

SEXUAL SUBORDINATION: INSTITUTIONALIZED HOMOSEXUALITY AND SOCIAL CONTROL IN MELANESIA¹

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Like food and shelter, sex is a basic human need that different societies satisfy in manifold ways. Compared with other topics, however, anthropologists have provided relatively few studies of sexuality. Even holistic ethnographies skim over or ignore sexual behavior and are not admonished for it. Anthropologists assume that all other dimensions of social behavior are socially constructed but, for whatever reasons, they disregard the social construction of sexuality and exclude it from social analysis. The roots of this bias are deep. As Malinowski's (1929) study of Trobriand sexual customs aptly demonstrates, early British ethnographers treated sexuality as an independent issue divorced from its broader political context. Influenced by the colonial administration's concern with tribal politics, British ethnographers conceptually divided the world into separate public and private spheres (e.g., Fortes and Evans-Pritchard 1940). They located the political issues which concerned them in the public sphere and cloistered away sexual behavior in the private realm where it could be justifiably ignored.

If anthropologists have had difficulty treating sexuality in general, dealing with the sexual practices they were taught to abhor (such as homosexuality) was almost impossible. Although the tenet of cultural relativism entreats us to perceive our subject matter objectively, there is something about sexual issues, particularly those Western culture regards as "deviant," that prohibits us from putting aside our own feelings and inhibitions. Anthropologists deal with this problem in two ways. First, one may throw relativism to the wind and accept the moralistic values of one's own society. For example, Williams (1936:158) refers to "sodomy" among the Keraki as an "unnatural practice" and a "perversion." Second, and potentially more damaging to scholarship, is to maintain a relativistic stance but ignore sexual practices that pose a threat. Thus, Evans-Pritchard hesitated reporting homosexual activity among the Azande. Even though he published several articles and books on the Azande, he (Evans-Pritchard 1970) only recently discussed their homosexual proclivities. Another version of this avoidance is manifested earlier in the research process when fieldworkers simply avoid investigating sensitive issues such as homosexuality, or do not pursue them as extensively as they would other issues. Kenneth Read (1980:184), reflecting on his own fieldwork among the Gahuku-Gama, admits that a more insistent

investigation might have uncovered homosexual activity. That researchers are now admitting such omissions and oversights is a reflection of changing attitudes in our own society.

In order to grasp the broader political and social importance of sexuality we must reject the old public/private dichotomy and realize that the private is political. Cohen (1969) took a giant step in this direction when he suggested that developing states used sexual regulations to gain political control of their citizenry, and since then many studies (Rowbotham 1973; Zaretsky 1976; Ortner 1978) have pursued the connection between sexuality and politics. Cohen (1969:664) suggested that "there is 'something' about sexuality that renders people vulnerable to control through it." This "something" may include the radically individualistic view of sexuality; the perception of sexuality as something so private and so personal means that controlling sexuality is virtually synonymous with controlling the individual. Furthermore, if we assume that every sex act contains an element of domination and subordination, then by controlling the occurrence of sex—by structuring who can have sex with whom and how—the inherent individual qualities of dominance and subordination can be generalized and assigned to particular groups of a population. Thus, we might view the insistence on heterosexuality as a way of ensuring male social and economic hegemony. Similarly, where homosexuality is a socially prescribed institution, we might look for a pattern of domination and subordination between those involved. Ritualized/institutionalized homosexuality in New Guinea I view as a mechanism of social control that operates to perpetuate a system of inequality based on sex and age. New Guinea ethnographers (Kelly 1976; Herdt 1981; Van Baal 1966) have suggested similar ideas but they have not pursued or supported these suggestions. I will attempt to specify some of the ways in which ritualized homosexuality actually subordinates and controls women and young men.

INSTITUTIONALIZED HOMOSEXUALITY IN MELANESIA

"Ritualized homosexual practices, usually introduced in male initiation, are virtually universal throughout the Papuan Gulf, extending from Anga groups (e.g., Menya, Sambia, Baruya) and the Fly headwaters west to Prince Hendrik Island and including fringe areas such as the Papuan Plateau (e.g., Etoro, Kalule) and Nomad River" (Herdt and Poole 1981:8). As the above quotation suggests, the practice of homosexuality in New Guinea is widespread, highly structured, and culturally regulated. The particulars of this practice may vary from society to society, but there is a general skeleton of beliefs and actions that characterize the institution across Melanesia. Here, I will describe the anatomy of this common skeleton and then flesh out the particulars of several cases.

Institutionalized homosexuality is rooted in a belief that the attributes of masculinity are not innate in male biology but acquired through strict adherence to a ritualized regimen. This is in contradistinction to femininity which is acquired naturally by women without such effort. Taking some liberties with old anthropological terminology, we might say that femaleness is an ascribed characteristic while maleness is an achieved one. The essence and focus of this maleness invariably is semen. Once this premise is accepted, the logical conclusion is clear; males must acquire semen in order to become real men. Basically, this is what ritualized homosexuality is all about; promoting masculine development by transferring semen from the haves to the have-nots.

This is always accomplished through a highly structured process. It usually takes place in the context of initiation rites, so that we must examine ritualized homosexuality in tandem with other aspects of male initiation. Even the sexual act itself is highly structured; there are restrictions on who may have sex with whom and what role an individual may play in sexual encounters. Kinship and age factors structure the phenomenon such that certain categories of kin are prohibited from

having homosexual relations while other categories of male relatives may be prescribed. The younger partner in a homosexual episode must always receive the semen from the older male, but as a boy ages he graduates to the role of inseminator and eventually moves into a period of heterosexuality, marriage, and child-rearing.

Malekula

Although this paper focuses on New Guinea, it behooves us to first examine Malekula, an island in Eastern Melanesia, since there is documentation of homosexual activity there from a relatively early period, and the pattern is similar to that described above. Layard's (1942) monograph and the posthumous edition of Deacon's (1934) fieldnotes together give a basic account of homosexual practices in the northern area of Malekula known as the Big Nambas. This area was not the primary fieldwork site of either ethnographer; Layard's work was concerned with the small northeastern island of Voa, and Deacon spent most of his time in the southwest of the island, making only a brief visit to the Big Nambas (Deacon 1934:xxii).

Both accounts suggest that the Malekula pattern of homosexual activity conforms in several ways to that found in New Guinea. Deacon (1934:260, 267) writes that up until the time a boy assumes his bark belt, which is the badge of the adult male, he is a "boy lover" to some older man. Once he assumes his belt this bond is terminated and he takes a "boy lover" himself. Neither Deacon nor Layard indicate the ages of boys at the time of their initial homosexual initiation, nor the age at which they receive the bark belt and graduate to homosexual dominants. Both authors are also unclear about how long men continue in the role of dominant inseminator, although some passages suggest that such involvements continue throughout adult life (Deacon 1934:260-262). Furthermore, neither ethnographer is clear about the ideology surrounding homosexual activities. Deacon (1934:262) relates that homosexual practices are believed to cause the boy's "male organ" to grow strong and large, and he assumes that this "male organ" is the penis. Recent work in New Guinea, however, has revealed a belief in an internal "semen organ" which swells up as semen acquired in homosexual intercourse accumulates there (Herdt 1981:217). The possibility exists that a similar mythical anatomical structure is the referent of the Malekulan "male organ." If so, this would make the connection between homosexuality and the transfer of semen which neither Deacon nor Layard makes explicit. Layard (1942:489) does say that ritualized homosexual practices constitute "a transmission of male power by physical means" but he does not say that semen is the vehicle of this transmission.

