the population practiced anal sex at least occasionally⁵²⁸. In the United States a study carried out in the early 1970's found that only a few Americans over the age of 45 had ever engaged in anal sex, and among those under 35 only 25 % had ever had anal sex, with less than 7 % continuing to engage in it "sometimes" or "often."⁵²⁹

⁵¹⁵ 4: Griaule and Dieterlen, 97 (Dogon). 4: Kenyatta, 161 (Kikuyu). 2: Voegelin, 134 (Klamath). 5: Baldus, 30 (Bororo)

⁵¹⁶ 4: Bryant, 571

⁵¹⁷ Gregerson, E. *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 60

⁵¹⁸ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 110

⁵¹⁹ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 61

⁵²⁰ 3: Cohen, 133

⁵²¹ 14: Piker, 82

⁵²² 1: Blackwood, 126

⁵²³ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 110

⁵²⁴ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 110. 28: Roheim, 238

⁵²⁵ 2: Smith and Dale, 436

⁵²⁶ 6: Alexandre and Binet, 68

⁵²⁷ 9: Reynolds, 33

⁵²⁸ Inez, A.L. de Santa, *Habitos Sexuais dos Brasileiros*, Sao Paulo: Editora Cultrix, 1983

⁵²⁹ Hunt, M. *Sexual Behavior in the 1970's*, Chicago: Playboy Press, 1974, p. 204

The woman's role in sexual contact also varies. The rural Irish considered a female orgasm as deviant, and curates told women that sexual relations were a "duty" that they had to endure. Their husbands typically used little or no sexual foreplay, and rejected their wives as soon as they had reached their orgasm⁵³⁰. Wolof men from Senegal also do not consider the possibility of giving satisfaction to women⁵³¹. Canadian Ojibwa men prefer sex with White women and complain that Indian women just lie there and do nothing to help

[p67]

during sexual intercourse⁵³². Lepcha women from the Himalayas remain similarly passive and relaxed during sex⁵³³.

Elsewhere the woman's enjoyment of sexual intercourse is more critical. Trukese men consider sexual intercourse a contest in which the man attempts to delay his ejaculation as long as possible, while giving his female partner multiple orgasms⁵³⁴. The Trobriand Islanders off the coast of New Guinea also wait for the woman to orgasm before the male ejaculates, and they complain that Europeans orgasm too quickly⁵³⁵. The Toba Indians of Argentina expect women to take the lead in sexual intercourse, and recite a proverb to support this attitude: "Where the nanny goat leads, the billy goat follows."⁵³⁶ In several societies women are thought more sexual than men. The Kapauku of West Irian complain that women are never satisfied, and are always asking for sex⁵³⁷. The Tucanoans of Amazonia also complain that their wives are too ardent⁵³⁸. The Cagaba of Colombia feel that sex is dangerous to men and resent their wives' preoccupation with it⁵³⁹.

The idea that sex may be dangerous is common to many societies. The Bushmen of southern Africa feel that sex, like hunting, can weaken a person, and should therefore be restrained⁵⁴⁰. Yapese men from Micronesia also feel that sex can make them feeble, and try not to have intercourse more than once a week⁵⁴¹. Somali men restrain their sexual activities in order to prevent the women from getting too strong a hold on them⁵⁴². Although they do not necessarily limit their sexual activities, the Cuna feel that dreaming about sex is very dangerous, and indicates that the dreamer has been possessed by an evil spirit. If the apparition coincides with some calamity in the village, the dreamer may be killed⁵⁴³. Although they do not feel that sex is particularly weakening, the Serbs are noted for their very low frequency of intercourse. When interviewing people about their sexual activities, researchers were advised to ask about yearly frequencies rather than monthly frequencies⁵⁴⁴.

Elsewhere sex is thought to have beneficial qualities. The Fang of the Cameroons must have coitus when peanuts are planted in order to set a good example for them to "multiply."⁵⁴⁵ The Thonga of Mozambique require sexual

[p68]

⁵³⁰ 16: Messenger, 109. 17: Messenger, 16, 31

⁵³¹ 8: Ames, 140

⁵³² 21: Hallowell, 295

⁵³³ 1: Gorer, 162

⁵³⁴ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 109

⁵³⁵ 5: Malinowski, 338-339

⁵³⁶ 4: Miller, 202-203

⁵³⁷ 1: Pospisil, 46

⁵³⁸ 5: Goldman, 185

⁵³⁹ 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 263

⁵⁴⁰ 1: Marshall, 354

⁵⁴¹ 1: Huntet al., 181

⁵⁴² 31: Lewis, 30-31

⁵⁴³ 12: Marshall, 251-252

⁵⁴⁴ 18: Hammel, 58

⁵⁴⁵ 1: Tessman, 56

intercourse when a village is abandoned and when widows must "caste out misfortune."⁵⁴⁶ Although they do not actually perform coitus, the Hopi have a fertility ceremony when male clowns humorously simulate copulation with all the women of the audience⁵⁴⁷. A high frequency of coitus is expected in many places. Young Azande princes from the Sudan have nothing to do all day except play with their naked wives⁵⁴⁸. Among the Santal of India young couples copulate up to five times a day until their first children are born. Thereafter they limit themselves to twice a day⁵⁴⁹. Newly married Tutsi from Rwanda and Burundi have sex three times a day, before eventually cutting down to once a day⁵⁵⁰. The Canadian Ojibwa also expected young men to engage in sexual intercourse nightly⁵⁵¹. In Korea if a man were lax in his sexual vigor, his partner might stick him in the testes with a pin to liven him up⁵⁵². Among the Wolof a man could be divorced for failure to accomplish his marital duties, although these were required only once every four months⁵⁵³.

Comparative studies have been carried out on some aspects of sexual stimulation, but they are generally quite limited in scope. One study of humor found that sex is the most popular subject for amusement worldwide. Sex jokes are most common where infants and young girls are punished less about sexual matters, and where people direct their humor to the opposite sex. Joking with those of the opposite sex is usually confined to potential spouses. Similarly, jokes about one another's body parts or body functions are most common where boys and girls are less sexually restrained, where there is little concern about impotence, and where married couples want sex more often⁵⁵⁴. What is true of sexual joking also appears to be true about sex talk in general. Discussions of sex are more acceptable where women are freer to engage in premarital and extramarital sex and where women are less modest⁵⁵⁵.

A number of studies have examined taboos concerning places or times for sex. One study showed that couples prefer to have sexual relations inside the home if there are walls to divide off spaces. Where walls are absent couples typically have sexual relations outside in gardens or in the forest⁵⁵⁶.²⁴⁵

[p69]

Apparently, men and women generally prefer as much privacy as possible. This is especially true where people expect women to be more modest anyway⁵⁵⁷.

Other studies have shown that taboos on sex during menstruation are most likely where men do not participate in childbirth and girls' initiation rites⁵⁵⁸. Menstrual taboos are also associated with other factors that keep men away from women, such as men's houses, men's secret societies or men's age-grades⁵⁵⁹, and warfare⁵⁶⁰. These correlations all suggest that menstrual taboos may

simply reflect a more general segregation of males from females. Still, a psychological factor may also be involved. There is some indication that menstrual taboos are related to anxiety about sex, since the taboos are most common where infants are punished for sexual activities, and where people believe sex is dangerous⁵⁶¹. One final argument about menstrual taboos sees them as resulting partly from a lack of tryptophane in the diet, which would make women crankier during their periods. In support of this argument, one study found that the taboos are less likely where people grow corn (a food rich in tryptophane)⁵⁶².

The prohibition on sex after a woman has just given birth is also related to diet. The taboo is strongest in societies where protein is in short supply⁵⁶³. The lack of available protein makes it difficult to wean children from the mother's breast since nothing else is available to feed them. In order to avoid having two children in succession who might compete for the mother's milk, people need to observe a sex taboo until the first child is ready for weaning. Perhaps in part because husbands find the taboo so onerous, societies that have long taboos at this time generally have a double standard permitting greater freedom for men to have extramarital affairs⁵⁶⁴.

Another study found that a belief that sex is dangerous may also have some practical origins. Men tend to feel anxious about heterosexual sex where they marry women who come from enemy villages. This fear of intimacy with their wives may be well grounded since the women may very well "spy" on the men's plans for warfare in order to protect the villages where their parents and brothers live. Still,

[p70]

marrying enemies cannot be the only reason men fear sex with their wives. Societies with periodic food shortages also feel that heterosexual sex is somewhat dangerous. Perhaps the anxiety over food makes the men afraid to sire too many children and incur the responsibility of feeding more mouths. Finally, fear of sex with women may have some more strictly psychological origins since this fear is most common where men as babies generally sleep with their mothers⁵⁶⁵.

Much less work has been done on sexual positions or sexual techniques. Gregerson has suggested some interesting hypotheses about sexual positions, but the ideas still need to be tested. He points out that the "missionary" position may be the best for ensuring impregnation, suggesting that it would be the preferred position where couples want more children. The "African" position (man and woman on their sides) is best when one or both sexual partners is tired or old, and so may be more common where older people maintain an interest in sex, perhaps with younger partners. The "Oceanic" position (man squatting above the woman lying in front) involves a minimum of body contact, and so may be preferred when people have sex with partners with whom they would like to maintain some distance — such as older or unattractive people. Having the man sit while the woman squats in front of him is easy to maintain for a long period of time and may be preferred when the couple wants to engage in extensive foreplay. On the other hand, a quick sexual encounter in the forest is easiest when the man enters the vagina from the rear, suggesting its preference in places where quick extramarital or premarital encounters are the norm⁵⁶⁶.

At least one study has also examined sexual foreplay and found it most likely in societies where children sleep in intimate contact with their mother⁵⁶⁷. Perhaps this sleeping arrangement makes people more aware of their bodies and more fond of prolonged bodily contact.

⁵⁴⁶ 1: Junod, 188

⁵⁴⁷ 1: Titiev, 111

⁵⁴⁸ 64: Evans-Pritchard, 69

⁵⁴⁹ 3: Mukherjee, 437

⁵⁵⁰ 9: Maquet, 77-78

⁵⁵¹ 21: Hallowell, 300

⁵⁵² 22: Osgood, 34

⁵⁵³ 4: Fayet, 8. 3: Chabas, 12

⁵⁵⁴ Alford, F. and Alford, R. "A Holo-Cultural Study of Humor," *Ethos* 9(2), 1981, pp. 149-164

⁵⁵⁵ Broude, G., "Cross-Cultural Correlates of Some Sexual Attitudes and Practices," *Behavior Science Research* 4, 1976, pp. 227-262

⁵⁵⁶ Ford, C.S. and Beach, F. A., *Patterns of Sexual Behavior*, New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers and Paul B. Hoeber, Inc., Medical Books, 1951

⁵⁵⁷ Broude, G., "Cross-Cultural Correlates of Some Sexual Attitudes and Practices," *Behavior Science Research* 4, 1976, pp. 227-262

⁵⁵⁸ Montgomery, R.E., "A Cross-Cultural Study of Menstruation, Menstrual Taboos, and Related Social Variables," *Ethos*, 2, 1974, pp. 137-170

⁵⁵⁹ Young, F., and Bacdayan, A.A., "Menstrual Taboos and Social Rigidity," IN Ford, C.S. (ed.) *Cross-Cultural Approaches*, New Haven: HRAF Press, 1967, pp. 95-110

⁵⁶⁰ Sanday, P.R., *Female Power and Male Dominance: On the Origins of Sexual Inequality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, (correlation between menstrual taboos and warfare.) Whyte, M.K., *The Status of Women in Preindustrial Societies*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978. (correlation between warfare and segregation of males from females)

⁵⁶¹ Broude, G.J., "The Cultural Management of Sexuality," IN R. Munroe and R. Munroe (eds.), *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Human Development*, New York: Garland Press, 1980, pp. 633-673. Broude, G., "Cross-Cultural Correlates of Some Sexual Attitudes and Practices," *Behavior Science Research* 4, 1976, pp. 227-262

⁵⁶² Bolton, R., personal communication

⁵⁶³ Whiting, J.W.M., "Effects of Climate on Certain Cultural Practices," IN A.P. Vayda (ed.), *Environment and Cultural Behavior*, Garden City, New York: Natural History Press, 1969, pp. 416-450

⁵⁶⁴ Broude, G., "Cross-Cultural Correlates of Some Sexual Attitudes and Practices," *Behavior Science Research* 4, 1976, pp. 227-262

⁵⁶⁵ Ember, C., "Men's Fear of Sex with Women," *Sex Roles* 4, 1978, pp. 657-678

⁵⁶⁶ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, pp. 57-63

⁵⁶⁷ Gray, J.P., "Cross-Cultural Factors Associated with Sexual Foreplay," *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 33(3-8), 1980, pp. 3-8

Very little has been done to account for preferences for oral-genital or anal sex. Some suggestion has been made that the American interest in oral sex may have something to do with relatively harsh weaning practices, but no cross-cultural studies are available to test these ideas. Obviously, there is a great deal more to be studied about the

[p71]

things people find sexually stimulating. In the coming chapters we will look in more detail at some of the more salient issues regarding sexual preferences.

[p72]

HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS

In the summer of 1984 a small scandal became the biggest joke of the season for the Brazilian resort town of Florianopolis. A group of local youths and men (some of them married) were discovered engaging in group sex in their local clubhouse. Participants were embarrassed about their discovery, but suffered no other harm. The event became known as "the bunch," in comic reference to the ways bananas grow all clumped together, and the good-natured banter found its way into local newspapers. One humorous article, entitled "an almost irresistible offer," described how the state governor was tempted to accept a picture of the boys in "the bunch" in exchange for some political favors⁵⁶⁸. While homosexuality is a favorite subject of entertainment around carnival time, it is not always treated so light-heartedly in Brazil. In January of 1983 Carlos Henrique de Paula from Sao Paulo was killed by his own brother who could not tolerate his brother's homosexuality, and a Brazilian gay organization has published information on dozens of similar murders⁵⁶⁹. As we shall, these different reactions to different aspects of homosexuality are not unusual, many societies permit some forms of homosexual activities, while prohibiting others.

MALE HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS

Cross-culturally attitudes toward homosexuality vary from complete intolerance of all forms of homosexual behavior, through acceptance of some behaviors but not others, to society-wide preferences for homosexual relations above heterosexual ones. A few societies are rigorously opposed to all kinds of homosexual behavior. The Chinese Miao indignantly deny its occurrence⁵⁷⁰. Among the Syrian Rwala homosexual relations are punished with death and are said to be almost unknown⁵⁷¹. Among the Polynesian Tikopia homosexual practices in the form of mutual masturbation do occur between bond friends, but people look on these relations with distaste, and refer to those who engage in them with the term "filthy hand."⁵⁷² Although homosexual behavior was quite common

[p73]

in colonial times, today the Panamanian Cuna regard homosexual relations as sinful⁵⁷³. Although they inflict no punishment, the Trobriand Islanders deride homosexual activities which they consider worthy only of fools⁵⁷⁴.

In some places, such as among the Taureg of the Western Sahara⁵⁷⁵, ethnographers report that homosexual behavior simply does not exist. In most cases, this probably indicates that the society holds a sufficiently negative attitude toward homosexuality to force its complete repression. Among

the southern Ojibwa of Canada a case of sex between two women was blamed for the hydrocephaly of their children and the women were punished by their husbands. In the same society there were cases of men who had remained single throughout their lives. One of these men explained that he simply did not like women, although he did not engage in homosexual behavior⁵⁷⁶. Similarly, among the Siriono of Bolivia an ethnographer reported one case of a man with homosexual tendencies who was simply unable to express them⁵⁷⁷.

