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V.
Culture and Sexuality

The study of sexuality in anthropology is a relatively recent research emphasis. Classic anthropological monographs have reported exotic sexual practices in the course of ethnographic description (for example, we learn in Malinowski's *The Sexual Life of Savages* [1929] that the Trobriand islanders may bite each others' eyelashes in the heat of passion), but other than occasional esoterica, a naturalistic, biological bias has dominated the study of sexuality. However, as Vance observes (1984:8), "although sexuality, like all human cultural activity, is grounded in the body, the body's structure, physiology, and functioning do not directly or simply determine the configuration or meaning of sexuality." Rather, sexuality is in large part culturally constructed. Just as we may inquire into the culturally variable meanings of male and female and masculinity and femininity, we may examine the ways in which sexuality is invested with meaning in particular societies (Ortner and Whitehead 1981:2).

Sexuality, as a topic of analysis, links the personal and the social, the individual and society. To Americans sex may imply medical facts, Freud, and erotic techniques, but all of these aspects of sexuality are socially shaped and inevitably curbed. Within every culture there are measures for the management of sexuality and gender expression (Ortner and Whitehead 1981:24–25) and sanctions for those who break the rules.

These sanctions may be imposed at the level of the family, the lineage, the community, or the state. Indeed, Foucault (1981) has suggested that a feature of the recent past is the increasing intervention of the state in the domain of sexuality. In this regard Ross and Rapp (1981:71) conclude that it is not accidental that contemporary western culture conceptualizes sex as a thing in itself, isolated from social, political, and economic context: "The separation with industrial capitalism of family life from work, of consumption from production, of leisure from labour, of personal life from political life, has completely reorganized the context in which we experience sexuality. . . . Modern consciousness permits, as earlier systems of thought did not, the positing of 'sex' for perhaps the first time as having an 'independent' existence." However, Caplan (1987:24) warns that while western culture may have a concept of sexuality divorced from repro-

duction, marriage, or other social domains, it is not possible to analyze sexuality without reference to the economic, political, and cultural matrix in which it is embedded.

A comparative perspective informs us that the attributes of the person seen as sexual and erotic vary cross-culturally. For example, scarification, the corsetted waist, bound feet, and the subincised penis are admired and provocative in particular cultures. Such attributes as these are not only physical symbols of sexuality, but indicators of status. Similarly, Sudanese women enforce infibulation, or pharonic circumcision causing serious pain and health risks to young women, for the honor of the lineage. In the name of power young men applied as recruits to the palace eunuch staff in Imperial China carrying their genitals in jars (Ortner and Whitehead 1981:24). These examples are reminders of the power of social concerns and cultural meanings in the domain of sexuality.

It has been argued that sexual intercourse, while personal, can also be a truly political act. For example, in hunting and gathering societies claims to women are central in men's efforts to achieve equal status with others (Collier and Rosaldo 1981:291). Through sexual relations with women, men forge relationships with one another and symbolically express claims to particular women. Shostak (in this book) presents the perspective of a !Kung woman, Nisa, on sex, marriage, and fertility in the broader context of a hunting and gathering society in which women have high status.

In !Kung society children learn about sex through observation. Boys and girls play at parenthood and marriage. If they are caught playing at sex, they are scolded but are not severely punished. No value is placed on virginity, and the female body need not be covered or hidden. A girl is not expected to have sex until the onset of menstruation, usually age 16. During adolescence, both heterosexual and homosexual sex play is permitted, and sexual liaisons outside of marriage are also permissible.

The !Kung believe that without sex, people can die, just as without food, one would starve. Shostak observes that "talk about sex seems to be of almost equal importance [to eating]. When women are in the village or out gathering, or when men and women are together, they spend hours recounting details of sexual exploits. Joking about all aspects of sexual experience is commonplace" (1983:265). According to Nisa, "If a woman doesn't have sex . . . her thoughts get ruined and she is always angry" (Shostak 1983:31).

From Nisa Shostak elicits the history of her relationships with men, in particular her former husband and constant admirer, Besa, who abandons her while she is pregnant but later tries to persuade her to return and live with him as his wife. Although he seeks the intervention of the headman, Nisa refuses to return to him, and the headman supports her decision. Nisa's characterization of sexuality among the !Kung suggests that for both men and women engaging in sex is necessary to maintaining good health and is an important aspect of being human.

In contrast, for the past 150 years Anglo-American culture has defined women as less sexual than men. This represents a major shift from the widespread view prior to the seventeenth century that women were especially sexual creatures (Caplan 1987:3). By the end of the nineteenth century the increasingly authoritative voice of male medical specialists argued that women were characterized by sexual anesthesia (Caplan 1987:3). Victorian ideas about male sexuality emphasized the highly sexed and baser nature of men. In contrast, Muslim concepts of female sexuality (Mernissi 1987:33) cast the woman as aggressor and the man as victim. Imam Ghazali, writing in the eleventh century, describes an active female sexuality in which the sexual demands of women appear overwhelming and the need for men to satisfy them is a social duty (Mernissi 1987:39). Women symbolize disorder and are representative of the dangers of sexuality and its disruptive potential.

The example of the Kaulong of New Guinea further illustrates the extent to which understandings of male and female sexual natures are cultural products (Goodale 1980). Both sexes aspire to immortality through the reproduction of identity achieved through parenting. Sexual intercourse, which is considered animal-like, is sanctioned for married people. Animals are part of the forest and nature, so the gardens of married couples are in the forest. The only sanctioned purpose of sex and marriage is reproduction; sex without childbearing is viewed as shameful. Suicide was formerly considered an acceptable recourse for a childless couple. Sexual activity is thought to be dangerous to men and women in different ways: polluting for men and leading to the dangers of birth for women. Goodale notes that girls are encouraged to behave aggressively toward men, to initiate sex, and to select the husband of their choice. In contrast, men are reluctant to engage in sex, are literally "scared to death of marriage," and rarely take the dominant role in courtship (Goodale 1980:135). Thus, the Kaulong view seems to reverse the western idea of the passive woman and the active man (Moore 1988:17).

Attempting to explain such variations in cultural constructions of sexuality, Caplan (1987) suggests that when desire for children is high, fertility and sexuality are hardly distinguished; biological sex is important and impediments to procreation (e.g., contraception, homosexuality) are viewed as wicked. Caplan shows that Hindu tradition values celibacy, although there may be a life stage in which an individual is sexually active. The spirit is valued over the flesh, and celibacy represents a purer and higher state than sexual activity. In contrast, a spirit-flesh dichotomy is less common in Africa and the Caribbean, where sexual activity is thought to be a part of healthy living (Nelson 1987:235–236). When fertility is less valued, sexual activity is more open and less regulated, and sexuality becomes an aspect of self, not of parenthood. Thus, control of female fertility is linked to control of sexual behavior; when sexual activity is thought to be a prerequisite for good health, there tends to be greater sexual autonomy for women.

Gender, referring to sociocultural designations of behavioral and psychosocial qualities of sexes (Jacobs and Roberts 1989), is commonly contrasted with sex, or the observable biophysiological, morphological characteristics of the individual. Gilmore (in this book) examines the relationship between sex and gender in his analysis of the often dramatic ways in which cultures construct appropriate manhood. He finds a recurring notion that "real manhood is different from simple anatomical maleness, that it is not a natural condition that comes about spontaneously through biological maturation but rather is a precarious or artificial state that boys must win against powerful odds" (1990:11).

To Gilmore the answer to the manhood puzzle lies in culture. He examines a post-Freudian understanding of masculinity as a category of self-identity, showing how boys face special problems in separating from their mother. A boy's separation and individuation is more perilous and difficult than a girl's, whose femininity is reinforced by the original unity with her mother. Thus, to become separate the boy must pass a test, breaking the chain to his mother. Ultimately, Gilmore concludes that manhood ideologies force men to shape up "on penalty of being robbed of their identity." Men are not innately different from women, but they need motivation to be assertive.

Gilmore notes that some cultures also provide for alternative gender constructs. Popular thinking in the United States dichotomizes two sexes, male and female, and corresponding gender identities, masculinity and femininity, leaving little room for culturally defined variance. Some research suggests at least three phenotypic sexes in human cultures: female, male, and androgynous or hermaphroditic people. This classification refers to characteristics observable to the naked eye rather than to medical classifications of sex types based on chromosomal evidence (Jacobs and Roberts 1989:440). Linguistic markers for gender reveal culturally specific epistemological categories (Jacobs and Roberts 1989:439). Accordingly, in English one may distinguish woman, lesbian, man, or gay male. The Chuckchee counted seven genders—three female and four male—while the Mohave reportedly recognize four genders—a woman, a woman who assumes the roles of men (berdache), a man, or a male berdache who assumes the roles of women (Jacobs and Roberts 1989:439–440). Thus, cross-cultural research suggests that we need to use categories of sex and gender that reflect the evidence of diversity rather than rigid classification systems.

In any culture genders are recognized, named, and given meaning in accordance with that culture's rules or customs (Jacobs and Roberts 1989:446). When a baby is born people

generally rely on the appearance of the infant's external genitalia to determine whether that child will be treated as female or male. As a child grows more criteria come into play, such as the phenotypic expression of sex—facial hair, voice, and breast development. In some societies spiritual development and interests may be used as criteria for gender attribution. One such example is the hijras of Indian society. The hijra role attracts people who in the West might be called eunuchs, homosexuals, transsexuals, transvestites, or hermaphrodites.

The hijra role is deeply rooted in Indian culture, and it accommodates a variety of sexual needs, gender behaviors and identities, and personalities. Nanda (in this book) shows that Hinduism encompasses ambiguities and contradictions in gender categories without trying to resolve them. In Hindu myths, rituals, and art, the theme of the powerful man-woman is significant; mythical figures who are androgynes figure in popular Indian culture. Thus the hijra represents an institutionalized third gender role.

Hinduism holds that all people contain both male and female principles, and in some sects male transvestism is used as a way of achieving salvation. There are many references in Hinduism to alternative sexes and sexual ambiguity. However, hijras are viewed ambivalently and can inspire both fear and mockery. Ancient writings indicate criticism of homosexuality, but in actuality homosexuals were tolerated, following the counsel of the classic Hindu text, the Kamasutra, that in sex one should act according to the custom of one's country and one's own inclination. Hijras see themselves as humans, neither man nor woman, calling into question basic social categories of gender. The accommodation of the hijras reflects the extent to which contradictions are embraced and tolerated in Indian culture.

Additional examples of cultures that tolerate gender ambiguity are found in Native American societies, in which a male who felt an affinity for female occupation, dress, and attributes could choose to become classified as a berdache. Williams (in this book) discusses alternative gender identities for Native American women whom he calls amazons; others refer to them as "cross gender females" or female berdache. According to Williams' use of the term, an amazon is a woman who has manifested an unfeminine character from infancy, has shown no interest in heterosexual relations, and might have expressed a wish to become a man. Such women were known for their bravery and skill as warriors. For example, Kaska Indians would select a daughter to be a son if they had none; after a transformation ritual the daughter would dress like a man and be trained for male tasks. Ingalik Indians also recognize such a status; in this society the amazons even participated in male-only sweat baths. The woman was accepted as a man on the basis of her gender behavior (Williams, in this book).

The assignment of this changed gender "operates independently of a person's morphological sex and can determine both gender status and erotic behavior" (Williams 1986:235). In some societies a woman could choose to be a man, as among the Kutenai Indians. The "man-like woman" was greatly respected, although the Kutenai did not recognize a berdache status for men. A tribe with an alternative gender role for one sex did not necessarily have one for the other, and the roles were not seen as equivalent. The Mohave also recognized the status of amazons, subjecting these women to a ritual that authorized them to assume the clothing, sexual activity, and occupation of the opposite, self-chosen sex. It is sometimes believed that such women do not menstruate because menstruation is a crucial part of the definition of a woman. However, the category of amazon is distinct from that of men or women. It is another gender status. Thus, some Native American cultures have a flexible recognition of gender variance, and they incorporate fluidity in their world view.

Sexuality, as differentiated from sex and gender, refers to sexual behaviors, feelings, thoughts, practices, and sexually based bonding behaviors (bisexuality, heterosexuality, homosexuality) (Jacobs and Roberts 1989:440). Sexual identity, involving an individual's self-attribution of sex preferences and practices, is both a response to and an influence on sexuality. In western culture today sexuality is thought to comprise an important part of one's identity, the core of self (Caplan 1987:2). In the United States, where heterosexual relations are the norm, the dominant ideology suggests that heterosexuality is innate and natural. Lesbianism may be threatening to male dominance, while male homosexuality threatens male solidarity and the sense of masculine identity. In other cultures, however, gender and sexuality are conceptually separate. For example, Shepherd (1987) shows that for Swahili Muslims of Mombasa, Kenya, being in a homosexual relationship does not change one's gender, which is essentially assigned by biological sex.

In American society sexuality is an integral part of identity on a personal and a social level. Sexuality not only classifies one as male or female, but is an aspect of adult identity. In contrast, in Jamaica or parts of Africa childbirth, rather than sexuality, confers adulthood. The linkage of sexual identity and gender leads to an identification of gay men and lesbians in terms of their homosexuality, although they do not necessarily change their gender. In this culture a lack of fit between sex, gender, and sexuality causes suspicion. In addition, the conflating of sexuality and gender makes it hard to conceptualize homosexual parents. Bozett (in this book) points out that there is almost no scientific literature on this subject, although there is somewhat more discussion of lesbian mothers than of gay fathers. Custodial gay fathers are less common and have been less accessible for research, although there may be as many as 3 million gay men who are natural fathers, not including those who adopt children, are stepfathers, or are foster parents.

Recent interest in gay families and gay parenting reflects the awareness that the "traditional" nuclear family now describes fewer than one-third of families with children (Bozett 1987:40). Bozett's research on children of gay fathers suggests that the father-child relationship does not significantly change when the child becomes aware of the father's homosexuality. While the children may not approve, the bond to their father remains. Because of embarrassment or concern that others will think they are gay, the children may seek to use social control strategies that will protect their public image of themselves. Gay fathers attempt to prevent homophobic harassment of their children and to prevent them from being socially marginalized. Fathers' homosexuality does not seem to influence children's sexual orientation.

The articles in this part reveal that there are a number of possible combinations of sex, gender, and sexuality, leading to different and culturally acceptable identities (Caplan 1987:22). Although western categorizations impose a particular rigidity on gender concepts, cross-cultural data demonstrate that these identities are not fixed and unchangeable. This realization necessitates a critique of these western classifications and provokes a number of stimulating questions: Are heterosexuality and homosexuality equally socially constructed? Is there cross-cultural variation in the extent to which sexuality represents a primary aspect of human identity? Is desire itself culturally constituted?

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Women and Men in !Kung Society

Marjorie Shostak

After Besa and I had lived together for a long time, he went to visit some people in the East. While there, he found work with a Tswana cattle herder. When he came back, he told me to pack; he wanted me to go and live with him there. So we left and took the long trip to Old Debe's village, a Zhun/twa village near a Tswana and European settlement. We lived there together for a long time.[1]

While we were there, my father died. My older brother, my younger brother, and my mother were with him when he died, but I wasn't; I was living where Besa had taken me. Others carried the news to me. They said that Dau had tried to cure my father, laying on hands and working hard to make him better. But God refused and Dau wasn't able to see what was causing the illness so he could heal him. Dau said, "God is refusing to give up my father."

I heard and said, "Eh, then today I'm going to see where he died." Besa and I and my children, along with a few others, left to take the long journey west. We walked the first day and slept that night. The next morning we started out and slept again that night; we slept another night on the road, as well. As we walked, I cried and thought, "Why couldn't I have been with him when he died?" I cried as we walked, one day and the next and the next.

The sun was so hot, it was burning; it was killing us. One day we rested such a long time, I thought, "Is the sun going to stop me from seeing where my father died?" When it was cooler, we started walking again and slept on the road again that night.

We arrived at the village late in the afternoon. My younger brother, Kumsa, was the first to see us. When he saw me, he came and hugged me. We started to cry and cried together for a long time. Finally, our older brother stopped us, "That's enough for now. Your tears won't make our father alive again."

We stopped crying and we all sat down. My mother was also with us. Although my father never took her back again after the time she ran away with her lover, she returned and lived near him until he died. And even though she slept alone, she still loved him.

Later, my mother and I sat together and cried together.

We stayed there for a while, then Besa and I went back again to live in the East where he had been working for the Europeans. A very long time passed. Then, my brother sent word that my mother was dying. Once again we made the journey to my family and when we arrived I saw her: she was still alive.

We stayed there and lived there. One day, a group of people were going to the bush to live. I said, "Mother, come with us. I'll take care of you and you can help me with my children." We traveled that day and slept that night; we traveled another day and slept another night. But the next night, the sickness that had been inside her grabbed her again and this time, held on. It was just as it had been with my father. The next day, she coughed up blood. I thought, "Oh, why is blood coming out like that? Is this what is going to kill her? Is this the way she's going to die? What is this sickness going to do? She's coughing blood . . . she's already dead!" Then I thought, "If only Dau were here, he would be able to cure her. He would trance for her every day." But he and my younger brother had stayed behind. Besa was with us, but he didn't have the power to cure people. There were others with us as well, but they didn't help.

We slept again that night. The next morning, the others left, as is our custom, and then it was only me, my children, my husband, and my mother; we were the only ones who remained. But her life was really over by then, even though she was still alive.

I went to get her some water and when I came back, she said, "Nisa . . . Nisa . . . I am an old person and today, my heart . . . today you and I will stay together for a while longer; we will continue to sit beside each other. But later, when the sun stands over there in the afternoon sky and when the new slim moon first strikes, I will leave you. We will separate then and I will go away."

I asked, "Mother, what are you saying?" She said, "Yes, that's what I'm saying. I am an old person. Don't deceive yourself; I am dying. When the sun moves to that spot in the sky, that will be our final separation. We will no longer be together after that. So, take good care of your children."

I said, "Why are you talking like this? If you die as you say, because that's what you're telling me, who are you going to leave in your place?" She said, "Yes, I am leaving you. Your husband will take care of you now. Besa will be with you and your children."

We remained together the rest of the day as the sun crawled slowly across the sky. When it reached the spot she had spoken of, she said—just like a person in good health—"Mm, now . . . be well, all of you," and then she died.

That night I slept alone and cried and cried and cried. None of my family was with me[2] and I just cried the entire night. When morning came, Besa dug a grave and buried her. I said, "Let's pull our things together and go back to the village. I want to tell Dau and Kumsa that our mother has died."

We walked that day and slept that night. We walked the next day and stopped again that night. The next morning, we met my brother Kumsa. Someone had told him that his mother was sick. When he heard, he took his bow and quiver and came looking for us. He left when the sun just rose and started walking toward us, even as we were walking toward him. We met when the sun was overhead. He stood and looked at me. Then he said, "Here you are, Nisa, with your son and your daughter and your husband. But Mother isn't with you . . . "

I sat down and started to cry. He said, "Mother must have died because you're crying like this," and he started to cry, too. Besa said, "Yes, your sister left your mother behind. Two days ago was when your mother

and sister separated. That is where we are coming from now. Your sister is here and will tell you about it. You will be together to share your mourning for your mother. That will be good."