Two characteristics distinguish the Big Nambas case from the general pattern described above: the close, often monogamous relationship between a boy and his adult inseminator; and the existence of what appears to be hereditary chiefs. Unfortunately, neither author gives much information on the basis of chiefly authority or the benefits of chiefly privilege. Deacon (1934:49-50) superficially notes that chiefs owe their influence and power to their opportunities for acquiring greater wealth, but he does not elaborate on how they come into these opportunities. Chiefly status is important to an understanding of homosexuality because chiefs may take on many boy lovers just as they may acquire many wives. Deacon does not investigate this interface of high status, wealth, and sexual access. Furthermore, he (Deacon 1934:170) does not tell us whether the quality of the homosexual relationships between a chief and his boy lovers is any different from that experienced by the rest of the population whose homosexual involvements appear to be monogamous.

Deacon's description of the quality of the average homosexual relationship is the strong point of his analysis. After the decision to hold circumcision rites, the

father of a candidate will seek out someone to act as guardian to his son. After these arrangements have been made the guardian has exclusive sexual rights over his ward. He becomes the boy's "husband" and their relationship is very close. The boy accompanies his guardian everywhere and if one of the two should die the survivor would mourn him deeply (Deacon 1934:261). Layard's description of homosexuality is primarily quoted from Deacon's account.

The Transfly

Reports from the Trans-Fly area of Papua New Guinea suggest that the intimate monogamous dimension found in the Big Nambas is absent. The primary sources on this area are Williams (1936) and Landtman (1927). The latter is disappointing with regard to homosexuality—the author (Landtman 1927:237) merely mentions that "sodomy" is practiced within the context of initiation as a means to make youth strong and tall. Even this statement is confounded by the fact that initiation is not a single event among the Kiwai. Youths are initiated separately into each of the great secret ceremonies as they occur, none of which has exclusive reference to the initiates (Landtman 1927:237).

Williams's account of the Keraki is much more informative with regard to homosexuality. Although he uses derogatory expressions such as "unnatural practice" and "perversion," he gives an informed account of the institution. He (Williams 1936:158) relates that sodomy was fully sanctioned by male society, universally practiced, and that homosexuality was actually regarded as essential to a boy's bodily growth. Boys are initiated at the bull-roarer ceremony at about the age of thirteen. On the night of the ceremony the initiate is turned over to a youth of the previous group of initiates who introduces the boy to homosexual intercourse. In all cases noted by William (1936:188), the older youth was the mother's brother's son or the father's sister's son of the new initiate. After this, the boy is available to fellow villagers or visitors of the opposite moiety who wish to have homosexual relations with him. During this time the initiates live together in a seclusion hut for several months, during which they are supposed to grow rapidly with the aid of homosexual activities. At the end of the seclusion the youth becomes a "bachelor." He associates more freely with the elders and shows an increased interest in hunting, but he continues to play the passive role in homosexual relations for a year or so.

Near the end of this period the initiates go through a ceremony of lime-eating. Lime is poured down their throats and the severe burns that result are thought to neutralize the effects of homosexual intercourse; i.e., to ensure that the young men do not become pregnant. After this, a youth's compulsory service as a passive homosexual partner comes to an end. He is then entitled to adopt the opposite role when the next batch of boys is initiated into the bull-roarer (Williams 1936:200-203). "It is commonly asserted that the early practice of sodomy does nothing to inhibit a man's natural desires when later on he marries; and it is a fact that while the older men are not debarred from indulging, and actually do so at the bull-roarer ceremony, sodomy is virtually restricted as a habit to the *setiriva* [bachelors]" (Williams 1936:159).

Like Deacon and Layard, Williams emphasized the role of homosexuality in growth and development without explicitly connecting this function to the transfer of semen. On the other hand, no alternative explanation connecting homosexuality and growth is offered. Williams (1936:204) suggests that "the real motive is presumably self-gratification and although the idea of promoting growth is actually present . . . we may be sure that sodomy could get on very well without it." While this conclusion is perhaps a bit extreme, it directs our attention to the actual physical and erotic aspects of homosexuality which are often overlooked when it is treated as institutionalized behavior. Institutionalized homosexuality is still sex and it may still serve a pleasurable function. Analyses that neglect this fact are incomplete.

Marind-Anim

To the west of the Keraki are the Marind-anim, a coastal group studied by Van Baal (1966). The Marind occupy a vast territory extending along the entire southeastern coast of Irian Jaya. They are the epitome of what Wagner (1972:19) calls the "flamboyant coastal cultures." Homosexuality is prescribed for an extended period of about six years with boys engaging in anal intercourse. According to Van Baal's (1966:147) description this period probably begins when the boy is between seven and fourteen years old. Van Baal suggests that boys are subjected to both the sexual desires of their appointed mentors, usually their mother's brother, as well as the desires of the age-grade of youths above them. Thus, Marind custom seems to combine generalized sexual access with the idea of a single homosexual partner.

Actually, Van Baal's descriptions are not explicit about the details of homosexuality. He does not pay any attention to the distinction between active and passive roles within homosexual relations and, consequently, he does not document the transition from one role to another. Certain statements do suggest such a transition, however, when examined in the context of the male life cycle. A boy is given a mentor at the onset of puberty and "the relationship between the boy and his mentor is a homosexual one, the *binahorevai* [mentor] having the right to use him" (Van Baal 1966:118). At about the same time the boy moves into the *gotad*—a ritual seclusion hut. The boy spends his days here but joins his mentor in the men's house at night where they sleep next to one another. When the boy's hair is long enough to be plaited into an elaborate hairdo, which is the pride of the Marind male, he is promoted to the age-grade of *wokraved*, where he stays for the next two or three years. According to Van Baal (1966:147) "the *wokraved* is called a girl, a qualification apparently referring to his role in the homosexual relationship with his *binahor*-father (and possibly with his older mates in the *gotad*)." This suggests that the *wokraved* plays the passive role in anal intercourse. It is confirmed by Van Baal's (1966:495) statement that the mother's brother might be seen as a mother substitute who promotes the boy's growth by depositing semen in his body.

Following the stage of *wokraved*, the adolescent young man becomes *ewati*. He remains in this age-grade for about three more years or until just before marriage, whereupon he leaves the *gotad*. "The promotion to *ewati* is a big event in the boy's life. It implies an important change in status . . . The *ewati* is, to all intents and purposes, a man . . . and he need no longer obey his *binahorevai*. However, he is in no hurry to marry as he finds much gratification in his status of *ewati*" (Van Baal 1966:151-152). Based upon the pattern of the other societies examined, we might suspect that the termination of the youth's obedience to his mentor spells the end of their homosexual relationship as well. It is also likely that the *ewati*'s reluctance to marry and leave the *gotad* is due to the fact that some of the "gratification" he finds in his status is his new role as the dominant inseminator to a new group of *wokraved*. This suggestion, however, is not obvious from Van Baal's description.