Elsewhere people may hold negative attitudes toward homosexuality, but still allow enough leeway to permit some sexual activities between males. Among the Cagaba of Colombia homosexual relations between children and adolescents of both sexes occur even though they are severely punished if discovered⁵⁷⁸. In part these relations can be justified as due to a dream sent by the evil spirit *heisei*, who controls the sexual life of men, and is considered the "Father of Homosexuality." It is because of these dreams that people are led to commit sexual offenses⁵⁷⁹. Perhaps the ambiguity felt by the Cagaba reflects historical changes. During colonial times homosexuality was a major passion of the Cagaba, who even filled their temples with obscene figures in order to excite themselves erotically⁵⁸⁰. Geographical variations in attitudes toward homosexuality may also play a role, since homosexuality is more common in the poorer regions of the Cagaba territory⁵⁸¹. Similarly, among the Fang of the Cameroons, homosexuality is thought immoral, and is associated with contracting such illnesses as frambesia or leprosy. Still, if an older man has sex with a boy, both are excused with the argument that the older "has the heart of a boy," while the younger is "ignorant." Those who practice

[p74]

homosexuality can also use a "medicine" to protect themselves from social scorn⁵⁸².

In many places some forms of homosexual behavior may be accepted or even required, while other forms are prohibited. The Himalayan Lepcha strongly disapprove of most homosexual acts, which they fear will bring about a year of disaster, but mutual masturbation among small boys is looked on with indulgence⁵⁸³. The same is true of the Fang, who accept homosexual relations among young boys, but disapprove of them for older males⁵⁸⁴. Similarly, among the Tucano, homosexual relations form part of the puberty rites of boys, who also perform a homosexual play using cloth phalluses during mourning ceremonies. Both boys and girls are free to engage in homosexual activities in public. While separated from the rest of the village to collect nuts in the forest, young men also engage in homosexual relations. Still, homosexual behavior is condemned in adults, although it commonly occurs in secret⁵⁸⁵. The Ila of Zambia sometimes require boys to imitate coitus with each other and to masturbate, and adult men enjoy comparing their penises. Yet "pederasty," by which the ethnographer probably means anal intercourse, is thought abominable, since people fear it may cause pregnancy⁵⁸⁶. Among the Ngonde of Tanzania homosexual relations were common among boys in their age-graded village, and were considered okay so long as no one forced sex on someone else. However, homosexuality among married men was considered bad, and sex between a grown man and a boy was classified as witchcraft⁵⁸⁷. In Samoa casual homosexual relations were common when men could not have sex with women, but exclusive homosexuals were looked on with annoyance and contempt⁵⁸⁸.

⁵⁷⁶ 2: Landes, 54

⁵⁷⁷ 2: Holmberg, 189

⁵⁷⁸ 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 199

⁵⁷⁹ 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 90-91

⁵⁸⁰ 3: Brettes, 26

⁵⁸¹ 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 280

⁵⁸² 2: Tessmann, 131-134

⁵⁸³ 1: Gorer, 102-103, 310

⁵⁸⁴ 2: Tessmann, 105

⁵⁸⁵ 4: Silva, 576, 593. 5: Goldman, 181, 239

⁵⁸⁶ 2: Smith and Dale, 435-436

⁵⁸⁷ 1: Wilson, 88, 94, 196-197, 273

⁵⁸⁸ 3: Mead, 70, 95, 149

⁵⁶⁸ Estado, "Proposta Quase Irresistível," July 11, 1984

⁵⁶⁹ Boletim do Grupo Gay da Bahia, no. 6, March 1983

⁵⁷⁰ 39: Bernatzik, 87

⁵⁷¹ 2: Musil, 473

⁵⁷² 2: Firth, 495

⁵⁷³ 3: Stout, 39

⁵⁷⁴ 5: Malinowski, 496

⁵⁷⁵ 6: Blanguernon, 134-143

In many cultures informants attribute the prevalence of homosexuality to a lack of heterosexual outlets. In some places this may be caused by a taboo on sex with women during certain times. Among the Central Thai many young men were thrown into celibacy during the "lenten" period, and had recourse to homosexuality at this time, although some ethnographers contend that the homosexual activities did not involve ejaculation⁵⁸⁹. Among the Hossi of Birkinaso (Upper Volta), chiefs kept harems of boys for sexual purposes on Fridays when sex with women was taboo. These boys ranged in

[p75]

age from seven to fifteen, and were selected from among the most attractive first born sons of the families to whom the chief had given a wife. They donned copper bracelets and anklets, and women's hairstyles, and were required to abstain from sex with females under penalty of death until they were finally given a wife of their own and sent away⁵⁹⁰.

Elsewhere the lack of heterosexual outlets may be caused by the need for men to leave their wives behind while they go off to work in some distant place. Among the Wogeo of New Guinea, older laborers take younger men as lovers while they are working in town or on plantations far from their home village⁵⁹¹. Thonga workers in South African mines often pay a brideprice for a boy to serve as their "wife" while in the compounds⁵⁹². Among the Basotho workers in these same mining compounds some young men sell their favors to the older males, and are considered "women of the compound."⁵⁹³ The homosexual activities of the Tutsi of Rwanda and Burundi while being trained at the royal court, were also attributed to a lack of heterosexual outlets⁵⁹⁴.

In other places, the shortage of females for sex may have been due to other reasons. The Bororo Indians of Brazil often engaged in homosexual relations in the men's house, but only when they lacked one of the girls normally designated to service the men⁵⁹⁵. Restrictions on premarital intercourse have been imputed in the intimate masculine friendships and homosexual activities of the Kurds⁵⁹⁶. The same argument has been used to explain why homosexuality was so widespread among Hutu and Tutsi young men from Rwanda⁵⁹⁷, and might also help account for the exploratory homosexual behavior of adolescent Bahian boys from Brazil⁵⁹⁸.

In many places the shortage of women was a result of polygyny, since the older, more powerful men succeeded in monopolizing all of the most attractive young women. This was one of the explanations given for the very popular practice of homosexual activities among the Andaman Islanders near India⁵⁹⁹. It has also been used to explain the homosexuality of the Yanoama Indians of Venezuela, famous for their disputes over women⁶⁰⁰.

Still, a shortage of women cannot explain all of the homosexuality encountered cross-culturally. Because it is so

[p76]

easy to find women for sex, Jamaicans say there is no reason for homosexual activities in their culture⁶⁰¹, but homosexuality is still widespread among religious cult leaders⁶⁰². Among the Malekula of

the New Hebrides, homosexual activities are quite institutionalized, and some have suggested that this may be due to the fact that the chiefs monopolize the women. But this would not explain why the chiefs themselves maintain harems of boys, whom they sometimes prefer to the point of ignoring their wives⁶⁰³.

Homosexual play among boys is common in many societies, even when boys can just as easily engage in erotic play with girls. Among the Toba for example, boys engage in erotic play with both girls and other boys, including such activities as rubbing penises together, or thrusting the penis in each other's anus⁶⁰⁴. Mongo boys from Zaire sometimes play a game in which they imitate monkeys chasing each other through the trees and engaging in homosexual activities⁶⁰⁵. Homosexual behavior is very common and considered quite normal among the Marquesan Islanders. Boys are often teased about who played "the girl's role" on a given day and so has a sore anus⁶⁰⁶. Hottentot males from southern Africa sometimes become "bond brothers," in which they agree to stand by each other at all times. These relationships are often characterized by jealousy over their homosexual relationship which includes mutual masturbation and anal sex⁶⁰⁷. Bachelors among the Araucanians of Chile also frequently and freely engage in homosexual activities. Although "sodomy" (anal sex?) is thought to cause disease, the boys are simply advised to get married^{608,41}.

Sometimes the homosexual activities of adolescence continue into adulthood. The Hottentot "bond brother" relationship can be entered into by adult males, and some Hottentot males are exclusively homosexual⁶⁰⁹. The Kurds also maintain close friendships with other men into adulthood. Since there is little room for adult males at home, they spend most of their time with other men, often participating in activities with homosexual elements. Teahouses for lower class Kurdish men often harbor homosexuals⁶¹⁰. In the Afghanistan town of Aq Kupruk, men sometimes congregate in the square where they sing romantic songs about their

[p77]

homosexual loves⁶¹¹. Among the Marquesan Islanders one ethnographer reported two cases of men who married women and used their wives to attract male lovers for themselves. The wives supposedly were not bothered by these arrangements⁶¹². Among the Tupinamba Indians of Brazil, the man who played the "active role" in sex often boasted of his homosexual affairs, and listed these affairs when formally reciting his praises⁶¹³. Homosexuality also appears to have been quite common in colonial times among Aymara adults of Bolivia⁶¹⁴.

In some societies there were special moments when men engaged in homosexual relations. The Papago Indians of Mexico, who freely accepted homosexuality of all kinds, had official "nights of saturnalia" during which men commonly had sex with each other⁶¹⁵. One ethnographer has also described a ceremony among the Ona of Patagonia in which a naked man representing a spirit wrestled and had sexual intercourse with another naked man while those present watched, although some

⁵⁸⁹ 12: Kaufman, 136. 19: Terweil, 113

⁵⁹⁰ 6: Tauxier, 108

⁵⁹¹ 8: Hogg, 206

⁵⁹² 1: Junod, 492-493

⁵⁹³ Gay, J., "Mummies and Babies' and Friends and Lovers in Lesotho," *Journal of Homosexuality*, 11(3/4), 1985, pp. 97-116

⁵⁹⁴ 9: Maquet, 77-78

⁵⁹⁵ 2: Steinen, 629

⁵⁹⁶ 2: Masters, 264

⁵⁹⁷ 9: Maquet, 77-78

⁵⁹⁸ 2: Hutchinson, 141

⁵⁹⁹ 11: Cipriani, 23

⁶⁰⁰ 10: Chagnon, 79

⁶⁰¹ 3: Cohen, 444

⁶⁰² 6: Hogg, 351

⁶⁰³ 1: Layard, 486-488

⁶⁰⁴ 5: Henry and Henry, 79

⁶⁰⁵ 2: Hulstaert, 73

⁶⁰⁶ 13: Suggs, 38-39

⁶⁰⁷ 2: Schapera, 322

⁶⁰⁸ 1: Titiev, 95

⁶⁰⁹ 2: Schapera, 322

⁶¹⁰ 4: Hansen, 176. 2: Masters, 80

⁶¹¹ Dupree, L., "Aq Kupruk: A Town in North Afghanistan," IN L. Sweet (ed.), *Peoples and Cultures of the Middle East*, volume 2. Garden City, New York: The Natural History Press, 1970, pp. 344-387

⁶¹² 13: Suggs, 40

⁶¹³ 8: Soares de Souza, 314-316

⁶¹⁴ 3: LaBarre, 134. 2: Tschopik, 167

⁶¹⁵ 2: Underhill, 117

people protested the lasciviousness of the performance ⁶¹⁶. Among the Fang of the Cameroons, homosexual intercourse was sometimes prescribed as a "medicine" for achieving wealth ⁶¹⁷. Among the Zulu of Southern Africa, a man who had killed an enemy could not sleep in his cattle barn until he had sex with a woman of another tribe. If no woman could be found, he was required to have sex with a boy ⁶¹⁸.

One of the most common forms of male homosexual behavior occurs between adult men and boys. Among the Trumai Indians of Brazil men sometimes had sex with pre-pubescent boys, and it was often the boys who instigated the relationships ⁶¹⁹. Among the Mongo of Zaire boys had sex with older males. In the past it was the younger male who played the "active" role in "sodomy," by which the ethnographer probably means anal intercourse ⁶²⁰. When adult Marquesan men could not have sex with women, they often engaged in homosexual activities generally preferring younger boys "because they have softer bodies, more like those of girls." ⁶²¹ On the Malekulan Islands sex between men and boys was justified on the grounds that the boy's male organ was made to grow stronger through homosexual acts with his "husband." ⁶²² The idea that boys need to engage in homosexual sex in order to grow is quite prevalent in the lowland areas of southern Hew Guinea, an

[p78]

area some anthropologists have classified as "ritualized homosexuality cultures" to reflect the tremendous importance these cultures attribute to the homosexual activities between boys and men. In general, it is the ingestion of semen, either through anal intercourse, fellatio or the rubbing of the substance over the boy's body that is thought essential to a boy's growth ⁶²³. Some of these societies are quite striking about their preference for sex with boys over sex with women. Among the Etoro sex between men and women is prohibited for an estimated 205 to 260 days out of the year, and even on the permissible days, a man and a woman are required to have sex out in the forest away from the longhouse and the gardens where people fear it might cause the crops to wither and die. On the other hand, homosexual relations are permitted at all times and in all places, and are thought to make the crops flourish and the boys grow strong ⁶²⁴.

The Siwans of Egypt were also enthusiastic about sex with boys. Love affairs were common knowledge, and men sometimes formed romantic triangles that were particularly rivalrous. Men supposedly would "kill each other for a boy, never for a woman." Parents (usually the mother) sometimes lent out their sons to older men for sexual purposes, at times involving payment for the boy's services. Often prominent men would exchange their sons for libidinous purposes. At one time the Siwans also practiced homosexual marriages in which a boy between 12 and 18 years old would wed an older man. ⁶²⁵

Marriages between men and boys were common in several societies. Thonga miners in South Africa were required to pay a brideprice for the boy-wives with whom they had sexual relations ⁶²⁶. Among the Aranda young boys served as temporary wives to older bachelors until these got married. A boy would also have a sexual relationship with the man who circumcised and subincised him, who could also be his future father-in-law ⁶²⁷. Among the Azande of Zaire boys married older males to

accompany them on military expeditions and serve as their wives, performing all the services, including sexual, normally provided by female wives. Men were required to pay a brideprice to the boy's family, and to build a hut for the "mother-in-law," just as in the case of a female bride.

[p79]

Azande princes also kept boys for sex when women were taboo, and some of them preferred their boys over their women ⁶²⁸. Although they did not have formal homosexual marriages, the Nambikwara Indians of Brazil required that males observe the proper incest taboos when engaging in homosexual relations, and brothers-in-law formally engaged in homosexual behavior ⁶²⁹.

Homosexual prostitution was also fairly common in different societies. Among the Aleutian Islanders handsome boys were brought up like girls and instructed in ways to please men sexually. Later they became concubines to the men ⁶³⁰. Among the Makassarese of the Celebes Islands boys who showed feminine tendencies ended up at the royal courts as part of a harem. In later times they served as prostitutes in the marketplace where they danced half-disguised as women. The men are said to have been crazy about them and to have spent a lot of time and money to have sex with them ⁶³¹. Homosexual prostitution was also common among the Tupinamba Indians of Brazil. In this case a man who took the "passive" role in sex set up a house in the forest away from the main village, where he offered himself to all who wanted him ⁶³². Ethnographers report a similar arrangement made in the Brazilian state of Bahia by a man who took the passive role in sex ⁶³³. Temples of India also provided for homosexual prostitution ⁶³⁴.

Elsewhere men were sometimes forced to take the passive role in homosexual sex. The Omaha Indians of the West Central states forced homosexual relations on their prisoners ⁶³⁵. The Goajiro Indians of Colombia liked to ridicule their enemies by saying they would not even serve as women for sexual relations, but slaves captured in war were used as passive homosexual partners ⁶³⁶.

