

the watercock or faucet (an evolution paralleled in other languages). Once the metaphor was created, however, it was reinforced by a natural similarity: "The extreme erectness of the cock, straining upwards, has suggested to many besides the Greeks the erectness of a tumid penis" (Smith and Daniel). There is also evidence of a broader association of birds with the penis, as seen in Italian, *uccello*, bird, penis, and German *vögeln*, to copulate (from *Vogel*, bird). Somewhat unusually, contemporary Spanish street language uses the female form *polla*, hen, to designate the penis. Contrast the established French *poule*, hen, whore. In older American slang, the word *capon*, a castrated rooster, served as an abusive epithet for an "effeminate man, a homosexual."

Confusingly, in a few parts of the English-speaking world, as in the southern United States, the slang word *cock* refers to the female pudenda. There is no doubt, however, that in the compounds *cock-sucker* and *cockteaser* the male organ is meant (though the former term is usually limited to male homosexuals, the latter to flirtatious heterosexual women).

In seduction scenes depicted on ancient Greek vases, roosters are the most common gift presented to youths by older male suitors. In the mythological realm the cock was associated with the bisexual god *Dionysus*. The noblest bird of all, the eagle, sometimes deputizes for father *Zeus* in depictions of the rape of *Ganymede*. A common emblem for homosexual lust in classical writing was two male partridges, who were said to be so highly sexed they turned to each other as easily as to the female. Another bird, the kite was linked to homosexual behavior because of a fanciful association of its Latin name *milvus* with *mollis*, a passive homosexual. Ancient folklore held that ravens conceived through their beaks; hence the Roman satirical poets *Martial* and *Juvenal* styled fellators "ravens." Finally, the ibis, a bird well known to the Egyptians, figured as a symbol of anal preoccupations because it

was reputed to employ its long beak to clean its own bowels.

*See also Animal Homosexuality.*

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## BISEXUALITY

Human bisexuality may be defined as the capacity to feel sexual attraction toward, and to consummate sexual performance with, members of the opposite and one's own sex. The concept needs to be distinguished from **androgyny** and **hermaphroditism**, with which, however, it is historically affiliated.

*History of the Concept of Bisexuality.* Modern thinking about bisexuality stems in part from medical investigations in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, which found that during the first few weeks after conception the urogenital system of the human embryo is undifferentiated as to sex. (Bisexuality in plants had been recognized since the beginning of the nineteenth century.) Determination of the anatomical gender of the organs of the originally neutral being is triggered by the intervention of mechanisms later identified as chromosomal. This embryological discovery suggested that human maleness and femaleness is in some sense secondary, and the puzzling duality of our natures could be restored, at least on the level of ontogeny, to a primal unity. Almost inevitably, these modern findings called to mind ancient Greek and Near Eastern mythological thinking about primordial androgyny. From this fertile mix of ideas it could be concluded that human sexual attraction should also be undifferentiated as to gender, since our postnatal gender dimorphism is but a secondary process superseding, but not completely effacing, an original oneness. The result of such

research and speculation was to offer two complementary models, one of primordial unity, the other of a comprehensive triad: neutral, male, and female. Both the unitary and the triadic themes were to exercise their influence on the concept of sexual orientation.

Before this medical and mythological amalgam could be applied to the psychodynamic sphere, a conceptual apparatus had to be invented and diffused that assigned human sexual orientation to two distinct poles—heterosexual and homosexual—a polarity which is distinct from, yet analogous to the gender dimorphism of male and female. In classical antiquity and the Middle Ages, as well as in many non-Western cultures today, no such dichotomy was recognized. The medieval sodomite was viewed as a departure, sinful it is true, from universal human standards which form the abiding context. Thus, although the Middle Ages had to all intents and purposes its own notion of the homosexual (the sodomite), it lacked a concept of the heterosexual as such. The polarity of heterosexual and homosexual attraction was formulated in Central Europe in the 1860s by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Károly Mária Kertbeny, who developed the homosexual concept. By the end of the century it had become widely familiar, and in the work of such writers as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Otto Weininger, Wilhelm Fliess, and Sigmund Freud, the heterosexual-homosexual contrast melded with the previously discussed medical concept of primordial gender neutrality. Hence the Freudian idea of the “polymorphous perverse,” in which the individual’s attraction is freeform and undifferentiated (though in mature individuals this state yields to full heterosexuality). From this family of ideas descends the contemporary popular notion that “we’re all bisexual.”

In the 1940s growing dissatisfaction with such notions of bisexuality led to significant critiques. Sandor Rado’s paper of 1940 signaled their abandonment by the psychoanalytic community. In 1948 Alfred

C. Kinsey faulted the then-current concept of bisexuality on two grounds. First, in view of its historical origins, reliance on the term bisexuality fosters confusion between the categories of gender and orientation, which must be kept quite distinct. Second, Kinsey averred, the triad of heterosexuality, bisexuality, and homosexuality is too rigid, and should be replaced by his own more supple 0-6 scale. While Kinsey effectively attacked the prevailing exclusivism, his numerical scale presented its own problems and failed to gain widespread popular recognition. Its legacy was to leave the term “bisexual” with a somewhat amorphous and controversial claim to all those who could not be classified as exclusively heterosexual or homosexual.