Van Baal (1966:166) is explicit about the general transition to heterosexuality. Eventually the *ewati* arranges for marriage, becomes an adult man, and leaves the *gotad*. "To be married is the wish of every man; in Marind-anim opinion the unmarried male is a poor wretch." Thus, the Marind conform to the general cycle from homosexuality to heterosexuality, though it seems that Marind men may continue to engage in homosexual sodomy throughout their life. The ideological underpinnings of homosexuality among the Marind also conform to our general pattern. Like the residents of the Big Nambas and the Transfly, the Marind believe homosexual relations promote the growth and development of boys. Unlike Layard's and Williams's descriptions, however, Van Baal's account states explicitly that this growth is attributed to the transfer of semen. Recent studies of

the Papuan Plateau are even more insistent about semen being the pivotal issue of the homosexual cult.

The Papuan Plateau

Our knowledge of homosexuality on the Plateau comes to us from the work of Kelly (1976, 1977) and Schieffelin (1976) who conducted fieldwork among the Etoro and Kaluli, respectively. Homosexuality is also practiced by the Onabasalu and Bendamini but the researchers of these areas have not yet published any account of homosexuality there. The homosexual activities of the Onabasalu are known to us through a reference to them in Kelly's description of the Etoro. Based on personal communication with the fieldworker, Ernst, Kelly (1977:16) relates that Onabasalu initiation is focused on masturbation and the smearing of semen over the initiates' bodies. According to Ernst, the Onabasalu formerly practiced oral intercourse and some Onabasalu boys were actually initiated at Etoro seclusion houses.

Schieffelin's (1976) description of the Kaluli is organized around an eloquent analysis of the *Gisaro* ceremony. The *Gisaro* is an exotic ritual drama in which dancers/singers from one longhouse community visit another community where they sing songs recalling some painful and depressing memory of their hosts. In a successful *Gisaro*, someone in the audience will be moved to such grief and sorrow that he will grab a torch and burn the dancer. Schieffelin treats the ceremony as a celebration of social reciprocity and believes that the theme of reciprocity is the basic current flowing through all of Kaluli society.

Unfortunately, Schieffelin does not pursue the theme of reciprocity when dealing with homosexuality. He simply explains homosexuality as an extreme expression of maleness within a context of male-female opposition. On the other hand, Schieffelin (1976:123) claims that relationships between Kaluli men and women are unusual, by New Guinea standards, for their lack of hostility and for their affection. Why then, do we not find this extreme expression of maleness in New Guinea societies with greater sexual antagonism, such as those in the Highlands proper? Schieffelin is not concerned with such questions.

The characteristics of Kaluli maleness are concentrated in semen. Semen has a magical quality that promotes physical growth and mental understanding. Boys must, therefore, acquire semen in order to grow and develop masculine qualities. "When a boy is eleven or twelve years old he is engaged for several months in homosexual intercourse with a healthy older man chosen by his father . . . Men point to the rapid growth of adolescent youths, the appearance of peachfuzz beards, and so on as the favorable results of this child-rearing practice" (Schieffelin 1976:124). Schieffelin does not tell us how much older this "older man" is or what criteria guide his selection, but he (Schieffelin 1976:126) does reveal that during periods of seclusion in the ceremonial hunting lodge, "homosexual intercourse was practiced between the older bachelors and the younger boys to make them grow, some boys and men developing specific liaisons for the time." Is this in addition to the homosexual relationship arranged by the boy's father? If so, how does it articulate with that relationship? Again, Schieffelin does not discuss the details.

Actually, Schieffelin says little beyond a basic statement of the relationship between homosexuality and adolescent development but, lest we criticize him for this, we should recall that his analysis is concerned with *Gisaro*, not with ritualized homosexuality, and his limited attention to homosexual practices makes sense in this context. At the end of the book, Schieffelin (1976:222) makes a connection between the generative role of homosexual intercourse in this world and the vitalizing, regenerative role that the *Gisaro* ritual plays in the "unseen world." In a report devoted to examining the *Gisaro*, Schieffelin tells the reader only enough

about homosexuality to ensure that the symbolic connection between the two is grasped.

Kelly's (1976) descriptions of Etoro homosexuality are also circumscribed by his particular interests. He examines Etoro society from a structural perspective and his investigation of homosexuality provides another clue in his search for the underlying structural characteristics of Etoro social structure. In his well-known article on witchcraft and sexual relations, Kelly treats homosexual and heterosexual activities together, since they both represent a transfer of "life force" from one individual to another. In the case of homosexual intercourse the passive boy is the beneficiary of the life force transferred to him in semen. In the case of heterosexual intercourse the unborn child is the recipient of this life force, since the Etoro believe that the semen deposited in the womb combines with the female's blood to form the child. Kelly (1976:41) suggests that witchcraft and sexual relations occupy analogous structural positions within the Etoro conceptual system since they both constitute modes of interaction through which life force is transmitted from one human being to another.

Kelly (1976:52) stresses the role of homosexual intercourse in supplying boys with adequate life force/semen to ensure their proper growth and maturity. To this end, a boy is inseminated through oral intercourse by a single inseminator from about the age of ten until he is fully mature and has a manly beard, usually around his early to mid-twenties. Initiation appears to take place during the later portion of this period. Kelly (1976:47) states that "youths are initiated into manhood in their late teens or early twenties when they are physically mature (although not fully bearded)." About every three years, all young men who have reached this stage of development go to a seclusion lodge and cannot be seen by women. The previous group of initiates, who are now completely mature, also reside at the lodge, but Kelly does not say whether they engage in sexual relations with the neophytes. He (Kelly 1976:47) does say that a "generalized insemination of the youths by older men takes place at the seclusion lodge," but the reader is unsure if the previous group of initiates are part of this group of "older men." Kelly is also not specific regarding how long the seclusion lasts, but, upon reaching maturity the Etoro initiate will become the inseminator of a new young neophyte, preferably his wife's (or his wife-to-be's) brother.

In his study of Etoro social structure, Kelly (1977) has more to say about the preference for the wife's brother as a homosexual partner. Here Kelly (1977:2) attempts to demonstrate that the principle of siblingship is as important as the principle of descent, and that Etoro social structure can be viewed as the outcome of managing these two contradictory principles. Kelly's discussion of homosexuality in this book is minimal and submerged under detailed description of the kinship system. Regarding homosexuality, he focuses primarily on the preference for the sister's husband as her brother's inseminator. If this ideal is achieved, then a married sister and her younger brother have equivalent relationships of sexual partnership to the same man. The relationship between the sister's husband and her unmarried brother is "exceptionally strong" and sexual relations between the two continue until the younger marries and starts inseminating his own wife's brother (Kelly 1977:183). Kelly (1977:270) uses the Etoro organization of homosexuality as an example of the principle of siblingship, in this case, as it is mediated by an affine.

The Sambia

Herd's (1981) analysis of the Sambia—occupants of the narrow river valleys in the remote Eastern Highlands—is the only full-length study of a New Guinea society concerned primarily with institutionalized homosexuality. Ironically, this narrow focus gives the impression that institutionalized homosexuality is a system

unto itself, concerned only with the construction of gender identity—a suggestion that flies in the face of the anthropological tenet that culture is integrated. We would be better informed of the importance of homosexuality if we were given more information about its connection to kinship, politics, economics, etc. The only connection that Herdt really stresses is the role of homosexuality in reproducing a warriorhood—a warriorhood that is reproduced sufficiently in other New Guinea societies without the aid of homosexual activities (Meggitt 1977).