We stayed there and cried and cried. Later, Kumsa took my little son and carried him on his shoulders. I carried my daughter and we walked until we arrived back at the village. My older brother came with his wife, and when he saw us he, too, started to cry.

After that, we lived together for a while. I lived and cried, lived and cried. My mother had been so beautiful . . . her face, so lovely. When she died, she caused me great pain. Only after a long time was I quiet again.

Before we returned to the East, I went with Besa to visit his family. While I was there, I became very sick. It came from having carried my mother. Because when she was sick, I carried her around on my back. After she died, my back started to hurt in the very place I had carried her. One of God's spiritual arrows must have struck me there and found its way into my chest.

I was sick for a long time and then blood started to come out of my mouth. My younger brother (he really loves me!) was visiting me at the time. When he saw how I was, he left to tell his older brother, "Nisa's dying the same way our mother died. I've come to tell you to come back with me and heal her." My older brother listened and the two of them traveled to where I was. They came when the sun was high in the afternoon sky. Dau started to trance for me. He laid on hands, healing me with his touch. He worked on me for a long time. Soon, I was able to sleep; then, the blood stopped coming from my chest and later, even if I coughed, there wasn't any more blood.

We stayed there for a few more days. Then, Dau said, "Now I'm going to take Nisa with me to my village." Besa agreed and we all left together. We stayed at my brother's village until I was completely better.

Besa and I eventually moved back East again. But after we had lived together for a long time, we no longer were getting along. One day I asked, "Besa, won't you take me back to my family's village so I can live there?" He said, "I'm no longer interested in you." I said, "What's wrong? Why do you feel that way?" But then I said, "Eh, if that's how it is, it doesn't matter."

I was working for a European woman at the time, and when I told her what Besa was saying to me, she told him, "Listen to me. You're going to chase your wife away. If you continue to speak to her like this, she'll be gone. Today, I'm pregnant. Why don't you just let her be and have her sit beside you. When I give birth, she will work for me and help me with the baby."

That's what we did. We continued to live together until she gave birth. After, I helped wash the baby's clothes and helped with other chores. I worked for her for a long time.

One day, Besa broke into a little box I had and stole the money she had paid me with. He took it and went to drink beer. I went to the European woman and told her Besa had taken five Rand[3] from me and had left with it. I asked her to help me get it back. We went to the Tswana hut where everyone was drinking and went to the door. The European woman walked in, kicked over a bucket and the beer spilled out. She kicked over another and another and the beer was spilling everywhere. The Tswanas left. She turned to Besa and said, "Why are you treating this young Zhun/twa woman like this? Stop treating her this way." She told him to give her the money and when he gave it to her, she gave it to me. I went and put the money in the box, then took it and left it in her kitchen where it stayed.

Later Besa said, "Why did you tell on me? I'm going to beat you." I said, "Go ahead. Hit me. I don't care. I won't stop you."

Soon after that, I became pregnant with Besa's child. But when it was still very tiny, when I was still carrying it way inside, he left me. I don't know what it was that made him want to leave. Did he have a lover? I don't know. He said he was afraid of a sore I had on my face where a bug had bitten me. It had become swollen, and eventually the Europeans helped to heal it. Whatever it was, his heart had changed toward me and although my heart still liked him, he only liked me a very little then. That's why he left.

It happened the day he finished working for the Europeans. He came back when the sun was low in the sky and said, "Tomorrow, I'm going to visit my younger brother. I have finished my work and have been paid. I'm going, but you'll stay here. Later, Old Debe and his wife can take you back to your brothers' village." I said, "If you are leaving, won't I go with you?" He said, "No, you won't go with me." I said, "Why are you saying you'll go without me? If I go with you and give birth there, it will be good. Don't leave me here. Let me go with you and give birth in your brother's village." But he said, "No, Old Debe will bring you back to your family."

When I saw Old Debe, he asked me what was wrong. I said, "What is Besa doing to me? If he doesn't want me, why doesn't he just end it completely? I've seen for a long time that he doesn't want me." I thought, "Besa . . . he took me to this faraway village, got me pregnant, and now, is he just going to drop me in this foreign place where none of my people live?"

Later, I said to Besa, "Why did you take me from my people? My brothers are still alive, yet you won't take me to them. You say someone else will. But, why should someone else, a near stranger, take me to my family after you've given me this stomach. I say you should take me to them, take me there and say, 'Here is your sister. Today I am separating from her.' Instead, you're saying you'll just leave me here, with these strangers? I followed you here, to where you were working, because you wanted me to. Now you're just going to leave me? Why are you doing this? Can there be any good in it?"

I continued, "You're the one who came here to work. Yet, you have no money and have no blankets. But when you had no more work and no more money, I worked. I alone, a woman. I entered the work of the European and I alone bought us blankets and a trunk. I alone bought all those things and you covered yourself with my blankets. When you weren't working, you asked people to give you things. How can you leave me here in this foreign place after all that?" He answered, "What work could I have done when there wasn't any to be had?"

I said, "It doesn't matter, because I can see that you will only be here for a few more nights, then you will go. I know that now. But, if you leave me like this today, then tomorrow, after you have gone and have lived with your brother, if you ever decide to come to where I am living, I will refuse you and will no longer be your wife. Because you are leaving me when I am pregnant."

The next morning, early, he tied up his things and left. He packed everything from inside the hut, including all our blankets, and went to his brother's village to live. I thought, "Eh, it doesn't matter, after all. I'll just sit here and let him go." He left me with nothing; the people in the village had to give me blankets to sleep with.

Besa, that man is very bad. He left me hanging like that.

Once he left, I saw that I would be staying there for a while. I thought, "Today I'm no longer going to refuse other men, but will just be with them. Then, maybe I will miscarry. Because this is Besa's child and didn't he leave it and go? I won't refuse other men and will just have them. I will drop this pregnancy; then I will go home."

That's when Numshe entered the hut with me. He spoke to me and I agreed. People said, "Yes, she will enter the hut with him. But when he tastes her,[4] the pregnancy will be ruined." Old Debe's wife said, "That won't be so bad. If her pregnancy is ruined, it won't be a bad thing. Because Besa dropped her. Therefore, I will sit here and take care of her. Later, I will bring her to her family."

I lived there for a long time. I lived alone and worked for the Europeans. Then one day, just as my heart had said, my body felt like fire and my stomach was in great pain. I told Old Debe's wife, "Eh-hey, today I'm sick." She asked, "Where does it hurt? Do you want some water? Where is the sickness hurting you." I said, "My whole body hurts, it isn't just my stomach." I lay there and felt the

pains, rising again and again and again. I thought, "That man certainly has made me feel bad; even today, I'm lying here in great pain."

She looked at my stomach and saw how it was standing out. She said, "Oh, my child. Are you going to drop your pregnancy? What is going to happen? Will you be able to give birth to this child or will it be a miscarriage? Here, there are just the two of us; I don't see anyone who will bring more help to you. If you miscarry, it will be only us two." I said, "Yes, that's fine. If I drop this pregnancy, it will be good. I want to drop it, then I can leave. Because my husband certainly doesn't want it."

We stayed together all day. When the sun was late in the sky, I told her it was time and we went together to the bush. I sat down and soon the baby was born. It was already big, with a head and arms and a little penis; but it was born dead. Perhaps my heart had ruined my pregnancy. I cried, "This man almost ruined me, did he not?" Debe's wife said, "Yes, he destroyed this baby, this baby which came from God. But if God hadn't been here helping you, you also would have died. Because when a child dies in a woman's stomach, it can kill the woman. But God . . . God gave you something beautiful in giving you this baby and although it had death in it, you yourself are alive." We left and walked back to the village. Then I lay down.

After that, I just continued to live there. One day I saw people visiting from Besa's village. I told them to tell him that our marriage had ended. I said, "Tell him that he shouldn't think, even with a part of his heart, that he still has a wife here or that when we meet another time in my village that he might still want me." That's what I said and that's what I thought.

Because he left me there to die.

Soon after, a man named Twi saw me and said, "Did your husband leave you?" I said, "Yes, he left me long ago." He asked, "Then won't you stay with me?" I refused the first time he asked as well as the second and the third. But when he asked the next time, I agreed and we started to live together. I continued to work for the European woman until my work was finished and she told me I could go home. She gave us food for our trip and then all of us—Old Debe, his wife, Twi, and me—traveled the long distance back to where my family was living.

Twi and I lived together in my brothers' village for a long time. Then, one day, Besa came from wherever he had been and said, "Nisa, I've come to take you back with me." I said, "What? What am I like today? Did I suddenly become beautiful? The way I used to be is the way I am now; the way I used to be is what you left behind when you dropped me. So what are you saying? First you drop me in the heart of where the white people live, then you come back and say I should once again be with you?" He said, "Yes, we will pick up our marriage again."

I was stunned! I said, "What are you talking about? This man, Twi, helped bring me back. He's the man who will marry me. You're the one who left me." We talked until he could say nothing more; he was humbled. Finally he said, "You're shit! That's what you are." I said, "I'm shit you say? That's what you thought about me long ago, and I knew it. That's why I told you while we were still living in the East that I wanted you to take me back to my family so we could end our marriage here. But today, I came here myself and you only came afterward. Now I refuse to have anything more to do with you."

That's when Besa brought us to the Tswana headman to ask for a tribal hearing. Once it started, the headman looked at everything. He asked me, "Among all the women who live here, among all those you see sitting around, do you see one who lives with two men?" I said, "No, the women who sit here . . . not one lives with two men; not one among them would I be able to find. I, alone, have two. But it was because this man, Besa, mistreated and hurt me. That's why I took this other man, Twi, who treats me well, who does things for me and gives me things to eat." Then I said, "He is also the man I want to marry; I want to drop the other one. Because Besa has no sense. He left me while I was pregnant and the pregnancy almost killed me. This other one is the one I want to marry."

We talked a long time. Finally, the headman told Besa, "I have questioned Nisa about what happened and she has tied you up with her talk; her talk has defeated you, without doubt. Because what she has said about her pregnancy is serious. Therefore, today she and Twi will continue to stay together. After more time passes, I will ask all of you to come back again." Later, Twi and I left and went back to my brothers' village to sleep.

The next day, my older brother saw a honey cache while walking in the bush. He came to tell us and take us back there with him; we planned to stay the night in the bush. We arrived and spent the rest of the day collecting honey. When we finished, we walked toward where we were planning to camp. That's when I saw Besa's tracks in the sand. I said, "Everyone! Come here! Besa's tracks are here! Has anyone seen them elsewhere?" One of the men said, "Nonsense! Would you know his tracks . . . " I interrupted, "My husband . . . the man who married me . . . I *know* his tracks." The man's wife came to look, "Yes, those are Besa's tracks; his wife really did see them."

The next morning, Besa walked into the camp. Besa and Twi started to fight. My older brother yelled, "Do you two want to kill Nisa? Today she is not taking another husband. Today she's just going to lie by herself." I agreed, "Eh, I don't want to marry again now."

Twi and I continued to live together after that. But later we separated. My older brother caused it, because he wanted Besa to be with me again. He liked him and didn't like Twi. That's why he forced Twi to leave. When Twi saw how much anger both Dau and Besa felt toward him, he became afraid, and finally he left.

I saw what my brother had done and was miserable; I had really liked Twi. I said, "So, this is what you wanted? Fine, but now that you have chased Twi away, I'll have nothing at all to do with Besa." That's when I began to refuse Besa completely. Besa went to the headman and said, "Nisa refuses to be with me." The headman said, "Nisa's been refusing you for a long time. What legal grounds could I possibly find for you now?"

After more time passed, a man who had been my lover years before, started with me again. Soon we were very much in love. He was so handsome! His nose . . . his eyes . . . everything was so beautiful! His skin was light and his nose was lovely. I really loved that man, even when I first saw him.

We lived together for a while, but then he died. I was miserable, "My lover has died. Where am I going to find another like him—another as beautiful, another as good, another with a European nose and with such lovely light skin? Now he's dead. Where will I ever find another like him?"

My heart was miserable and I mourned for him. I exhausted myself with mourning and only when it was finished did I feel better again.

After years of living and having everything that happened to me happen, that's when I started with Bo, the next important man in my life and the one I am married to today.

Besa and I lived separately, but he still wanted me and stayed near me. That man, he didn't hear; he didn't understand. He was without ears, because he still said, "This woman here, Nisa, I won't be finished with her."

People told Bo, "You're going to die. This man, Besa, he's going to kill you. Now, leave Nisa." But Bo refused, "Me . . . I won't go to another hut. I'll just stay with Nisa and even if Besa tries to kill me, I'll still be here and won't leave."

At first, Bo and I sneaked off together, but Besa suspected us; he was very jealous. He accused me all the time. Even when I just went to urinate, he'd say that I had been with Bo. Or when I went for water, he'd say, "Did you just meet your lover?" But I'd say, "What makes you think you can talk to me like that?" He'd say, "Nisa, you are not still my wife? Why aren't we living together? What are you doing?" I'd say, "Don't you have other women or are they refusing you, too? You have others

so why are you asking me about what I'm doing?"

One night, Bo and I were lying down inside my hut and as I looked out through the latched-branch door, I saw someone moving about. It was Besa; I was able to see his face. He wanted to catch us, hoping I would feel some remorse and perhaps return to him.

I said, "What? Besa's here! Bo . . . Bo . . . Besa's standing out there." Bo got up; Besa came and stood by the door. I got up and that's when Besa came in and grabbed me. He held onto me and threatened to throw me into the fire. I cursed him as he held me, "Besa-Big-Testicles! Long-Penis! First you left me and drank of women's genitals elsewhere. Now you come back, see me, and say I am your wife?" He pushed me toward the fire, but I twisted my body so I didn't land in it. Then he went after Bo. Bo is weaker and older than Besa, so Besa was able to grab him, pull him outside the hut, and throw him down. He bit him on the shoulder. Bo yelled out in pain.

My younger brother woke and ran to us, yelling, "Curses to your genitals!" He grabbed them and separated them. Bo cursed Besa. Besa cursed Bo, "Curses on your penis!" He yelled, "I'm going to kill you Bo, then Nisa will suffer! If I don't kill you, then maybe I'll kill her so that you will feel pain! Because what you have that is so full of pleasure, I also have. So why does her heart want you and refuse me?"

I yelled at him, "That's not it! It's you! It's who you are and the way you think! This one, Bo, his ways are good and his thoughts are good. But you, your ways are foul. Look, you just bit Bo; that, too, is part of your ways. You also left me to die. And death, that's something I'm afraid of. That's why you no longer have a hold over me. Today I have another who will take care of me well. I'm no longer married to you, Besa. I want my husband to be Bo."

Besa kept bothering me and hanging around me. He'd ask, "Why won't you come to me? Come to me, I'm a man. Why are you afraid of me?" I wouldn't answer. Once Bo answered, "I don't understand why, if you *are* a man, you keep pestering this woman? Is what you're doing going to do any good? Because I won't leave her. And even though you bit me and your marks are on me, you're the one who is going to move out of the way, not me. I intend to marry her."

Another time I told Bo, "Don't be afraid of Besa. You and I will marry; I'm not going to stay married to him. Don't let him frighten you. Because even if he comes here with arrows, he won't do anything with them." Bo said, "Even if he did, what good would that do? I am also a man and am a master of arrows. The two of us would just strike each other. That's why I keep telling him to let you go; I am the man you are with now."

The next time, Besa came with his quiver full of arrows, saying, "I'm going to get Nisa and bring her back with me." He left with another man and came to me at my village. When he arrived, the sun was high in the sky. I was resting. He said, "Nisa, come, let's go." I said, "What? Is your penis not well? Is it horny?"

People heard us fighting and soon everyone was there, my younger and older brothers as well. Besa and I kept arguing and fighting until, in a rage, I screamed, "All right! Today I'm no longer afraid!" and I pulled off all the skins that were covering me—first one, then another, and finally the leather apron that covered my genitals. I pulled them all off and laid them down on the ground. I cried, "There! There's my vagina! Look, Besa, look at me! This is what you want!"

The man he had come with said, "This woman, her heart is truly far from you. Besa, look. Nisa refuses you totally, with all her heart. She refuses to have sex with you. Your relationship with her is finished. See. She took off her clothes, put them down, and with her genitals is showing everyone how she feels about you. She doesn't want you, Besa. If I were you, I'd finish with her today." Besa finally said, "Eh, you're right. Now I am finished with her."

The two of them left. I took my leather apron, put it on, took the rest of my things and put them on.

Mother! That was just what I did.

Besa tried one last time. He went to the headman again, and when he came back he told me, "The headman wants to see you." I thought, "If he wants to see me, I won't refuse."

When I arrived, the headman said, "Besa says he still wants to continue your marriage." I said, "Continue our marriage? Why? Am I so stupid that I don't know my name? Would I stay in a marriage with a man who left me hanging in a foreign place? If Old Debe and his wife hadn't been there, I would have truly lost my way. Me, stay married to Besa? I can't make myself think of it."

I turned to Besa, "Isn't that what I told you when we were still in the East?" Besa said, "Mm, that's what you said." I said, "And, when you left, didn't I tell you that you were leaving me pregnant with your baby. Didn't I also tell you that?" He said, "Yes, that's what you said." I said, "And didn't I say that I wanted to go with you, that I wanted you to help make our pregnancy grow strong? Didn't I say that and didn't you refuse?" He said, "Yes, you said that." Then I said, "Mm. Therefore, that marriage you say today, in the lap of the headman, should be continued, that marriage no longer exists. Because I am Nisa and today, when I look at you, all I want to do is to throw up. Vomit is the only thing left in my heart for you now. As we sit together here and I see your face, that is all that rises within and grabs me."

The headman laughed, shook his head and said, "Nisa is impossible!" Then he said, "Besa, you had better listen to her. Do you hear what she is saying? She says that you left her while she was pregnant, that she miscarried and was miserable. Today she will no longer take you for her husband." Besa said, "That's because she's with Bo now and doesn't want to leave him. But I still want her and want to continue our marriage."

I said, "What? Besa, can't you see me? Can't you see that I have really found another man? Did you think, perhaps, that I was too old and wouldn't find someone else?" The headman laughed again. "Yes, I am a woman. And that which you have, a penis, I also have something of equal worth. Like the penis of a chief . . . yes, something of a chief is what I have. And its worth is like money. Therefore, the person who drinks from it . . . it's like he's getting money from me. But not you, because when you had it, you just left it to ruin."

The headman said, "Nisa is crazy; her talk is truly crazy now." Then he said, "The two of you sleep tonight and give your thoughts over to this. Nisa, think about all of it again. Tomorrow, I want both of you to come back."

Besa went and lay down. I went and lay down and thought about everything. In the morning, I went to the headman. I felt ashamed by my talk of the night before. I sat there quietly. The headman said, "Nisa, Besa says you should stay married to him." I answered, "Why should he stay married to me when yesterday I held his baby in my stomach and he dropped me. Even God doesn't want me to marry a man who leaves me, a man who takes my blankets when I have small children beside me, a man who forces other people to give me blankets to cover my children with. Tell him to find another woman to marry."

