SIBLING INCEST

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INTRODUCTION

IN THIS PAPER we will not be concerned so much with either the functions or the origins of incest taboos—subjects on which too many words have been wasted already—but rather with incest behaviour and the motivations underlying it. It is too easy to list either the dire consequences of incestuous behaviour or the beneficial effects of non-incestuous behaviour, and not so easy to discover what motivates actors with respect to incest. To point out that the practice of incest would result in various calamities is not necessarily to state the reasons for the actors’ non-performance in this area—nor is to list the beneficial effects of non-incestuous behaviour a sufficient explanation of the behaviour in question. Statements of dire results are not statements of why actors are motivated to the non-performance or punishment of the performance of incest—they are statements of what would happen if actors were not so motivated. Reasons why it should or could not happen are not necessarily reasons why it does not happen. ‘Necessarily’, because if it were shown that an anticipation of dire consequences or beneficial results were motivating the actors to non-performative or sanctioning behaviour, then, if the anticipated consequences coincided with the consequences predicted by the social scientist, it could be said that these consequences were causative with respect to the behaviour. If the anticipations were not, however, those of the social scientist (e.g. the breakdown of the family), but of the actor (e.g. the failure of the crops), then the scientist’s consequences remain of academic interest and cannot be invoked as explanations of behaviour. (They may be invoked as explanations of survival, through adaptation, of a social group, but then they become difficult to test, and still do not necessarily explain behaviour.) Too often we are told that there must be incest taboos, phobias, etc., because if there were not . . . etc. We are more interested in why there are (or are not) these phobias, anxieties, taboos, etc., not why there must be. We are seeking then for the motives of incestuous or non-incestuous behaviour.
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**THE PROBLEM**

The behaviour surrounding sexual activity among the members of the family (family = primary relatives) is by no means as uniform as thinkers on the subject have so readily assumed. Two features appear to be very general:

1. *Marriage* between members of the family has, with some regal and other exceptions, rarely been encouraged;

2. *Sexual intercourse* between members of the family (other than husband and wife, of course) is nowhere *condoned* as a regular and systematic activity.⁴

While the first feature and the second have often been confused (for example by Murdock)⁵ they are in fact separate issues. The first is a problem of exogamy; the second, from which the first could but does not necessarily follow, is the problem I would like to define as the problem of incest, i.e. the sexual relationships in the group of primary relatives other than husband and wife. In this area there occur many differential features. There is no uniformity in the practice of, or the reaction to, intra-familial intercourse. What is more, there is no uniformity in the desire for such intercourse which would, in the view of many writers, make stringent taboos necessary. Also, for example, although there seem to be few cases of positive sanctions for such intercourse, there are not always negative sanctions, i.e. although it is rarely condoned, it is not always punished. There seems to be a continuum of sanctions from frenzied capital punishment to none at all. The anxiety displayed in the presence of the incest stimulus (thought, dream, suggestion, or occurrence of incest) varies widely from mere academic curiosity to wild rage or excruciating embarrassment. One of the things any theory of incest motivation must explain, is why actors in different societies and groups within societies exhibit such different responses to the incest stimulus, although it may well be that the motives, for example, for punishing incest, are not necessarily related to the incest motivation itself, or only related to it in some indirect way.

We will concentrate here on sibling incest. It may be possible later to extend the analysis to other family members, but as the relationship between siblings is obviously different from that between parents and children it needs separate treatment. It will be interesting also to approach the problem from the sibling angle, as usually, and particularly in psychoanalytic writings, ‘incest’ connotes parents and children, and one cannot help thinking that this is treated as the basic relationship from which all else is derived. In our analysis ‘sibling’ will be short for ‘sibling of the opposite sex’, and ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ will be short for co-socialized children of opposite sex. It may be possible in the future, with more evidence, to break down more exactly the differences between ‘real-sibling’ and ‘sibling-like’ relationships, as
obviously a greater measure of cognitive learning often surrounds the former.

Our problem then is to try to uncover the nature of the motivations which lie behind the widely varying reactions to the incest stimulus.

SOME HYPOTHESES

These have been suggested by a perusal of the literature. Evidence from different societies will be presented in the subsequent section. Here the rational analysis will be pushed as far as possible.