The narrow focus of Herdt's analysis is the product of two factors. First, his definition of culture as "the cognitive system of values, norms, and rules influencing perception and behavior" is mentalistic and allows him (Herdt 1981:12) to give short shrift to material connections. Second, Herdt's goal is to discover the subjective experience of homosexuality for individuals by focusing on verbal behavior, especially idioms. His (Herdt 1981:11) primary concern is with intimate communication; what particular men in particular circumstances said to him in particular. Putting aside the question of whether or not one person can actually understand another's "subjective experience," there is still the question of the value of such an exercise. As a rule, anthropologists are not interested in individual idiosyncrasies but in social generalities.

Herdt discusses Sambia homosexuality in terms of stages of "masculinization." The Sambia believe that masculine attributes develop when young men acquire sufficient semen. By this point in the paper it should come as no surprise that the Sambia think that semen must be acquired by ingesting it in homosexual oral intercourse. Around the age of seven to ten years old, a boy is separated from his mother and subjected to painful and traumatic rituals directed toward purging the initiates of female contamination. Once purged, the initiates embark upon a period of consuming semen intended to provide them with the requisite for masculine development. Fellatio becomes a way of life and elders reiterate that boys should ingest semen every night (Herdt 1981:235). Boys must consume a lot of semen in order to build a reservoir of maleness and strength that will last a lifetime.

The appearance of male physical traits around the age of fourteen to sixteen is taken as proof that the boy has ingested enough semen. He is promoted to the status of bachelor and required to serve as the dominant inseminator for a new group of initiates. This period leads into marriage, usually to a pre-menarche girl. The young wife may practice fellatio on her husband but the new couple cannot engage in vaginal intercourse. During a period of about a year or two then, a man can be truly bisexual, continuing to have oral sex with young initiates as well as his wife. Once the wife's menarche occurs, however, they begin coitus and homosexual activities should cease (Herdt 1981:252).

As the bachelor approaches coitus and fatherhood, which is the peak of manhood, his ritual practices are shifted to defend and maintain the manliness already acquired. For example, men begin drinking white "milk" sap after each occasion of heterosexual intercourse as a means of replacing ejaculated semen (Herdt 1981:251). But one wonders why milk sap is not used as the original source of semen for initiates. This enigma should have prompted Herdt to look for other possible functions of the homosexual relationship which could not be replaced by milk sap consumption, such as the subordinate-dominant relationship between homosexual partners, which is affirmed in the sexual exchange.

Herdt (1981:320) views homosexual contacts as powerful personal experiences that inculcate masculinity and further the unfinished process of male "separation-individuation." "Ritualized homosexuality reinforces the rigidity of the masculine ethic, it allows for no exceptions in the race for acquiring maleness" (Herdt 1981:322). In Herdt's (1981:305) terms, ritualization homosexuality is a process of "radical resocialization," a kind of "ritualized gender surgery" that replaces the gender identity a boy acquires at the hands of his mother with the appropriate

masculine gender identity. Herdt does not say why homosexuality is the means of "radical resocialization" nor how other societies, which have to deal with the same problem, manage without it.

HOMOSEXUALITY AND SOCIAL CONTROL

Herdt's suggestion follows Burton and Whiting's (1961) explanation of male initiation as "psychological brainwashing." They (Burton and Whiting 1961:90-91) suggest that puberty rites replace the feminine identity acquired by boys during the intense period of mothering with the appropriate masculine identity. Male initiation in general and ritualized homosexuality in particular are obviously connected to the formation of masculine gender identity, but restricting the role of homosexuality to this one function is a mistake. In fact, what Herdt (1981) calls the "radical resocialization" of boys may not be as necessary as he thinks. While the first several years of a boy's life are dominated by his mother, during this time he is continually confronted with the gender polarization around him. Despite the closeness of his mother he could not be oblivious to the sexual divisions that define his environment. Furthermore, he is probably continually indoctrinated in the correct behavior for the different sexes—a mother surely reminds her young son of his sex and the behavior appropriate to it.

Ritualized homosexuality doubtless cements and guarantees the correct gender identity, but here I suggest a broader function of homosexual initiation—that it is a powerful component in a system of social control. This notion actually encompasses the former argument since indoctrination of the acceptable gender identity is the first line of attack in keeping individuals within the boundaries delineated and accepted by society. A closer examination, however, reveals that ritualized homosexuality may serve to control more than individual psychology. Institutionalized homosexuality is a mechanism of control that operates to perpetuate a system of inequality based on sex and age. It supports the status and position of older men over and against women and young men. Kelly (1976:51) made a similar suggestion about the structural role of sexual relations and witchcraft in producing an elementary system of inequality based on sex and age, but he does not explain how the actual practice of homosexuality contributes to such a system. Herdt (1981:13) also suggests that initiation separates women and children as a class and reproduces the social order but, as mentioned above, his analysis is restricted to an examination of gender identity and he does not specify any of the actual connections between homosexual practices and the oppression of young men and women.

Male homosexuality may seem completely removed from anything having to do with women, but, paradoxically, this separation and isolation are related to the control and subordination of women in several ways. First, the secrecy which in most cases surrounds the male homosexual cult (the Marind-anim seem to be the only exception) keeps women ignorant of male activities. This ignorance itself is a powerful controlling mechanism. Men state that women have no idea of male ritual activities and in most of the societies discussed above initiates are instructed not to reveal any of the secrets they learn. Williams (1936:185) states that young Keraki initiates were threatened with execution if they revealed any ritual secrets. Furthermore, the seclusion of small boys in initiation huts and their reappearance after the period of rapid adolescent development is intended to impress upon women the power of the male cult. Schieffelin's (1977:126) account of the Kaluli, for example, states that young men were strictly secluded from women for periods of up to fifteen months. "The young men emerged from seclusion decked in their brightest finery, so handsome and so much grown, it is said, that their own relatives didn't recognize them." A more explicit example of the manipulation of ignorance revolves around the use of the bull-roarer, a noise maker used by some societies in the context of male initiation and ritualized homosexuality. The bull-roarer makes a strange noise which can be heard by women and children. They

know that it is connected with men's activities but they have no idea of its source (Williams 1936:192). Such ignorance of male ritual activity is easily turned into fear of its apparent power, and this fear ensures female submission.