The headman turned to Besa, "Nisa has explained herself. There's nothing more I can see to say. Even you, you can hear that she has defeated you. So, leave Nisa and as I am headman, today your marriage to her is ended. She can now marry Bo."[5]

Besa went to the headman one more time. When he tried to discuss it again, saying, "Please, help me. Give Nisa back to me," the headman said, "Haven't you already talked to me about this? You talked and talked, and the words entered my ears. Are you saying that I have not already decided on this? That I am not an important person? That I am a worthless thing that you do not have to listen to? There is no reason to give Nisa back to you."

I was so thankful when I heard his words. My heart filled with happiness.

Bo and I married soon after that.[6] We lived together, sat together, and did things together. Our hearts loved each other very much and our marriage was very very strong.

Besa also married again not long after—this time to a woman much younger than me. One day he came to me and said, "Look how

wrong you were to have refused me! Perhaps you thought you were the only woman. But you, Nisa, today you are old and you yourself can see that I have married a young woman, one who is beautiful!"

I said, "Good! I told you that if we separated, you'd find a young woman to marry and to sleep with. That is fine with me because there is nothing I want from you. But you know, of course, that just like me, another day she too will be old."

We lived on, but not long after, Besa came back. He said that his young wife was troubled and that he wanted me again. I refused and even told Bo about it. Bo asked me why I refused. I said, "Because I don't want him." But what he says about his wife is true. She has a terrible sickness, a type of madness. God gave it to her. She was such a beautiful woman, too. But no longer. I wonder why such a young woman has to have something like that . . .

Even today, whenever Besa sees me, he argues with me and says he still wants me. I say, "Look, we've separated. Now leave me alone." I even sometimes refuse him food. Bo tells me I shouldn't refuse, but I'm afraid he will bother me more if I give anything to him. Because his heart still cries for me.

Sometimes I do give him things to eat and he also gives things to me. Once I saw him in my village. He came over to me and said, "Nisa, give me some water to drink." I washed out a cup and poured him some water. He drank it and said, "Now, give me some tobacco." I took out some tobacco and gave it to him. Then he said, "Nisa, you really are adult; you know how to work. Today, I am married to a woman but my heart doesn't agree to her much. But you . . . you are one who makes me feel pain. Because you left me and married another man. I also married, but have made myself weary by having married something bad. You, you have hands that work and do things. With you, I could eat. You would get water for me to wash with. Today, I'm really in pain."

I said, "Why are you thinking about our dead marriage? Of course, we were married once, but we have gone our different ways. Now, I no longer want you. After all that happened when you took me East—living there, working there, my father dying, my mother dying, and all the misery you caused me—you say we should live together once again?"

He said that I wasn't telling it as it happened.

One day, he told me he wanted to take me from Bo. I said, "What? Tell me, Besa, what has been talking to you that you are saying this again?" He said, "All right, then have me as your lover. Won't you help my heart out?" I said, "Aren't there many men who could be my lover? Why should I agree to you?" He said, "Look here, Nisa . . . I'm a person who helped bring up your children, the children you and your husband gave birth to. You became pregnant again with my child and that was good. You held it inside you and lived with it until God came and killed it. That's why your heart is talking this way and refusing me."

I told him he was wrong. But he was right, too. Because, after Besa, I never had any more children. He took that away from me. With Tashay, I had children, but Besa, he ruined me. Even the one time I did conceive, I miscarried. That's because of what he did to me; that's what everyone says.

NOTES

1. This chapter covers about five years, beginning when Nisa was in her early thirties (c. the mid 1950s).
2. In fact, her husband and children were with her.
3. The Rand is a South African currency that was then legal tender in Bechuanaland (pre-independence Botswana). It was worth between $1.20 and $1.50. Five Rand was a very large sum of money to the !Kung at that time—perhaps as much as two months wages at a typical menial task.
4. Tastes her: A euphemism for sexual intercourse.
5. The procedure for divorce in traditional !Kung culture would have been less complicated and would have proceeded more quickly.
6. Nisa and Bo married around 1957, when Nisa was about thirty-six years old.

The Manhood Puzzle

David D. Gilmore

There are continuities of masculinity that transcend cultural differences.
—Thomas Gregor, *Anxious Pleasures*

Are there continuities of masculinity across cultural boundaries, as the anthropologist Thomas Gregor says (1985:209)? Are men everywhere alike in their concern for being "manly?" If so, why? Why is the demand made upon males to "be a man" or "act like a man" voiced in so many places? And why are boys and youths so often tested or indoctrinated before being awarded their manhood? These are questions not often asked in the growing literature on sex and gender roles. Yet given the recent interest in sexual stereotyping, they are ones that need to be considered if we are to understand both sexes and their relations.

Regardless of other normative distinctions made, all societies distinguish between male and female; all societies also provide institutionalized sex-appropriate roles for adult men and women. A very few societies recognize a third, sexually intermediary category, such as the Cheyenne *berdache,* the Omani *xanith,* and the Tahitian *mahu* . . . but even in these rare cases of androgynous genders, the individual must make a life choice of identity and abide by prescribed rules of sexual comportment. In addition, most societies hold consensual ideas—guiding or admonitory images—for conventional masculinity and femininity by which individuals are judged worthy members of one or the other sex and are evaluated more generally as moral actors. Such ideal statuses and their attendant images, or models, often become psychic anchors, or psychological identities, for most individuals, serving as a basis for self-perception and self-esteem (D'Andrade 1974:36).

These gender ideals, or guiding images, differ from culture to culture. But, as Gregor and others (e.g., Brandes 1980; Lonner 1980; Raphael 1988) have argued, underlying the surface differences are some intriguing similarities among cultures that otherwise display little in common. Impressed by the statistical frequency of such regularities in sexual patterning, a number of observers have recently argued that cultures are more alike than different in this regard. For example, Gregor (1985:200) studied a primitive Amazonian tribe and compared its sex ideals to those of contemporary America. Finding many subsurface similarities in the qualities expected of men and women, he concludes that our different cultures represent only a symbolic veneer masking a bedrock of sexual thinking. In another study, the psychologist Lonner (1980:147) echoes this conclusion. He argues that culture is "only a thin veneer covering an essential universality" of gender dimorphism. In their comprehensive survey of sex images in thirty different cultures, Williams and Best (1982:30) conclude that there is "substantial similarity" to be found "panculturally in the traits ascribed to men and women."

Whether or not culture is only a thin veneer over a deep structure is a complicated question: as the rare third sexes show, we must not see in every culture "a Westerner struggling to get out" (Munroe and Munroe 1980:25). But most social scientists would agree that there do exist striking regularities in standard male and female roles across cultural boundaries regardless of other social arrangements (Archer and Lloyd 1985:283–

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84). The one regularity that concerns me here is the often dramatic ways in which cultures construct an appropriate manhood—the presentation or "imaging" of the male role. In particular, there is a constantly recurring notion that real manhood is different from simple anatomical maleness, that it is not a natural condition that comes about spontaneously through biological maturation but rather is a precarious or artificial state that boys must win against powerful odds. This recurrent notion that manhood is problematic, a critical threshold that boys must pass through testing, is found at all levels of sociocultural development regardless of what other alternative roles are recognized. It is found among the simplest hunters and fishermen, among peasants and sophisticated urbanized peoples; it is found in all continents and environments. It is found among both warrior peoples and those who have never killed in anger.

Moreover, this recurrent belief represents a primary and recurrent difference from parallel notions of femaleness. Although women, too, in any society are judged by sometimes stringent sexual standards, it is rare that their very status as woman forms part of the evaluation. Women who are found deficient or deviant according to these standards may be criticized as immoral, or they may be called unladylike or its equivalent and subjected to appropriate sanctions, but rarely is their right to a gender identity questioned in the same public, dramatic way that it is for men. The very paucity of linguistic labels for females echoing the epithets "effete," "unmanly," "effeminate," "emasculated," and so on, attest to this archetypical difference between sex judgments worldwide. And it is far more assaultive (and frequent) for men to be challenged in this way than for women.

Perhaps the difference between male and female should not be overstated, for "femininity" is also something achieved by women who seek social approval. But as a social icon, femininity seems to be judged differently. It usually involves questions of body ornament or sexual allure, or other essentially cosmetic behaviors that enhance, rather than create, an inherent quality of character. An authentic femininity rarely involves tests or proofs of action, or confrontations with dangerous foes: win-or-lose contests dramatically played out on the public stage. Rather than a critical threshold passed by traumatic testing, an either/or condition, femininity is more often construed as a biological given that is culturally refined or augmented.

TESTS OF MANHOOD: A SURVEY

Before going any further, let us look at a few examples of this problematic manhood. Our first stop is Truk Island, a little atoll in the South Pacific. Avid fishermen, the people of Truk have lived for ages from the sea, casting and diving in deep waters. According to the anthropologists who have lived among them, the Trukese men are obsessed with their masculinity, which they regard as chancy. To maintain a manly image, the men are encouraged to take risks with life and limb and to think "strong" or "manly" thoughts, as the natives put it (M. Marshall 1979). Accordingly, they challenge fate by going on deep-sea fishing expeditions in tiny dugouts and spearfishing with foolhardy abandon in shark-infested waters. If any men shrink from such challenges, their fellows, male and female, laugh at them, calling them effeminate and childlike. When on land, Trukese youths fight in weekend brawls, drink to excess, and seek sexual conquests to attain a manly image. Should a man fail in any of these efforts, another will taunt him: "Are you a man? Come, I will take your life now" (ibid.:92).

Far away on the Greek Aegean island of Kalymnos, the people are also stalwart seafarers, living by commercial sponge fishing (Bernard 1967). The men of Kalymnos dive into deep water without the aid of diving equipment, which they scorn. Diving is therefore a gamble because many men are stricken and crippled by the bends for life. But no matter: they have proven their precious manhood by showing their contempt for death (ibid.:119). Young divers who take precautions are effeminate, scorned and ridiculed by their fellows.

These are two seafaring peoples. Let us move elsewhere, to inland Black Africa, for example, where fishing is replaced by pastoral pursuits. In East Africa young boys from a host of cattle-herding tribes, including the Masai, Rendille, Jie, and Samburu, are taken away from their mothers and subjected at the outset of adolescence to bloody circumcision rites by which they become true men. They must submit without so much as flinching under the agony of the knife. If a boy cries out while his flesh is being cut, if he so much as blinks an eye or turns his head, he is shamed for life as unworthy of manhood, and his entire lineage is shamed as a nursery of weaklings. After this very public ordeal, the young initiates are isolated in special dormitories in the wilderness. There, thrust on their own devices, they learn the tasks of a responsible manhood: cattle rustling, raiding, killing, survival in the bush. If their long apprenticeship is successful, they return to society as men and are only then permitted to take a wife.

Another dramatic African case comes from nearby Ethiopia: the Amhara, a Semitic-speaking tribe of rural cultivators. They have a passionate belief in masculinity called *wand-nat*. This idea involves aggressiveness, stamina, and bold "courageous action" in the face of danger; it means never backing down when threatened (Levine 1966:18). To show their wand-nat, the Amhara youths are forced to engage in whipping contests called *buhe* (Reminick 1982:32). During the whipping ceremonies, in which all able-bodied male adolescents must participate for their reputations' sake, the air is filled with the cracking of whips. Faces are lacerated, ears torn open, and red and bleeding welts appear (ibid.:33). Any sign of weakness is greeted with taunts and mockery. As if this were not enough, adolescent Amhara boys are wont to prove their virility by scarring their arms with red-hot embers (Levine 1966:19). In these rough ways the boys actualize the exacting Amhara "ideals of masculinity" (Reminick 1976:760).

Significantly, this violent testing is not enough for these virile Ethiopians. Aside from showing physical hardihood and courage in the buhe matches, a young man must demonstrate his potency on his wedding night by waving a bloody sheet of marital consummation before the assembled kinsmen (ibid.:760–61). As well as demonstrating the bride's virginity, this ceremonial defloration is a talisman of masculinity for the Amhara groom. The Amhara's proof of manhood, like that of the Trukese, is both sexual and violent, and his performances both on the battlefield and in the marriage bed must be visibly displayed, recorded, and confirmed by the group; otherwise he is no man.

Halfway around the world, in the high mountains of Melanesia, young boys undergo similar trials before being admitted into the select of club of manhood. In the New Guinea Highlands, boys are torn from their mothers and forced to undergo a series of brutal masculinizing rituals (Herdt 1982). These include whipping, flailing, beating, and other forms of terrorization by older men, which the boys must endure stoically and silently. As in Ethiopia, the flesh is scored and blood flows freely. These Highlanders believe that without such hazing, boys will never mature into men but will remain weak and childlike. Real men are made, they insist, not born.

PARALLELS

To be sure, there are some contextual similarities in these last few examples. The Amhara, Masai, and New Guinea Highlanders share one feature in common beyond the stress on manhood: they are fierce warrior peoples, or were in the recent past. One may argue that their bloody rites prepare young boys for the idealized life of the warrior that awaits them. So much is perhaps obvious: some Western civilizations also subject soft youths to rough hazing and initiations in order to toughen them up for a career of soldiering, as in the U.S. Marines (Raphael 1988). But these trials are by no means confined to militaristic cultures or castes. Let us take another African example.

Among the relatively peaceful !Kung Bushmen of southwest Africa (Thomas 1959; Lee 1979), manhood is also a prize to be grasped

through a test. Accurately calling themselves "The Harmless People" (Thomas 1959), these nonviolent Bushmen have never fought a war in their lives. They have no military weapons, and they frown upon physical violence (which, however, sometimes does occur). Yet even here, in a culture that treasures gentleness and cooperation above all things, the boys must earn the right to be called men by a test of skill and endurance. They must single-handedly track and kill a sizable adult antelope, an act that requires courage and hardiness. Only after their first kill of such a buck are they considered fully men and permitted to marry.

Other examples of stressed manhood among gentle people can be found in the New World, in aboriginal North America. Among the nonviolent Fox tribe of Iowa, for example, "being a man" does not come easily (Gearing 1970:51). Based on stringent standards of accomplishment in tribal affairs and economic pursuits, real manhood is said to be "the Big Impossible," an exclusive status that only the nimble few can achieve (ibid.:51–52). Another American Indian example is the Tewa people of New Mexico, also known as the Pueblo Indians. These placid farmers, who are known today for their serene culture, gave up all warfare in the last century. Yet they subject their boys to a severe hazing before they can be accounted men. Between the ages of twelve and fifteen, the Tewa boys are taken away from their homes, purified by ritual means, and then whipped mercilessly by the Kachina spirits (their fathers in disguise). Each boy is stripped naked and lashed on the back four times with a crude yucca whip that draws blood and leaves permanent scars. The adolescents are expected to bear up impassively under the beating to show their fortitude. The Tewa say that this rite makes their boys into men, that otherwise manhood is doubtful. After the boys' ordeal, the Kachina spirits tell them, "You are now a man. . . . You are made a man" (Hill 1982:220). Although Tewa girls have their own (nonviolent) initiations, there is no parallel belief that girls have to be *made* women, no "big impossible" for them; for the Tewa and the Fox, as for the other people above, womanhood develops naturally, needing no cultural intervention, its predestined arrival at menarche commemorated rather than forced by ritual (ibid.:209–10).

Nor are such demanding efforts at proving oneself a man confined to primitive peoples or those on the margins of civilization. In urban Latin America, for example, as described by Oscar Lewis (1961:38), a man must prove his manhood every day by standing up to challenges and insults, even though he goes to his death "smiling." As well as being tough and brave, ready to defend his family's honor at the drop of a hat, the urban Mexican, like the Amhara man, must also perform adequately in sex and father many children. Such macho exploits are also common among many of the peasant and pastoral peoples who reside in the cradle of the ancient Mediterranean civilizations. In the Balkans, for instance, the category of "real men" is clearly defined. A real man is one who drinks heavily, spends money freely, fights bravely, and raises a large family (Simic 1969, 1983). In this way he shows an "indomitable virility" that distinguishes him from effeminate counterfeits (Denich 1974:250). In eastern Morocco, true men are distinguished from effete men on the basis of physical prowess and heroic acts of both feuding and sexual potency; their manly deeds are memorialized in verses sung before admiring crowds at festivals, making manhood a kind of communal celebration (Marcus 1987:50). Likewise, for the Bedouin of Egypt's Western Desert, "real men" are contrasted with despicable weaklings who are "no men." Real Bedouin men are bold and courageous, afraid of nothing. Such men assert their will at any cost and stand up to any challenge; their main attributes are "assertiveness and the quality of potency" (Abu-Lughod 1986:88–89). Across the sea, in Christian Crete, men in village coffee shops proudly sing paeans to their own virility, their self-promotion having been characterized as the "poetics of manhood" by Michael Herzfeld (1985a:15). These Cretans must demonstrate their "manly selfhood" by stealing sheep, procreating large families,

and besting other men in games of chance and skill (ibid.).

Examples of this pressured manhood with its almost talismanic qualities could be given almost indefinitely and in all kinds of contexts. Among most of the peoples that anthropologists are familiar with, true manhood is a precious and elusive status beyond mere maleness, a hortatory image that men and boys aspire to and that their culture demands of them as a measure of belonging. Although this stressed or embattled quality varies in intensity, becoming highly marked in southern Spain, Morocco, Egypt, and some other Mediterranean-area traditions, true manhood in other cultures frequently shows an inner insecurity that needs dramatic proof. Its vindication is doubtful, resting on rigid codes of decisive action in many spheres of life: as husband, father, lover, provider, warrior. A restricted status, there are always men who fail the test. These are the negative examples, the effete men, the men-who-are-no-men, held up scornfully to inspire conformity to the glorious ideal.

Perhaps these stagy routes to manhood seem bizarre to us at first glance. But none of them should surprise most Anglophone readers, for we too have our manly traditions, both in our popular culture and in literary genres. Although we may choose less flamboyant modes of expression than the Amhara or Trukese, we too have regarded manhood as an artificial state, a challenge to be overcome, a prize to be won by fierce struggle: if not "the big impossible," then certainly doubtful.

For example, let us take a people and a social stratum far removed from those above: the gentry of modern England. There, young boys were traditionally subjected to similar trials on the road to their majority. They were torn at a tender age from mother and home, as in East Africa or in New Guinea, and sent away in age sets to distant testing grounds that sorely took their measure. These were the public boarding schools, where a cruel "trial by ordeal," including physical violence and terrorization by elder males, provided a passage to a "social state of manhood" that their parents thought could be achieved in no other way (Chandos 1984:172). Supposedly, this harsh training prepared young Oxbridge aristocrats for the self-reliance and fortitude needed to run the British Empire and thereby manufactured "a serviceable elite as stylized as Samurai" (ibid.:346). Even here, in Victorian England, a culture not given over to showy excess, manhood was an artificial product coaxed by austere training and testing.

