

## CHAPTER 14

### *Sexuality*

Concepts of sexuality, and especially of female sexuality, suffered greatly from the theorising of Freud, which even now retains an unfortunate influence. I won't recount all his rubbish about penile envy and castration complex and clitoral orgasms being immature. Suffice it to say that there was never any evidence for the correctness of these views and such evidence as has accumulated in later years has been definitely against them.

His contention that all psychological problems in adult life are due basically to sexual bad experiences in very early life, while almost incapable of proof or disproof, has also proved a blind alley and the therapy based on it can point to few successes. However, it still holds quite a grip on the public imagination. The same could be said for his concept of the sexual drive being responsible for all creativity, and for the Oedipus complex.

Freud was at least right in that human sexuality is far more complex than being born and growing up male or female and eventually mating with one or more of the opposite sex. The true nature of human sexuality continues to be a hot topic for debate and the subject of some research. As with many such topics, the debate centres to a large extent on the relative contributions of biology and culture.

Brain studies have shown differences not only between the brains of males and females but between those of straight men and gay men. This could seem to suggest that sexuality (including ones preference for those of the opposite, or the same, sex) might have a biological basis. However, given the increasing evidence of brain plasticity, the differences could also be produced by the person's experiences after birth.

More recently, a putative 'gene for homosexuality' has been reported. As with all such reports, the true role of this gene (if any) in sexuality remains to be proven. If a true 'gene for homosexuality' is found, does this mean we will eventually be able to 'cure' homosexuality and, if so, should we try?

The fact that a man is much more likely to be gay if his identical twin brother is gay seems to demonstrate the importance of genes. At the same time, the fact that identical twin brothers are both gay only half the time (even when reared together) suggests that subtle factors within the womb or during socialisation may be the cause of sexual preference.

Homosexuality has been around for a long time. It can be found in nearly every society on Earth and occurred in many ancient societies. As is well known, it was a common practice in ancient Greece; what is not as well known is that there was at least as much prejudice against homosexuals then as there is today. Accounts of homosexuality with young boys as a purer form of love are also probably little more than a 'dirty old man's' justification.

Homosexuality also exists in virtually every animal species that has been exhaustively studied, but this is usually a case of a second best option, as with humans in jail and other similar situations without contact with partners of the opposite sex.

Though Kinsey found that '37 percent of the total male population has at least some overt homosexual experience to the point of orgasm between adolescence and old age', better conducted more modern studies put the figure at about five percent. These later surveys have fairly consistently found figures of 1-2 percent for female, and 2-3 percent for male, confirmed homosexuals or bisexuals.

The stereotype of homosexual couples as involving one who takes the 'male' part and one the 'female' is by no means always true. Homosexual men have the same varied repertoire of sexual techniques as heterosexual couples. Anal sex may form part of their lovemaking, but they are less likely to have this type of sex contact than is commonly believed. Mutual masturbation and oral sex are popular with both gay men and lesbians. With some people, it is possible that some of the attraction of homosexual sex is a feeling that, because of direct experience, those of the same sex are more knowledgeable and proficient in providing pleasure than are those of the

opposite sex.

At the same time, many people find it easier to interact with those of their own sex, and homosexuality may arise simply because they find inter-sex relationships too difficult.

Somewhat in the same vein, studies of bodybuilders have found a surprisingly high percentage of homosexuals among them. Despite the appearance of hypermasculinity associated with bulging biceps, many of these are left with a gnawing sense of insecurity about what it is to be a man - an insecurity which translates, in some cases, into an avoidance of heterosexual relationships and the adoption of a homosexual lifestyle.

A factor worth noting is the high degree of promiscuity among gay men. It was promiscuity, rather than anal sex as such, that was responsible for the AIDS epidemic. It is extremely rare for a heterosexual who is not a prostitute to have over a thousand lifetime sex partners, as the average gay man infected with HIV had in the beginning of the epidemic. (The average Australian male has 14 one-night stands and three longer-term partners in his lifetime.) It is quite possible that many of these men were in fact attracted to the gay lifestyle simply because of the possibilities for extreme promiscuity, and that this is a factor in the sex lives of many bisexuals.