Most writers have recognized that factors of childhood experience are important in the generation of reactions to incest. Two opposed schools of thought have grown up around the theories of Westermarck and Freud. Westermarck writes:

Generaly speaking, there is a remarkable absence of erotic feelings between persons living very closely together from childhood. Nay more, in this, as in many other cases, sexual indifference is combined with the positive feeling of aversion when the act is thought of. This I take to be the fundamental cause of the exogamous prohibitions. Persons who have been living closely together from childhood are as a rule near-relatives. Hence their aversion to sexual relations with one another displays itself in custom and law as a prohibition of intercourse between near kin.\(^6\)

He is proposing a causal chain roughly as follows:

childhood propinquity  positive aversion  prohibitions

He has been criticized on the second link. If we have positive aversions why do we need sanctions? Freud says:

The most preposterous attempts have been made to account for this horror of incest: some people have assumed that it is a provision of nature for the preservation of the species, manifesting itself in the mind by these prohibitions because in-breeding would result in racial degeneration; others have asserted that propinquity from early childhood has deflected sexual desire from the persons concerned. In both these cases, however, the avoidance of incest would have been automatically secured and we should be at a loss to understand the necessity for stern prohibitions, which would seem rather to point to a strong desire. Psychoanalytic investigations have shown beyond the possibility of doubt that an incestuous love-choice is in fact the first and the regular one, and that it is only later that any opposition is manifested towards it, the causes of which are not to be sought in the psychology of the individual.\(^7\)

He thus proposes a different chain:

strong desire  stern prohibitions

But this is simply a case of two people talking past each other. If we put the 'Westermarck effect' and the 'Freud effect' side by side—
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Westermarck
childhood propinquity positive aversion prohibitions

Freud
strong desire stern prohibitions

we find that each chain has elements that should, if they are not to conflict, have correlations in the other. If we fill in the blanks as follows:

childhood propinquity positive aversion (lax) prohibitions
(incipit separation) strong desire stern prohibitions

we find ourselves with an interesting and suggestive dichotomy. The problem of sanctions (prohibitions) is probably a red herring. The two factors of incest anxiety (horror) and prohibitions are again not necessarily related. One can be horrified by incest and not do anything about it: on the other hand one can forbid it without any particular affect being associated with the prohibition. Sanctions are one kind of index of feelings about incest, but not the only one, and not necessarily the most reliable. In fact it is now obvious that the nature of our problem requires us to be much more concerned with incest behaviour than with incest rules. As Westermarck himself points out, rules and laws have often an origin and an autonomy which is divorced from, or only indirectly related to, behaviour which the rules sanction. Rather than study the rules we will try to account for the affect surrounding the incest stimulus. We will concentrate on trying to unmask the motivational states of ‘strong desire’ and ‘positive aversion’—sanctions will be only a guide.

The difference between childhood experience and its adult consequences brings to light the fact that ‘incest’ has a different significance at different stages of the life cycle. Obviously the situation between a brother and sister during sexual immaturity, when any incestuous desires would be difficult to consummate, is different from the situation in adult life when such consummation would be possible. Again Westermarck:

What I have here spoken of is a lack of inclination for, and a feeling of aversion associated with the idea of, sexual intercourse between persons who have lived in a long-continued intimate relationship from a period of life when the action of sexual desire, in its acuter forms at least, is naturally out of the question.8

This quaintly discreet language hides an important insight into which we shall inquire further. But another event in the life cycle, marriage, has an effect on incest reactions. If, as in most primitive societies, the sister marries young and rights over her sexual services are given (often after a considerable exchange of wealth) to another
man, then intercourse between brother and sister would come under the rubric of adultery. There is no necessary reason why the interference with a husband’s rights by his brother-in-law should be more heinous than interference by any other man. If more violent feelings attach to this form of adultery than others then obviously there is something ‘in the nature of’ the brother-sister relationship that remains to be explained. The factors of immaturity and early marriage make it difficult to understand, for example, Goody’s point that the Trobriand incest taboo guards against conflict among the brothers for the sexual services of the sisters. If at puberty the girls are married, then adultery laws should be enough. It is important to take the time element into account here and not treat these relationships as somehow static.

What is it then about the relationship of brother and sister during sexual immaturity that makes for a weak or strong affectual response to heterosexual relationships between them when mature? Propinquity and separation have been suggested. Certainly various evidence suggests that intimacy or lack of it between opposite sex organisms during immaturity has such after-effects. Westermarck quotes animal evidence of a somewhat unsystematic kind, but experiments by F. A. Beach show some pertinent features. He found that male rats reared from birth in isolation tended to copulate more readily than male rats raised with females during sexual immaturity. Thus propinquity resulted in aversion, separation in strong desire.