Similar ideas motivated educators on both sides of the Atlantic, for example, the founders of the Boy Scouts. Their chartered purpose, as they put it in their pamphlets and manuals, was to "make big men of little boys" by fostering "an independent manhood," as though this were not to be expected from nature alone (cited by Hantover 1978:189). This obsessive moral masculinization in the English-speaking countries went beyond mere mortals of the day to Christ himself, who was portrayed in turn-of-the-century tracts as "the supremely manly man," athletic and aggressive when necessary, no "Prince of Peace-at-any-price" (Conant 1915:117). The English publicist Thomas Hughes dilated rhapsodically about the manliness of Christ (1879), while his colleagues strove to depict Christianity as the "muscular" or "manly" faith. Pious and articulate English Protestants loudly proclaimed their muscular religion as an antidote to what Charles Kingsley derided as the "fastidious maundering, die-away effeminacy" of the High Anglican Church (cited in Gay 1982:532). Boys, faiths, and gods had to be made masculine; otherwise there was doubt. The same theme runs through much British literature of the time, most notably in Kipling, as for example in the following lines from the poem "If":

> If you can fill the unforgiving minute
> With sixty seconds worth of distance run,
> Yours is the Earth, and everything that's in it,
> And—which is more—you'll be a Man, my son!

Consequent only to great deeds, being a Kiplingesque man is more than owning the Earth, a truly imperial masculinity consonant with empire building. The same theme of "iffy" heroism runs through many aspects of

popular middle-class American culture today. Take, for example, the consistent strain in U.S. literature of masculine *Bildungsroman*—the ascension to the exalted status of manhood under the tutelage of knowledgeable elders, with the fear of failure always lurking menancingly in the background. This theme is most strongly exemplified by Ernest Hemingway, of course, notably in the Nick Adams stories, but it is also found in the work of such contemporaries as William Faulkner and John Dos Passos, and in such Hemingway epigones as Studs Terkel, Norman Mailer, James Dickey, Frederick Exley, and—the new generation—Robert Stone, Jim Harrison, and Tom McGuane. This "virility school" in American letters (Schwenger 1984:13), was sired by Papa Hemingway (if one discounts Jack London) and nurtured thereafter by his acolytes, but it is now in its third or fourth generation and going strong (for a feminist view see Fetterly 1978).

In contemporary literary America, too, manhood is often a mythic confabulation, a Holy Grail, to be seized by long and arduous testing. Take, for example, this paradigmatic statement by Norman Mailer (1968:25): "Nobody was born a man; you earned manhood provided you were good enough, bold enough." As well as echoing his spiritual forebears, both British and American, Mailer articulates here the unwritten sentiments of the Trukese, the Amhara, the Bushmen, and countless other peoples who have little else in common except this same obsessive "quest for male validation" (Raphael 1988:67). Although some of us may smile at Mailer for being so histrionic and sophomoric about it, he nevertheless touches a raw nerve that pulsates through many cultures as well as our own. Nor is Mailer's challenge representative of only a certain age or stratum of American society. As the poet Leonard Kriegel (1979:14) says in his reflective book about American manhood, "In every age, not just our own, manhood was something that had to be won."

Looking back, for instance, one is reminded of the cultural values of the antebellum American South. Southerners, whatever their class, placed great stress on a volatile manly honor as a defining feature of the southern character, a fighting principle. Indeed, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, in his book *Southern Honor* (1982), has argued convincingly that this touchy notion was a major element behind southern secessionism and thus an important and underrated political factor in U.S. history. A defense of southern "manliness" was in fact offered by Confederate writers of the time, including the South Carolina firebrand Charles C. Jones, as one justification for regional defiance, political separation, and, finally, war (cited in McPherson 1988:41). And of course similar ideals are enshrined in the frontier folklore of the American West, past and present, as exemplified in endless cowboy epics.

This heroic image of an achieved manhood is being questioned in America by feminists and by so-called liberated men themselves (Pleck 1981; Brod 1987). But for decades, it has been widely legitimized in U.S. cultural settings ranging from Italian-American gangster culture to Hollywood Westerns, private-eye tales, the current Rambo imagoes, and children's He-Man dolls and games; it is therefore deeply ingrained in the American male psyche. As the anthropologist Robert LeVine (1979:312) says, it is an organization of cultural principles that function together as a "guiding myth within the confines of our culture." But given the similarities between contemporary American notions of manliness and those of the many cultures discussed above, can we drop LeVine's qualifying phrase about "the confines of our culture"? Can we speak instead of an archetype or "deep structure" of masculinity, as Andrew Tolson (1977:56) puts it? And if so, what explains all these similarities? Why the trials and the testing and the seemingly gratuitous agonies of man-playing? Why is so much indoctrination and motivation needed in all these cultures to make real men? What is there about "official" manliness that requires such effort, such challenge, and such investment? And why should manhood be so desirable a state and at the same time be conferred so grudgingly in so many societies? These are some of the questions I want to consider here. Only a broadly comparative approach can begin to answer them.

MANHOOD AND GENDER ROLE

Let us pause at this point to take stock. What do we know so far about the origins of such gender imagery? Until very recently, studies of male and female were wedded to a persistent paradigm derived from mechanistic nineteenth-century antecedents. Most pervasive was the idea of generic types, a Universal Man counterpoised to a Universal Woman—a sexual symmetry supposedly derived from self-evident dualisms in biology and psychology (Katchadourian 1979:20). Freud, for example, held that anatomy was destiny, and Jung (1926) went so far as to develop universal principles of masculinity and femininity which he conveyed as "animus" and "anima," irreducible cores of sexual identity. Western literature and philosophy are full of such fundamental and supposedly immutable dualisms (Bakan 1966); they are also found in some Asian cosmologies, for example, the Chinese Yin and Yang, and in countless sets of binary oppositions both philosophical and scientific (e.g., Ortner 1974). What could be a neater polarity than sex? Our view of manhood in the past was often a simple reflection of these polar views of male and female "natures" or "principles." This view had some scientific support among biologists and psychologists, many of whom held that the aggressiveness of masculinity, including the testing and proving, was merely a consequence of male anatomy and hormones: men seek challenges because they are naturally aggressive. That is simply the way they are; women are the opposite. Period.

The way we look at sex roles, however, has changed drastically in the past two decades. Although appealing to many, sex dualisms and oppositions are definitely out of fashion, and so are sexual universals and biological determinisms. Part of the reason, aside from the recent movement away from static structural dualisms in the social sciences generally, lies in the feminist revolution of the past twenty years. Starting in the 1960s, the feminist attack on the bipolar mode of sexual thinking has shaken this dualistic edifice to its roots; but to be fair, it was never very sturdy to begin with. For example, both Freud and Jung accepted an inherent mixture of masculinity and femininity within each human psyche. Although he distinguished male and female principles, Jung to his credit admitted the existence of animus and anima to degrees in all people; bisexuality was in fact one of the bedrocks of Freud's psychological reasoning. In every human being, Freud (1905:220) remarks, "pure masculinity or femininity is not to be found either in a psychological or a biological sense. Every individual on the contrary displays a mixture."

Moreover, feminists of various backgrounds and persuasions (see, for example, Baker 1980; Sanday 1981; Otten 1985) have convincingly demonstrated that the conventional bipolar model based on biology is invalid and that sex (biological inheritance) and gender (cultural norms) are distinct categories that may have a relationship but not an isomorphic identity. Most observers would agree that hormones and anatomy do have an effect on our behavior. The biological anthropologist Melvin Konner has convincingly shown this in his book, *The Tangled Wing* (1982). Assessing the latest scientific and clinical literature in this highly acclaimed survey, Konner concludes that testosterone (the main male sex hormone) predisposes males to a slightly higher level of aggressivity than females (see also Archer and Lloyd 1985;138–39). But, as Konner freely admits, biology does not determine all of our behavior, or even very much of it, and cultures do indeed vary to some degree in assigning sex roles, measured in jobs and tasks. Discrete concepts of masculinity and femininity, based on secondary sex characteristics, exist in virtually all societies, but they are not always constructed and interfaced in the same way. Gender is a symbolic category. As such, it has strong moral overtones, and therefore is ascriptive and culturally relative—potentially changeful. On the other hand, sex is rooted in anat-

omy and is therefore fairly constant (Stoller 1968). It is now generally accepted, even among the most traditional male researchers, that masculine and feminine principles are not inherent polarities but an "overlapping continuum" (Biller and Borstelmann 1967: 255), or, as Spence and Helmreich put it (1979:4), "orthogonal dimensions."

Still, as we have seen from the examples above, there exists a recurrent cultural tendency to distinguish and to polarize gender roles. Instead of allowing free play in sex roles and gender ideals, most societies tend to exaggerate biological potentials by clearly differentiating sex roles and by defining the proper behavior of men and women as opposite or complementary. Even where so-called "third sexes" exist, as for example the Plains Indian berdache and the Omani xanith, conventional male and female types are still strongly differentiated. So the question of continuities in gender imaging must go beyond genetic endowment to encompass cultural norms and moral scripts. If there are archetypes in the male image (as there are in femininity), they must be largely culturally constructed as symbolic systems, not simply as products of anatomy, because anatomy determines very little in those contexts where the moral imagination comes into play. The answer to the manhood puzzle must lie in culture; we must try to understand why culture uses or exaggerates biological potentials in specific ways.

PREVIOUS INTERPRETATIONS

Some feminists and other relativists have perceived the apparent contradiction between the theoretical arbitrariness of gender concepts and the empirical convergence of sex roles. Explanations have therefore been offered to account for it. The existing explanations are interesting and useful, and I do not argue against them on the grounds of logical consistency. Rather, I think that the wrong questions have been asked in this inquiry. Most explanations have been phrased in one of two ways, both ideologically satisfying depending upon one's point of view, but neither getting us very far analytically.

First, the question has been phrased by the more doctrinaire Marxists and some radical feminists in an idiom of pure conflict theory. They see gender ideology as having a purely exploitative function. Thus they ask, inevitably, cui bono? Since many male ideologies include an element of gender oppressiveness, or at least hierarchy (in the view of liberated Western intellectuals), some of these radicals regard masculine ideologies as masks or justifications for the oppression of women. They see male ideologies as mystifications of power relationships, as examples of false consciousness (see, for example, Ortner 1981; Godelier 1986). This explanation is probably true for some cases, at least as a partial explanation, especially in some extreme patriarchies where male dominance is very pronounced. But it cannot be true as a universal explanation, because it cannot account for instances in which males are tested for manhood but where there is relative sexual equality. We have seen one example of this in the African Bushmen (Thomas 1959; Lee 1979; Shostak 1981). Although these nonsexist foragers are often held up by feminists as a model of sexual egalitarianism (Shostak 1981), Bushmen boys must prove their manhood by hunting prowess. They must also undergo tests of hardiness and skill from which girls are excluded. . . . Their manhood is subject to proof and, conceptually, to diminishment or loss. The same is true of the Fox and the Tewa of North America. So if a conception of manhood has no oppressive function in these societies, what is it doing there? It seems that the conflict theorists are missing something.

The second idiom of explanation is equally reductionistic. Here, biological or psychological processes are given analytical priority. There are two forms of biopsychological reductionist argument. The first is biological/evolutionary à la Lionel Tiger in *Men in Groups* (1971). Tiger holds that men worry about manhood because evolutionary pressures have predisposed them to do so. Once we were all hunters, and our success and therefore the survival and expansion of the group depended upon our developing genetically determined "masculine tendencies," aggression and male bonding being principal among them. This sociobiological argument is useful in certain cases, again, most notably in the violent patriarchies. But it is demonstrably false as a universal explanation because there are many societies where "aggressive" hunting never played an important role, where men do not bond for economic purposes, where violence and war are devalued or unknown, and yet where men are today concerned about demonstrating manhood. Further, this argument commits the historical fallacy of proposing a historical explanation for a cultural trait that persists under changed circumstances.

The second genetic reductionism is the standard psychoanalytic one about male psychic development. It is based squarely on an orthodox reading of Freud's Oedipus complex and its derivative, castration anxiety. This orthodoxy has been challenged recently with a neo-Freudian viewpoint stressing other aspects of male development, which I find much more powerful. . . . The standard psychoanalytic view holds that men everywhere are defending against castration fears as a result of identical oedipal traumas in psychosexual development. Masculinity cults and ideals are compensations erected universally against such fears (Stephens 1967; Kline 1972).

In this view, the norms of masculinity are projected outward from the individual psyche onto the screen of culture; public culture is individual fantasy life writ large. I think this explanation is useful in some cases but supererogatory. More damaging, it fails to give proper weight to social constraints that enforce male conformity to manhood ideals; as we shall see, boys have to be encouraged—sometimes actually forced—by social sanctions to undertake efforts toward a culturally defined manhood, which by themselves they might not do. So the explanation cannot be one based solely on psychic projections. Moreover, the orthodox psychoanalytic view can also be demonstrated to be false at a universal level, for there are empirical exceptions to the culture of manhood. There are a few societies that do not place the usual stress on achieving a masculine image; in these exceptional "neuter" societies, males are freed from the need to prove themselves and are allowed a basically androgynous script, which, significantly, they find congenial. As these exceptions do exist, . . . the answer to the masculinity puzzle must have a social side to it, because formal variation cannot be explained on the basis of a psychological constant such as castration anxiety.

SOME HELP FROM THE POST-FREUDIANS

At this point we have to call upon some alternative models of male psychosexual development that accommodate social and relational factors. A psychological theory of masculinity that I find useful . . . derives in part from recent work by the post-Freudian ego psychologists. The list of relevant theorists and their works is long but may be reduced here to Erik Erikson, Ralph Greenson, Edith Jacobson, Margaret Mahler, Gregory Rochlin, Robert Stoller, and D. W. Winnicott.

The basic idea here concerns the special problems attached to the origin of masculinity as a category of self-identity distinct from femininity. The theory begins with the assumption that all infants, male and female, establish a primary identity, as well as a social bond, with the nurturing parent, the mother. This theory already departs from the classic Freudian assumption that the boy child has from the first a male identity and a natural heterosexual relationship with his mother that culminates in the oedipal conflict, that the boy's identity as male is axiomatic and unconflicted. This new theory goes on to posit an early and prolonged unity or psychic merging with the mother that Freud (1914) discussed under "primary narcissism," a period when the infant fails to distinguish between self and mother. The argument is that the physical separation of child and mother at birth does not bring with it a psychological separation of equivalent severity or finality.

As the child grows, it reaches the critical threshold that Mahler (1975) has called separation-individuation. At this juncture its growing awareness of psychic separateness from the mother combines with increased physical mobility and a motoric exercise of independent action, for example, walking, speaking, manipulating toys. These independent actions are rewarded socially both by parents and by other members of the group who want to see the child grow up (Erikson 1950). Boys and girls alike go through these same trial stages of separation, self-motivation, encouragement and reward, and protopersonhood; and both become receptive to social demands for gender-appropriate behavior. However, according to this theory, the boy child encounters special problems in the crucible of the separation-individuation stage that impede further progression toward independent selfhood.

The special liability for boys is the different fate of the primal psychic unity with the mother. The self-awareness of being a separate individual carries with it a parallel sense of a gender identity—being either a man or a woman, boy or girl. In most societies, each individual must choose one or the other unequivocally in order, also, to be a separate and autonomous person recognizable as such by peers and thus to earn acceptance. The special problem the boy faces at this point is in overcoming the previous sense of unity with the mother in order to achieve an independent identity defined by his culture as masculine—an effort functionally equivalent not only to psychic separation but also to creating an autonomous public persona. The girl does not experience this problem as acutely, according to this theory, because her femininity is reinforced by her original symbiotic unity with her mother, by the identification with her that precedes self-identity and that culminates with her own motherhood (Chodorow 1978). In most societies, the little boy's sense of self as independent must include a sense of the self as different from his mother, as separate from her both in ego-identity and in social role. Thus for the boy the task of separation and individuation carries an added burden and peril. Robert Stoller (1974:358) has stated this problem succinctly:

> While it is true the boy's first love object is heterosexual [the mother], he must perform a great deed to make this so: he must first separate his identity from hers. Thus the whole process of becoming masculine is at risk in the little boy from the day of birth on; his still-to-be-created masculinity is endangered by the primary, profound, primeval oneness with mother, a blissful experience that serves, buried but active in the core of one's identity, as a focus which, throughout life, can attract one to regress back to that primitive oneness. That is the threat latent in masculinity.

To become a separate person the boy must perform a great deed. He must pass a test; he must break the chain to his mother. He must renounce his bond to her and seek his own way in the world. His masculinity thus represents his separation from his mother and his entry into a new and independent social status recognized as distinct and opposite from hers. In this view the main threat to the boy's growth is not only, or even primarily, castration anxiety. The principal danger to the boy is not a unidimensional fear of the punishing father but a more ambivalent fantasy-fear about the mother. The ineradicable fantasy is to return to the primal maternal symbiosis. The inseparable fear is that restoring the oneness with the mother will overwhelm one's independent selfhood.

Recently, armed with these new ideas, some neo-Freudians have begun to focus more specifically on the puzzle of masculine role modeling cults. They have been less concerned with the questions of gender identity and castration anxiety than with the related questions of regression and its relation to social role. In a recent symposium on the subject, the psychoanalyst Gerald Fogel (1986:10) argues that the boy's dilemma goes "beyond castration anxiety" to a conflicted effort to give up the anaclitic unity with the mother, which robs him of his independence. In the same symposium, another psychoanalyst (Cooper 1986:128) refers to the comforting sense of omnipotence that this symbiotic unity with the mother affords. This sense of omnipotence, of narcissistic completeness, sensed and retained in fantasy as a blissful experience of oneness with the mother, he argues, is what draws the boy back so powerfully toward childhood and away from the challenge of an autonomous manhood. In this view, the struggle for masculinity is a battle against these regressive wishes and fantasies, a hard-fought renunciation of the longings for the prelapsarian idyll of childhood.

From this perspective, then, the manhood equation is a "revolt against boyishness" (Schafer 1986:100). The struggle is specifically "against regression" (ibid.). This revisionist theory provides us with a psychological key to the puzzle of manhood norms and ideals. Obviously, castration fear is also important from an individual point of view. But manhood ideologies are not only intrapsychic; they are also collective representations that are institutionalized as guiding images in most societies. To understand the meaning of manhood from a sociological point of view, to appreciate its social rather than individual functions and causes, regression is the more important variable to consider. The reason for this is that, in aggregate, regression poses a more serious threat to society as a whole. As we shall see, regression is unacceptable not only to the individual but also to his society as a functioning mechanism, because most societies demand renunciation of escapist wishes in favor of a participating, contributing adulthood. Castration anxiety, though something that all men may also need to resolve, poses no such aggregate threat to social continuity. In sum, manhood imagery can be interpreted from this post-Freudian perspective as a defense against the eternal child within, against puerility, against what is sometimes called the Peter Pan complex (Hallman 1969).