Practitioners themselves actually view homosexual activity as a statement of male superiority over females. Van Baal (1966:489) says that Marind male pride and superiority find their fullest expression in homosexual rites. These rites stress the absolute superiority of the male sex. This expression, however, is a fiction that men are determined to maintain. Men are well aware that they depend upon women, not only for their substantial contribution to subsistence, but, more importantly, for their reproductive power. Among the Kaluli a man can develop the connections and influence that render him fully effective in his life only through a relationship with a woman (Schieffelin 1977:128). Similarly, among the Sambia only the birth of a child confirms complete manhood, and one's success in fathering children is an important gauge of one's prestige and social status (Herdt 1981:52). Thus, as Van Baal (1966:949) points out, the venerated power of men is not all it is pretended to be. "These self-sufficient males need the females and they know it; only they do not care to admit it." The conflict between the fiction of all-powerful masculinity and the reality of female reproductive power gives rise to masculine ritual and dogma that reinforces the former in face of the latter. Ritualized homosexuality is the critical element of the male defense system—they use it to deny their dependence upon women. Among the Sambia this is taken so far as the elaboration of a myth of male parthenogenesis which asserts that the female sex itself was the product of male homosexual intercourse (Herdt 1981). By denying the power of women, men are able to justify and assert their own authority and control. Men may try to demonstrate in many ways their ability to live without women, but male homosexuality is particularly effective in this regard since it denies the need for women in the area where women are most powerful—sexuality.

The contradiction between the myth of all-powerful masculinity and the reality of female reproductive power is paralleled within the male sex itself in terms of age. The social status and influence that come with age are well documented in the New Guinea literature. Van Baal (1966:115), for example, states that "relative age is important in Marind society. It finds expression in the somewhat exalted position of elderly people and in the system of age grades among adolescents." Herdt (1981:35) also affirms that age is a fundamental principle of hamlet organization among the Sambia, as well as one of the primary sources of power and prestige. On the other hand, older men are not blind to the energy, vitality and determination possessed by youth. In fact, they may formally recognize it. In Marind society, for example, the important position of elders is juxtaposed to a special emphasis on youth: "what counts is youth and life" (Van Baal 1966:171). Similarly, Schieffelin (1977:125) points out that the Kaluli recognize that virgin youths and unmarried young men are the best hunters not only because of their greater speed, stamina and sharpness of eye, but also because animals may be more likely to appear before them. If we accept the suggestion that homosexuality affirms masculine supremacy in the face of female power, we must also investigate the possibility that it operates in the parallel contradiction between the ideal of adult supremacy and the reality of youthful vitality.

The ways in which male initiation in general may help ensure adult ascendancy over younger males are numerous and intermittently intertwined with the control of females. The same strategy of enforced ignorance used against women is also employed against youth. Very young boys are as ignorant of male cult secrets as their mothers are. Even as they grow and begin to learn the secrets of manhood, they are in no position to challenge the accumulated wisdom and knowledge of older adult men. As Meillassoux (1960:49) suggests regarding African elders, the

authority of the elders rests on withholding knowledge, and it is this which supports and justifies the control of youth's labor products. Herdt's (1981:45) account supports this suggestion. He points out that the distinguished position of Sambia elders is based on their accumulated knowledge; they hold ritual secrets that younger men have not learned and this knowledge gives them enormous power to constrain the actions of younger men. Keraki adults also restrict the knowledge of young men. According to Williams (1936) young boys learn some of the myths of the male cult in the context of initiation, but they may remain ignorant of other myths until much later in their life. Williams (1936:199) offers a poignant example of how knowledge is regulated. Bamboo pipes are revealed to initiates as the source of a mysterious, unknown sound they heard as children. After demonstrating the use of the pipes, adults give the initiates their own pipes and tell them to blow, but the boys may blow until they pass out without producing a sound since they have been given a plain tube without the almost invisible splint responsible for the noise. Thus, this step in initiation removes some of the ignorance which boys share with their mothers, but not necessarily all of it.

As young boys become more aware of male ritual secrets through the process of initiation, new and additional mechanisms of control must be found to replace ignorance. In the societies examined here the very process of enlightenment—initiation into the homosexual cult—contains the new means of control. Initiation reveals to boys the powerful secret of male homosexuality, but the ideological underpinnings of this institution perpetuate their subordination. Ideologically locating "strength" in semen means that boys, like women, lack strength and are, therefore, weak and inferior. Furthermore, by denying that semen is acquired naturally and insisting that it is a limited good which can only be acquired from someone already possessing it, adult males make boys not only completely inferior to their seniors, but also absolutely dependent upon them for status mobility. In such a situation, as Herdt (1981:51) realizes, strength, maleness and manliness become virtually synonymous with conformity to the ritual routine. "Boys and youths alike must conform: either that, which rewards manhood, or else oblivion by weakness, female contamination, or death" (Herdt 1981:242).

Equating semen with strength and other masculine qualities is an economical controlling ideology since, at the same time that it affirms the ascendancy of males over females, it also denies boys the chance to capitalize automatically on the favorable position of their sex. They can acquire the prerequisite for domination only by subordinating themselves to those who already have semen and following their ritual dictates. These dictates may include painful purging rites since the dogma of institutionalized homosexuality not only denies boys strength but also maintains that they are full of female weakness. A boy could not come from his mother's womb and go through an intense period of mothering without being infected by female pollution. Therefore, boys must be separated from this debilitating female influence and may have to go through purging rites, such as nose-bleeding, to remove existing female contamination.

While the removal of feminine influence may be the stated purpose of the early stages of initiation, ritualized homosexuality may actually be a mechanism to maintain the feminine quality of youth as a way of perpetuating their inferiority. This suggestion challenges the established anthropological interpretations of initiation rituals as simply rites of passage which make boys into men (e.g., Van Gennep 1960, Turner 1967). While this is the recognized emic purpose of ritualized homosexuality, descriptions of the phenomenon suggest that it may be a means of maintaining control of growing boys and maturing young men by emphasizing their femininity and forcing them to play a role in homosexual intercourse analogous to that of women in heterosexual activity.² In so doing adult men support their own superior position against the potential challenge or

psychological threat of a new generation. Dundes (1976:232) points out that homosexual initiatory practices actually feminize the initiates but he seems unaware that initiates are already feminized to a certain extent by their association with their mothers. More accurately, enforced homosexuality capitalizes on the existing femininity of initiates and maintains it through homosexual intercourse in order to subordinate and control younger men and boys. Dundes is interested in psychological identity, and while he insightfully recognizes the component of feminization involved in ritualized homosexuality, he does not make the connection between feminization and subordination and control.

This feminine quality of the passive partner in homosexual initiation is also suggested by Etoro kinship terminology which refers by the same kin term to a brother and a sister, who are equally appropriate sexual partners for an older male (Kelly 1977:182). Van Baal (1966:147) offers more explicit evidence. Marind mockingly call young initiates "girls" in reference to their role in homosexual relationships. In sexually polarized societies the association of young males with females must have extensive ramifications.

The anthropological interpretation of homosexual rituals as rites of passage simplifies the complex and gradual process of masculine development. By looking at initiation ceremonies as signalling the transition from boyhood to manhood, investigators may overlook the continuing age and status differentials which separate men throughout the life cycle. Becoming a "man"/adult in New Guinea societies is only one step in the larger process of achieving status, prestige, and a prominent position in society. Ritualized homosexuality, then, is not just a rite of passage but an integrated segment in the lifelong process that takes young boys from childhood, through a period as semen recipients, then through a period as semen providers, to a time of heterosexual marriage and fathering children. Concomitantly, ritualized homosexuality assures the authority and superiority of those at the end of this cycle by subordinating those at the beginning and ensuring that they remain differentiated with no pretensions of status before their time.