The kinds of homosexual acts men or boys engage in vary and are sometimes subject to strict taboos. Although they are one of the greatest defenders of homosexual activity, the Etoro of New Guinea practice only anal intercourse and consider the fellatio and mutual masturbation of their neighbors as abhorrent ⁶³⁷. The Central Thai have no objections to any sexual act so long as ejaculation does not take place ⁶³⁸. The Tucano of Amazonia approve of mutual

[p80]

masturbation in boys, but are apparently less tolerant of other activities ⁶³⁹. The Nahane of northern Canada also prefer mutual masturbation ⁶⁴⁰. On the other hand, the Hottentot and the Marquesans engage in both mutual masturbation and anal intercourse ⁶⁴¹. The Andaman Islanders are tolerant of anal, and oral homosexual acts ⁶⁴².

⁶¹⁶ 1: Gusinde, 946-947

⁶¹⁷ 2: Tessmann, 23

⁶¹⁸ 1: Krige, 276

⁶¹⁹ 1: Murphy and Quain, 83

⁶²⁰ 2: Hulstaert, 86

⁶²¹ 13: Suggs, 67

⁶²² 1: Layard, 486-488

⁶²³ Herdt, G.H. (ed.), *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984

⁶²⁴ Kelly, R., "Witchcraft and Sexual Relations: An exploration in the social and semantic implications of the structure of belief," IN P.Brown and G. Buchbinder (eds.), *Man and woman in the New Guinea Highlands*, Washington, D.C.: American Anthropological Association

⁶²⁵ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, pp. 202-203

⁶²⁶ 1: Junod, 492-493

⁶²⁷ 9: Roheim, 72. 25: Strehlow, 98

⁶²⁸ 64: Evans-Pritchard, 19, et passim. 57: Evans-Pritchard, 256, et passim

⁶²⁹ 1: Levi-Strauss

⁶³⁰ 9: Langsdorff, 345

⁶³¹ 1: Chabot, 210. 3: Kennedy, 213

⁶³² 8: Soares de Souza, 314

⁶³³ 2: Hutchinson, 140

⁶³⁴ 32: Dubois, 312. 18: Farquhar, 409

⁶³⁵ 11: Tixier

⁶³⁶ 11: Gutierrez de Pineda, 141, 191

⁶³⁷ Kelly, R., *Etoro Social Structure: A Study in Structural Contradiction*, Ph.D. dissertation, Univ. Michigan, 1974

⁶³⁸ 19: Terweil, 113

⁶³⁹ 5: Goldman, 181

⁶⁴⁰ 1: Honigmann, 164

⁶⁴¹ 2: Schapera. 13: Suggs, 39

⁶⁴² 6: Cipriani, 493

The types of homosexual behavior described so far have almost all dealt with what most Americans would call "bisexuals." However, as several anthropologists have noted, the U.S. classification system is not entirely adequate when dealing with other cultures. The different classification schemes found in Brazil are illustrative of some of the problems involved. In Brazil several different systems coincide. Among some people from the urban middle classes the U.S. system is often used. According to this system a man's sexual orientation is determined by the gender of his sex partner, not by what they do during a sexual encounter. This is the classification criterion used by Kinsey. Any male/male relationship is considered homosexual. In most of Brazil a second classification scheme prevails in which distinctions are based not on who a man's partner is, but on what they do. A man who simply inserts his penis in another man's anus or mouth is in no way considered homosexual, for this is an activity expected of most men. The homosexual is simply the man who receives the other's penis. The psychological makeups of the two individuals are quite different. In a third classification scheme, common to fishermen, miners and others who are away from their wives and other women for long periods of time homosexuality is determined, not by the kinds of sexual acts a man performs, but rather by his relative masculinity or femininity in normal social contexts. With this classification scheme only effeminate men are considered homosexual. Normal men engage in "active" and "passive" sexual relations with each other ⁶⁴³.

Cross-culturally, the U.S. system for classifying sexual orientations is quite rare. This may explain in part why, outside of the U.S. and a few other stratified societies, there are very few places where "homosexuals" congregate to form a community or ghetto. A few of the places where this

[p81]

does occur include Haiti and Burma, where homosexuals congregate in the larger cities ⁶⁴⁴, and Western Tibet where the monasteries are havens where exclusive homosexuals join together ⁶⁴⁵. To be sure there are men who are exclusively homosexual in many primitive societies, but in most cases these "homosexuals" do not have sexual relations with other "homosexuals" and in fact may be prohibited from doing so ⁶⁴⁶. It is these people who are the subject of the next section.

TRANVESTISM AND EXCLUSIVE HOMOSEXUALITY

In most of the "primitive" societies in the world and in many technologically more advanced societies as well, men who engaged exclusively in homosexual behavior also typically adopted women's dress. Adopting the role of a transvestite often came about when the boy or man received some indication that he was called to this role. The Klamath Indians of the American Northwest performed a special test to see if a youth should become a transvestite. While sleeping they put a boy's bow and arrow and a girl's punt pole beside him. They then awoke him with a shout to see whether he took the boy's or the girl's paraphernalia ⁶⁴⁷. Among the Iban of Borneo a man adopted the role of a transvestite if he had been called to do so three times by the supernatural. After this calling, his penis was disabled and he devoted himself to becoming as completely female as possible. The more he succeeded in this mission the more he was respected in the community. Generally it was older men who received this calling. The transvestite received money for his services as a curer and would often gain a husband who was simply after his money ⁶⁴⁸. Among the Aleutian Islanders handsome boys were deliberately brought up as girls and taught how to please men sexually. Later they served as prostitutes to the men ⁶⁴⁹.

⁶⁴³ Fry, P. and E. MacRae, *O que é a homossexualidade*. São Paulo: Editora Brasiliense, 1982. Parker, R. "Masculinity and Femininity and Homosexuality: On the Anthropological Interpretation of Sexual Meanings in Brazil," *Journal of Homosexuality* 11(3/4), 1985, pp. 155-163

⁶⁴⁴ 1: Herskovits, 117 (Haiti). 17: Orr, 46 (Burma)

⁶⁴⁵ 23: Peter, 217

⁶⁴⁶ Callender, C. and L.M. Kochems, "Men and Not-Men: Male Gender-Mixing Statuses and Homosexuality," *Journal of Homosexuality* 11(3/4), 1985, pp. 165-178

⁶⁴⁷ 1: Spier, 51-53

⁶⁴⁸ 4: Roth, 119

⁶⁴⁹ 9: Langsdorff, 345

In some places effeminate behavior and transvestism were highly condemned. The Mbundu of Angola would beat a young man if he dressed like a woman ⁶⁵⁰. The Creek Indians of the American Southeast, whipped a young man if they thought him too effeminate ⁶⁵¹. For the River Yumans of the American Southwest "transvestite" was an abusive term used to insult their enemies ⁶⁵². Among the Marquesan Islanders, male transvestites would sometimes join a household as a

[p82]

subsidiary wife, though they could never become a headwife and were regarded with contempt ⁶⁵³.

Elsewhere, people still disapproved of the transvestites, but held somewhat more lenient views about them. The Amhara of Ethiopia looked on transvestites as "mistakes of God" and regarded them with pity, rather than blame ⁶⁵⁴. Among the Southeast Salish of the American Northwest transvestites were not particularly frowned upon, but were not thought to be good for much either ⁶⁵⁵. Among the Hausa of Nigeria transvestites wore fine clothes, ate good food, and were thought to be beautiful to look at, but people thought them unhealthy. Typically they lived by building huts to rent out to prostitutes ⁶⁵⁶. Among the Toba of Argentina transvestites were the laughing stock of everyone, but there was no sanction against them, and their husbands felt close enough to them to get jealous if their transvestite wife had sex with another man ⁶⁵⁷. Similarly, among the Goajiro of Colombia a man who did women's work might be considered not quite right, but was looked on with indulgence ⁶⁵⁸. A Tubatulabal informant from California reported that transvestites were never openly ridiculed, but people were amused by them ⁶⁵⁹.

At least one scholar has suggested that some anthropologists may have misinterpreted this "ridicule" as reflecting negative attitudes toward the transvestite, when in fact it was simply the normal joking expected between potential sexual partners. An example from the Santee Dakota is illustrative. A transvestite was once exiled from his home village for flirting with the men. However, when he moved to another village he was welcomed by the women who appreciated his hard work (women's work) and by the men who appreciated his sexual services, although they often subjected him to flirtatious teasing. In fact, the transvestite received the same sort of treatment a woman would have received if she had flirted with men of her native village, because this would have violated incest taboos. In the other village she also would have been the butt of flirtatious jokes by the men who were her potential sex partners ⁶⁶⁰.

A few societies permit transvestism but forbid them to engage in homosexual activities. The Ngonde of Tanzania feel that homosexual activities between grown men are bad, and the

[p83]

transvestites among them do not engage in homosexual sex ⁶⁶¹. Transvestites among the Eastern Apache are not mistreated, but they are ridiculed in private, and if they engage in homosexual activities they are considered witches and are killed ⁶⁶². The Ila of Zambia strongly disapprove of "pederasty," by which the ethnographers appear to mean anal sex, and guilty offenders are fined three or

⁶⁵⁰ r: Hambly, 162

⁶⁵¹ 1: Swanton, 364

⁶⁵² 1: Spier

⁶⁵³ 10: Linton, 174

⁶⁵⁴ 1: Messing, 551

⁶⁵⁵ 3: Cline, 137

⁶⁵⁶ 3: Smith, 64

⁶⁵⁷ 14: Metraux, 36

⁶⁵⁸ 7: Bolinder, 108

⁶⁵⁹ 1: Voegelin, 47

⁶⁶⁰ Greenberg, D.F., "Why was the Berdache Ridiculed?" *Journal of Homosexuality* 11(3/4), 1985, pp. 179-189

⁶⁶¹ 1: Wilson, 197

⁶⁶² 1: Opler, 79, 415

four cows, but there are cases of transvestites among them who are elevated to the status of prophet⁶⁶³.

In several societies men dress as women in certain ceremonies, but homosexual activity does not appear to be a part of the charade. Among the Yoruba of Nigeria men dress up as grossly pregnant women in a ritual to cure male impotence or female sterility⁶⁶⁴. Among the Nupe of Nigeria, male homosexuality is strongly condemned, but during one ceremony the boys are required to dress up as women and imitate their movements⁶⁶⁵. Transvestism also forms part of religious ceremonies and dances in Jamaica⁶⁶⁶ and among the Aymara of Bolivia⁶⁶⁷.

In many societies it was common for a transvestite to live with another man as his "husband." Among the Northern Ojibwa, transvestites were rare but everyone knew about them. They were called "split testicles" because people believed them to be hermaphrodites, and would often live with another man. While the Goajiro Indians of Colombia used the word "transvestite" as an insult, some men were not above adopting them into their households as sexual partners⁶⁶⁸. Although they were taunted among the Klamath Indians of the American Northwest, transvestites here were also able to marry men⁶⁶⁹. The Marquesan Islanders permitted transvestites to become subsidiary wives of a man, but not to become the head wife⁶⁷⁰. Similarly, among the Tanala of Madagascar a transvestite dancer, although he may previously have had a wife and children himself, could still become a subsidiary "wife" to a man. Sometimes a man who became impotent would adopt the transvestite role since, although impotence might be mocked by the women, transvestism was not⁶⁷¹.

The psychologically "heterosexual" nature of these unions is suggested by one marriage among the Chukchee of Siberia in which the husband hoped his transvestite mate would

[p84]

eventually develop female genitals. The Chukchee were quite appreciative of these men who adopted female roles, and an attractive young transvestite would be courted by all of his male companions. Normally transvestites played the "passive" role in sex with men, but some people suspected they might have snuck out at times to father children with women⁶⁷².

In several societies, transvestites held special places of honor in the community. Among the Dakota Indians transvestites were debarred from certain privileges, but they sang in special ceremonies, and, because they were considered geniuses, their advice was thought essential to council meetings⁶⁷³. Among the Navaho a family considered itself lucky if it had a transvestite or a hermaphrodite among its members, since transvestites were held responsible for wealth. Although homosexual relations among normal adult males was thought to cause insanity, sex with the transvestite was fine⁶⁷⁴. One of the great Klamath chiefs from the American Northwest had once been a transvestite in his youth⁶⁷⁵.

Transvestites were often given special magical or religious roles in society. Among the Yokut Indians of California, transvestites held the special role of preparing the dead for burial and cremation. For this service they were allowed to keep the property that was left with the deceased⁶⁷⁶. Among the

⁶⁶³ 2: Smith and Dale, 74, 436

⁶⁶⁴ 45: Prince, 109

⁶⁶⁵ 2: Nadel, 113

⁶⁶⁶ 6: Hogg, 351

⁶⁶⁷ 12: Buechler and Buechler, 84

⁶⁶⁸ 7: Bollinder, 108

⁶⁶⁹ 1: Spier, 51-53

⁶⁷⁰ 10: Linton, 174

⁶⁷¹ 1: Linton, 299

⁶⁷² 1: Bogoras, 451-455

⁶⁷³ 10: Hoffman, 153 (Ojibwa)

⁶⁷⁴ 93: Hill, 274-275

⁶⁷⁵ 1: Spier, 51-53

⁶⁷⁶ 2: Kroeber, 497

Hopi Indians transvestites had a special role in fertility rites⁶⁷⁷. Pawnee transvestites provided special charms and songs for men to use in luring women⁶⁷⁸. Among the Toradja of the Celebes, male shamans (curers) dressed like women and were called "aunt" or "mother." Effeminate boys were thought destined to become transvestite shamans, and sometimes a transvestite could become a great priest⁶⁷⁹. Shamans among the Chukchee of Siberia were also often transvestites⁶⁸⁰. The Lapps of northern Scandinavia required their shamans to wear female clothes and use a female name⁶⁸¹. Among the Zulu, diviners were also transvestites, and people liked to make up bawdy jokes that hinged on the impossibility of a diviner having sex with a woman⁶⁸². Leaders of religious cults having African roots in Jamaica and northern Brazil are also typically transvestites, or at least exclusive

[p85]

homosexuals⁶⁸³. In India transvestites, oftentimes castrated, join together in communities to devote themselves to the Mother Goddess Bahuchara Mata. They survive by begging and by performing ritual services at infant naming ceremonies and at weddings. Sometimes they also make money through prostitution to males, although, strictly speaking, they are expected to be sexually chaste⁶⁸⁴.

For many North American Indians societies, contact with White American culture has resulted in a lowering of the status of the transvestites. Among the Winnebago of the East Central states, people felt that their transvestites had once been highly honored and respected. But because Whites thought this behavior was evil, most Indians now were ashamed of the custom⁶⁸⁵. Among the Crow Indians, people protested when White government agents tried to force their transvestites to put on men's clothes. The Crow simply considered this against the transvestite's nature⁶⁸⁶. But White culture has not completely eliminated the old ideas. Studies carried out in the 1980's found that transvestites still received respect from many more tradition-minded Indians. Some things have changed though. Among the Dakota Indians many people feel that there is now a confusion between native transvestites, called "*winkte*", and American "gays." Today many of the *winkte* now dress up in a more non-descript manner, whereas formerly they would have dressed as women. This is not considered a serious change. Other changes, however, are thought sufficiently important to disqualify some of the "gays" from the traditional *winkte* role. Some Indians were scandalized that "gays" sometimes lived with, and had sex with other "gays," something that true *winkte* would never do. *Winkte* had sexual relations only with normal men. Most importantly, many people felt that the "gays" had lost the spiritual side that only a few *winkte* now maintain from the old days⁶⁸⁷.