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Neither Man nor Woman: The Hijras of India

Serena Nanda

The hijra role is a magnet that attracts people with many different kinds of cross-gender identities, attributes, and behaviors—people whom we in the West would differentiate as eunuchs, homosexuals, transsexuals, hermaphrodites, and transvestites. Such individuals, of course, exist in our own and perhaps all societies. What is noteworthy about the hijras is that the role is so deeply rooted in Indian culture that it can accommodate a wide variety of temperaments, personalities, sexual needs, gender identities, cross-gender behaviors, and levels of commitment without losing its cultural meaning. The ability of the hijra role to succeed as a symbolic reference point giving significant meaning to the lives of the many different kinds of people who make up the hijra community, is undoubtedly related to the variety and significance of alternative gender roles and gender transformations in Indian mythology and traditional culture.

Whereas Westerners feel uncomfortable with the ambiguities and contradictions inherent in such in-between categories as transvestism, homosexuality, hermaphroditism,

and transgenderism, and make strenuous attempts to resolve them, Hinduism not only accommodates such ambiguities, but also views them as meaningful and even powerful.

In Hindu mythology, ritual, and art—important vehicles for transmitting the Hindu world view—the power of the combined man/woman is a frequent and significant theme. Indian mythology contains numerous examples of androgynes, impersonators of the opposite sex, and individuals who undergo sex changes, both among deities and humans. These mythical figures are well known as part of Indian popular culture, which helps explain the ability of the hijras to maintain a meaningful place for themselves within Indian society in an institutionalized third gender role.

One of the most important sexually ambivalent figures in Hinduism with whom hijras identify is Shiva, a deity who incorporates both male and female characteristics.[1] Shiva is an ascetic—one who renounces sex—and yet he appears in many erotic and procreative roles. His most powerful symbol and object of worship is the phallus—but the phallus is almost always set in the *yoni,* the symbol of the female genitals. One of the most popular forms of Shiva is that of *Ardhanarisvara,* or half-man/half-woman, which represents Shiva united with his shakti (female creative power). Hijras say that worshipers of Shiva give them special respect because of this close identification, and hijras often worship at Shiva temples. In the next chapter, I look more closely at the identification of the hijras with Shiva, particularly in connection with the ritual of emasculation.

Other deities also take on sexually ambiguous or dual gender manifestations. Vishnu and Krishna (an *avatar,* or incarnation, of Vishnu) are sometimes pictured in androgynous ways. In one myth, Vishnu transforms himself into Mohini, the most beautiful woman in the world, in order to take back the sacred nectar from the demons who have stolen it. In another well-known myth, Krishna takes on the form of a female to destroy a demon called Araka. Araka's strength came from his chasteness. He had never set eyes on a woman, so Krishna took on the form of a beautiful woman and married him. After 3 days of the marriage, there was a battle and Krishna killed the demon. He then revealed himself to the other gods in his true form. Hijras, when they tell this story, say that when Krishna revealed himself he told the other gods that "there will be more like me, neither man nor woman, and whatever words come from the mouths of these people, whether good [blessings] or bad [curses], will come true."

In Tamil Nadu, in South India, an important festival takes place in which hijras, identifying with Krishna, become wives, and then widows, of the male deity Koothandavar. The story behind this festival is that there were once two warring kingdoms. To avert defeat, one of the kings agreed to sacrifice his eldest son to the gods, asking only that he first be allowed to arrange his son's marriage. Because no woman could be found who would marry a man about to be sacrificed, Krishna came to earth as a woman to marry the king's son, and the king won the battle as the gods promised.

For this festival, men who have made vows to Koothandavar dress as women and go through a marriage ceremony with him. The priest performs the marriage, tying on the traditional wedding necklace. After 1 day, the deity is carried to a burial ground. There, all of those who have "married" him remove their wedding necklaces, cry and beat their breasts, and remove the flowers from their hair, as a widow does in mourning for her husband. Hijras participate by the thousands in this festival, coming from all over India. They dress in their best clothes and jewelry and ritually reaffirm their identification with Krishna, who changes his form from male to female.

Several esoteric Hindu ritual practices involve male transvestism as a form of devotion. Among the Sakhibhava (a sect that worships Vishnu) Krishna may not be worshiped directly. The devotees in this sect worship Radha, Krishna's beloved, with the aim of becoming her attendant: It is through her, as Krishna's consort, that Krishna is indirectly worshiped. The male devotees imitate feminine behavior, including simulated menstruation; they also may engage in sexual acts with men as acts of devotion, and some devotees even castrate themselves in order to more nearly approximate a female identification with Radha (Bullough, 1976:267–268; Kakar, 1981; Spratt, 1966:315).

Hinduism in general holds that all persons contain within themselves both male and female principles. In the Tantric school of Hinduism, the Supreme Being is conceptualized as one complete sex containing male and female sexual organs. Hermaphroditism is the ideal. In some of these sects, male (never female) transvestism is used as a way of transcending one's own sex, a prerequisite to achieving salvation. In other Tantric sects, religious exercises involve the male devotee imitating a woman in order to realize the woman in himself: Only in this way do they believe that true love can be realized (Bullough, 1976:260).

Traditional Hinduism makes many specific references to alternative sexes and sexual ambiguity among humans as well as among gods. Ancient Hinduism, for example, taught that there was a third sex, which itself was divided into four categories: the male eunuch, called the "waterless" because he had desiccated testes; the "testicle voided," so called because he had been castrated; the hermaphrodite; and the "not woman," or female eunuch (which usually refers to a woman who does not menstruate). Those who were more feminine (whether males or females) wore false breasts and imitated the voice, gestures, dress, delicacy, and timidity of women (Bullough, 1976:268). All of these categories of persons had the function of providing alternative techniques of sexual gratification, some of which are mentioned in the classical Hindu sex manual, the Kamasutra.

Another ancient reference to a third sex, one that sounds similar to the hijras, is a prostitute named Sukumarika ("good little girl"), who appears in a Sanskrit play. Sukumarika is accused of being sexually insatiable. As a third sex, she has some characteristics advantageous in her profession: "She has no breasts to get in the way of a tight embrace, no monthly period to interrupt the enjoyment of passion, and no pregnancy to mar her beauty" (O'Flaherty, 1980:299).

As just suggested, ancient Hindus, like contemporary ones, appeared to be ambivalent about such third gender roles and the associated alternative sexual practices. The figure of Sukumarika, for example, was considered inauspicious to look upon and, not coincidentally, similar to the hijras today, inspired both fear and mockery. Historically, both eunuchism and castration were looked down on in ancient India, and armed women and old men were preferred to eunuchs for guarding court ladies (Basham, 1954:172). Whereas homosexuality was generally not highly regarded in ancient India, such classic texts as the Kamasutra, however, did describe, even prescribe, sexual practices for eunuchs, for example, "mouth congress."[2]

Homosexuality was condemned in the ancient lawbooks. The Laws of Manu, the first formulation of the Hindu moral code, held that men who engaged in anal sex lost their caste. Other medieval writers held that men who engaged in oral sex with other men were reborn impotent. But homosexuals were apparently tolerated in reality. Consistent with the generally "sex positive" attitude of Hinduism, Vatsyayana, author of the Kamasutra, responded to critics of oral and anal sex by saying that "in all things connected with love, everybody should act according to the custom of his country, and his own inclination," asking a man to consider only whether the act "is agreeable to his nature and himself" (Burton, 1964:127).

Even the gods were implicated in such activities: Krishna's son Samba was notorious for his homosexuality and dressed as female, often a pregnant woman. As Sambali, Samba's name became a synonym for eunuch (Bullough, 1976:267). An important ritual at the Jagannatha temple in Orissa involves a sequence in which Balabhadra, the ascetic elder brother of the deity Jagannatha, who is identified with Shiva, is homosexually seduced by a transvestite (a young man dressed as a female temple dancer) (Marglin, 1985:53). In

some Hindu myths a male deity takes on a female form specifically to experience sexual relations with another male deity.

Islam also provides a model of an in-between gender—not a mythological one, but a true historical figure—in the traditional role of the eunuch who guarded the ladies of the harem, under Moghul rule. Hijras often mention this role as the source of their prestige in Indian society. In spite of the clear connection of hijras with Hinduism, Islam not only provides a powerful positive model of an alternative gender, but also contributes many elements to the social organization of the hijra community. Hijras today make many references to the glorious, preindependence Indian past when the Muslin rulers of princely states were exceedingly generous and reknowned for their patronage of the hijras (see Lynton & Rajan, 1974).

Today the religious role of the hijras, derived from Hinduism, and the historical role of the eunuchs in the Muslim courts have become inextricably entwined in spite of the differences between them. Hijras are distinguished from the eunuchs in Muslim courts by their transvestism and their association with men. Muslim eunuchs dressed as males and associated with women and, unlike the hijras, were sexually inactive. More importantly, the role of hijras as ritual performers is linked to their sexual ambiguity as this incorporates the elements of the erotic and the ascetic; Muslim eunuchs had no such powers or roles. Today, the collapsing of the role of the hijra and that of the Muslim eunuchs leads to certain contradictions, but these seem easily incorporated into the hijra culture by hijras themselves; only the Western observer seems to feel the need to separate them conceptually.

The hijras, as human beings who are neither man nor woman, call into question the basic social categories of gender on which Indian society is built. This makes the hijras objects of fear, abuse, ridicule, and sometimes pity. But hijras are not merely ordinary human beings; . . . they are also conceptualized as special, sacred beings, through a ritual transformation. The many examples that I have cited above indicate that both Indian society and Hindu mythology provide some positive, or at least accommodating, roles for such sexually ambiguous figures. Within the context of Indian social roles, sexually ambiguous figures are associated with sexual specializations; in myth and through ritual, such figures become powerful symbols of the divine and of generativity.

Thus, where Western culture strenuously attempts to resolve sexual contradictions and ambiguities, by denial or segregation, Hinduism appears content to allow opposites to confront each other without resolution, "celebrating the idea that the universe is boundlessly various, and . . . that all possibilities may exist without excluding each other" (O'Flaherty, 1973:318). It is this characteristically Indian ability to tolerate, even embrace, contradictions and variation at the social, cultural, and personality levels that provides the context in which the hijras cannot only be accommodated, but even granted a measure of power.

NOTES

1. The Hindu Triad, or Trinity, is made up of Brahma, the creator; Vishnu, the preserver (protector and sustainer of the world); and Shiva, the destroyer. Brahma is the Supreme Being and the creator of all creatures. Vishnu is believed to descend into the world in many different forms (*avataras*, or incarnations) and is worshiped throughout India. One of Vishnu's incarnations is Ram. Krishna is sometimes considered an aspect or incarnation of Vishnu but more commonly is worshiped as a god in his own right. Shiva is the god of destruction or absorption, but he also creates and sustains life. In addition to the Triad Hinduism includes a large number of deities, both male and female, all of whom are aspects of the Absolute. This concept of the Absolute Reality also includes matter and finite spirits as its integral parts; the divine spirit is embodied in the self and the world, as well as in more specifically religious figures. The religious concepts of Hinduism are expressed in the two great Hindu epics, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana, both of which are familiar to every Hindu and many non-Hindus as well. These epics, along with other chronicles of the gods and goddesses, are frequently enacted in all forms of popular and elite culture. Thus, for the hijras, particularly the Hindu hijras, the incorporation of these divine models of behavior into their own world view and community image is in no way unusual.
2. In an editor's note Burton (1962:124) suggests that this practice is no longer common in India and has been replaced by sodomy, which was introduced after the Muslim period began in the tenth century. In a later chapter (Nanda 1990) we will see that Meera, a hijra elder, specifically says that oral sex is "not a good thing and goes against the wishes of the hijra goddess" and that it brings all kinds of problems for those who practice it.

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Amazons of America: Female Gender Variance

Walter L. Williams

When Pedro de Magalhães de Gandavo explored northeastern Brazil in 1576, he visited the Tupinamba Indians and reported on a remarkable group of female warriors.

> There are some Indian women who determine to remain chaste: these have no commerce with men in any manner, nor would they consent to it even if refusal meant death. They give up all the duties of women and imitate men, and follow men's pursuits as if they were not women. They wear the hair cut in the same way as the men, and go to war with bows and arrows and pursue game, always in company with men; each has a woman to serve her, to whom she says she is married, and they treat each other and speak with each other as man and wife.[1]

Gandavo and other explorers like Orellana were evidently so impressed with this group of women that they named the river which

flowed through that area the River of the Amazons, after the ancient Greek legend of women warriors.

To what extent did this recognized status for women exist among Native Americans? The sources are few, since European male explorers dealt almost entirely with aboriginal men. Most documents are unclear about anything to do with women, and as a result it is difficult to make conclusions about those females who took up a role similar to that of the Tupinamba Amazons. But we can begin by making it clear that this institution was not the same as berdache. As specified earlier, the term *berdache* clearly originated as a word applying to males. Anthropologist Evelyn Blackwood has done a thorough search of the ethnographic literature and found mention of a recognized female status in thirty-three North American groups. Because she sees it as distinct from berdachism, she does not use the term "female berdache" but instead calls this role "cross-gender female." She notes that it was most common in California, the Southwest, the Northwest, and the Great Basin, but she also notes a few instances among peoples of the Subarctic and the northern Plains.[2]

Because I have some disagreement with the concept of gender crossing, and also because "cross-gender female" is linguistically awkward, I prefer the word *amazon*. This term is parallel to berdache, but it is a status specific to women that is not subservient to male definitions. American Indian worldviews almost always recognize major differences between amazons and berdaches. With the single exception of the Navajo, those cultures that recognize alternative roles for both females and males, have distinct terminologies in their languages that are different for each sex. The Papago word translates as "Light Woman," and such women even up to the 1940s were considered simply socially tolerated variations from the norm.[3] Among the Yumas of the Southwest, berdaches are called *elxa'*, while amazons are called *kwe'rhame.* They are defined as "women who passed for men, dressed like men and married women." There is no ceremony marking their assumption of the role, as there is for the *elxa'*.[4]

The parents of a *kwe'rhame* might try to push her into feminine pursuits, but such a child manifested an unfeminine character from infancy. She was seen as having gone through a change of spirit as a result of dreams. In growing up she was observed to hunt and play with boys, but she had no interest in heterosexual relations with them. According to Yuman informants in the 1920s, a *kwe'rhame* "wished only to become a man." Typical of amazons in several cultures, she was said to have a muscular build and to desire to dress like a man, and it was also claimed that she did not menstruate. A Yuman *kwe'rhame* married a woman and established a household with herself as husband. She was known for bravery and for skillful fighting in battle.[5]

RAISING A FEMALE HUNTER

While there are parallels between berdaches and amazons, female amazons are also very different from male berdaches. Among the Kaska Indians of the Subarctic, having a son was extremely important because the family depended heavily on big-game hunting for food. If a couple had too many female children and desired a son to hunt for them in their old age, they would simply select a daughter to "be like a man." When the youngest daughter was about five years old, and it was obvious that the mother was not going to produce a son, the parents performed a transformation ceremony. They tied the dried ovaries of a bear to a belt which she always wore. That was believed to prevent menstruation, to protect her from pregnancy, and to give her luck on the hunt. According to Kaska informants, she was dressed like a male and trained to do male tasks, "often developing great strength and usually becoming an outstanding hunter."[6]

The Ingalik Indians of Alaska, closely related to the Kaska as part of the Dene culture, also recognized a similar status for females. Such a female even participated in the male-only activities of the *kashim,* which involved sweat baths. The men ignored her morphological sex in this nude bathing, and accepted her as a man on the basis of her gender behavior.[7] Other notable Subarctic amazons from the eighteenth century included the leader of the eastern Kutchin band from Arctic Red River, and a Yellowknife Chipewayan who worked for peace between the various peoples of the central Subarctic.[8]

Among the Kaskas, if a boy made sexual advances to such a female, she reacted violently. Kaska people explained her reaction thus: "She knows that if he gets her then her luck with game will be broken." She would have relationships only with women, achieving sexual pleasure through clitoral friction, "by getting on top of each other."[9] This changed-gender demonstrates the extreme malleability of people with respect to gender roles. Such assignment operates independently of a person's morphological sex and can determine both gender status and erotic behavior.

TRANSFORMATION INTO A MAN

In other areas, becoming an amazon was seen to be a choice of the female herself. Among the Kutenai Indians of the Plateau, for example, in what is now southern British Columbia, such a female became famous as a prophet and shaman. She is remembered in Kutenai oral tradition as being quite large and heavy boned. About 1808 she left Kutenai to go with a group of white fur traders, and married one of them. A year later, however, she returned to her people and claimed that her husband had operated on her and transformed her into a man. Kutenai informants from the 1930s told ethnographer Claude Schaeffer that when she returned she said: "I'm a man now. We Indians did not believe the white people possessed such power from the supernaturals. I can tell you that they do, greater power than we have. They changed my sex while I was with them. No Indian is able to do that." She changed her name to Gone-To-The-Spirits, and claimed great spiritual power. Whenever she met people she performed a dance as a symbol of her transformation.[10]

Following her return, she began to dress in men's clothes, and to carry a gun. She also began to court young women. After several rebuffs she met a divorced woman who agreed to marry her. "The two were now to be seen constantly together. The curious attempted to learn things from the consort, but the latter only laughed at their efforts." A rumor began that Gone-To-The-Spirits, for the pleasure of her wife, had fashioned an artificial phallus made of leather. But whatever their sexual technique, the wife later moved out because of Gone-To-The-Spirits's losses in gambling. Thereafter, Gone-To-The-Spirits changed wives frequently.

Meanwhile, she began to have an interest in warfare and was accepted as a warrior on a raid. Upon coming to a stream, Kutenai oral tradition recalled, the raiders would undress and wade across together but she delayed so as to cross alone. On one of these crossings, her brother doubled back to observe her. He saw her nude and realized that her sex had not been changed at all. Seeing him, she sat down in the water and pretended that her foot was injured. Later, trying to protect her reputation, she told the others that she was injured in the stream and had to sit. She declared that she hereafter wished to be called *Qa'nqon ka'mek klau'la* (Sitting-In-The-Water-Grizzly).

Her brother did not tell what he saw, but refused to call her by her new name. Later, she took still another wife, and as she had done with previous wives eventually began accusing her of infidelity. Qa'nqon was of a violent temper, and when she began to beat this wife, the brother intervened. He yelled out angrily, in the hearing of the entire camp: "You are hurting your woman friend. You have hurt other friends in the same way. You know that I saw you standing naked in the stream, where you tried to conceal your sex. That's why I never call you by your new name."[11]

After this, according to Kutenai informants, all the people knew that Qa'nqon had not really changed sex. It is conceivable that the community already knew about her sex before this pronouncement since Qa'nqon's ex-wives must have spread the truth. The oral tradition does not explain why women contin-

ued to marry the temperamental Qa'nqon. Soon after this incident, evidently, she and a wife (whether the same woman or another is unknown) left to serve as guides for white traders. The couple seemed to get along fine once they arrived at Fort Astoria on the Columbia River in 1811.