The transition from semen recipient to semen donator, which is a general characteristic of institutionalized homosexuality, is also intelligible when viewed as part of a system of social control. The ideology of ritualized homosexuality describes semen as a limited good which boys acquire and then dissipate during the remainder of their lives. Logically then, those who have just acquired their store of semen through a period of homosexuality must have the most semen, and, by extension, the most strength. Switching to the role of dominant inseminator for an extended period depletes a young man of much of this newly acquired treasure and perhaps undermines any ambitions he might have as a consequence of his new found maturity. The institutionalized transition to semen provider forces those who have the most semen/strength to dissipate it for the benefit of the next group of initiates. In exchange they are able to dominate the prepubescent initiates who are dependant upon them for semen. Ideally, this subordinate relationship should continue after the initiates reach maturity, but as an added safety measure they will be forced to deplete their store of semen/strength for the next age grade, thereby ensuring their continued subordination to their seniors and the perpetuation of the system. The system thus creates and maintains a structured hierarchy in which each age grade is subordinate to the next oldest age grade.

Psychologically this arrangement also provides an emotional outlet for energetic teenagers who, according to Herdt (1981:323), "feel their growing strength and want to test their power." No doubt they also feel anger and resentment about the abuse they suffered during initiation at the hands of their seniors. The transition to the dominant position in homosexual activities is a way of directing this dangerous combination of strength and anger away from their seniors toward

those who are younger. According to Herdt (1981:56), Sambia elders actually assert that young initiates must become "strong" and "angry" because of what has been done to them, then "they can do something equally laden with power: they are encouraged to channel that anger and relax their tight penises by serving as dominant fellateds (for the first time) of younger initiates."

This quotation also suggests that anger and strength are not the only feelings being orchestrated by ritualized homosexuality. The suggestion that boys "relax their tight penises" represents a recognition of the developing libido of maturing boys. By requiring that these urges be satisfied in homosexual relations, older men defend their own monopoly over women and thereby assure their own ascendancy in a system that emphasizes marriage and fatherhood as important measures of social status. The importance of wives in New Guinea is well documented in the literature. For our purposes it is sufficient to note that wives are a valuable resource. Marriage extends a man's network of social relations and provides him with a productive laborer and childbearer. Older men can maximize their own access to this resource by prohibiting younger men from having heterosexual relations and directing their developing sex drive toward young boys. As Herdt (1981:322) points out, "all sexual contact is regulated . . . ritualized homosexual contacts cordon bachelors directing their erotic impulses."

If this is an objective of institutionalized homosexuality, then the early stage of the institution may be seen not so much as a way of masculinizing the new initiates, but as a way of using new initiates to satisfy and pacify the next older age grade and thereby keep them under control. This suggestion is further supported by the general improvement in living conditions that accompanies the transition to inseminator. As initiates graduate to this stage of their life they are usually released from many of the obligations and abuses they endured during the stage of passive homosexual service. For example, among the Marind the *ewati* has an enjoyable, gratifying role and is in no hurry to marry (Van Baal 1966:151-152). The relative ease of the *ewati's* life, combined with the sexual gratification he receives from the new group of initiates, may temporarily obviate the *ewati's* desire for a wife or female sexual partner. Consequently, young females are available to older men.

If this is true we would expect to find a marriage pattern in which very young girls marry older men. This is what Kelly (1977) found historically for the Etoro; girls were traditionally married at about ten to twelve years old to men approximately ten years their senior. Kelly (1977:169) explains this age differential as a consequence of an imbalanced sex ratio. The sex ratio is obviously important, but Kelly would do well to also investigate the connection between this marriage pattern and the organization of ritualized homosexuality. I am not suggesting that ritualized homosexuality necessarily causes a certain marriage pattern, only that there may be a connection between the two that is worth examining. Western researchers have overlooked such connections because they see homosexual activities and heterosexual practices such as marriage as diametrical opposites rather than integrated components of a larger system. As Lindenbaum (n.d.) points out, this problem is further aggravated by "a method of analysis that proceeds to some degree with one sex at a time, when . . . gender is the mutual product of men and women acting in concert."

The arguments made so far regarding homosexuality revolve around the issue of controlling or influencing behavior. This same issue has been discussed more extensively with regard to initiation practices in general, and the role of initiation in socializing and disciplining initiates is well known. Burton and Whiting (1961:85) state that "regardless of the relative strength of infantile dependence, there remains a need for initiation to exercise authority over boys." Similarly, Williams (1936:247) suggests that Keraki initiation rites serve an expressly disciplinary function: "while he [the new initiate] is elevated, he must be

humbled. He enters at the bottom of the class and must be taught to know his place." According to Van Baal's (1966:142) description of the Marind a first disciplining begins as soon as boys become initiates in the seclusion hut. "Living in a kind of gang, the boys drill each other on the basis of the rule that the juniors are at the beck and call of their seniors, and have to win complete acceptance by living up to the rules." Ritualized homosexuality fits nicely into this general initiatory objective. Thus, Van Baal (1966:149) concludes "that the elements of disciplining and of being subservient to others, also in homosexual relationships prevail." Herdt is even more explicit. He (Herdt 1981:56) says that "the act of ritualized fellatio confirms the respective statuses of bachelor and initiate alike, and it establishes a definite pattern of eroticism, dominance, and subordination in their interactions for years to come."

Obedience and conformity are not necessarily the only socially desirable results of homosexual practices. Older adults also accrue political and economic benefits. We have already noted how institutionalized homosexuality reserves the economic contribution of women for older men, but there may be other economic benefits as well. In societies where older adults act as inseminators there are benefits that accompany this dominant role. Among the Big Nambas, for example, from the time a father selects a "husband" for his son until the time the boy takes on the status of an adult male, his mentor has absolute sexual rights over him and would be extremely jealous of any other man having intercourse with the boy. In fact, Deacon (1934:261) claims that the older man will hardly let the boy out of his sight. However, a man may sell his rights to his boy-lover for a short period of time. This suggests a situation of privatized sexual rights which can be sold, or more accurately, rented out by a boy's "husband" for the "husband's" economic benefit.

Not surprisingly, these sexual rights go hand in hand with other service obligations, the most significant of which is the requirement that the boy work in his "husband's" garden. Deacon does not discuss the extent of this garden labor, but he (Deacon 1934:261) does say that this labor contribution is the reason chiefs acquire many boy-lovers, which suggests that the work is significant. Finally, a boy's mentor also receives compensation directly from his boy-lover and the boy's father. At some point after the seclusion period the boy must purchase his bark belt (the badge of adulthood) from his mentor with coconuts and tobacco. The homosexual relationship between the two continues until this payment is made (Deacon 1934:267). In addition, at the conclusion of the period of seclusion the father of the initiate gives his son's mentor "a very considerable payment of pigs" (Deacon 1934:262).

Van Baal notes similar benefits which accrue to the dominant inseminator. He (Van Baal 1966:845) says that the guardian enjoys many privileges and the lavish provisions he must make for the feasts given in honor of his wards are well balanced by the services they render him. "It is the boy's duty to assist his *bibabor*-father [his homosexual guardian] in gardening and hunting, to fetch coconuts for him and to render him various small services" (Van Baal 1966:148). The initiate's servitude is guaranteed by the fact that the transition to the next age grade, which terminates his sexual and economic service to his guardian, requires the co-operation of his guardian in arranging the relevant feasts. As Van Baal (1966:161) succinctly puts it, "whether he likes it or not, he has to conform to the prescribed patterns of behavior." The economic dimension of this arrangement is even more obvious in cases where the guardian is childless. A man in this situation may prefer to have the boy as a helper for as long as possible and may therefore delay the necessary feasts (Van Baal 1966:149).