FEMALE HOMOSEXUAL RELATIONS

Although one might expect attitudes toward male and female sexuality to be similar, there are some societies that prohibit female homosexual acts, while permitting male homosexuality and vice-versa. Although Ngonde boys from

[p86]

⁶⁷⁷ 2: Titiev, 215

⁶⁷⁸ 4: Murie, 640

⁶⁷⁹ 1: Downs, 47,70. 3: Adriani and Kruyt, 384

⁶⁸⁰ 1: Bogoras, 449-450

⁶⁸¹ 9: Gjessing, 26

⁶⁸² 2: Ngubane. 20: Lee, 266

⁶⁸³ 6: Hogg, 351. Fry, P. "Male Homosexuality and Spirit Possession in Brazil," Journal of Homosexuality 11(3/4), 1985, pp. 137-154

⁶⁸⁴ Nanda, S., "The Hijras of India: Cultural and Individual Dimensions of an Institutionalized Third Gender Role," Journal of Homosexuality, 11(3/4), 1985, pp. 35-54

⁶⁸⁵ 8: Lurie

⁶⁸⁶ 1: Lowie

⁶⁸⁷ Williams, W.L., "Persistence and Change in the Berdache Tradition among Contemporary Lakota Indians," Journal of Homosexuality 11(3/4), 1985, pp. 191-209

Tanzania may freely engage in homosexual activities, the same behavior on the part of Ngonde girls is thought to smack of witchcraft and cunning ⁶⁸⁸. Among the Azande of Zaire young men can actually marry boys, but if women use bananas or manioc roots as artificial penises during homosexual encounters, people fear they may give birth to cats and witches ⁶⁸⁹. On the other hand the Nigerian Nupe strongly condemn homosexual relations between men, but permit the co-wives of a polygynously married man to indulge in this activity ⁶⁹⁰.

Homosexual relations are an expected part of a girl's growing up in several societies. Tucanoan girls from the Amazon have no qualms about stroking one another's nipples in public to make them erect ⁶⁹¹. Homosexuality is also said to be a "conspicuous part" of the life of a young Aranda girl from Australia ⁶⁹². In the Marquesan Islands it is an older girl who "instructs" a younger one in sexual acts ⁶⁹³. Among the Basotho of southern Africa a young girl sometimes enters into a special relationship with an older girl whom she calls, "mummie" while the older girl calls her "baby." The "mummie" gives her younger girlfriend presents and instructs her in sexual relations with men. The two engage in intimate kissing and hugging, and go to bed together, although it is not clear just how much emphasis is placed on genital contact. The girls do not regard the tugging of the labia minora to lengthen them as significant. What is most important is "falling in love" and simply caressing each other. The difference between this relationship and the homosexual relationships between men who work away from the village in South African mines is a subject for debate among the girls. Some wonder if "boys ever loved as seriously as girls, or if boys only wanted sexual satisfaction." ⁶⁹⁴

Attitudes toward adult lesbian relationships vary. The southern Ojibwa once blamed the sexual relations between two women for the hydrocephaly of their children and punished them. Elsewhere people are more lenient. Although Jamaicans feel that male homosexuality is unnecessary because females are so easily accessible, women are expected to have some homosexual unions because they feel it is harder for them to find heterosexual outlets ⁶⁹⁵. Similarly, women who must share

[p87]

the same husband often engage in homosexual relations among themselves. This is the case among the Mongo of Zaire ⁶⁹⁶ and among the Nupe of Nigeria ⁶⁹⁷. Among the Santal of India women sometimes mutually swear "eternal fidelity in friendship till death do us part." The women subsequently eat together, talk together and sleep together, but they deny homosexuality ⁶⁹⁸. Among the Lovedu of southern Africa as in many other places in Africa, women, especially women in power, may legally marry other women, although at least in some of these societies the marriages do not imply homosexual relations ⁶⁹⁹. One place where lesbian relationships are institutionalized is Southern Kwangtung in the People's Republic of China. Here some women form sisterhoods in which groups of single women live together, usually under the aegis of a Buddhist religious organization. Although male homosexual relations are disapproved of, the lesbian relationships in the sisterhoods are accepted as normal. Very few of the love relationships between the sisters last a lifetime, so the women depend on the sisterhood organization to provide for them in their old age ⁷⁰⁰.

⁶⁸⁸ 1: Wilson, 94

⁶⁸⁹ 2: Evans-Pritchard, 56-57,174

⁶⁹⁰ 1: Nadel, 152

⁶⁹¹ 5: Goldman, 181

⁶⁹² 28: Roheim, 238

⁶⁹³ 13: Suggs, 24

⁶⁹⁴ Gay, J., "Mummies and Babies' and Friends and Lovers in Lesotho, *Journal of Homosexuality* 11(3/4), 1985, pp. 97-116

⁶⁹⁵ 3: Cohen, 444

⁶⁹⁶ 2: Hulstaert, 87

⁶⁹⁷ 1: Nadel, 152

⁶⁹⁸ 3: Mukherjee, 401

⁶⁹⁹ 2: Krige and Krige

⁷⁰⁰ Sankar, A., "Sisters and Brothers, Lovers and Enemies: Marriage Resistance in Southern Kwangtung," *Journal of Homosexuality* 11(3/4), 1985, pp. 69-81

The kinds of sexual activities women employ vary. After arousing each sexually by showing their vaginas, Aranda women from Australia use dildoes in their sexual activities with other women. They also rub each others' clitoris with their leg during certain rituals ⁷⁰¹. Ifaluk women from Micronesia engage in mutual cunnilingus ⁷⁰². During puberty ceremonies adult women engage in sexual play that includes putting food on the vulva and forcing other women to eat it with vaginal secretions on it ⁷⁰³.

Female transvestites have also been present in a fair number of societies, although several ethnographers report them to be less common than the male transvestites in the societies they studied, such as among the Toradja of the Celebes ⁷⁰⁴, and the Chukchee of Siberia ⁷⁰⁵. Among the Tupi-namba Indians of Brazil, female transvestites cut their hair like the men, and pursued masculine activities such as going to war with bows and arrows or hunting. They travelled with the men and had "wives" who served them, and who referred to the transvestite as their "husband." ⁷⁰⁶ Similarly, among the Klamath Indians one ethnographer reports

[p88]

that a woman who, although she did not dress as a man, referred to herself as a man, and married another woman, eventually observing male mourning rituals when her wife died. Another female transvestite in the same society had sex with both males and females, and eventually ended up as a prostitute ⁷⁰⁷. Among the Tucano Indians of the Amazon people imagined that a female transvestite actually grew a penis ⁷⁰⁸. Among the Chukchee a female transvestite could actually have children with her wife by entering into one of the traditional "group marriage" arrangements of this society ⁷⁰⁹.

To my knowledge, no one has yet carried out any systematic studies on lesbianism around the world. At this point we cannot even say for sure whether female homosexuality is most common in the same places where male homosexuality is customary. It would appear from the few cases cited here that female transvestites are found in societies that also have male transvestism, but further confirmation is needed to verify if this is a general trend. The relationship between acceptance of lesbianism and male homosexuality is less clear, since there are at least a few societies where one of these activities is acceptable while the other is not.

There are a few systematic studies of male transvestism. One study found that transvestites are more common where there is less segregation between males and females in terms of eating arrangements or participation in other social affairs ⁷¹⁰. This finding goes against some popular arguments about transvestism. For example, some scholars once viewed transvestism as a way out for a male who did not want to go to war in a violent society. Others saw transvestism as a way to mock women in male chauvinist societies. Yet there is no correlation between the need for bravery in warfare and transvestism. It seems, instead, that people are simply more tolerant of those who deviate from normal sex roles when males and females are not treated that differently anyway.

Other studies have examined possible psychological causes for male transvestism. One question concerns psychological identification with females. In the anthropological literature there are two striking customs that seem to

⁷⁰¹ 28: Roheim, 226, 238

⁷⁰² 28: Spiro, 127-128

⁷⁰³ 1: Blackwood, 256

⁷⁰⁴ 2: Adriani and Kruyt, 243

⁷⁰⁵ 1: Bogoras, 449-450

⁷⁰⁶ 12: Magalhaes de Gandavo, 89-90

⁷⁰⁷ 1: Spier, 51-53

⁷⁰⁸ 5: Goldman, 181

⁷⁰⁹ 1: Bogoras, 455-456

⁷¹⁰ Munroe, R.L., J.W.M. Whiting, and D.J. Hally, "Institutionalized Male Transvestism and Sex Distinctions," *American Anthropologist* 71, 1969, pp. 87-91

[p89]

suggest a good deal of feminine identity in males-transvestism and the couvade. The "couvade" refers to what is known as "male pregnancy syndrome." In some societies men identify so strongly with their pregnant wives that they believe they can actually feel the pains of pregnancy and childbirth. While one might expect transvestism and the couvade to be found in the same societies, in fact, the reverse is true. Societies with a lot of transvestites are very unlikely to observe the couvade⁷¹¹. Based on these results researchers have suggested that there must be different ways men identify with females in varied social contexts, but just what these differences are has yet to be clarified.

The acceptability and frequency of male transvestism in a society is also associated with the acceptance and frequency of male homosexual activity in general⁷¹², so perhaps part of the explanation for male transvestism may have to do with general male homosexuality.

Cross-cultural studies of male homosexuality have had more luck with social and economic explanations than with psychological ones. Some studies suggest that native informants may indeed be at least partially correct when they say they engage in homosexual sex because there are not enough women available. Homosexuality is more common where there is a shortage of sexually accessible women caused by polygyny or by a late age of marriage for males. The rejection or acceptance of homosexual behavior may also have something to do with how many children people want. Homosexuality is less acceptable where people are encouraged to have more babies⁷¹³.¹⁴⁶

One sociobiological explanation about homosexuality has also been offered. According to this argument, engaging in homosexual behavior would be a viable strategy to increase the number of genes a man passes on to future generations if the men who most engaged in it were able to help their brothers and sisters raise more children. This would only be possible if the siblings lived nearby, suggesting more homosexuality where men live closer to their siblings. However, cross-cultural data show that this does not appear to be the case⁷¹⁴.

[p90]

As far as the psychology of male homosexuality is concerned, researchers have had much more luck uncovering the variables that are *unrelated* to homosexual behavior than the variables that are. Homosexual activity is not consistently related to parent-child relationships such as close mothers or distant fathers, or the sex of other child caretakers⁷¹⁵. Nor is homosexuality related to other aspects of sexual behavior such as premarital or extramarital sex restrictions, or to the segregation or closeness of males and females⁷¹⁶. Perhaps researchers would have more luck in their studies of the psychology of homosexuality if they distinguished different kinds of homosexual activity. It seems likely that homosexual behavior means something entirely different to a Navaho transvestite from what it means to a man from New Guinea who was brought up to believe that sex with other males is the only way to become a true man.

Although we have learned a good deal about homosexuality in the past decade or so, there are still many unanswered questions, especially with regard to lesbianism and to male homosexuality in societies where this behavior is considered a normal part of growing up.

[p91]

⁷¹¹ Munroe, R.L., "Male Transvestism and the Couvade," *Ethos* 8(1), 1980, pp. 49-59. Gray, J.P. and J.E. Ellington, "Institutionalized Male Transvestism, the Couvade, and Homosexual Behavior," *Ethos* 12(1), 1984, pp. 54-63

⁷¹² Werner, D. "On the Societal Acceptance or Rejection of Male Homosexuality," M.A. thesis, Hunter College. Gray, J.P. and J.E. Ellington, "Institutionalized Male Transvestism, the Couvade, and Homosexual Behavior," *Ethos* 12(1), 1984, pp. 54-63

⁷¹³ Werner, D. "On the Societal Acceptance or Rejection of Male Homosexuality," M.A. thesis, Hunter College

⁷¹⁴ Werner, D. "On the Societal Acceptance or Rejection of Male Homosexuality," M.A. thesis, Hunter College

⁷¹⁵ Werner, D., "A Cross-Cultural Perspective on Theory and Research on Male Homosexuality," *Journal of Homosexuality* 4(4), 1979, pp. 345-362

⁷¹⁶ Broude, G., "The Cultural Management of Sexuality," IN R. Munroe and R. Munroe (eds.), *Handbook of Cross-Cultural Human Development*, New York: Garland Press, 1980, pp. 633-673

OTHER SEXUAL MATTERS

In March of 1983 the gang rape of a woman in a Hew Bedford, Massachusetts bar made national headlines. It was not so much the rape itself that shocked the journalists, as the fact that the rape took place in the presence of numerous bar patrons who not only failed to notify the police, but actually stayed around to cheer the rapists on⁷¹⁷. The day the judge convicted the rapists in the New Bedford case a 12-year old boy was charged with raping a 10-year old girl on the pool table of his family's basement, in imitation of the New Bedford rapists he had seen on television⁷¹⁸.

Another sex scandal jolted the national consciousness in 1984. An upper class descendant of the original Mayflower colonists was arrested for her participation in one of the classiest call-girl rings in the country. Her business catered to gentlemen from the finest families in the country, who were willing to pay, by credit card, between \$200 and \$400 for a discreet visit from one of the many young women who worked for the operation. Reports indicated that the upper class breeding of the 'Mayflower Madam' had brought decorum, good taste and hygiene to a business normally characterized by garish pimps in cadillacs⁷¹⁹.

The public shock on these two matters reflects some basic American stereotypes about rape and prostitution — that rape is a backstreet affair committed by a few isolated men, and that prostitution is a lower-class vice. Elsewhere these phenomena may be viewed quite differently.

This chapter deals with rape, prostitution, and a few other sexual issues like incest and sadomasochism, that, although relatively rare, attract a good deal of attention in American as well as other cultures.

RAPE

In some societies rape is reported to be virtually unknown. The Yapese of Micronesia have no concept of rape. People find the whole idea amusing because they simply cannot

[p92]

imagine why a man would ever need to use force since women want sex so much anyway. Besides, they expect their love magic would work better than any physical force ever could⁷²⁰. The Mbuti pygmies of Zaire are also reported to have no rape, although their ethnographer does report that boys sometimes try to force girls "to their will."⁷²¹ The Shilluk of the Sudan and the Cagaba of Colombia also abhor rape and report that it is rare or almost completely unknown in their cultures⁷²².

The punishment different cultures confer on rapists varies from a relatively benign admonishment to death. Among the Goajiro of Colombia a rapist needs only to pay a fine equal to that paid for illicit sexual relations with any unmarried woman⁷²³. Among the Mossi of Upper Volta (Birkina Faso) a rapist is beaten and put in irons⁷²⁴. The Cuna of Panama execute a rapist by forcing a briar up his penis and leaving him alone to die⁷²⁵.

Rape was used in some societies to punish women for infractions of taboos. Among the Australian Aranda men would gang rape a woman who violated sacred rules against females seeing hallowed pools and ceremonial stones⁷²⁶. Among the Blackfoot Indians of Canada a woman who committed adultery or who had sexual relations would sometimes be gang raped and killed. If she were allowed to survive afterwards she was looked on with scorn⁷²⁷.