One trader named Alexander Ross characterized them as "two strange Indians, in the character of man and wife." "The husband," he said, "was a very shrewd and intelligent Indian" who gave them much information about the interior. Later, this trader learned that "instead of being man and wife, as they at first gave us to understand, they were in fact both women—and bold adventurous amazons they were." Qa'nqon served as guide for Ross's party on a trip up the Columbia to the Rocky Mountains. Ross recounted that "the man woman" spread a prophesy among the tribes they passed, saying that the Indians were soon going to be supplied with all the trading goods they desired.

> These stories, so agreeable to the Indian ear, were circulated far and wide; and not only received as truths, but procured so much celebrity for the two cheats, that they were the objects of attraction at every village and camp on the way; nor could we, for a long time, account for the cordial reception they met with from the natives, who loaded them for their good tidings with the most valuable articles they possessed—horses, robes, leather, and higuas [?]; so that, on our arrival at Oakinacken [Okanagon, near the present-day border of British Columbia and Washington State], they had no less than twenty-six horses, many of them loaded with the fruits of their false reports.[12]

Another white traveler in the area nearly a decade later heard the Indians still talking about Qa'nqon, whom they referred to as "Manlike Woman." She had acquired a widespread reputation as having supernatural powers and a gift of prophesy. Her most important prediction was that there would soon be a complete change in the land, with "fertility and plenty" for all tribes. According to this traveler, writing in 1823, she had predicted that the whites would be removed and a different race of traders would arrive "who would supply their wants in every possible manner. The poor deluded wretches, imagining that they would hasten this happy change by destroying their present traders, of whose submission there was no prospect, threatened to extirpate them."[13] What we can see from these stories is that Qa'nqon sparked a cultural movement similar to "cargo-cults" that twentieth-century anthropologists have observed among Melanesians and other tribal peoples coming in close contact with Western trade cargo goods. This movement also reflected the dissatisfaction the Indians felt with the white traders.

After establishing her fame, Qa'nqon returned to settle with the Kutenai and became noted as a shamanistic healer among her people. A twentieth-century elderly headman named Chief Paul remembered his father telling stories of her curing him of illnesses when he was a child. In 1825 she accompanied a Kutenai chief to the Hudson's Bay Company post among the Flathead Indians, taking the role of interpreter. The company trader described her as "a woman who goes in men's clothes and is a leading character among them. . . . [She] assumes a masculine character and is of some note among them."[14]

In 1837 she was traveling with some Flatheads when a Blackfoot raiding party surrounded them. Through her resourcefulness the Flatheads made an escape while she deceived the attackers. The Blackfeet were so angry that they tried to kill her, but after several shots she was still not seriously wounded. They then slashed her with their knives. But according to Kutenai oral tradition, "Immediately afterwards the cuts thus made were said to have healed themselves. . . . One of the warriors then opened up her chest to get at her heart and cut off the lower portion. This last wound she was unable to heal. It was thus *Qa'nqon* died." Afterward, the story goes, no wild animals disturbed her body.[15]

This story, which was passed down among the Kutenai for over a century, signifies the respect the Indians had for the shamanistic power of the "Manlike Woman." Even the animals recognized this power and respected it. It should be noted that the Kutenai did not recognize a berdache status for males. A tribe that had an alternative gender role for one sex did not necessarily have another role for the other sex. Native Americans did not see the two roles as synonymous so equating amazons with berdaches does not clarify the matter.

MANLIKE WOMAN

The Mohaves, like other cultures, have different words for berdaches and amazons. *Hwame* girls are known to throw away their dolls and refuse to perform feminine tasks. It is said that they dreamed about their role while still in the womb. Adults recognize this pattern and, according to ethnographer George Devereux, make "occasional half-hearted and not very hopeful attempts to discourage them from becoming inverts. When these efforts fail, they are subjected to a ritual, which is half 'test' of their true proclivities and half 'transition rite' and which authorizes them to assume the clothing and to engage in the occupations and sexual activities of their self-chosen sex." Adults then help the *hwame* to learn the same skills that boys are taught.[16]

Mohaves believe that such females do not menstruate. In the worldview of many American Indians, menstruation is a crucial part of defining a person as a woman. Some amazons may have in fact been nonmenstruating, or, since they wished to be seen as men, if they did menstruate they would hide any evidence of menses. The other Indians simply ignored any menstrual indicators out of deference to their desire to be treated like men.[17]

Mohaves also accept the fact that a *hwame* would marry a woman. There is even a way to incorporate children into these female relationships. If a woman becomes impregnated by a man, but later takes another lover, it is believed that the paternity of the child changes. This idea helps to prevent family friction in a society where relationships often change. So, if a pregnant woman later takes a *hwame* as a spouse, the *hwame* is considered the real father of the child.[18]

George Devereux, who lived among the Mohaves in the 1930s, was told about a famous late nineteenth-century *hwame* named Sahaykwisa. Her name was a masculine one, indicating that she had gone through the initiation rite for *hwames*. Nevertheless, she dressed more like a woman than a man, proving that cross-dressing is not a requirement for assuming amazon status. While she was feminine in appearance and had large breasts, Mohaves said that she (typical of others like her) did not menstruate. As evidence of this, they pointed out that she never got pregnant, despite the fact that she hired herself out as a prostitute for white men.

Sahaykwisa used the money that she received from this heterosexual activity to bestow gifts on women to whom she was attracted. With her industriousness as a farmer (a woman's occupation) and as a hunter (a man's occupation), she became relatively prosperous. She was also noted for her shamanistic ability to cure venereal diseases. Shamans who treated venereal diseases were regarded as lucky in love. This fame, plus her reputation as a good provider, led women to be attracted to her.

Sahaykwisa's first wife was a very pretty young woman, whom many men tried to lure away from her. Motivated by jealousy, they began teasing her, "Why do you want a *hwame* for a husband? A *hwame* has no penis; she only pokes you with her finger." The wife brushed off the remark saying "That is alright for me." But then later the wife eloped with a man. Such a breakup was not unusual, given the fact that heterosexual marriages among Mohaves were equally subject to change. After a time the wife returned to Sahaykwisa, having found the man less satisfying. People referred to Sahaykwisa by the name Hithpan Kudhape, which means split vulvae, denoting how the *hwame* would spread the genitals during sex. This part of the oral tradition indicates that the Mohaves were well aware that an amazon role involved sexual behavior with women.

While accepting these relationships, Mohaves nevertheless teased Sahaykwisa's wife unmercifully. While teasing is quite common in American Indian cultures generally, in this case it was done so much that the woman left a second time. Sahaykwisa then began to flirt with other women at social dances, soon easily

attracting another wife, and then a third one later on. Mohaves explained this by the fact that Sahaykwisa was, after all, lucky in love. Her reputation as a good provider was also an obvious factor. But after the third woman left her, and returned to the man from whom Sahaykwisa stole her, the man attacked the *hwame* and raped her. Rape was extremely uncommon among the Mohaves, so this incident had a major impact on her life.

Sahaykwisa became demoralized and an alcoholic, and ironically began having wanton sex with men. She claimed to have bewitched one man who rejected her advances, and when he died in the late 1890s she boasted about having killed him. The man's son was so enraged by this that he threw her into the Colorado River, where she drowned. In telling this story Devereux's Mohave informants were convinced that Sahaykwisa claimed witchcraft intentionally so that someone would kill her. They explained that she wanted to die and join the spirits of those she had earlier loved.[19]

While this story does not have a happy ending, it does nevertheless point out that female-female relationships were recognized. Sahaykwisa was killed because it was believed that she had killed another person by witchcraft, not because of her gender status or her sexual relations with women.

While the social role of the *hwame* was in some ways like that of men, the story of Sahaykwisa does not support Blackwood's view of gender *crossing*. The Mohaves did not in fact accept Sahaykwisa as a full-fledged man, and the wife was teased on that regard. She was regarded as a *hwame*, having a distinct gender status that was different than men, women, or *alyha*. Mohaves thus had four genders in their society.

To what extent an amazon was accepted as a man is unclear. The variation that existed among Indians of the Far West typifies this matter. The Cocopa *warrhameh* cut her hair and had her nose pierced as men did, and did not get tattooed as women did.[20] Among the late nineteenth-century Klamath a woman named Co'pak "lived like a man. . . . She tried to talk like a man and invariably referred to herself as one." Co'pak had a wife, with whom she lived for many years, and when the wife died Co'pak "observed the usual mourning, wearing a bark belt as a man does at this time." Nevertheless, this mourning may have been the standard for a "husband" rather than for a "man," and we do not know if Klamath custom made a distinction between the two categories. Co'pak also retained woman's dress, which certainly implies a less than total crossover. Other Klamaths continued to see her as a manlike woman rather than as a man.[21]

A survey of California Indian groups that recognized amazon status revealed that in half of the groups amazons performed both men's and women's work, while in the other half they did only men's work.[22] No doubt this variation of roles is typical of cultural diversity in aboriginal America generally.

Unlike Western culture, which tries to place all humans into strict conformist definitions of masculinity and femininity, some Native American cultures have a more flexible recognition of gender variance. They are able to incorporate such fluidity into their worldview by recognizing a special place for berdaches and another one for amazons. "Manlike Woman" is how Indians described the Kutenai female, and that phrase recurs in anthropological literature when direct translations are given. By paying more attention to words used by Indians themselves, we can make more precise definitions. Gender theory is now beginning to make such distinctions. Terms like gender crossing imply that there are only two genders, and one must "cross" from one to the other. As with the male berdache, most recent theorists argue, the amazon is either a distinct gender role, or is a gender-mixing status, rather than a complete changeover to an opposite sex role.[23]

WARRIOR WOMEN IN THE GREAT PLAINS

When we turn to the nomadic Plains cultures, the picture becomes even more complex. Here, an accepted amazon status was generally lacking. Female divergence into male activity was not recognized as a distinct gender

comparable to the institutionalized berdache role. Women could participate in male occupations on the hunt or in warfare, but this did not imply an alternative gender role. Precisely because they had various activities open to them on a casual and sporadic basis, there was not as much need to recognize a specific role for females behaving in a masculine way. For example, they could become "Warrior Women." Such a woman might join a war party for a specific occasion, like a retribution raid for the death of a relative. She might even accumulate war honors, called *coup*. But since it did not affect her status as a woman, she should not be confused with an amazon. Male warriors simply accepted female fighters as acting within the parameters of womanhood, without considering them a threat to their masculinity.[24]

Warrior women were not the same as amazons partly because their menstruation continued to define them as women. Among Plains peoples, as among many other American Indians, blood was seen as an important and powerful spiritual essence. An individual who bled would not be able to control the power of this bleeding, so if a person bled it might disrupt any important activity that depended on spiritual help, like a hunt or a raid. Consequently, if a woman began her period, the raid would have to be delayed while the spirits were placated. As a result of this belief, the "manly hearted women" who sometimes participated in warfare were almost always postmenopausal.[25]

This belief was not just a restriction on women; a male who bled from an accident or a wound had to go through the same efforts to placate the spirits. The matter was more a question of power than of restriction. Menstruation "was not something unclean or to be ashamed of," according to the Lakota shaman Lame Deer, but was sacred. A girl's first period was cause for great celebration. Still, Lame Deer concluded, "menstruation had a strange power that could bring harm under some circumstances."[26] Paula Gunn Allen explains: "Women are perceived to be possessed of a singular power, most vital during menstruation. . . . Indians do not perceive signs of womanness as contamination; rather they view them as so powerful that other 'medicines' may be cancelled by the very presence of that power." American Indians thought of power not so much in terms of political or economic power, but as supernatural power. Being a matter of spirituality, woman's power comes partly by her close association with the magical properties of blood.[27]

Another possible factor inhibiting the development of amazon status among Plains women had to do with the economic need for their labor and procreation. Women were responsible for the preparation of buffalo meat. Since a successful hunter could kill more bison than one woman could dress and preserve for food or trade, every available woman was needed to do this work. This economic system limited women's choice of occupation and put more pressure on them to marry than in other North American cultures. Furthermore, with the loss of men from warfare, there was the expectation that every woman would marry and have children.[28]

There was such a strong need for female labor that Plains men began taking multiple wives. A typical pattern was for an overworked wife to encourage her husband to take a second wife. The first wife now had higher status, as a senior wife who directed younger women, and the family as a whole benefited from the extra output of the additional wife. Quite often it would be the younger sisters of the first wife who were later brought in as co-wives. This pattern gave advantages to women. It kept female siblings together, giving them support and strength throughout their lives. In contrast to Western culture, which keeps women separated by promoting competition among them for men, Plains polygyny meant that wives were added to the family rather than replaced by divorce and serial monogamy.[29]

Despite these pressures on women to marry and procreate, even in the Plains culture there were exceptions. An amazon role was followed by a few females, with the most famous example being Woman Chief of the Crows. She was originally a Gros Ventre Indian who had been captured by Crow raiders when she was ten years old. She was adopted

by a Crow warrior, who observed her inclination for masculine pursuits. He allowed her to follow her proclivities, and in time she became a fearless horseback rider and skilled rifle shooter. Edward Denig, a white frontiersman who lived with the Crows in the early nineteenth century, knew Woman Chief for twelve years. He wrote that when she was still a young woman she "was equal if not superior to any of the men in hunting both on horseback and foot. . . . [She] would spend most of her time in killing deer and bighorn, which she butchered and carried home on her back when hunting on foot. At other times she joined in the surround on horse, could kill four or five buffalo at a race, cut up the animals without assistance, and bring the meat and hides home."[30]

After the death of the widowed man who adopted her, she assumed control of his lodge, "performing the double duty of father and mother to his children." She continued to dress like other women, but Denig, writing in 1855, remembered her as "taller and stronger than most women—her pursuits no doubt tending to develop strength of nerve and muscle." She became famous for standing off an attack from Blackfoot Indians, in which she killed three warriors while remaining unharmed herself: "This daring act stamped her character as a brave. It was sung by the rest of the camp, and in time was made known to the whole nation."[31]

A year later she organized her first raid and easily attracted a group of warriors to follow her. She stole seventy horses from a Blackfoot camp, and in the ensuing skirmish killed and scalped two enemies. For these acts of bravery she was awarded *coups,* and by her subsequent successful raids she built up a large herd of horses. As a successful hunter, she shared her meat freely with others. But it was as a warrior, Denig concluded, that her fame was most notable. In every engagement with enemy tribes, including raids on enemy camps, she distinguished herself by her bravery. Crows began to believe she had "a charmed life which, with her daring feats, elevated her to a point of honor and respect not often reached by male warriors." The Crows were proud of her, composing special songs to commemorate her gallantry. When the tribal council was held and all the chiefs assembled, she took her place among them, as the third-highest-ranked person in the tribe.[32]

Woman Chief's position shows the Crows' ability to judge individuals by their accomplishments rather than by their sex. Their accepting attitude also included Woman Chief's taking a wife. She went through the usual procedure of giving horses to the parents of her intended spouse. A few years later, she took three more wives. This plurality of women added also to her prestige as a chief. Denig concluded, "Strange country this, where [berdache] males assume the dress and perform the duties of females, while women turn men and mate with their own sex!"[33]

Denig's amazement did not denote any condemnation on his part, for individual traders on the frontier often accepted Indian ways of doing things. Rather, he respected his friend as a "singular and resolute woman. . . . She had fame, standing, honor, riches, and as much influence over the band as anyone except two or three leading chiefs. . . . For 20 years she conducted herself well in all things." In 1854 Woman Chief led a Crow peacekeeping mission to her native Gros Ventre tribe. Resentful because of her previous raids against them, some Gros Ventres trapped her and killed her. Denig concluded sadly, "This closed the earthly career of this singular woman." Her death so enraged the Crows that they refused to make peace with the Gros Ventres for many years.[34] Woman Chief's exceptionally high status was rather unique on the Plains; stories that were passed down made her a hero in the classic Plains mode. Even her death, at enemy hands, was typical of the pattern for the honored male warrior.

WIVES OF AMAZONS

What about the wives of the amazon? Woman Chief, like the other amazons, evidently had no difficulty finding women to marry. Yet, these women did not identify as lesbian in the Western sense of the word. American Indian women were not divided into separate categories of persons as is the case with Anglo-American homosexual and heterosexual women. The white lesbian often sees herself as a member of a minority group, distinct from and alienated from general society. She is seen as "abnormal," the opposite of "normal" women, and often suffers great anguish about these supposed differences. Paula Gunn Allen writes, "We are not in the position of our American Indian fore-sister who could find safety and security in her bond with another woman because it was perceived to be destined and nurtured by non-human entities, and was therefore acceptable and respectable."[35]

With the exception of the amazon, women involved in a relationship with another female did not see themselves as a separate minority or a special category of person, or indeed as different in any important way from other women. Yet, they were involved in loving and sexual relationships with their female mates. If their marriage to an amazon ended, then they could easily marry heterosexually without carrying with them any stigma as having been "homosexual." The important consideration in the Indian view is that they were still fulfilling the standard role of "mother and wife" within their culture. The traditional gender role for women did not restrict their choice of sexual partners. Gender identity (woman or amazon) was important, but sexual identity (heterosexual or homosexual) was not.[36]

WOMEN-IDENTIFIED WOMEN

Socially recognized marriages between an amazon and her wife only tell part of the story. Relationships between two women-identified women were probably more common. American Indians, while not looking down on sex as evil or dirty, generally see it as something private. Consequently, it is not something that is talked about to outsiders, and there is not much information on sexual practices. It is most important for a woman to have children, but in many tribes a woman's sexual exclusiveness to the child's father is not crucial. Thus, a woman might be sexually active with others without worrying that she or her children would be looked down on. In many Native American societies, a woman has the right to control her own body, rather than it being the exclusive property of her husband. As long as she produces children at some point in her life, what she does in terms of sexual behavior is her own private business.[37]

Individual inclinations, after all, are usually seen as due to a direction from the spirits. This spiritual justification means that another person's interference might be seen as a dangerous intrusion into the supernatural. "In this context," writes Paula Gunn Allen, "it is quite possible that Lesbianism was practiced rather commonly, as long as the individuals cooperated with the larger social customs." Allen wrote a poem to native "Beloved Women" which expresses this attitude of noninterference:

> It is not known if those
> who warred and hunted on the plains . . .
> were Lesbians
> It is never known
> if any woman was a lesbian
> so who can say. . . .
> And perhaps the portents are better
> left written only in the stars. . . .
> Perhaps
> all they signify is best left
> unsaid.[38]

It is precisely this attitude, that sexual relations were not anyone else's business, that has made Indian women's casual homosexuality so invisible to outsiders. Except for some female anthropologists, most white observers of native societies have been males. These observers knew few women, other than exceptional females who acted as guides or go-betweens for whites and Indians. Most writers expressed little interest in the usual female lifestyle. Yet even if they did, their access to accurate information would be limited to bits that they could learn from Indian males.