Among the Keraki the primary inseminators are not older adults but the next older age grade of youths. However, the services required of initiates by their

homosexual partners appear to establish a pattern of servitude that extends into adulthood. Williams (1936:189) states that all the functionaries at an initiation ceremony, one of which is an initiate's primary inseminator, have special relationships to the initiate and continue to have claims on his services. The initiate is never supposed to refuse their requests. In this sense, semen and manhood may be seen as gifts which place the recipient in a situation of almost permanent indebtedness to the giver. Such indebtedness establishes a relationship of subordination and obligation which may last a lifetime. The only compensation for this predicament is the opportunity they have to balance their own indebtedness by subordinating a younger group of initiates in the same manner.

The subordination of those who are younger as compensation for one's own subordination points to one of the most efficient characteristics of homosexuality as a social control mechanism—it is self-perpetuating. The major investments are required of boys at a young age. By the time young men are at an age to offer resistance they are vested in the system, some of the benefits are already beginning to flow their way and they need only wait for time to take them to the most favored positions. This progression undercuts any identification with women who are forever destined to a subordinate position. Were young men to grow impatient, the rules and relationships indoctrinated via ritualized homosexuality provide a continual restraint.

The suggestion that institutionalized homosexuality is primarily a social control mechanism is essentially a functional explanation; as such it suffers from the usual problems and failings of functionalist theory. Perhaps the greatest pitfall of functional explanations is that they do not explain why a certain cultural phenomenon, in this instance homosexuality, is the means utilized to achieve a particular effect, in this case the control of women and youth and the perpetuation of a social hierarchy based on sex and age. In other words, if we accept the suggestion that homosexuality is a mechanism of social control we still do not know why it is used in some societies and not in others.

Lindenbaum (n.d.) offers some enlightening suggestions in this regard. She sees a connection between sister exchange and ritualized homosexuality and suggests that the latter is a sort of bride service. According to Lindenbaum, a striking aspect of societies with ritualized homosexuality is that the pattern of marriage is sister exchange with no payment of brideprice. In such a situation semen is a kind of covenant that keeps the sister exchange system intact. Lindenbaum's discussion points out the important role of material valuables and ceremonial exchange in brideprice societies. In the Highlands proper, not semen exchange but the ceremonial exchange of shells, feathers, pigs, etc. is the center of attention. Marriage arrangements are cemented with brideprice valuables and ritual is directed toward the making of men of status rather than the formation of masculine men.

This suggests that the relative paucity or absence of material wealth may be an important variable in accounting for the occurrence of institutionalized homosexuality. Where substantial amounts of material valuables and wealth are available, social ascendancy and control can be ensured by monopolizing that wealth. Where such wealth is absent, other means of control must be found and monopolized, and naturally occurring bodily substances are readily available alternatives. Semen is particularly well suited for the task since it naturally excludes women and children. In support of this suggestion, the societies with ritualized homosexual practices examined here do not appear to have vast amounts or numerous types of material wealth, nor do they seem overly concerned about such issues. Herdt (1981:52) actually states that the Sambia "have few material means of gaining control." Furthermore, as Lindenbaum (n.d.)

points out, when such items do become available they are utilized for brideprice payments, and sister exchange as a marriage pattern and ritualized homosexuality begin to break down in tandem. This argument still does not tell us why homosexuality developed or why it was institutionalized into the male cult. These are historical questions that require and deserve more extensive research. However, the focus on material wealth points out one variable that may figure substantially in the answers to these questions.

Lindenbaum's (n.d.) analysis is also instrumental in showing the explanatory potential of comparisons with New Guinea societies which do not exhibit a ritualized homosexual complex. Generally, researchers interested in homosexuality treat it as a single type of behavior and compare it cross-culturally (e.g., Broude and Greene 1976; Carrier 1980). In response to this approach Whitehead (1981:81) claims that many cases of homosexuality (the modern United States, the berdache, the New Guinea examples, etc.) are very different "animals" and not really comparable. While such comparisons are not worthless, we can learn more about the New Guinea cases by comparing them instead with nonhomosexual New Guinea societies. As Lindenbaum's paper demonstrates, our best clues to understanding homosexuality in New Guinea may be the other differences that distinguish homosexual and nonhomosexual societies within this culture area. More comparisons of this type must be attempted.

DISCUSSION

The intention of this paper is not to answer all the perplexing questions surrounding ritualized/institutionalized homosexuality in New Guinea, but to examine existing accounts of the phenomenon, and to demonstrate that its role as a social control mechanism has been underestimated or at least underinvestigated. In this attempt I have shown that institutionalized homosexuality is not an independent phenomenon that can be understood or explained in isolation. It is an aspect of culture integrated with the position of women, the ideology of pollution, the stratification of males by age, as well as the economic organization of the society. Obviously, these are not the only connections between homosexuality and the rest of social life. As a conclusion I will mention a few of the questions and issues that must be pursued if a complete or holistic understanding of ritualized homosexuality is to be achieved.

First and foremost, more reliable and comparable ethnographic descriptions must be compiled. Much of the existing literature is old and, due to the divergent interests of the ethnographers, the extent of their concern with homosexuality is highly variable. When they do discuss the phenomenon their descriptions focus on different aspects or issues and therefore undermine comparative and generalizing endeavors. The usual problems encountered when working with other people's data are even more troublesome when such time differences and such variation of focus are prominent. In addition, older accounts are often unclear about the source of their information and whether or not they are referring to extant customs.

Only when we have a larger, more uniform ethnographic base will we be able to make generalizations about homosexuality in New Guinea or, conversely, make any suggestions about the variations in the practice within New Guinea. Just because several societies have institutionalized homosexuality does not mean that it serves the same role or function in each. The variations we have noted in the practice of homosexuality, such as the length of time a boy is subjected to it (from several months among the Kaluli to several years among the Etoro), or the differences between the "monogamous"-type arrangement between a boy and an adult inseminator and the situation where one or more youths from the next older age grade act as inseminators, may be related to other sociocultural differences.

Even contemporary research does not adequately address certain issues, such as

the articulation of institutionalized homosexuality with the kinship system. We have seen repeatedly that kinship relations are important concerns in establishing homosexual involvements. Kelly (1976) pointed out that the Etoro preference for the wife's brother as a homosexual partner is an example of the principle of sibblingship, and there are probably other kinship connections worth examining. In sexually polarized societies such as the ones we are dealing with here, each "pole" must socially reproduce itself. We have already discussed how the organization of institutionalized homosexuality helps ensure the continuity of a male cult, but homosexual relations may also act to maintain and perpetuate an ideology of relatedness or "kinship" between generations within the male cult. In this way semen and homosexuality are to the male cult what blood and fatherhood are to the lineage—the means of descent.