⁷¹⁷ Starr, M., "Gang Rape: The Legal Attack," *Newsweek*, March 12, 1984, p. 38

⁷¹⁸ "The 'Big Dan's' Rape: A Copycat Crime," *Newsweek* April 30, 1984, p. 25

⁷¹⁹ Adler, J. and P. Johnson, "The 'Mayflower Madam'," *Newsweek*, October 29, 1984, p. 44

⁷²⁰ 1: Hunt, 95

⁷²¹ 2: Turnbull, 121

⁷²² 17: Humphrey, 44. 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 267-268

⁷²³ 1: Gutierrez de Pineda, 89

⁷²⁴ 2: Mangin, 33

⁷²⁵ 12: Marshall, 341-342

⁷²⁶ 1: Spencer and Gillen, 168

⁷²⁷ 33: Bradley, 271

In many societies rape is a common aspect of warfare. The Fang of the Cameroons typically rape the women of the neighboring peoples they conquer⁷²⁸. Among the Philippine Ifugao, an enemy woman may be gang raped by an entire war party⁷²⁹. The Yanoama Indians of Venezuela sometimes capture enemy women whom they take home to use as a prostitute and they periodically gang-rape her⁷³⁰. Like many other New Guinea societies, the Kapauku people "marry their enemies" and men raid villages in which they have in-laws or close friends. During these raids enemy men are killed and unmarried girls may be raped by their potential in-laws or "friends." According to their ethnographer, Kapauku girls sometimes actually like being raped and allow themselves to be caught. Some eventually marry their rapists⁷³¹.

Rape is common in some places simply because the men want to have sex with a woman who refuses them. Among the Santal

[p93]

of India if a girl consistently flirts with the boys without permitting them sexual intercourse, the boys may join together and rape her⁷³². The Chukchee of Siberia are also likely to commit rape if refused by a woman⁷³³. Among the Bororo Indians of Brazil a girl who is still unmarried by the time she turns 12 or 13 she may be seized by the men and taken to the men's house where she is forced to reside and to have sex with all the males who live there⁷³⁴. During the harvest season among the Marquesan Islanders men wait for the arrival of the girls to pick coffee beans in order to have sex with them. If a girl refuses their advances she is raped, often with the help of the other girls who want to assure themselves that she will not confess what she has seen the other girls do⁷³⁵. Chagga youths from Tanzania are allowed to rape any woman they please as she goes to market, and neither the woman nor her husband have the right to complain. The woman is prohibited from even mentioning the incident⁷³⁶. Among the Aymara of Bolivia rape, as well as incest, are common and accepted⁷³⁷.

Elsewhere, as in the United States, it is sometimes not easy to determine exactly what constitutes rape. Among the Ifugao, even if they want sex as much as the boy, girls are expected to resist a boy's sexual overtures. Boys may also attempt to "rape" girls while they are sleeping, although they often wonder if the girl is just pretending sleep. Sometimes a family even tries to seduce a boy into having sex with their daughter in order to collect the fine the boy will have to pay when he is accused of rape⁷³⁸.

Although it is much more common for males to rape females, in at least two societies women may join together to rape a man. In some parts of the Trobriand Islands off the coast of New Guinea men are prohibited from entering the women's gardens during the communal weeding season. If a strange man appears, the women attack him, tear off his pubic leaf, and try to excite him sexually through masturbation and exhibitionism. One of the women may insert his penis into her vagina while the others continue to beat him, or urinate and defecate on him. A man raped in this manner is said to vomit repeatedly and to emerge lacerated and beaten⁷³⁹. Similarly, among the Canadian Ojibwa Indians, one ethnographer reports

[p94]

case when the girls got their revenge on a boy who was overly aggressive in his sexual advances. The girls attacked him, tore off his clothes and threw him to the ground, at which time one of the girls urinated on him. After this incident the boy became a laughing stock and the girls would have nothing more to do with him⁷⁴⁰.

A few researchers have looked at the cross-cultural variation in rape. Their studies show that rape is least likely where men have more extramarital sex⁷⁴¹, where punishments for rape are more severe⁷⁴², and where men are nonviolent in general toward each other. Of these three variables, it is, statistically, the general level of violence in a society that best accounts for the incidence of rape⁷⁴³. It appears, then, that acceptance of aggressiveness in general makes people more likely to accept violence in sexual matters as well.

PROSTITUTION

Although it is often called the world's oldest profession, there is no indication that prostitution was a typical part of the life of early humans, or that it is particularly common among the technologically more primitive cultures of the contemporary world. Shamanism, involving religious professionals who often served as curers, is certainly a much more common specialty in the simpler societies anthropologists have examined. Still there are a fair number of technologically simple societies where prostitution, or something very akin to it is practiced.

Among the Mekranoti Indians of the Brazilian Amazon region, some women, called kupry, remain single throughout their entire lives, even after they have borne numerous children. Like all other Mekranoti women, these women live in the same house with their children, their parents, their sisters and their sisters' husbands, and they gain their livelihood through slash-and-burn gardening. But while other women have a husband to bring them meat from the hunt, or to clear them a garden space out of the forest, many of the kupry gain these male services as presents for the sexual diversions they provide to the village men. The "payments"

[p95]

for these services are fairly direct, and the men and women harbor no illusions about the economic aspect of the relationship. It is doubtful whether many of these women enjoy their status as kupry. Compared to other women, kupry are generally thought to be lazier, less attractive, and less desirable as work companions. It seems the kupry may have been induced into their roles by personal circumstances they could not control. As children the kupry were more likely to have lost their mother than were other children, and none of the kupry had received the ceremonial names other girls sometimes receive when their parents sponsor a special ceremony for them⁷⁴⁴.

Prostitution is a more temporary occupation in other simpler societies. Among the Blackfoot Indians of Canada, an unmarried woman might serve as a prostitute for a while until she got married⁷⁴⁵. Although they were not specialized in prostitution, unmarried women and widows among the Hbundu of Angola would also sometimes be loaned to visitors to provide sexual services in exchange for payments⁷⁴⁶. Among the Bororo Indians of Brazil, widows and women whose husbands had abandoned them would serve as prostitutes for a time⁷⁴⁷. The Bororo also forced specially chosen unmarried girls to abandon their mother's home and sleep with the men in the men's house in return for gifts bestowed on them by their paramours. Sometimes the girls themselves or their parents were attracted

⁷²⁸ 5: Balandier, 61

⁷²⁹ 12: Barton, 156

⁷³⁰ 2: Becher, 68-70

⁷³¹ 1: Pospisil, 94

⁷³² 3: Mukherjea, 432

⁷³³ 1: Bogoras, 37

⁷³⁴ 8: Cook, 387

⁷³⁵ 13: Suggs, 22

⁷³⁶ 4: Dundas, 296

⁷³⁷ 10: Bouroncle, Carreon, 20

⁷³⁸ 2: Barton, 88, 224

⁷³⁹ 5: Malinowski, 273

⁷⁴⁰ 21: Hallowell, 297

⁷⁴¹ Broude, G., "Cross-Cultural Patterning of Some Sexual Attitudes and Practices," *Behavior Science Research* 4, 1976, pp. 227-262

⁷⁴² Minturn, L., M. Grosse, and S. Haider, "Cultural Patterning of Sexual Beliefs and Behavior," *Ethnology* 8(3), 1969, pp. 301-328

⁷⁴³ Sanday, P.R., "Reply," *Science* 82, December 16, 1982, p. 16

⁷⁴⁴ Werner, D., "Paid Sex Specialists among the Mekranoti," *Journal of Anthropological Research*, 40(4), 1984, pp. 394-405

⁷⁴⁵ 33: Bradley

⁷⁴⁶ 3: Hambly, 181

⁷⁴⁷ 8: Cook, 389

enough by the presents these girls received to volunteer for this occupation. When the girls eventually became pregnant, they married one of the men and promptly ceased their sexual activities with the others ⁷⁴⁸.

In several other societies men also went out of their way to obtain special women to serve as prostitutes. Among the Micronesian Yapese, the unmarried men would "buy" or abduct a girl from another village to stay with them in their men's house and provide sexual services for anywhere from a few months to a few years. According to the ethnographer, sometimes the girl actually wanted to be abducted ⁷⁴⁹. Among the Aranda Aborigines from Australia, women were sometimes selected to provide sexual services to all of the men at special ceremonies when large numbers of people got together ⁷⁵⁰. On Santa Cruz of the Solomon Islands boys also

[p96]

would pay a fee to a girl's relatives in order to bring her back to their village for sex. Sometimes the girl was "hired out" so the boys could gain feathers, money, pigs or coconuts, and when the boys grew tired of her, they would auction her off in another village ⁷⁵¹. The captured women who served as prostitutes to Yanoama Indian men were in a similarly unfortunate and powerless condition ⁷⁵².

In a few places husbands had no qualms about asking their wives to prostitute themselves for economic gain. This was true of the Blackfoot Indians of Canada ⁷⁵³, and of the Fang of the Cameroons ⁷⁵⁴. Of course, this is also true in some more technologically developed societies. Among Yugoslavian Serbs many peasant women prostitute themselves on market days. Sometimes mothers may sell themselves together with their daughters ⁷⁵⁵.

In a few societies women became prostitutes because their sexual misbehavior made it impossible for them to marry. Among the Nuer of the Sudan a girl who was too promiscuous generally became a prostitute as soon as she bore an illegitimate child. This was frowned upon by her family since it meant they would not receive a brideprice for her ⁷⁵⁶. A Kurdish woman who became a prostitute had to move away from her family and adopt a Christian name in order to avoid being killed by her relatives who were ashamed of her activities ⁷⁵⁷. Among the Pawnee Indians of the American plains, widows and unmarried women who did not remain sexually chaste were forced to live on the outskirts of the village and practice prostitution ⁷⁵⁸. Among the Tupinamba Indians of seventeenth century Brazil it was the males who were "passive" in sexual encounters who had to set up houses outside the main community to sexually service the village men ⁷⁵⁹.

Male prostitution was common in many societies, primarily for homosexual activities. In ancient Greece male prostitutes were mostly teenagers or younger boys, but sometimes transvestites or eunuchs also performed sexually in exchange for money. Transvestite prostitutes are also common among Muslims in such places as East Africa, Oman, or Morocco where they may charge less than women ⁷⁶⁰. On the other hand, in Brazil male transvestites typically charge more than women ⁷⁶¹. Male transvestites also worked as prostitutes in Japan and in

[p97]

ancient China where they actually formed their own trade guilds ⁷⁶². Curiously, in New Zealand female prostitutes are generally of White European descent, while male transvestite prostitutes tend to be of Maori extraction ⁷⁶³.

In some societies prostitution was elevated to sacred status. Perhaps the best known example is ancient India where Hindu temples elaborately decorated with scenes of sexual activities once housed as many as 100 sacred prostitutes dedicated to the great Mother Goddess. Sacred prostitutes also existed in many ancient Arab and West African societies, as well in ancient Greece and Babylonia. As pointed out by Gregerson, apparently the ancient Hebrews (as reported in II Kings 23:7) also tolerated sacred prostitutes — both male and female — some of whom lived in the Jerusalem temple ⁷⁶⁴.

Although prostitution is common in many if not most contemporary societies, it may not have the same implications in different contexts. Up until the end of World War II prostitution in Japan was legal and surveys showed most people considered it necessary in order to provide sexual satisfaction to single men, to prevent sex crimes and to provide variety for married men. Because prostitution was regarded in a more favorable light, researchers claimed Japanese prostitutes, although poor, were generally more psychologically "normal" than their U.S. or Western European counterparts ⁷⁶⁵.49

Other researchers have noted differences in the ways brothels are organized. One study found that the major activity of bordellos in Peru is not sex, but rather the socializing that goes on among the clients and the prostitutes, all of whom know each other ⁷⁶⁶. A comparison of Mexican brothels on the American border is also revealing. In Mexico prostitution is legal, and the police, rather than harass the prostitutes, often serve to protect clients and prostitutes from cheating and aggressiveness. In this area, the brothels that cater to Mexican clients generally display a good deal of socializing and friendly banter. In the brothels that cater to Americans, encounters between prostitutes and their clients are much quicker, more professional and more aggressive, and the Americans pay more attention to the sexual than to the social skills of the

[p98]

prostitutes ⁷⁶⁷. The American attitude toward prostitutes may reflect a more general tendency in American culture for people to "compartmentalize" their lives and to view others in light of their specific professional capacities rather than their complete personalities.

Anthropologists have done little to isolate the factors that might account for different attitudes toward prostitution or its prevalence in different societies. Clearly, prostitution is not limited only to economically stratified societies. Nor does it imply the same level of exploitation in all cultures. More cross-cultural research would help to resolve some of the debates surrounding the question of legalizing prostitution in American society.

INCEST

Of all the sexual activities societies might taboo incest is one of the most, if not the most, severely taboo. Still, there is wide variation in what a society might regard as incestuous. In some societies, people are not permitted to marry or have sex with any relative. Elsewhere certain cousins are the preferred choices for marriage. In many Arab societies, for example, men prefer to marry one of the

⁷⁴⁸ Bloemer, N., "Análise Crítica do Artigo: Men's House Associates among the Eastern Bororo," manuscript, Depto. de Ciências Sociais: Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, S.C. Brazil, 1980

⁷⁴⁹ 2: Salesius, 140

⁷⁵⁰ 1: Spencer and Gillen, 475

⁷⁵¹ 1: Graebner, 138

⁷⁵² 2: Becher, 68-70

⁷⁵³ 33: Bradley

⁷⁵⁴ 5: Balandier, 60

⁷⁵⁵ 15: Erlich, 165

⁷⁵⁶ 2: Evans-Pritchard, 53

⁷⁵⁷ 2: Masters, 168

⁷⁵⁸ 5: Dorsey and Murie, 108

⁷⁵⁹ 8: Soares de Souza, 316

⁷⁶⁰ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1980, pp. 161-163

⁷⁶¹ Werner, D. *Field Notes*, Florianópolis, 1985

⁷⁶² Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, 162

⁷⁶³ MacFarlane, D.F., "Transsexual Prostitution in New Zealand: Predominance of Persons of Maori Extraction," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 13(4), 1984, pp. 301-309

⁷⁶⁴ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, pp. 163-164

⁷⁶⁵ Iga, M., "Sociocultural Factors in Japanese Prostitution and the 'Prostitution Prevention Law,'" *The Journal of Sex Research*, 4(2), 1968, pp. 127-146

⁷⁶⁶ Primov, G., and K. Carolynne, "The Peruvian Brothel as Sexual Dispensary and Social Arena," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 6(3), 1977, pp. 245-253

⁷⁶⁷ Roebuck, J., and P. McNamara, "Ficheras and Free-Lancers: Prostitution in a Mexican Border City," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 2(3), 1973, pp. 231-244

daughters of their father's brother in order to keep the family property together. Among the Toradja of the Celebes, a man could marry his niece ⁷⁶⁸.

In a few societies sexual relations with closer relatives were permitted under special circumstances. The Aymara Indians of Bolivia believe that on Good Friday God is dead, so they can commit crimes with impunity on this day. At this time, then, fathers sometimes engage in incestuous relations with their daughters ⁷⁶⁹. Incest had curing powers in Rwanda and Burundi. The Rundi felt that impotence was the result of a mother's having left her son's dried umbilical cord fall on his penis. In this case a man needed to have sex with his own mother in order to restore his sexual potency ⁷⁷⁰. Among the Tucanoan Indians of Amazonia, incest between blood brothers and sisters or between parents and children was considered somewhat sacred and was advisable at certain times, such as during puberty rites, during an eclipse, or during a new

[p99]

moon. Even in ordinary times the Tucanoans did not consider it improper for brothers and sisters to have sexual relations with each other, provided the male did not put his penis in his sister ⁷⁷¹. In one case the ethnographer reports that a man took up with his mother when he was unable to find another wife. Perhaps significantly, in their incestuous relations Tucanoan couples used special potions or mechanical means to avoid having children, and in the few cases when pregnancy did result the woman either aborted, or lost her child after a short while ⁷⁷².