Given the segregation of the sexes in native society, women would not open up to a male outsider about their personal lives. Even Indian men would not be told much about what went on among the women.[39]

Given these circumstances, it is all the more necessary for women researchers to pursue this topic. Openly lesbian ethnographers would have a distinct advantage. In contrast to institutionalized male homosexuality, female sexual variance seems more likely to express itself informally. Again, enough cross-cultural fieldwork has not been done to come to definite conclusions. However, Blackwood suggests that female-female erotic relationships may be most commonly expressed as informal pairings within the kin group or between close friends.[40]

GENDER AND SEXUAL VARIANCE AMONG CONTEMPORARY INDIAN WOMEN

In what ways do these patterns continue today? An idea of the type of data that might be gathered by contemporary fieldworkers is contained in a report by Beverely Chiñas, who has been conducting research among the Isthmus Zapotecs of southern Mexico since 1966. While she details an accepted berdache status for males, among females the picture is somewhat different. In two decades of fieldwork she has observed several instances of women with children leaving their husbands to live with female lovers. She sees these relationships as lesbian: "People talk about this for a few weeks but get used to it. There is no ostracism. In the case of the lesbians, they continued to appear at fiestas, now as a couple rather than as wives in heterosexual marriages." At religious festivals, she points out, such female couples do not stand out, since every woman pairs up with another woman to dance together as a couple. There is virtually no male-female couple activity in religious contexts. The sexes are always separated in ceremonies, with different roles and duties.[41]

The only negative reaction that Chiñas reports concerned an unmarried daughter of a close friend and informant who "left her mother's home and went to another barrio to live with her lesbian lover. The daughter was only 25 years old, not beyond the expected age of heterosexual marriage. The mother was very upset and relations between mother-daughter broke off for a time but were patched up a year later although the daughter continued to live with her lesbian partner."[42]

The Zapotec mother's anger at her daughter was due to the latter's evident decision not to have children. By refusing to take a husband at least temporarily, the daughter violated the cultural dictate that females should be mothers. It was thus not lesbianism per se that caused the mother-daughter conflict. It would be interesting to know if the mother was reconciled by the daughter's promise that she would get pregnant later. If so, it would fit into the traditional pattern for American Indian women. The importance of offspring in small-scale societies cannot be ignored; female homosexual behavior has to accommodate to society's need to reproduce the population.

Chiñas explains that in such *marimacha* couples, "one will be the *macho* or masculine partner in the eyes of the community, i.e., the 'dominant' one, but they still dress as women and do women's work. Most of the lesbian couples I have known have been married heterosexually and raised families. In 1982 there were rumors of a suspected lesbian relationship developing between neighbor women, one of whom was married with husband and small child present, the other having been abandoned by her husband and left with children several years previously."[43]

These data offer an example of the kind of valuable findings that direct fieldwork experience can uncover. The fact that one of the women was looked on as the macho one, even though she did not cross-dress, points up the relative *un*importance of cross-dressing in a same-sex relationship. An uninformed outsider might have no idea that these roles and relationships exist, and might assume that the practice had died out among the modern Zapotecs.

Since the field research that could answer these questions has not yet been done with enough Native American societies, I am reluctant to agree with Evelyn Blackwood's statement that by the end of the nineteenth century "the last cross-gender females seem to have disappeared."[44] Such a statement does not take into account the less formalized expressions of gender and sexual variance. If I had trusted such statements about the supposed disappearance of the male berdache tradition, I never would have carried out the fieldwork to disprove such a claim.

As also occurs with the berdaches, contemporary Indians perceive similarities with a Western gay identity. A Micmac berdache, whose niece recently came out publicly as gay, reports that the whole community accepts her: "The family members felt that if she is that way, then that's her own business. A lot of married Indian women approach her for sex. A male friend of mine knows that she has sex with his wife, and he jokes about it. There is no animosity. There might be some talking about her, a little joking, but it is no big deal as far as people on the reserve are concerned. There is never any condemnation or threats about it. When she brought a French woman to the community as her lover, everyone welcomed her. They accept her as she is."[45]

Despite the value of such reports, it is clear that a male cannot get very complete information on women's sexuality. I hope that the data presented here will inspire women ethnographers to pursue this topic in the future.

Paula Gunn Allen, who is familiar with Native American women from many reservations, states that there is cultural continuity. She wrote me that "There are amazon women, recognized as such, *today* in a number of tribes—young, alive, and kicking!"[46] They may now identify as gay or lesbian, but past amazon identities, claims Beth Brant (Mohawk), "have everything to do with who we are now. As gay Indians, we feel that connection with our ancestors." Erna Pahe (Navajo), cochair of Gay American Indians, adds that this connection gives advantages: "In our culture [and] in our gay world, anybody can do anything. We can sympathize, we can really feel how the other sex feels. [We are] the one group of people that can really understand both cultures. We are special." Paula Gunn Allen also emphasizes this specialness, which she sees as applying to non-Indian gay people as well. "It all has to do with spirit, with restoring an awareness of our spirituality as gay people."[47] As with the berdache tradition for males, modern Indian women's roles retain a connection with past traditions of gender and sexual variance. There is strong evidence of cultural revitalization and persistance among contemporary American Indians.

NOTES

1. Pedro de Magalhães de Gandavo, "History of the Province of Santa Cruz," ed. John Stetson, *Documents and Narratives Concerning the Discovery and Conquest of Latin America: The Histories of Brazil* 2 (1922): 89.
2. Evelyn Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender in Certain Native American Tribes: The Case of Cross-Gender Females," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 10 (1984): 27–42. These tribes are listed on p. 29: California (Achomawi, Atsugewi, Klamath, Shasta, Wintu, Wiyot, Yokuts, Yuki), Southwest (Apache, Cocopa, Maricopa, Mohave, Navajo, Papago, Pima, Yuma), Northwest (Bella Coola, Haisla, Kutenai, Lillooet, Nootka, Okanagon, Queets, Quinault), Great Basin (Shoshoni, Ute, Southern Ute, Southern and Nothern Paiute), Subarctic (Ingalik, Kaska), and northern Plains (Blackfoot, Crow).
3. Alice Joseph, et al., *The Desert People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 227.
4. C. Caryll Forde, "Ethnography of the Yuma Indians," *University of California Publications in American Archeology and Ethnology* 28 (1931): 157; Leslie Spier, *Yuman Tribes of the Gila River* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), p. 243.
5. Forde, "Ethnography of the Yuma," p. 157. E. W. Gifford, "The Cocopa," *University of California Publications in American Archeology and Ethnology* 31 (1933): 294.
6. John J. Honigmann, *The Kaska Indians: An Ethnographic Reconstruction* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), pp. 129–30.
7. Cornelius Osgood, *Ingalik Social Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958); com-

mented on in Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender," p. 32.
8. K. J. Crowe, *A History of the Original Peoples of Northern Canada* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1974), pp. 77–78, 90.
9. Honigmann, *Kaska*, pp. 129–30.
10. Claude Schaeffer, "The Kutenai Female Berdache: Courier, Guide, Prophetess, and Warrior," *Ethnohistory* 12 (1965): 195–216.
11. Quoted in ibid.
12. Alexander Ross, *Adventures of the First Settlers on the Oregon or Columbia River* (London: Smith and Elder, 1849), pp. 85, 144–49; quoted in Schaeffer, "Kutenai Female."
13. John Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Seas* (London: J. Murray, 1823), p. 152; quoted in Schaeffer, "Kutenai Female."
14. T. C Elliott, ed. "John Work's Journal," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 5 (1914): 190; quoted in Schaeffer, "Kutenai Female."
15. Quoted in Schaeffer, "Kutenai Female," pp. 215–16.
16. George Devereux, "Institutionalized Homosexuality of the Mohave Indians," *Human Biology* 9 (1937): 503. George Devereux, *Mohave Ethnopsychiatry* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1969), p. 262.
17. Devereux, *Mohave Ethnopsychiatry*, pp. 416–17.
18. Ibid., p. 262.
19. Ibid., pp. 416–420.
20. E. W. Gifford, "The Cocopa," *University of California Publications in American Archeology and Ethnology* 31 (1933): 257–94.
21. Leslie Spier, *Klamath Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1930), p. 53.
22. Erminie Voegelin, *Culture Element Distribution: Northeast California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1942), vol. 20, pp. 134–35.
23. Charles Callender and Lee Kochems, "Men and Not-Men: Male Gender-Mixing Statuses and Homosexuality," *Journal of Homosexuality* II (1985); and by the same authors, "The North American Berdache," *Current Anthropology* 24 (1983): 443–56. See also Harriet Whitehead, "The Bow and the Burden Strap: A New Look at Institutionalized Homosexuality in Native North America" in *Sexual Meanings*, ed. Sherry Ortner and Harriet Whitehead (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 80–115. The beginnings of a sophisticated approach, recognizing cultural variation in the number and statuses of genders, are suggested in M. Kay Martin and Barbara Voorhies, *Female of the Species* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), chap. 4.
24. Beatrice Medicine, "'Warrior Women'—Sex Role Alternatives for Plains Indian Women," in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, ed. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1983), p. 269. Though Medicine criticizes Sue-Ellen Jacobs for suggesting that Plains Warrior Women were parallel to berdachism, Jacobs has clarified that "they should not be confused with transsexuals, third gender people, homosexuals or others." Sue-Ellen Jacobs, personal communication, 17 May 1983. See also Whitehead, "Bow and Burden Strap," pp. 86, 90–93; Donald Forgey, "The Institution of Berdache among the North American Plains Indians," *Journal of Sex Research* II (1975): I; and Ruth Landes, *The Mystic Lake Sioux* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968).
25. Ibid., pp. 92–93; Oscar Lewis, "The Manly-Hearted Women among the Northern Piegan," *American Anthropologist* 43 (1941): 173–87.
26. John Fire and Richard Erdoes, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), pp. 148–49.
27. Paula Gunn Allen, "Lesbians in American Indian Cultures," *Conditions* 7 (1981): 76.
28. Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender," p. 39; Jeannette Mirsky, "The Dakota," in *Cooperation and Competition among Primitive Peoples*, ed. Margaret Mead (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), p. 417.
29. The best recent works on the position of Plains women are the essays in Albers and Medicine, *Hidden Half*.
30. Edwin Thompson Denig, *Five Indian Tribes of the Upper Missouri*, ed. John Ewers (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961), pp. 195–200.
31. Ibid.
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. Allen, "Lesbians," pp. 68, 78–79.
36. Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender," pp. 35–36.
37. Allen, "Lesbians," pp. 65–66, 73.
38. Ibid.
39. Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender," p. 38; Allen, "Lesbians," pp. 79–80; Albers and Medicine, *Hidden Half*, pp. 53–73.
40. Evelyn Blackwood, "Some Comments on the Study of Homosexuality Cross-Culturally," *Anthropological Research Group on Homosexuality Newsletter* (3 (Fall 1981): 8–9. Important source material on female homosexual behavior is in the classic study by Ferdinand Karsch-Haack, *Das Gleichgeschlechtliche Leben der Naturvölker* (The same-sex life of nature peoples) (Munich: Verlag von Ernst Reinhardt, 1911). It and July Grahn, *Another Mother Tongue: Gay Words, Gay Worlds* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), are the starting points for future cross-cultural research on lesbianism. Just two examples of female-female relationships which bear further investigation include groups of women silk weavers, "spinsters," in China—see Agnes Smedley, *Portraits of Chinese Women in Revolution* (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1976)—and female marriages in Africa—see Denise O'Brian, "Female Husbands in Southern Bantu Societies," in *Sexual Stratification*, ed. Alice Schlegel (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977).
41. Beverly Chiñas, "Isthmus Zapotec 'Berdaches,'" *Newsletter of the Anthropological Research Group on Homosexuality* 7 (May 1985): 3–4.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid.
44. Blackwood, "Sexuality and Gender," p. 38.
45. Joseph Sandpiper, Micmac informant I, September 1985.
46. Paula Gunn Allen, personal communication, 6 September 1985.
47. Quoted in Will Roscoe, "Gay American Indians: Creating an Identity from Past Traditions," *The Advocate*, 29 October 1985, pp. 45–48.

Children of Gay Fathers

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The scientific literature devoted solely to the topic of children of gay fathers is limited to one report, whereas research on the children of lesbian mothers is more extensive. . . . The reason for this discrepancy is most probably due to the fact that lesbian mothers, like nonlesbian single mothers, are much more likely than fathers, gay or nongay, to have child custody. Lesbian mother custody cases have received considerable publicity (see Julian, 1985), sparking researchers' interest in studying the potential effect of the mothers' sexual orientation and lifestyle on their children. Custodial gay fathers are less common. Because of their relative invisibility, gay fathers and their children have been less accessible for study. Although it has been thought that the numbers of gay fathers (and hence the numbers of their children) were not sufficiently substantial to warrant study, it is now known that this assumption is erroneous. There are at least 1 to 3 million gay men who are natural fathers. . . . Also, this figure is conservative since it does not take into consideration gay men who adopt children, who are foster or stepfathers, or who achieve fatherhood by other less traditional means (for example, sperm donation). Likewise, it is difficult to estimate the number of children of gay fathers. However, Schulenburg (1985) estimates the combined number of children of lesbian mothers and gay fathers to approximate 6 million, whereas, according to Peterson (1984), there are 14 million. Hence, the number of both gay fathers and their children is sufficient to warrant serious study.

In addition, the American family has been undergoing radical change within the past twenty years. No longer can the term "family" be used to refer to a characteristic or typical family form. The so-called "traditional" nu-

clear family, which consisted of two biological parents of opposite sex with the father as breadwinner, the mother as homemaker, and one or more children is now less than one-third of all families with children (Hayes, 1980, in Bloom-Feshbach, 1981). Moreover, gay father (and lesbian mother) families appear to be increasing in number. Whether or not the number is real or is an artifact of more homosexually-oriented parents letting their sexual orientation be known is unknown. Nevertheless, as Hunt and Hunt (1977) point out, hundreds of thousands of formerly married individuals, many of whom are parents, are leaving their "heterosexual" marriages and are entering the gay world. Thus, it behooves professionals in many disciplines to have an understanding of this particular family form.

The purpose of this chapter is to present what is known about the children of gay fathers. It is based upon the author's research (Bozett, 1986), the research of Miller (1979), panel presentations by such children at professional meetings attended by the author, and upon informal personal discussions with several of these children. The chapter begins with a discussion of the children's reactions to their fathers' disclosure of his homosexuality. How gay fathers manage their homosexuality and their gay lifestyle vis-à-vis their children is addressed next, and is followed by a discussion of the children's development of their sexual identity. Following this, the advantages and disadvantages of having a gay father are identified. Recommendations for educators and counselors are presented, and the chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

CHILDREN'S REACTIONS TO HAVING A GAY FATHER

Research by the author in which 19 children of gay fathers were interviewed (6 male and 13 female, ages 14 to 35) found that the overriding concern of these children was their fear that others would think that they, too, were gay if their fathers' homosexuality became known. This fear can be explained on the basis of several theoretical premises. Lindesmith, Strauss, and Denzin (1977) comment that one's "self" cannot be separated from one's social environment, that "self implies others." In addition, Goffman (1963) remarks about the informing nature of the "with" relationship. For example, it is assumed that if an individual is seen with others who have a particular trait, that person, too, has that trait. The presumption is that one is what the others are. In addition, homophobia in the United States is especially acute (Altman, 1982). Thus, fear of identity contamination by the children of gay fathers is understandable.

To manage their public image it was found that children use social control strategies, which are specific behaviors children of gay fathers employ vis-à-vis their father so that they are perceived by others as they want to be perceived—gay or nongay. Acting as agents of control can be thought of as the "identity work" of the children of gay fathers. Heterosexual children use these strategies primarily to assure that others will not think that they are gay. Gay children may or may not use the strategies, depending upon their acceptance of their own homosexuality. It is logical to assume that gay or lesbian children who are unaccepting of their own homosexuality, and thus do not want it known, would behave similarly to nongay children in the use of the strategies. Thus, the father's expression of his homosexuality would be kept in check to prevent others from possibly correctly identifying them as gay (the "with" relationship). However, this is not borne out in the research reported here since all of the gay respondents were accepting of their homosexuality.

Social Control Strategies

The first social control strategy is referred to as *boundary control,* which has three facets. The first of these is control by the child of the *father*'s behavior (behavioral or verbal) in order to control expression of his homosexuality. For example, one subject refused to allow her father to bring his lover to her Christmas party although she hoped her father would come alone. Another respondent asked her father to keep his hands off his boyfriend's thigh during a party at her home. The second boundary control strategy is control by the child of their *own* behavior in relation to the father. For example, one child would not invite his father and his father's lover to visit his place of employment because the son was afraid that his fellow workers would correctly identify them as being gay. Another subject did not invite her father to a celebration at her home because "I didn't want people talking about me behind my back or pointing at me going 'Oh, her dad's a fag.' I don't want the shame of it." Another subject refuses to be seen in public with her father since she is certain that his homosexuality is readily evident.

The third boundary control strategy is controlling *others* vis-à-vis the father. An example of this is the child who will not bring certain friends home to keep them from encountering both the father and his lover. The function of boundary control strategies is to keep the boundary of the father's expression of his homosexuality within the limits set by the child. By controlling the father, the self, and others in relation to the father, the child controls others' perceptions of him or herself as being nongay. Moreover, the use of these strategies helps children avoid the embarrassment they feel because of their father's "shameful differentness" (Goffman, 1963, p. 140). In addition, the first two strategies help to inform the gay father of where the boundary of acceptable behavior is drawn (Higgins & Butler, 1982) by their children.

A second major social control strategy is *nondisclosure.* Unless children are certain it is safe to do so, children avoid telling others that their father is gay in order to avoid soiling their own identity. One young respondent stated: "I don't tell anyone else because I'm afraid they won't like me . . . [I'm] afraid they'll think I'm gay." An adult son who lives with his father rarely tells anyone since he thinks others might think he is also gay. He said, "I [do] not want to be perceived as a person who's gay because I certainly am not!" Nondisclosure may take other forms, such as referring to the father's lover as an "uncle" or a "housemate," or hiding artifacts such as gay newspapers when friends visit (Bozett, 1980). The children believe that not telling others prevents identity contamination, that it helps to maintain relationships, and that it keeps them from becoming social pariahs.

The last social control mechanism is the opposite of the one just discussed, *disclosure.* It was found that the most common reason for disclosing was that others are potential discreditors, that they are homophobic, that they will be derogatory about *them* (the child), if they discover the father is homosexual, and thus others need to be "prepared" before meeting the father. It seems that many of these children attribute exceptional decoding capacity to others; they assume that upon first meeting the father others are able to discern that he is gay. In addition, telling others is highly selective because closure of information channels is usually impossible. For example, one male respondent explained that it was very important to choose who to tell very carefully because "you have to be sure they won't tell somebody else. I was worried [about] people knowing [because] I was afraid of what they'd think of me; maybe it would be embarrassing." A gay informant *does* disclose his father's homosexuality to friends because he talks a lot about his family, and his father's homosexuality is "just one part of my family. It's significant." This may appear to be a contradictory finding but it is not. Gay children who are accepting of their own and their fathers' homosexuality may use the strategy of disclosing their father' homosexuality, thus, through the "with" relationship, allowing their own gay identity to be known, or at least assumed without necessarily disclosing it directly.