The countercultural and social-utopian currents of the 1960s and 70s stimulated attempts at revision and partial restoration of the paradigm among many innovative (or would-be innovative) thinkers, who viewed the inherited “gender system” of fixed roles for men and women as an albatross which kept women inferior and hindered the full self-realization of both men and women. There was thus a trend to regard the anatomical differences of men and women as a minor matter. If this be so, it makes little sense to be overly concerned about the gender of the individual to whom one is attracted, and we are all free to be simply “humansexuals.”

Also in this period the vocal assertion of homosexual rights, often cast in the minority mold, suggested to some that bisexuals too were a neglected and victimized minority, suffering from the invisibility which had once characterized homosexuality, and who should join together to fight for recognition and rights (Klein, 1978). Adoption of this “bisexual activist” view would lead to full-fledged recognition of three orientations, as seen, for example in the 1986 New York City gay rights ordinance, which explicitly protects heterosexuals, homosexuals, and bisexuals.

Contrasting with this triadic scheme is a unitary futurist utopian model which posits bisexuality as the eventual human norm, superseding both exclusive heterosexuality and exclusive homosexuality which would be regarded as forms of sexual restrictiveness, and even bigotry.

In support of their contention, the advocates of bisexuality point to earlier civilizations and contemporary tribal societies where, they claim, bisexual response is the norm. This would be true also in advanced industrial societies, which, it is held, would be also bisexual were it not for their sophisticated apparatus of sexual repression. Here one should interject the caveat that since the concepts of heterosexuality, homosexuality, and bisexuality are themselves of recent Western origin, it may not be wise to impose them insouciantly on cultures other than one's own. Still, with all due caution, one can observe that some societies, such as ancient Greece and some contemporary Melanesian tribes do exhibit a serial bisexuality, in which the maturing male does undergo homosexual experience as part of initiatory rites, assuming the heterosexual roles of husband and father afterwards. This seriality is far, however, from the ideal of nonorientation propounded by some theorists, that is to say, the notion that an individual is free to choose objects of sexual attraction in total disregard of their gender.

*Bisexual Liberation Movement.*

In the 1970s (and to a lesser extent in the 1980s) a number of organizations were active in support of "bisexual liberation," modeled on the gay liberation and the other sexual freedom movements. While these groups did not establish a consensus definition of bisexuality, they tended toward a broad conceptualization in which bisexuality was thought of as a basic capacity to respond erotically and emotionally/romantically to persons of either gender, either simultaneously or serially; the response did not have to be equal but had to be sufficient for a bisexual to feel

somewhat alienated from identification as either homosexual or heterosexual.

Bisexuals, according to the leaders of this movement, were discriminated against by homosexuals as well as by heterosexuals, and much of the discussion revolved around a critique of homosexuals' attitudes toward bisexuality, and the exclusion of recognition of bisexuals in the gay movement, which was seen as dedicated to the fostering of an exclusively homosexual identity. Other topics were the implications of bisexuality for such institutions as marriage and the ghettoization which leaders decried in homosexual circles at the time. Bisexuals, it was held, should be allies in a common struggle with gays against discrimination, but should function as a bridge to the heterosexual world rather than being submerged in an exclusivist subculture.

Many bisexual spokespeople advocated bisexuality as superior (for various reasons) to either form of "exclusivism" (heterosexual or homosexual); they also held it to be much more threatening to the prevailing sexual norms, precisely because it potentially involved everyone rather than a small minority which could be ghettoized.

With the AIDS crisis in the 1980s, bisexuals were targeted as the most serious source of infection for the heterosexual majority, and "bisexual chic" passed as quickly as it had arisen. With it, for the most part, went the bisexual liberation movement. Its self-description as threatening had been realized all too quickly, but in a way none of its leaders had foreseen.

*Bisexual Patterns.* Examination of the biographies in this Encyclopedia reveals that many of the individuals chronicled displayed behavior patterns which today might be labeled "bisexual," whether a wide or a narrow definition is used. It is difficult, however, to analyze and categorize data from such a wide spectrum of eras and cultures.

Contemporary American society exhibits a number of behavior types which

may be classified as bisexual. There are, for example, **macho men**, basically heterosexual, who become to some degree habituated to achieving occasional gratification—employing the inserter role only—with men who would define themselves as gay. Among women, the sense of sisterhood engendered by the women's movement, accompanied in some cases by a wariness toward men, has led to lesbian contacts involving women whose previous experience was essentially heterosexual.

The United States, together with other advanced industrial societies, reveals a number of versions of serial patterns of other- and same-sex behavior. In what is sometimes termed **situational homosexuality**, inmates of total institutions, typically men's and women's **prisons**, form homosexual liaisons, only to resume their heterosexual patterns on release. Some young men follow a career of **male prostitution** for a time, and then, as their looks fade or other circumstances supervene, settle into a completely heterosexual lifestyle. Yet another type of serial experience appears in "late blooming" individuals, that is, men and women who have entered into heterosexual marriages or relationships, and then find, sometimes as late as their forties, that they are strongly attracted to members of their own sex. It should be noted that self-reports of persons' sexual orientation are not always fully reliable; for understandable reasons, some men and women who are essentially homosexual will say that they are bisexual, in the belief that this label is less stigmatizing.