Incestuous relations that lead to marriage and children are extremely rare and seem to have been limited to royal families in a small number of societies: ancient Korea, Hawaii, the Inca, Thailand, and the African kingdoms of Ancient Egypt, Ankoe, Buganda, Bunyoro, Nyanga, Monomotapa, Shilluk, Zande and Dahomey ⁷⁷³. In Hawaii the highest ranking chief was one who had been born of a chiefly brother and sister marriage. In such a chief's presence people had to prostrate themselves on the ground. If the chief's parents were only half-siblings, then the chief was downgraded a level, and people needed only to remain seated in his presence. In Ancient Egypt brother/sister, or half-brother/sister marriage was carried out for centuries among the nobility. There is even some evidence that this practice extended to the commoners, although it cannot have been very frequent there ⁷⁷⁴.

For decades anthropologists have debated the reasons for the prevalence of the incest taboo. But few have attempted to explain the cross-cultural variation in the severity of the taboo, or its extension to cousins or other relatives. One study did show that societies are most likely to permit marriage with a cousin when such marriages are unlikely anyway because the society is so large or because cousins live far away from each other. Cousin marriages are most likely to actually take place in societies where many people have recently died, often due to a plague that swept through their society. Such plagues are common when isolated peoples, who have never been exposed to Western illnesses, are suddenly brought into contact with people who carry these

[p100]

diseases. The loss of people makes it more difficult to find a mate who is not a cousin. The author of this study suggests that incest is normally prohibited because incestuous relations may lead to too many deficient offspring. Cousin marriage is acceptable only when no other alternatives are available or when it is so unlikely anyway that its negative effects would not be noticed ⁷⁷⁵.

⁷⁶⁸ 3: Adriani and Krut, 391

⁷⁶⁹ 7: Forbes 232

⁷⁷⁰ 10: Albert, 205

⁷⁷¹ 5: Goldman, 181

⁷⁷² 4: Silva, 159, 578

⁷⁷³ Van Den Berghe, P.L., and G. M. Mesher, "Royal Incest and Inclusive Fitness," *American Ethnologist* 7(2), 1980, pp. 300-317. 22: Osgood, 242-244

⁷⁷⁴ Van Den Berghe, P.L., and G. H. Mesher, "Royal Incest and Inclusive Fitness," *American Ethnologist* 7(2), 1980, pp. 300-317

⁷⁷⁵ Ember, M., "On the Origin and Extension of the Incest Taboo," *Behavior Science Research* 10(4), 1975, pp. 249-281

Sociobiological arguments have also been proposed to account for why incest is most permissible among royal families where kings have many wives. Although he runs the risk of failing to produce healthy offspring with his sister, a king can be sure of siring numerous children with other women. If his sister-wife does produce a healthy child, then this child will possess more of the king's genes than will the children of his other wives. To assure that he passes the maximum number of genes on to the future, it is to the king's advantage to assure that his incestuously born son also becomes a king and sires many children, preferably with his sister. Of course unhealthy children would never accede to the throne, but evidently enough healthy children are born for this strategy to work for a long period of time. It lasted for centuries in ancient Egypt ⁷⁷⁶.

Evidently, enforcing the incest taboo is not very difficult in most societies because it appears most people are simply not sexually attracted to the people who have grown up with them. This phenomenon is particularly clear in two places in the world where boys are actually encouraged to marry the girls they have been raised with. In some Israeli kibbutzim (collective communities) all the children are brought up together, sleeping in a communal dwelling and eating in communal dining halls. Parents in these communities encourage their children to marry other members of the kibbutz. But, despite all this encouragement, few children actually accept marriage with a kibbutz mate. They simply feel no sexual attraction to their childhood companions ⁷⁷⁷. Similarly, in Taiwan families often adopted a young girl and raised her together with their son, expecting the two to marry each other when they grew older. Although these marriages did take place, in most cases they were characterized by sexual difficulties and many more

[p101]

extramarital affairs than with other arranged marriages between young men and women who were not raised together ⁷⁷⁸.

PARAPHILIAS (BESTIALITY, NECROPHILIA, SADO-HASOCHISM)

Although people in most societies generally prefer to satisfy their sexual desires in an affectionate way with other human beings, in a few cases people may enjoy other forms of sexual release. These forms may be as innocent as solitary masturbation, or as diabolical as human sacrifice.

In very few places do people indicate a preference for masturbation, but some Cagaba men from Colombia admit that they cannot achieve orgasm through heterosexual sex, but only through masturbation ⁷⁷⁹. The Mbuti pygmies of Zaire also speak of the joy of "making love to the forest" when they masturbate alone in the moonlight ⁷⁸⁰. The Trukese think nothing of masturbating in public, and the men like to stimulate themselves while watching the naked women bathe ⁷⁸¹. The Hopi Indians also like to "window peep" at women undressing ⁷⁸². In certain ceremonies Aranda aborigines from Australia stimulate themselves, sometimes to the point of orgasm, while dancing with a wooden phallus ⁷⁸³.

Sexual relationships with animals are common in many places. In some societies these relationships were frowned upon. The Ngonde of Tanzania considered sex with animals as witchcraft ⁷⁸⁴. The Mossi of Birkinia Faso (Upper Volta) did not permit a man to marry if he had had sex with a she-ass, or if his betrothed had copulated with a man who had had sex with a she-ass ⁷⁸⁵. Among the Nuer a headman who once had intercourse with a cow, cut off his finger in penance, fearing that his sexual

⁷⁷⁶ Van Den Berghe, P.L., and G. M. Mesher, "Royal Incest and Inclusive Fitness," *American Ethnologist* 7(2), 1980, pp. 300-317

⁷⁷⁷ Talmon, Y., "Mate Selection in Collective Settlements," *American Sociological Review* 29, 1964, pp. 491-508

⁷⁷⁸ Wolf, A., "Adopt a Daughter-in-Law, Marry a Sister: A Chinese Solution to the Problem of the Incest Taboo," *American Anthropologist* 8-, 1968, pp. 864-874

⁷⁷⁹ 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 282

⁷⁸⁰ 2: Turnbull, 121

⁷⁸¹ 24: Kramer, 315. 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 115

⁷⁸² 7: Talayesva

⁷⁸³ 9: Roheim, 96-97

⁷⁸⁴ 1: Wilson, 94

⁷⁸⁵ 7: Tauxier, 22

activities would cause him to die ⁷⁸⁶. Similarly, the Ojibwa felt that sexual relations with an animal such as a dog, moose, bear, beaver, caribou or porcupine would cause death, not for supernatural, but for natural reasons ⁷⁸⁷. Among the Cagaba of Colombia, although almost everyone had sexual experiences with animals, people still felt these relationships were offensive ⁷⁸⁸. Similarly, although it was regarded with contempt, some Yanoama men also copulated with dogs in estrus ⁷⁸⁹.

In some societies sexual relations with animals were seen as a substitute when other sexual activities were impossible.

[p102]

In ancient times the Aymara Indians of Brazil had sex with their alpacas while transporting their pack animals on long treks that kept them away from their wives, although laws were eventually passed against this practice ⁷⁹⁰. Among the Marquesan Islanders married men copulated with chickens when nothing else was available, and married women had dogs perform cunnilingus on them ⁷⁹¹. Older Trukese women also encouraged dogs to perform cunnilingus by putting pieces of coconut meat in their vaginas ⁷⁹². These activities were looked upon with indulgence by the rest of the community ⁷⁹³. The Central Thai disapproved of bestiality, but so long as a man did not ejaculate, any sexual activity with an animal was considered okay ⁷⁹⁴.

In a few places sexual relations with animals were actually encouraged. Hopi boys of the American Southwest were warned to be careful of girls, and to begin their sexual activities with chickens, dogs or burros ⁷⁹⁵. Although it is not clear how much sexual activity was actually involved, in Kenya a Kikuyu man accused of murder was required to take an oath with his penis inserted in the vagina of a sheep ⁷⁹⁶. In some places people may be aroused by the sight of animals, but the extent of their sexual activity is unclear. Hottentot men from southern Africa find elephants sexually stimulating because of the shape of their vaginas and the position of their nipples on the front of the breast ⁷⁹⁷. Among the Kung Bushmen, also of southern Africa, men enjoy adopting the roles of hyenas in a staging of the animal's coital activities ⁷⁹⁸.

In a couple of societies people accepted sexual relations with the corpse of a loved one. Among the Tiwi of northern Australia, widows often had sex with the body of their deceased wife at the moment of her burial ⁷⁹⁹. Similarly, among the Pukapukans of New Zealand people took care to cover the bodies during a burial, and tabooed the removal of the cover. This was done because it was common for bereaved cousins and sometimes husbands to have sex with the corpse, an activity considered excusable by those present ⁸⁰⁰. Among the Kenyan Luo if an adolescent girl died while still a virgin, it was thought important for a stranger to deflower her corpse,

[p103]

because the ghost of a post-pubertal virgin was thought to be particularly dangerous ⁸⁰¹.

⁷⁸⁶ 8: Howell, 218

⁷⁸⁷ 21: Hallowell, 294

⁷⁸⁸ 1: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 141. 2: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 267-268

⁷⁸⁹ 10: Chagnon, 61-63

⁷⁹⁰ 3: LaBarre, 134

⁷⁹¹ 13: Suggs, 50

⁷⁹² 24: Kramer, 315

⁷⁹³ 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 115

⁷⁹⁴ 19: Terweil, 113

⁷⁹⁵ 7: Talayesva, 78

⁷⁹⁶ 9: Barnett and Njama, 126

⁷⁹⁷ 1: Schutze, 77

⁷⁹⁸ 9: Thomas, 120

⁷⁹⁹ Goodale, J.C., *Tiwi Wives: A Study of the Women of Melville Island, North Australia* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971

⁸⁰⁰ 1: Beaglehole and Beaglehole, 284

⁸⁰¹ 19: Wilson, 184

Sadomasochistic practices also formed part of love-making in some societies. The Santal of India were fond of scratching and biting each other during sex, although they avoided inflicting any real pain ⁸⁰². Among the Siriono Indians of Brazil sex was described by the ethnographer as "a violent and rapid affair," in which men and women scratched and bit each other, emerging wounded from the experience ⁸⁰³. Off the coast of New Guinea, young Trobriand couples stimulated each other with cries of 'drink by blood,' or 'pull my hair,' while biting each others' lips until they bled, or biting off each other's eyelashes. Girls were encouraged to inflict considerable injury on their lover by scratching him or wounding him with a sharp instrument ⁸⁰⁴. On the Micronesian Truk islands girls burned their lovers with the ignited dry powder of breadfruit stumps. They also used a knife to make small parallel cuts on their lover's arm, and subsequently rubbed dirt in the wounds, while the boys scratched their girlfriend's cheek ⁸⁰⁵. These activities were in addition to the urination boys expected their lovers to perform on them as they orgasmed during long sexual encounters ⁸⁰⁶.

Some of the sadistic rituals performed in different cultures may also have had erotic overtones, but it is difficult to tell from most anthropological accounts just how much eroticism, if any, was really involved. Besides the initiation ceremonies there were also other occasions when custom called for a ritual that might appear to have sadomasochistically erotic components. Among the Kenyan Kikuyu, a man accused of having sex with a girl was required to swear an oath while eating a sweet potato or banana that had been inserted in the girl's vagina ⁸⁰⁷. Among the Nuer, at the time of initiations, the women tied cords to the penises of their husband's age-mates and pulled on the cords. The men, in turn, tugged at the skin aprons of their age-mates' wives ⁸⁰⁸. One society where the erotic elements of sadomasochistic rituals are clear is the Aranda of Australia. The Aranda find all genital secretions sexually exciting including semen, vaginal fluid, urine, and menstrual blood or blood which the men extract from their penises. The lyrics to

[p104]

one of their songs expressing sexual excitement go, "they smell the crack, the urine, the age mates, the age mates, they smell the urine." ⁸⁰⁹ A description of one of the rituals goes: "One of the performers pulls his penis violently and shakes it. He looks at it; it is not sufficiently erect; he is dissatisfied. He stabs the subincision wound (of his penis) to draw blood...Blood runs down their legs..." ⁸¹⁰

In several societies a man's exploits in war were considered particularly erotic. Iban men from Borneo were anxious to bring back heads of their enemies because the women preferred men who were brave in war ⁸¹¹. Similarly, among the Tupinamba Indians of Brazil a renowned warrior had more women to serve him ⁸¹². Among the related Kaapor Indians, who also practiced cannibalism, male violence apparently also had an erotic appeal to the women. During cannibalistic rites the victim was tied by ropes around the waist and taunted by the crowd, until a designated warrior dealt him the final blow with a club. After the cannibalistic feast the warrior had to enter seclusion for a period of several days. Just prior to emerging from seclusion the women entered his hut and the warrior ceremoniously pulled back his foreskin allowing the women to admire his exposed penis ⁸¹³.

The eroticism surrounding cannibalistic rites among the Fijians of Melanesia has been clearly documented. Fijian warriors were highly honored on their return from a raid with the bodies of their

⁸⁰² 3: Mukherjea, 436

⁸⁰³ 2: Holmberg, 184

⁸⁰⁴ 5: Malinowski, 256, 333-334

⁸⁰⁵ 2: Gladwin and Sarason. 3: LeBar, 361

⁸⁰⁶ 12: Swartz, 482-483

⁸⁰⁷ 9: Barnett and Njama, 126

⁸⁰⁸ 9: Evans-Pritchard, 241

⁸⁰⁹ 9: Roheim, 168-169

⁸¹⁰ 9: Roheim, 162-163

⁸¹¹ 7: Gomes, 78

⁸¹² 2: Thevet, 210-211

⁸¹³ Huxley, F., *Affable Savages: An Anthropologist among the Urubu Indians of Brazil*, New York: Capricorn Books, 1956

victims. At naming ceremonies the warriors were stripped naked (sometimes by the women) and plastered with red paint while standing astride the corpses and holding their clubs over their heads. The victims' bodies had the genitals removed and hung on display. While the bodies cooked, the warriors and women danced a lewd death dance ending in a sexual orgy, and at night, the women copulated indiscriminately with the warriors, to the point where they could hardly walk the next morning⁸¹⁴.

As far as I know, there are no studies of bestiality, sadomasochism or other paraphilias that compare their incidence in different cultures. Presumably, bestiality would be more common in pastoral societies where people simply have more contact with their animals, but such an association has

[p105]

yet to be demonstrated. Sadomasochism may well reflect a general tendency toward violence in a society, but this too needs to be verified. At least one scholar has suggested that sadomasochism may actually be more common where the expression of violence is more restricted⁸¹⁵.

While cross-cultural studies to examine the different sexual behaviors discussed in this chapter are very rare, one study did compare some of these sexual behaviors in terms of the relative severity of taboos. This comparison showed that incest is the most commonly and severely tabooed sexual activity. This is followed closely by the abduction of a married woman, and, in order, by rape, sexual relations after a woman has just given birth, bestiality, and sex during a woman's menstrual period. The least tabooed activities (in order from least to most tabooed) were sex with one's fiancée, female homosexuality, premarital sex, masturbation, sex during pregnancy, male homosexual relations, and the seduction of a pre-pubescent girl⁸¹⁶. Sadomasochism and prostitution were not examined in the study, so there is no way to know where they would fit in. Obviously, more studies on these topics would be highly appreciated.