Influencing Factors

From the foregoing it is possible for the reader to have the impression that children of

gay fathers are concerned in the extreme about their fathers' homosexuality, and that they are excessively embarrassed by it. This is *not* necessarily the case. Although social control strategies are used in order to negotiate a public persona, in the research being reported here it was also discovered that there are *influencing factors* that determine the extent to which the children utilize the strategies just described. *The influencing factors are as important to understanding the reactions of these children as are the social control strategies.*

The first influencing factor is *mutuality.* Mutuality refers to identification by the child with the father. When the child identifies or links him or herself in some way with also being different, or the child feels that he or she varies in some way from societal norms in terms of behavior, lifestyle, values, or beliefs or believes there are other mutual links with the father such as sharing similar tastes in music or movies, then the more accepting the child is of the father as gay, and the less the child uses social control strategies. In addition, for children who consider themselves to be nontraditional, the father's homosexuality seems to help legitimate their own feelings of variance. An example of mutuality is the overweight respondent who remarked, "There's a lot of hostility toward heavy people, too. I don't like being labeled, and I understand what labeling is like. I think it's easier for me to accept a difference in someone else." Another subject explained that both she and her father had a drinking problem that linked them together. An adolescent son stated:

> In some ways I'm kind of jealous of my dad being different because I don't want to be like everyone else; I want to be different. My dad is hip. He likes all the music I do, he likes the movies and TV shows I see, and we just like to do the same things. I think I'm much more like my dad (than my mother) and I think that helps me.[1]

The second influencing factor is *obtrusiveness,* which refers to how discernable the child believes the father's homosexuality to be. What constitutes discernability is determined by each child, but generally it refers to the culturally determined stereotypical symbols and manifestations of gay behavior such as the presence of gay artifacts in the household, the father's use of effeminate gestures, or his wearing excessive jewelry. It also includes the father asking his children to participate with him in gay social settings such as dining in gay restaurants. Any external manifestation that "increases the difficulty of maintaining easeful inattention regarding the stigma" (Goffman, 1963, p. 103) may be considered by the child to be obtrusive. One young son explained that he walks twenty feet behind his dad when his father walks arm and arm with another man, whereas another adolescent subject stated: "I feel at ease when I'm in public with my dad. My dad does not act homosexual. He does not! And Joe [the father's lover] does not act like that."

The third influencing factor is *age* of the children. If they are young they have less control over their own, their fathers', and others' actions, whereas the older the children are the more control they can exercise. For example, younger children may use the strategy of nondisclosure by referring to the father's lover as an uncle, whereas an adult child could avoid that situation entirely if the child so chose. Another facet of age as an influencing factor is the age of the child when he is told his father is gay. The older the child is, the more time the child has to take in society's homonegative attitudes and beliefs (Moses & Hawkins, 1982). However, if the child is told when he is young and grows up in association with gays, then it is more likely that the child will be comfortable with them and be relatively immune to the prejudice of others. This reasoning is supported by Turner, Scadden, & Harris (1985) who found that the fathers in their study related that children who were told at an earlier age were reported to have had fewer difficulties than those who found out when they were older.

The fourth and last influencing factor is *living arrangements,* which is often directly related to age. Living arrangements frequently dictate which controlling strategies are used and the extent of their use. For example, if children live with their father and the father's lover, they may have little control over interactions between themselves and their father, but they do exert control over their friends' contacts with their father. Thus, they may be highly selective regarding which friends they bring home. On the other hand, if children live with their mother or live independent of their parents they will probably have less need to use controlling strategies. These four influencing factors are the ones that were extracted from the interview data. However, the odds are that this is not an exhaustive list. For example, another probable influencing factor is the degree of acceptance by the father of his own homosexuality. It is likely that the more accepting and matter-of-fact fathers are regarding their homosexuality, the easier it is for children to accept.

FATHERS' REACTIONS

Protective Strategies

It should be noted that characteristically gay fathers seem to be highly sensitive to their children's needs. They often attempt to avoid undue overt expression of their sexual orientation and gay lifestyle. It is also common for fathers to advise their children to refer to the father's lover as "uncle" or as "housemate." Also, if the children's friends are present the father and his lover often avoid even simple displays of affection, and the father may also put away gay artifacts such as newspapers or magazines. Another strategy is for custodial gay fathers to place their children in a school outside of their own school district. This provides the children with both school friends and neighborhood friends. If the father's gay identity is discovered by one group who then harasses the children, they still have another set of friends (Bozett, 1980). These are only several of the many means that gay fathers use to keep their homosexuality from public notice in order to protect their children from the torment of others.

However, a father's behavior may inadvertently be indiscrete. An example of the negative consequences of such behavior was related to the author by a fourteen-year-old son of a friend who explained that his father had visited the boy's school several times with "all his jewelry on. The teachers knew he was gay, and all the kids saw him and figured it out. It was obvious. They started calling me names like 'homoson.' It was awful. I couldn't stand it. I hate him for it. I really do" (Bozett, 1980, p. 178).

Role Modeling

Although gay fathers attempt to protect their children from the hostility of others, many gay fathers also want their children to understand that although the wider society disapproves of homosexuality and homosexual parenting, homosexuality is not a negative attribute, and the father is as moral and virtuous as other men. A Jewish gay father explained it this way:

> Any parent wants to show their kids good role models. As a gay parent you'd want to show your kids good gay role models to reinforce to your child that what you're doing is okay. And not only is it okay for you, but that there are also other gay family units out there that it's okay with. Because as a gay parent, I do have to think in my mind that my child is seeing something that is not the ordinary. And I want to have the obligation for her to at least see that this not ordinary thing is okay. And not only okay with me, but with enough people so she knows that although it may not be ordinary, it's out there, it's happening. And to see that, to make it easier, for whatever the future holds in store for her (Bozett, 1980, p. 176).

This father ended his comments by saying:

> I guess all you can do is give your kids the strongest feeling that what's going on is okay, so at least they'll be able to fight back. It's like being Jewish or being black. That kind of discrimination.
>
> And the kid is going to have to fight back as best as he can and get the best support from home that he can get. This is just one of the realities (Bozett, 1980, p. 178).

There is yet another important facet of role modeling. If the gay father has a child who is gay or lesbian, then he has the responsibility to be a positive gay role model just as nongay fathers serve as role models for their heterosexual children. It is regrettable that most gay or lesbian children have no homosexual adult role models during their formative years. As a consequence, self-acceptance and adaptation to the gay world is often much more difficult than it would be otherwise. It is assumed that gay children who have an adult gay role model would experience a much smoother transition into adulthood than gays without such models. Research is needed, however, to bear this out.

CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT OF SEXUAL IDENTITY

Studies of the children of lesbian mothers (Golombok, Spencer, & Rutter, 1983; Green, 1978; Hoeffer, 1978, 1981; Hotvedt & Mandel, 1982; Kirkpatrick, Smith, & Roy, 1981; Weeks, Derdeyn, & Langman, 1975) have found no areas directly related to parental homosexuality. The findings of this research can be summed by the statement of Green (1978): "Children being raised by transsexual or homosexual parents do not differ appreciably from children raised in more conventional family settings on macroscopic measures of sexual identity" (pp. 696–697). . . . Although there are no reported studies on the development of sexual identity of children of gay fathers, there is no reason to assume that the findings would differ appreciably from those reported for the children of lesbian mothers. Even so, this is a much needed area of research.

In the study by Miller (1979), among the 27 daughters and 21 sons whose sexual orientation could be assessed, the fathers reported that one son and three daughters were gay. Among the 25 children in the author's study of gay fathers (Bozett, 1981a,b), no father reported having a gay or lesbian child, although not all of the children were old enough for their sexual orientation to be determined. In the author's study of 19 children of gay fathers (Bozett, 1986), two sons reported being gay, and one daughter considered herself bisexual. The remaining 17 claimed to be heterosexual. Thus, as Miller (1979) points out, the link between parental and children's sexual orientation appears weak. Thus, the myth that gay parents will raise gay children and that gay parents attempt to convince their children to be gay has no support from research data. Likewise, another issue brought up regarding gay fathers is that they may seduce or molest their children. There is no evidence that gay fathers are more likely than nongay fathers to seduce their children or to allow them to be seduced. Child molesters are primarily heterosexual, and the victims are usually female.

In addition, there is some evidence that gay fathers attempt to develop traditional gender identity and sex-role behaviors in their children. Harris and Turner (1986) found that the fathers in their study tended to encourage their children to play with sex-typed toys, whereas half of the gay fathers in the Turner, Scadden, and Harris study (1985) did so. Also, it was not uncommon for fathers of both sons and daughters in the author's gay father research (Bozett, 1981a,b) to express concern regarding the absence of a feminine influence in the household. Most of the fathers in the study by Turner, Scadden, and Harris (1985) are reported to have made an effort to provide an opposite sex-role model for their children. These researchers also state that most of their subjects reported that their children appeared to be developing traditional sex-role identification, and that they considered their childrens' behaviors to be no different from other children of the same age and sex.

Children may, however, worry about their own sexual orientation; they may believe that because their father is gay they will be too (Moses & Hawkins, 1982). This concern may be especially acute for the adolescent who has had a homosexual experience. These children need assurance that homosexual experimentation is not unusual among young people (Woodman & Lenna, 1980). Moreover, children need to understand that they have options. Riddle (1978) points out that children's exposure to cultural and individual diversity can be positive, and that "an increased comfort with diversity could result in a greater ability to make personal choices independent of societal pressures to conform" (p. 53). She continues by stating that

> children do not model specific sexual behaviors unquestioningly; rather, they experiement. After early childhood, peers and significant adults (not necessarily parents) serve as primary role models. Persons are selected as models because of perceived valued traits, and then those particular traits are adopted. What gays have to offer children is a non-traditional, multi-option adult lifestyle model, independent of sexual preference choices (p. 53).

HOMONEGATIVE REACTIONS OF CHILDREN

On the basis of current research, it appears that most children are accepting of their fathers as gay. According to Harris and Turner (1986), and Turner, Scadden, and Harris (1985), *initial* responses of children to learning that their fathers are homosexual as reported by their fathers were closeness, confusion, not understanding, worrying, knowing all along, shame, disbelief, anger, shock, and guilt. Wyers (1984), reporting on the initial impact on children, states that 40 percent of the fathers reported a positive impact, 35 percent were uncertain of the initial impact, and 25 percent indicated the impact was negative. The children's *current* feelings as perceived by the fathers in the first two studies mentioned above were indifferent, supportive, proud, confused, angry, hostile, and ashamed. Wyers writes that 50 percent of the fathers reported the current impact was positive, 45 percent were uncertain of the current impact, and 5 percent indicated that the current impact was negative. In all of these studies the number of children who remained negative toward their fathers as gay was small.

Hence, although most children are accepting of their fathers as gay, some are not. It also seems that almost all children who reject their father as gay continue to accept him in the role of father. Although rare, it is likely that there are children who react by severing ties altogether. In the author's research (Bozett, 1986) two grown daughters were found to be intensely homophobic. They both exhibited some characteristics of the authoritarian personality type: rigid conformity to middle-class values, little tolerance for ambiguity, generalized hostility, and punitive attitudes regarding sexual "goings on" (Babad, Birnbaum, & Benne, 1983). According to Herek (1984), "Heterosexuals who express hostile attitudes toward homosexual persons tend to endorse traditional ideologies of family, sexuality and sex roles, and often are prejudiced against other minorities as well" (p. 12). The quotations that follow are characteristic of the individual described by Herek. They exemplify the attitudes and feelings of these children toward gay persons and homosexuality in general, and toward their fathers in particular.

> I don't hate gays, I just hate the way they act. I don't like people acting weird which is not to say that I don't want people to be different to be proper. I want them to be polite. I mean my dad's fine as long as he's not acting like a fag. Sure I'd prefer for my dad to still be in the closet. There's no conflict [that way] (Bozett, 1983, p. 10–11).

Another example is the following:

> I'm embarrassed that my father's gay. A lot of times I would just like him to go away. I almost wish he would die because then I can lie about what he was like to the future hypothetical children I'm going to have. It's not normal. Normal people don't go around doing things like that (Bozett, 1984, p. 64).

Note that these statements provide support for the contention of Altman (1982) that "What affronts others is the blatant *sexuality* of homosexuals, not merely their transgression of sex roles" (p. 68).

Although these two children are undoubtedly the exception to the rule, these examples are provided in order to demonstrate some of the range of children's reactions to homosexuality and to having a gay father. This is not to

say, however, that these children do not have a *cognitive* understanding of their father. For example, one of the children quoted above explained that on one occasion her father took her to a gay restaurant:

> Fortunately we got a table back in the corner. I remember him sort of making eyes at the waiter. That really pissed me off! It's not intentional. What I think he's trying to do is say, "Look. Accept me. This is the world I've chosen." I know he loves me. He wants to be accepted. And it's really hard for me to do that. It's all right for him to live his life whatever way he's going to, but I'm separate from it and I don't want him to try to pull me into it (Bozett, 1983, p. 11).

Although this daughter understands that her father's attempt to integrate her into his gay world is because he values both her and his gay identity and lifestyle and wants her to share in his pleasure, she rejects his efforts because such participation is in conflict with her value system. In addition, since research has demonstrated significant correlations between the attitudes of parents and those of their children (Ehrlich, 1973), these examples point to the value of gay fathers inculcating in their children as they develop an acceptance and appreciation for an extensive diversity of human behavior.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF HAVING A GAY FATHER

Based upon the research literature, it appears that the advantages of having a gay father outweigh the disadvantages. One common advantage is that it seems that many fathers who have disclosed their homosexuality to their children are more open in their communication with them, which seems to evoke a reciprocal response in their children, creating a closer father-child relationship. One daughter explained that before her father came out to her she had only a father, but now she has both a father and a friend. One son remarked that since his father had come out to him communication "has been much better. Since then I've felt much more comfortable talking about anything. When I first moved in with him, on weekends we would sit and just talk from the time we got up in the morning around 8 o'clock until almost 9 or 10 o'clock at night."

In his recent autobiographical account Robert Bauman (1986), the ultraconservative congressman from Maryland whose highly successful career was destroyed when his homosexuality was made public, writes about his four children and former wife knowing that he is gay. "At least we are able to talk without shame, seeking the truth and debating our differences. 'We would have never known who you are,' my daughter, Vicky, said in her youthful wisdom. And I would have never known my children fully, or myself" (p. 272). That disclosure generally fosters a close relationship is supported by the research on disclosure (Chelune 1979) and by Woodman and Lenna (1980, p. 102) who write that one of the effects of delaying disclosure is to postpone opportunities for a closer relationship with one's children. Another advantage children identify is that they learn to be more tolerant of persons different from themselves.

There appear to be few disadvantages. Two daughters commented that their fathers attempted to become too close, that they were *too* open and revealing about themselves. In this regard, Colman and Colman (1981) remark that children measure their parents against the simple images of parents in the culture and the media, and thus, even though fathers may want to be closer to their children, their children may allow them only more traditional limit-setting roles. The most common disadvantage in the author's research (Bozett, 1986) was that the children may have considered the father's homosexuality to be responsible for the breakup of the family. This topic was discussed by several subjects with considerable emotion. For example, one 33-year-old daughter poignantly stated:

> There's been so much that got taken away by my parents' divorce. I enjoyed the times I spent with my parents. It took that away. We don't have the house any more that we grew up in, and it was really a special house. It took away a lot of innocence, I guess. The world just looked different. You couldn't trust it so much any more. Things weren't as they seemed. It took away a family. It broke up a unit of people, and over the years I'm learning that that's a really valuable thing to have (Bozett, in press).

It is worth noting, however, that children who feel close to their father and express feelings of love and admiration for him do not necessarily approve of his homosexuality. These children seem to be able to separate their fathers' *gay* identity from his *father* identity. For example, one son who spontaneously discussed his love for his father also said, "I perceive his lifestyle as wrong. I don't want to perceive what he's doing as wrong, really, but I just never have been able to change that perception." Likewise, a daughter who said that her father might "burn in hell" because of his homosexuality also explained that "If he wasn't gay I'd say he was sent from heaven. That's how impressed I am with him. He's smart, he's successful, and he's also a very caring man." Even though these children may not approve of their fathers' homosexuality, their homonegative attitudes and beliefs do not appear to interfere with the father-child relationship. Turner, Scadden, and Harris (1985) generalized from the reports of the fathers in their study that a parent's homosexuality seems to create few long-term problems for children who seem to accept it better than parents anticipate. Note, however, the significance of the word "few"; it is reasonable to assume that some long-term problems may occasionally occur under certain circumstances as a result of parental homosexuality. Turner et al. also write that most of their subjects reported a positive relationship with their children, and that the parents' sexual orientation was of little importance in the overall parent-child relationship. These findings are corroborated in the present study. Furthermore, Turner, Scadden, and Harris (1985) remark that gay parents try harder than traditional heterosexual parents to create stable home lives and positive relationships with their children. Although the original research reported here involved data from children only, it does seem from the children's reports that, in general, they felt their fathers had put forth considerable effort to parent well. Lastly, Harris and Turner (1986) sum their study of gay parents by stating that being gay is compatible with effective parenting, and that the parents' sexual orientation is not the major issue in these parents' relationships with their children. Most certainly, the study reported here supports both of these findings. Yet again a caveat must be introduced in that surely it is possible that for some children the father's homosexuality could be a major issue. For the two homophobic daughters reported on earlier, their fathers' homosexuality was often a major issue in their relationship with him. Whether the fathers perceived it to be an issue in their relationship with their daughters is unknown. In short, it seems that the findings of the research on the children of gay fathers are in general agreement with the research reported on gay fathers.

NOTE

1. Unless otherwise noted quotations in this chapter are derived from unpublished in-depth interviews conducted by the author. The interviews are housed at the Henry A. Murray Research Center at Radcliffe College.

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VI.

Equality and Inequality: The Sexual Division of Labor and Gender Stratification

In most societies certain tasks are predominantly assigned to men while others are assigned to women. In European and American cultures it used to be considered "natural" for men to be the family breadwinners; women were expected to take care of the home and raise the children. An underlying assumption of this division of labor was that men were dominant because their contribution to the material well-being of the family was more significant than that of women. Women were dependent on men and therefore automatically subordinate to them.

The "naturalness" of this division of labor has been called into question as women increasingly enter the labor force. However, has this significantly altered the status of women within their families and in the wider society? Or has it simply meant that women are now working a double day, performing domestic tasks that are negatively valued and not considered work once they get home from their "real" day's work? If employment enhances the social position of women, why is it that women still earn only 65% of what men earn for the same work? Why is there still a high degree of occupational segregation by gender?

What precisely is the relationship between the economic roles of women and gender stratification? Cross-cultural research on the sexual division of labor attempts not only to describe the range of women's productive activities in societies with different modes of subsistence, but also to assess the implications of these activities for the status of women.

In many parts of the world women contribute significantly, if not predominantly, to subsistence. This is perhaps most apparent among hunting and gathering or foraging populations, and for this reason such groups have been labeled the most egalitarian of human societies. Hunters and gatherers used to form the bulk of the human population, but today only a small number remain. They are found in relatively isolated regions; they possess simple technology and therefore make little effort to alter the envi-