Interesting in this regard is the fact that among the Etoro, the personal characteristics which a youth develops as he matures are believed to correspond to those of his primary inseminator. "If a man is strong, vigorous in his advanced years, a proficient hunter and trapper, and/or courageous warrior, then his protege will possess identical qualities and abilities upon attaining manhood" (Kelly 1976:46). According to Layard's (1942) description of the Big Nambas, this kind of connection may transcend several generations. He (Layard 1942:489) believes that the act of homosexuality represents a transmission of male power by physical means; this power does not come simply from the active partner but from the ancestors in direct succession through each generation. Indeed, since semen is a limited good passed down the generations, the semen men have now is the same semen possessed by their male ancestors. Elsewhere, Layard (1959:111) states that homosexual anal intercourse among the Big Nambas symbolizes "continuity with the ancestral ghosts in the male line."

Alternatively, one might view homosexual relationships as cross-cutting ties that bind together various kin groups. For example, among the Sambia all kin are taboo with regard to fellatio. As a rule, fellatio is permissible only with males from "outside one's security circle," that is with "unrelated, potentially hostile males" (Herdt 1981:238). Similarly, Kelly (1977:91) states that a boy gets his life giving force in semen from individuals outside his lineage. Thus, homosexuality can be interpreted as somewhat analogous to the institution of marriage as explained by alliance theory—homosexual connections may ally potentially hostile groups. Unfortunately, the existing ethnographies do not discuss the role of homosexual relationships/connections in conflict or conflict resolution, but neither do they deny such a connection. The more general point is that in societies where kin relations are crucial to social organization the connections between kinship and institutionalized homosexuality have not been adequately investigated.

Another issue that needs attention is the issue of cultural change. As Lindenbaum (n.d.) points out, "the systematic interconnectedness of the various aspects of culture [is] best illuminated at moments of transformation." Apart from her paper, however, most studies treat homosexuality statically as an unchanging institution. In some societies rituals of homosexuality are disappearing (Godelier 1976), others are experiencing increasing exposure to societies and traditions that do not condone homosexuality and may even be hostile to such behavior. These dynamics obviously contribute to the current situation regarding homosexuality.

Change and contact are not merely recent developments. Deacon's (1934:22) early account of Malekula discusses the massive depopulation of whole districts caused by labor migration to large plantations. Such processes have become even more important and extensive in recent years. Kelly (1976:53) mentions in a footnote that young Etoro men were anxious for him to arrange work for them as contract laborers on the coast. Even among the more isolated Sambia, Herdt

(1981:179) notes that young men have been leaving their hamlets for temporary work on coastal plantations since the 1960s. He estimates that twenty percent of unmarried males currently journey to the coast and remain for two to four years. Anthropologists have noted how the unusual circumstances of labor migration give rise to temporary periods of homosexuality (e.g., Hogbin 1946:205-206, Mead 1930:193-199, Malinowski 1929:472) but the effect of such movements on those who carry a belief in ritualized homosexuality with them has not been investigated.

Labor migration is both a symptom and a cause of increasing involvement in a cash economy, yet the general impact of cash on homosexuality has not been addressed. The introduction of wage labor is a major metamorphosis that may put economic power in the hands of young workers. The effect of cash is, therefore, an important area to investigate in regard to the suggestion that homosexuality is a mechanism for controlling youth by denying them power. How does this new economic resource effect the youth's role in homosexual relations and his social status in general? Herdt (1931:46) mentions that the introduction of a cash economy and coffee production among the Sambia have led to the acceptance of the entrepreneurial big man, but he does not mention the effect of this on the practice or ideology of homosexuality.

Labor migration and participation in a cash economy are manifestations of the broader issue of colonial and foreign intervention. Another major manifestation is pacification. The recreation of a warriorhood is referred to repeatedly in attempts to account for ritualized homosexuality, especially by Van Baal and Herdt. Van Baal (1966:160) asserts that the creation of a "warlike spirit" is one of the primary objectives of male initiation. Herdt (1981:315) repeatedly suggests that the crux of ritualized homosexuality, and the male cult in general, is the creation of warriors. He (Herdt 1981:50) also acknowledges, however, that Australian officials succeeded in completely pacifying the Sambia in 1968 and that fighting among the Sambia and their neighbors came to an end at that time. If homosexuality and warfare are as intertwined as Herdt and Van Baal suggest, it is inconceivable that pacification did not affect the practice or ideology of homosexuality. If there was no effect, then that fact in itself needs explanation.

The impact of colonial administration is not limited to warfare and migration. Kelly (1977:169) notes that the colonial government prohibited "child marriages" among the Etoro in 1966. As a result the average age at marriage for both men and girls increased about six years. Since marriage is a general point when homosexual activities are curtailed, one might expect that this legislation led to a prolonged period of homosexuality, but Kelly does not mention it.

The creation of tribal councils is another change that might influence the practice of homosexuality. Like wage labor, the creation of tribal councils opens up new avenues of power and influence for young men. Consequently, it might effect existing power relations between the generations. Herdt (1981:46) tells us that such councils were set up among the Sambia, but he does not discuss any ramifications for intergenerational relations or homosexuality.

Finally, the problem of missionary activity should be investigated. Needless to say, Christian missionaries do not look favorably on homosexuality. The impact of their moralizing and evangelizing might provide enlightening information about the nature and importance of ritualized homosexuality. For example, we might look for a relationship between the presence of missionaries and the degree of secrecy that shrouds homosexual practices.

In order to address these questions we surely must do more research on the topic but we must go beyond static studies, narrowly focused on homosexuality. Institutionalized homosexuality, like all sexuality everywhere, is embedded in other social arenas and changes as these other dimensions of society change. As Ross and Rapp (1981:54) point out, "sexuality both generates wider social relations and is refracted through the prism of society. As such, sexual feelings

and activities express all the contradictions of power relations—of gender, class, and race.” This paper has concentrated specifically on the interaction of homosexual activities with the power relations between the sexes and between the generations. These are still only a few strands in the web of connections between homosexuality and other aspects of culture. If we hope to grasp the complexity of this web we must broaden our scope and look at the multitude of interrelations between sex and society. Simultaneously, we must extend our time frame and adopt a processual view that can accommodate change.

Ross and Rapp, drawing upon Geertz's onion imagery, eloquently summarize these issues. They (Ross and Rapp 1981:54) state that “in sexuality as in culture, as we peel off each layer (economics, politics, families, etc.) we may think that we are approaching the kernel, but we eventually discover that the whole is the only ‘essence’ there is. Sexuality cannot be abstracted from its surrounding social layers.” Only when we succeed in connecting ritualized homosexuality to all the surrounding social layers of New Guinea society will we come close to understanding its “essence.”

NOTES

1. I am grateful to Professor Mervyn Meggitt for comments on an earlier version of this paper and to Professor Shirley Lindenbaum for providing me with a copy of her yet unpublished paper. Her paper is to be published soon in a collection of essays devoted to ritualized homosexuality in Melanesia edited by G. Herdt. At the time of my research I did not have access to the other unpublished papers to be included in that volume.
2. The attribution of feminine and despicable qualities to only the passive partner in a homosexual encounter is also found in nonhomosexual New Guinea societies (e.g., Whiting 1941:51), and in other culture areas such as the Mediterranean (e.g., Brandes 1981:232-233).

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