[p106]

VIEWS ON THE BIOLOGY OF SEX

In 1983 one more self-help group was formed in Washington, D.C. Within a year it had grown to boast of 10 chapters around the country. Called "Impotents Anonymous," the group was formed to help the 10 million American men who suffer from sexual dysfunctions. In the past the affliction could ruin a man's life by taking away his self esteem as well as his sexual abilities. Fortunately, today impotence is a much less taboo subject, and most impotent men can be helped through sex therapy, drug treatments or the implantation of artificial devices into their penises⁸¹⁷.

Other aspects of sexual biology have also become more acceptable subjects for conversation. While the major television networks still refuse to accept ads on contraceptives, fearing the public will assume they are promoting promiscuous sexual relations, local stations and the cable networks have been less reticent. Perhaps in part because the ads are generally low-key, there has been no public outcry against them⁸¹⁸.

While the major television networks debated the delicateness of placing ads for contraceptives on television, the United States surgeon general was motivated to call for a major educational campaign to distribute the facts about a frightening new disease, AIDS, that had already succeeded in curbing the nation's and, indeed, the world's sexual activities. Although they had fewer cases of AIDS, other countries, like Norway, responded more quickly to the epidemic by putting up billboards around the

country and placing television commercials calling for the use of condoms⁸¹⁹. It was not just liberal Scandinavia that responded this way to the crisis. The Brazilian government also began placing television ads to encourage the use of condoms during their 1986 carnival⁸²⁰. As of August 1986 estimates suggested that between five and 10 million people worldwide had been

[p107]

infected with the virus. Unfortunately, many of the countries with the highest infection rates were the slowest to adopt educational programs to control the disease. This was especially true of many of the central African countries. In the Congo capital city of Brazzaville, random household surveys in 1985 showed five percent of the population had antibodies to the AIDS virus (HIV), although "official" cases of AIDS had not been reported⁸²¹.

Although the "facts of life" may in a strictly biological sense be the same for all humans, the ways these "facts" are viewed in different cultures vary considerably.

As we have seen in earlier chapters, in many societies people feel that puberty comes about as a result of sexual activities. In the "ritualized homosexuality" area of New Guinea men credit the ingestion of semen for the growth of a boy's genitals, the deepening of his voice, and the strengthening of his body⁸²². Similarly, the Lepcha of the Himalayas, the Trukese of Micronesia, the Andaman Islanders off the coast of India, and the Toba Indians of Argentina believe that the onset of menstruation is caused by sexual intercourse⁸²³. The Tucanoan think the growth of pubic hair, which they find ugly, results from coitus⁸²⁴.

Elsewhere, the changes brought about by puberty are simply ignored as much as possible. Irish mothers do not explain menstruation to their daughters, whose first period is usually a traumatic one⁸²⁵. The Mekranoti Indians of Brazil do not even have a word for menstruation. When it occurs, women are convinced they must be ill. In practical terms menstruation must be relatively rare for Mekranoti matrons who spend a major portion of their lives either pregnant or nursing young infants, a practice that inhibits menstruation⁸²⁶.

Many people in the world hold highly negative views toward menstruation. Mae Enga men think they will die of vomiting and blackening of their blood if they enter into contact with menstrual blood, so women seclude themselves in a special hut during their periods⁸²⁷. Among the Bororo men think they can cut down on the frequency of their wives' menstrual periods if they can reduce the quantity of semen they ejaculate. As a

[p108]

result the men try to avoid certain foods that might increase their semen production. It is because of the men's consideration and attentiveness that women do not have to menstruate twice every month⁸²⁸. 12 Male ambiguity toward menstruation is highlighted among the Fang of the Cameroons,

⁸¹⁹ Bolton, R., presentation on AIDS Education In Norway at the 1986 meetings of the American Anthropological Association, Philadelphia, Pa

⁸²⁰ "AIDS -- A Public Health Crisis," Population Reports 14(3), 1986, pp. L-193-L-227. Population Information Program, Johns Hopkins University

⁸²¹ "AIDS -- A Public Health Crisis," Population Reports 14(3), 1986, pp. L-193-L-227. Population Information Program, Johns Hopkins University

⁸²² Herdt, G. (ed.), *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984

⁸²³ 1 : Gorer, 175 (Lepcha). 2: Gladwin and Sarason, 94 (Truk). 6: Cipriani, 492 (Andamans). 14: Metraux, 32 (Toba)

⁸²⁴ 5: Goldman, 182

⁸²⁵ 16: Messenger, 109

⁸²⁶ Werner, D., *Amazon Journey: An Anthropologist's Year among Brazil's Mekranoti Indians*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984

⁸²⁷ Meggitt, M., "Male-Female Relationships in the Highlands of Australian New Guinea," *American Anthropologist*, 56, 1964, pp. 801-824

⁸²⁸ 4: Levak, 78

⁸¹⁴ Sanday, P., *Divine Hunger: Cannibalism as a Cultural System*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986

⁸¹⁵ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 303

⁸¹⁶ Brown, J.S., "A Comparative Study of Deviations from Sexual Mores," *American Sociological Review* 17(2), 1952, pp. 135-146

⁸¹⁷ "Overcoming Impotence," *Newsweek*, June 18, 1984, pp. 86-87

⁸¹⁸ Foltz, K., "TV, Sex and Prevention," *Newsweek* September 9, 1985, p. 72

where sex with a menstruating woman is normally taboo, except during the planting season for peanuts, when such sexual activity is thought propitious for the food crop ⁸²⁹. Contrary to much of the world's opinion on the matter, the Toba Indians of Argentina take as a matter of fact that women are most receptive to sex during their menstrual period ⁸³⁰.

The question of pregnancy among young women is treated differently in diverse societies. Although they joyfully accept any children a young woman may bear, the Chukchee of Siberia feel it is bad for a young girl's health to become pregnant ⁸³¹. The Ila of Zambia are unconcerned about adolescent pregnancies because they feel pregnancies are very unlikely even when girls are quite promiscuous in their sexual affairs ⁸³². Several Oceanic societies such as the Trobrianders also feel that young women are unlikely to conceive. Very probably young women in these societies pass through a fairly lengthy period of adolescent sterility before their bodies become mature enough to conceive ⁸³³. Among the Andaman Islanders, for example, it is rare for a woman to conceive before she is 28 years old, even though she may marry at 14. One ethnographer attributed this sterility to the highly acidic vaginal secretions of Andaman women ⁸³⁴. The Micronesian Yapese also have very high sterility rates. One ethnographer reported that three fourths of all marriages were childless ⁸³⁵.

The complexity of impregnation means that its biological roots are not immediately obvious. Among many societies in Oceania where adolescent sterility and premarital sex are both common, people refuse to believe that sexual relations cause impregnation. To support their view on this matter some Trobriand Islanders point out that not only do promiscuous young girls not get pregnant, but hideously ugly women sometimes do, and no one, they emphasize, would ever have sex with such women. At most, a man simply opens a passageway in a woman's vagina to allow a spirit-child to enter ⁸³⁶.

[p109]

Similarly, among the Buka of the Solomon Islands, natives report a case where a man whose penis had rotted away succeeded in impregnating his wife with an artificial phallus made of wood ⁸³⁷. The Tzeltal Indians of the Yucatan also emphasize the spiritual nature of pregnancy, and point out that a fetus may sometimes be transferred from one woman to another, which explains why some woman who think they are pregnant sometimes discover they are not, while others may suddenly discover they are well along the way in a pregnancy ⁸³⁸.

Some anthropologists have suggested that, despite their verbal denials of a connection between sexual relations and conception, people in all societies do, in fact, recognize the connection. Perhaps within populations different people hold different beliefs. Some may emphasize the mystical, while others emphasize the naturalistic aspects of pregnancy. The two are not contradictory. The Andaman Islanders off the coast of India, and the Guarani Indians of Brazil also believe that conception results from a spirit. At least in the case of the Guarani this sacred view is coupled with a more naturalistic one. People believe sexual relations are necessary but not sufficient for impregnation. Conception occurs because the father dreams of a child, and tells his vision to his wife. His wife may also have a dream which could result in pregnancy. When the child is born it is thought to be the product of the parent whose dream it materializes ⁸³⁹.

Other societies emphasize a closer connection between sexual activities and pregnancy. The Toba Indians of Argentina feel that a man's semen contains a miniature human being which simply grows inside the woman's womb until it is large enough to be born ⁸⁴⁰. The Sinhalese of Ceylon believe semen is created from blood in a man's testes which becomes heated. With intercourse, the semen enters the woman's stomach. His semen mixes with the woman's "semen" to form a ball which begins to grow with the nourishment provided by the mother and by the additional inputs of semen from the man ⁸⁴¹. On the Polynesian island of Tikopia, semen is said to originate in coconut oil which men's bodies store in their buttocks until they ejaculate. This explains why men who

[p110]

copulate a lot have thin buttocks, while those who have little intercourse have a fatter behind ⁸⁴². The Mataco Indians of Argentina think sperm comes from the knee, and is increased by drinking milk and broth and eating chickens. When the sperm, assimilated into milk coagulates in the mother's womb, it blocks off the passage of blood, and so stops the flow of menstrual blood ⁸⁴³.

Societies differ with regard to just how much sex is required to produce pregnancy. The Ona of Patagonia think it takes a lot of sex to produce a child, especially with a young wife ⁸⁴⁴. Similarly, the Amhara of Ethiopia think men must have intercourse several times a night in order to produce a child ⁸⁴⁵. The Ojibwa of Canada also believe many acts of coitus over a period of several months are necessary for impregnation, a fact which they use to justify why it is okay to have premarital sexual encounters without fear of conception ⁸⁴⁶. The beliefs of the Pawnee Indians of the northern plains are perhaps most similar to the modern scientific view. Although a Pawnee woman could have sex with more than one man, she had to restrict her activities in a given month to just one sexual partner. That way if she conceived she could point out who the father of the child was, and exactly when the conception took place ⁸⁴⁷.

A few other beliefs about conception are also worth noting. The Yapese are convinced pregnancy is impossible unless the woman has an orgasm to make her fluids flow ⁸⁴⁸. The Mbuti pygmies feel pregnancy is most likely when a woman has sex while menstruating ⁸⁴⁹. The Kikuyu of Kenya think the best time for impregnation is three days after menstruation ⁸⁵⁰.

After conception, a few societies feel there is no need for further sexual activity for the fetus to grow. The Himalayan Lepcha see no effect of further copulation after conception unless incest is involved, in which case a miscarriage is likely ⁸⁵¹. However, many other societies think further sexual intercourse is necessary. The Yanoama Indians of Venezuela think that only through such continued acts of coitus can a fetus become strong ⁸⁵². The Toba of Argentina and the Tzeltal of the Yucatan also feel continued copulation is necessary to build up the fetus ⁸⁵³. In Rwanda and Burundi a man is required to have sex a minimum of once a week when his

[p111]

⁸⁴⁰ 5: Henry and Henry, 10

⁸⁴¹ 4: Halman, 137

⁸⁴² 2: Firth, 482-484

⁸⁴³ 3: Metraux, 114-116

⁸⁴⁴ 1: Gusinde, 364

⁸⁴⁵ 1: Messing, 547

⁸⁴⁶ 22: Dunning, 146

⁸⁴⁷ 14: Weltfish, 17

⁸⁴⁸ 1: Hunt, 378

⁸⁴⁹ 2: Turnbull, 122

⁸⁵⁰ 4: Kenyatta, 179

⁸⁵¹ 1: Gorer, 283

⁸⁵² 2: Becher, 145

⁸⁵³ 14: Metraux, 25 (Toba). 7: Nash, 110 (Tzeltal)

⁸²⁹ 1: Trezenem, 56

⁸³⁰ 1: Karsten, 86

⁸³¹ 1: Bogoras, 37

⁸³² 1: Smith and Dale, 16

⁸³³ 5: Malinowski

⁸³⁴ 6: Cipriani, 493

⁸³⁵ 6: Muller, 378

⁸³⁶ 5: Malinowski, 293

⁸³⁷ Gregerson, E., *Sexual Practices*, New York: Franklin and Watts, 1983, p. 8

⁸³⁸ 4: Villa-Rojas, 223

⁸³⁹ 2: Schaden, 111

wife is pregnant, not so much because of the needs of the fetus, but because women are thought to be most desirous of sex at this time ⁸⁵⁴. In some places all of the men who have sex with a pregnant woman may be recognized as "fathers" of her child, since they all contributed sperm toward its growth. This has resulted in an "underground" kinship system in some South American societies like the Mehinaku of Brazil. Here, when the husband of a child's mother is around, only he is called "father," but when he leaves the village, the child may also call "father" all of the other men who contributed to his conception. In addition, the relatives of these other fathers may all be called by another appropriate kin term reflecting their ties to the child through this other "father." ⁸⁵⁵

A couple of societies also require sex during pregnancy, but for other reasons. The Kanuri of Nigeria think sex is necessary at this time to keep a woman's birth canal open so that labor is made easier when the child is finally born ⁸⁵⁶. Among the Ila of Zambia a woman uses her own hands to stretch her birth canal, hopefully to the point of being able to insert her fist ⁸⁵⁷. While people are urged to continue sexual relations during pregnancy in some societies, elsewhere this is considered dangerous. The Kikuyu of Kenya require a man to insert no more than two inches of his penis into the vagina of a pregnant woman. This distance is marked on his member by the hanging of his foreskin scar ⁸⁵⁸. The Tucanoan Indians of Amazonia think that continued coitus will add more fetuses to the mother's womb, and tell stories of women who supposedly burst from having too many fetuses ⁸⁵⁹.

Avoiding pregnancies is a major preoccupation in many societies. Various techniques of birth control are practiced. Ejaculating outside of the woman's body is popular among such groups as the Masai of Kenya ⁸⁶⁰, the Tallensi of Ghana ⁸⁶¹, the Ngonde of Tanzania ⁸⁶², and the Thonga of Mozambique ⁸⁶³. The Goajiro Indians of Colombia use herbs as contraceptives and abortifacients ⁸⁶⁴. Bambara men from Mali admit they often masturbate in order to avoid having too many children ⁸⁶⁵.

The reasons for preventing pregnancies vary. The Masai avoid them in uninitiated girls, but are less concerned about other pregnancies ⁸⁶⁶. Among the Yapese of Micronesia, and the

[p112]

Goajiro Indians of Colombia young women, although they may actually want children, avoid pregnancies because they fear this will cause them to lose their physical attractiveness ⁸⁶⁷. On the Polynesian Island of Tikopia leaders recognize the problem of overpopulation, and couples are advised to have sex only once a week to prevent too many pregnancies ⁸⁶⁸. The Ojibwa Indians of Canada also think was disgraceful for a man "to have children like steps and stairs." Ojibwa men are told simply to stay away from their wives if they already have a young child ⁸⁶⁹.

For many men staying away from one's wife was an unwanted result of sexual impotence. Especially in many African and Middle East societies impotence was a particularly onerous stigma. Among the Lozi and Ila of Zambia, and the Wolof of Senegal, impotence was grounds for divorce ⁸⁷⁰. Among

the Libyan Bedouin an impotent man might be required undergo a witnessed test of his sexual capacity in order to prevent a divorce ⁸⁷¹. Public exposure of impotence was also a danger among the Igbo of Nigeria ⁸⁷². A Rundi king was required to commit suicide if he became old and sexually weak, in order to prevent the weakening of the country ⁸⁷³.