It seems that there are few individuals in today's society who have attained the posited ideal of "gender-blindness," choosing their partners solely on the basis of personal qualities, so that they will go with a man one day and a woman the next. It is hard to say how many come close to this ideal, with gender playing a relatively small role. If they are comparable with the Kinsey "3's" (those who

"accept and equally enjoy both types of contacts, and have no strong preferences for one or the other"), they are a substantial group, Kinsey's "3's" representing somewhere between 4 and 5 percent of all males for at least three years of their life.

Those persons who are bisexual under the definition cited at the beginning of this article, but who have a definite preference for one side or the other, may be compared to Kinsey's "2's" and "4's", described by him as "predominantly" one way but "rather definitely . . . more than incidentally" the other way. Added together, these represent about 10.5 percent of the male population at age 25, divided between 7 percent predominantly heterosexual and 3.5 percent predominantly homosexual. Add the "3's" and we see why it is said that, using a broad definition, about 15 percent of the American male population is bisexual for a significant part of their lives.

As the types selectively reviewed above and the Kinsey figures suggest, most people fall more strongly on the one side than the other, and when all is said and done may be classified as predominantly heterosexual or homosexual with at least as much justification as bisexual. Moreover, there seems to be a kind of funnel effect, whereby as an individual grows older he or she tends to focus more and more exclusively on one sex or another. Thus the number of Kinsey "3's" declines from 4.7 percent at age 25 to 2 percent at age 45. This trend is particularly evident if one contrasts adolescent "sexual experimentation" with the more settled patterns of later life. The risk, perhaps, is in sliding easily from the description "*predominantly homosexual*" (or heterosexual) to just plain "homosexual" (or heterosexual), thereby picking up the connotations of exclusivity often associated with those terms.

*Conclusion.* All in all, the present status of the concept of bisexuality is far from satisfactory. As has been noted, both learned discussions and popular think-

ing display a recurrent tendency to confuse bisexual orientation with anatomical or psychic androgyny. Further, the assembling of useful ethnographies of contemporary groups requires a careful delimitation of the specific type or variety of bisexual behavior to be studied. With respect to individual psychodynamics, it is essential to pay careful attention to the depth and quality of the experience, rather than relying on a mere quantitative assessment of "sexual outlets." It is to be hoped that with further well-planned research, the present chaotic amalgam of "bisexuality" will yield to a more rational spectrum of "bisexualities," perhaps in parallel to a comparable phalanx of "homosexualities."

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## BLACK GAY AMERICANS

Thus far the social profile and achievements of black gay Americans have not received their due. This neglect stems from several sources. White Americans tend to view blacks almost monolithically, through a lens of stereotypes, one of which is that the black male is typically a macho heterosexual. The slighting of black lesbians is part and parcel of the relative invisibility of lesbians as a whole. Until recently, most socially conscious black gays chose to put their energies in the civil rights movement, rather than in the gay movement. Finally, there is the view that homosexuality is somehow alien to the black experience. Some black nationalists claim that same-sex behavior was unknown in Sub-Saharan Africa until European colonialists imposed it. Although abundant evidence now exists for a variety of homosexual social patterns in black

Africa, the notion that the behavior is somehow distinctively white lingers.

*Earlier History.* For countries such as Brazil and Haiti there is evidence of direct transfer of forms of homosexual life as part of the African cultural diaspora. For North America such evidence is lacking, perhaps because the slave masters, observing Protestant norms of opposition to "sodomy," ruthlessly sought to stamp the phenomenon out. Oral tradition suggests, however, that just as white masters engaged in sexual relations with black women, so some white men would seek the sexual company of attractive young black slaves. After Emancipation, at the turn of the century, there is evidence of large-scale black dance events in such centers as St. Louis and Washington, D.C. These gatherings probably lie at the origin of the drag balls in Harlem in the 1920s, which attracted both blacks and whites. Not altogether dissimilar is the still surviving tradition of *Mardi Gras* in New Orleans—though a more visible black-white gay presence is evident in the carnivals in Brazil.

New York City's Harlem, originally developed as housing for the white middle class, emerged at the end of World War I as a vital center of black culture (the *Harlem renaissance*). A number of black gay writers contributed to this flowering, including the poet Countee Cullen (1903-1946), and the prose writers (Richard Bruce Nugent (1906- ) and Wallace Thurman (1902-1934). Other writers such as Langston Hughes (1902-1967) were very discreet and ambiguous in their sexuality but occasionally displayed homoerotic sensitivities. More tolerant than Greenwich Village, Harlem's vibrant nightclub scene attracted many white gays from other parts of the city. Here they were regaled by such bisexual and lesbian entertainers as Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith, "Moms" Mabley, and Gladys Bentley (1907-1960). Of these, Bentley was most easily identifiable, with her male attire and tough, butch behavior; eventually she