In some societies an impotent man could avoid divorce by providing his wife or wives with other men for "stud services." This was true of the Yao of Mozambique, Lozi of Zambia, the Mende of Sierra Leone, and the Tallensi of Ghana ⁸⁷⁴. Elsewhere impotence could be treated. The Yoruba of Nigeria performed a ceremony for the victim ⁸⁷⁵. Among the Bambara of Mali, an impotent man was rubbed with cooked lizard oil ⁸⁷⁶. The Ila of Zambia gave an impotent man an emetic "to clear the blocked passage," or else twisted a drug into a thread and inserted it into his urethra ⁸⁷⁷. The Mbuti pygmies of Zaire roasted leaves and rubbed the ashes into incisions made above the penis or into the skin of the penis itself ⁸⁷⁸. The Bush Negroes of Guyana mashed up the seeds of a plant and inserted them into the urethra, which served as an irritant and supposedly caused long-lasting erections ⁸⁷⁹.⁶³

In some places impotence was not viewed as such a serious problem. Although he did not like his condition, an impotent Hopi Indian reported that he derived small pleasures from little things like hugging a woman or placing his hand on her

[p113]

leg ⁸⁸⁰. Among the Cagaba Indians of Colombia, a loss in sexual desire was actually favorably looked upon. Men chewed coca in order to suppress their sexual desires, eventually making some of them impotent ⁸⁸¹. The Lepcha of the Himalayas did not think impotence a problem because they asserted it simply did not occur ⁸⁸².

While there is a fair amount of literature on male impotence, there is very little on female frigidity. Perhaps this is because some societies, like the Irish, do not expect women to experience orgasms ⁸⁸³. A fair number of societies in Africa actually perform genital operations to reduce a woman's sexual feelings. Still, even in some of the societies where clitoridectomy is practiced people distinguish a kind of frigidity considered abnormal. Among the Amhara of Ethiopia, "impotent" women are known to experience uncontrollable crying when approached or touched by a man ⁸⁸⁴.

A feeling that sex is disagreeable may sometimes result from an association of sex with sickness. In some cases this association is rational. A taboo on sex with animals may have something to do with the diseases that may be transmitted from animals to humans. Alpacas suffer from a disease similar to human syphilis, and some researchers believe syphilis may have originated from the alpaca disease, and spread to humans among populations like the Aymara where intercourse with the animal was common ⁸⁸⁵. According to this theory syphilis spread to Europe when the conquistadores returned from their Incan exploits. But the connection with bestiality is even today not so clear. Some authori-

⁸⁵⁴ 9: Maquet 77-78

⁸⁵⁵ Gregor, T., Mehinaku: The Drama Daily Life in a Brazilian Indian Village, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977

⁸⁵⁶ 1: Cohen, 54

⁸⁵⁷ 2: Smith and Dale, 434

⁸⁵⁸ 4: Kenyatta, 179

⁸⁵⁹ 5: Goldman, 166

⁸⁶⁰ 18: Merker, 110

⁸⁶¹ 3: Fortes, 20

⁸⁶² 2: Wilson, 131

⁸⁶³ 1: Junod, 56

⁸⁶⁴ 1: Gutierrez de Pineda, 78

⁸⁶⁵ 4: Henry, 178

⁸⁶⁶ 18: Merker, 110

⁸⁶⁷ 5: Senfft, 2 (Yapese). 1: Gutierrez de Pineda, 78 (Goajiro)

⁸⁶⁸ 21: Spillius, 13

⁸⁶⁹ 15: Hilger, 3

⁸⁷⁰ 6: Gluckman, 186 (Lozi). 1: Smith and Dale, 227 (Ila). 3: Chabas, 12 (Wolof)

⁸⁷¹ 6: Peters, 127

⁸⁷² 27: Henderson and Henderson, 11

⁸⁷³ 9: Maquet, 79

⁸⁷⁴ 3: Stannus, 236 (Yao). 6: Gluckman, 188 (Lozi). 2: Little, 160 (Mende). 3: Fortes, 23 (Tallensi)

⁸⁷⁵ 45: Prince, 109

⁸⁷⁶ 1: Dieterlin, 227

⁸⁷⁷ 1: Smith and Dale, 227

⁸⁷⁸ 2: Turnbull, 314

⁸⁷⁹ 2: Kahn, 125

⁸⁸⁰ 7: Talayesva, 365

⁸⁸¹ 1: Reichel-Dolmatoff, 77

⁸⁸² 1: Gorer, 174

⁸⁸³ 17: Messenger, 16

⁸⁸⁴ 12: Young, 196

⁸⁸⁵ 7: Forbes, 226-227

ties attribute the spread of syphilis to a strain of the human yaws spirochete, common in many Oceanic societies ⁸⁸⁶.

Other cases where sex is associated with sickness are also not quite correct, but still have some truth to them. The Sudanese Nuer attribute syphilis and yaws specifically to incestuous relationships, but not to other types of sex ⁸⁸⁷. The Lovedu of southern Africa feel that urethritis always results from sex with a menstruating woman ⁸⁸⁸. Some researchers in the United States feel that part of the association of AIDS with homosexual activities in the American public's mind is not entirely accurate, since the disease appears to be contracted primarily through specific

[p114]

sexual acts -- mostly through receptive anal or vaginal intercourse -- rather than through specifically male-male sexual activities which may not involve anal intercourse ⁸⁸⁹.

In other places the association between illness and sexual transgressions may have a larger psychological than biological component. The Pukapukans off the coast of New Zealand think that a sick woman passes her illness on to her sexual partner because her secretions are absorbed by the man's penis. The diseases that are spread this way include swelling of parts of the body, and stomach pains ⁸⁹⁰. The Canadian Ojibwa feel that disease in general results from violations of sex taboos ⁸⁹¹. The Fang of the Cameroons tell stories attributing the development of frambesia by a girl and her father to their illicit sexual relations, and the catching of leprosy by two men to the homosexual activities they had once engaged in ⁸⁹². It was not the intimate contact in these cases that was thought responsible for the diseases, but rather the sexual transgressions. In fact some Fang women are actually said to have sought out lepers for extramarital intercourse ⁸⁹³. The Lovedu of southern Africa think some men and women have a small thick hair in their genitals that kills their partner ⁸⁹⁴.

Although sexual relations may be associated with illness in some places, they are considered healing in others. Among the Fang of the Cameroons, homosexual intercourse was sometimes prescribed as a "medicine" for achieving wealth ⁸⁹⁵. Incest had curing powers in Rwanda and Burundi. The Rundi felt that impotence was the result of a mother's having left her son's dried umbilical cord fall on his penis. In this case a man needed to have sex with his own mother in order to restore his sexual potency ⁸⁹⁶. The Zulu thought masturbation was a good way to expel venereal disease ⁸⁹⁷.

Anthropologists have looked into some of the questions about how people view the biology of sex. There seems to be a general consensus in the field that ideas about conception may have something to do with the ways property and other rights are passed along to future generations. Presumably, where children inherit only from the father, people would place more emphasis on the father's role in procreation. They

[p115]

might believe, for example, that the father plants the real seed for the fetus in the mother, who is only the "field" in which the fetus grows. Where children inherit from their mothers, the mothers' role

in procreation would be emphasized. For example, males might be limited to the simple opening of the vaginal passage, and the actual "seed" might come from the mother. However, to my knowledge, no one has yet carried out any comparative studies on the topic that could confirm this relationship.

Other topics have received a bit more attention. Comparative studies have shown that males are more likely to have problems with impotence in societies that are restrictive of premarital and extra-marital sex, and in fact have less sex before marriage. Impotence is also more common where sex is seen to be dangerous, and where attitudes are more restrictive about rape. There is also a tendency for men to worry about impotence in societies where talk about sex is more taboo ⁸⁹⁸. It seems that men have more difficulty becoming sexually aroused when sex is looked on as a dangerous and difficult business.

The association of sex with sickness has also been examined with systematic comparative data. These studies show that people are most likely to attribute illness to sexual transgressions where they are punished more severely for sex in infancy. Conversely, where infants receive sexual gratification, sex is likely to be seen as therapeutic rather than harmful ⁸⁹⁹. Evidently, the feeling that sex is good or evil is learned early and continues into adult life.

[p116]

CONCLUSION

"Doin' what comes naturally," is the expression people once used to describe sex. It probably never was a very helpful piece of advice. In light of the tremendously varied ways other cultures look on sexual matters "doin what comes naturally," hardly seems apt at all. Some of the sexual activities Americans consider most "natural" are looked on with horror elsewhere. The Zulu, for example, abhor the "missionary position" which they associate with animals ⁹⁰⁰. On the other hand, some of the "unnatural" lusts Americans condemned, such as homosexual relations, are considered in many New Guinea societies to be as wholesome as Mom and apple pie ⁹⁰¹. Obviously, sex is as malleable as tastes in food or home decoration.

Nor can societies be divided simply into those that are "liberal" about sexual matters and those that are not. There are just too many issues that do not divide themselves up this way. For example, a society where girls engage freely in premarital sex is no more and no less likely than any other society to require women to be modest about sex. Knowing the frequency of premarital sex and the extent of sexual modesty in a culture, tells us nothing about its frequency of homosexuality ⁹⁰².

To be sure, there are some patterns to the sexual diversity found around the world. One comparative study used sophisticated statistical techniques to uncover a few "clusters" of sexual attitudes and practices that seem to "hang together." One cluster seems to reflect a society's position on sexual promiscuity (sexual relations with multiple partners). Societies that restrict premarital sex for girls generally have less sexual promiscuity among the boys and men, and are more likely to have arranged marriages. By the same token, in societies where unmarried girls are more promiscuous, marriages are unlikely to be arranged, and boys and men are generally more promiscuous as well. Attitudes toward sex with multiple partners may be related to the amount of intimacy infants and children have with their

[p117]

caretakers. Where people have learned to be intimate when young, they tend to be more comfortable about having sex with many people as adults.

⁸⁹⁸ Welch, M.R. and Kartub, P., "Socio-Cultural Correlates of Incidence of Impotence: A Cross-Cultural Study," *The Journal of Sex Research* 14(4), 1978, pp. 218-230

⁸⁹⁹ Whiting, J.W.M. and I.L. Child, *Child Training and Personality*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1953

⁹⁰⁰ 4: Bryant, 571

⁹⁰¹ see Herdt, G. (ed.), *Ritualized Homosexuality in Melanesia*, (Berkeley) University of California Press, 1984

⁹⁰² Broude, G., "Cross-Cultural Patterning of Some Sexual Attitudes and Practices," *Behavior Science Research* 4, 1976, pp. 227-262

⁸⁸⁶ McNeill, U.H. *Plagues and Peoples*, Garden City: New York, 1976, pp. 194-197

⁸⁸⁷ 2: Evans-Pritchard, 30

⁸⁸⁸ 2: Kriges and Kriges, 221

⁸⁸⁹ Gajdusek, D.C., "Interview," *Omni* 8(6), 1986, pp.62-68, 104-106

⁸⁹⁰ 1: Beaglehole and Beaglehole, 286

⁸⁹¹ 21: Hallowell, 294

⁸⁹² 2: Tessman, 133-134

⁸⁹³ 2: Tessmann, 44

⁸⁹⁴ 2: Kriges and Kriges, 221

⁸⁹⁵ 2: Tessmann, 23

⁸⁹⁶ 10: Albert, 205

⁸⁹⁷ 8: Berglund, 343

A second "cluster" seems to reflect how much "possessiveness" men feel toward their wives. Societies that have a double standard about adultery (permitting husbands more extramarital affairs than wives) are also likely to refuse wife-sharing and to restrict the wife's sexual activities. Societies where men and women must abide by the same rules of marital conduct generally permit more extramarital affairs for wives, and are more likely to engage in wife-sharing. Possessiveness seems to be related to the amount of separation that exists between males and females generally in a society. Where men and women live very different and separate lives possessiveness is greater.

The third "cluster" encountered in this study was less easy to interpret. It lumped together a society's concern with impotence, its restrictiveness about a man's extramarital sexual activities, and the presence of homosexuality. Just what all of these variables might have in common is unclear, and will have to await further study⁹⁰³.

In practical terms, it may be more useful at this point to examine the reasons for specific sexual attitudes and behaviors rather than try to find patterns of behaviors. After all, most of the sexual issues up for debate in this country are more specific and involve legislation or policy decisions about one type of sexual activity rather than the broader issue of American sexuality in general.

We have come a long way in our understanding of why cultures differ in their particular sexual attitudes and practices. Some of the specifics of what we know are summarized at the ends of the different chapter sections. Taken as a whole, these research findings suggest that some aspects of sexuality appear to arise from practical concerns related to a society's economy or social structure. Premarital sex is more permissible in societies with matrilineal kinship systems where it is easier for an unwed or divorced mother to raise a child. Adolescents also enjoy more sexual freedom where the absence of class differences makes parents less concerned about who their daughter might

[p118]

marry. Romantic love may be easier where husbands and wives continue to live near their relatives, and so do not need to depend so heavily on each other for practical support. This permits them to be less "realistic" about their mate's qualities and to "idealize" them more. Homosexuality may be more taboo when people feel a need to have more babies, and homosexual behavior may increase when men have fewer heterosexual outlets due to polygyny or a late age of marriage.

Other aspects of sexuality have clearer psychological roots. A willingness to have sex with multiple partners and to engage in more extensive foreplay may be related to greater bodily intimacy with one's caretakers when young. Love magic may reflect anxiety over punishments received for sexual activities when small. A concern with impotence may be related to general anxiety resulting from a belief that sex is dangerous and from restrictions on premarital and extramarital sex. And punishment for infant sexual behavior may accentuate the idea that sex causes sickness.

Although detractors would point out that the data are also consistent with other theories, sociobiological explanations on some aspects of human sexuality are also supported by research findings. That incest was most acceptable among the nobility where the elites could marry many spouses conforms to mathematical models of how these elites could pass along the highest number of their genes to future generations. That premarital sex freedom is most common in matrilineal societies and that extramarital sex freedom is most common in endogamous societies also fit sociobiological models of how men can best assure that their energies will be invested in passing along their genes to future generations.

While we have learned some things about human sexuality in different cultures, there are still many topics that have yet to be studied. Throughout the text I tried to highlight some of the as yet unexplained ways societies vary in their sexual attitudes and practices. These include such questions as sex education, sexual relationships between adults and children, sexual "binges" during adolescence, celibacy and singlehood, the sexual activities of the elderly, physical attractiveness, genital mutilations, preferences for

[p119]

different sexual positions, preferences for anal and oral-genital sex, lesbianism, homosexual relations between men and boys, prostitution, bestiality, sadomasochistic sexual practices, and views on how puberty and conception take place. There is presently enough information in the published ethnographic literature to make some useful comparisons on these questions. Many, if not most of these matters could be studied from information available in the Human Relations Area Files alone. All that is needed is a little effort on the part anyone interested enough to try.

In the past controversies about sexual issues were mostly confined to heated emotional discourses on the imagined implications of different sexual practices. Today, it is much easier to talk about sexual matters in a calmer, more reasoned way. I think this is due, at least in part, to the fact that researchers have now provided enough information to sort out many of the good explanations from the bad. I hope this text will help continue this trend into the future, so that some of today's more emotional discussions about sexual issues can also one day be brought into a calmer and somewhat more objective perspective.

[page 120 to page 134]

NOTES TO CHAPTERS

Numbers followed by a colon refer to bibliographic sources in the Human Relations Area Files
<http://www.yale.edu/hraf/>

[NB: notes are placed at the bottom of each page]

⁹⁰³ Broude, G. , "Cross-Cultural Patterning of Some Sexual Attitudes and Practices," Behavior Science Research 4, 1976, pp. 227-262