With human organisms things are, of course, in many ways more complicated, and yet in some ways simpler. For instance, there is greater specificity of cues in the human case. The human will know exactly with whom he was intimate and so reactions will be specific to those persons. The rats merely avoided or mounted any oestrous females. But what provokes the positive aversion? Here we are in the area of intelligent guesswork, but evidence to be presented later suggests the following.

Mutual stimulation during play (tickling, wrestling, exploring, soothing, stroking—all tactile interaction) between brother and sister leads to heightened sexual excitement, which, while nearing climax, cannot be (or rather is not) consummated by a successful act of coitus. The frustration engendered by the lack of tumescence will lead to anger and aggression and the episode will end in pain and tears. This, if repeated often enough, should act as an effective negative reinforcement. Thus, when sexual maturity is reached, each will try to avoid sexual approaches to or from the object of painful sexual experience. Hence one will find ‘positive aversion’ to the sex act between these two actors. In the case of separation during sexual immaturity, there will have been no chance for this conditioned aversion to develop, and yet the other will remain as a stimulus object at the approach and onset of puberty. Thus, the other will provide an object of temptation.
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which the actor has perhaps learned consciously to avoid, but to which avoidance has not been unconsciously conditioned. Hence the early childhood separation is self-defeating. It is a sad thought that it is often practised in order to prevent that which it unwittingly provokes. The amount of provocation and temptation will, of course, depend on a number of associated factors, particularly the relative closeness of the other sibling and the availability of outlets for sexual activity other than the sibling. In fact the category of ‘separation’ needs to be closely examined and broken down. Separation can be harsh or gentle, absolute or conditional, effective or ineffective. If separation is absolute and no other outlets are offered, then one would not expect behaviour towards the sibling to be different from behaviour towards any other actor of opposite sex. All others will be equally objects of strong desire. On the other hand, even if these conditions pertain, if there is in adult life a special social relationship between brother and sister, then the fact that strong desires are entertained between them will create special problems. The specificity of cues is important here, although one would also expect some stimulus generalization.

Within the proposed syndrome of ‘positive aversion’ there are also many possible variations. The fact that in some respects the physical relationship with the sibling is painful does not mean that in others it is not satisfactory. Certainly the warmth of companionship between adult siblings is a well-known phenomenon. It may well be that the positive aversion to sex with the sibling provokes a high degree of sex anxiety (which may be accentuated by other factors) and thus encourages the practising of a warm relationship from which the anxiety-provoking factor is absent. The fact that there exists a companion of the opposite sex who is not a sexual stimulus could result in the reduction of sex anxiety.

In a sense this is a regression phenomenon. The sexually anxious siblings can allay the anxiety by a form of pre-genital interaction.

There is another possibility. The interaction between siblings will have a range of intensiveness. It may well be that if a certain low level of bodily interaction is practised (the soothing, stroking, petting type) which does not over-excite the participants, this will be rewarding. Hence there will be generated a desire to preserve this warm, rewarding relationship, i.e. not to intrude the more excitable genital behaviour into it. This could not and never would work in isolation. (None of these factors is autonomous.) The syndrome just mentioned would obviously work best where the transition to genital sexuality was traumatic. This again would produce a regression phenomenon. Whichever of these processes were at work, the result would be ‘positive aversion’ to the sex act itself.

These are of course extreme cases. There is a continuum of possible practices from complete separation of siblings to complete permissive-
ness. It will be seen that we have to some extent re-written Westermarck's category of 'propinquity' to read 'intensive physical interaction'. In fact, 'propinquity' in the sense of mere nearness, coupled with 'separation' in the sense of 'no physical interaction', would, we hypothesize, generate the highest incest anxiety of all. But what we have added to Westermarck's hypothesis is the suggestion that 'propinquity' should be interpreted, not in terms of 'same household' (necessarily), but of 'physical (bodily, tactile) interaction'. We will set out here a paradigm of ideal-type cases. A breakdown of the 'separation/avoidance' case suggests itself, into those cases where separation is strongly associated with the internalization of standards (strong super-ego) and those in which punishment is external (weak super-ego, 'shame cultures'). The reason for this is to cover the empirical fact of the difference between these kinds of society.

<table>
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<th>Conditions during sexual immaturity</th>
<th>Resultant motivation</th>
<th>Associated sanctions</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Intensive tactile interaction</td>
<td>'positive aversion'</td>
<td>Lax (few occurrences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Complete separation</td>
<td>'strong desire'</td>
<td>severe (external)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(non-guilty temptation)</td>
<td>(breaches where possible)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Separation and guilt inculcation.</td>
<td>'strong desire'</td>
<td>self-punishment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(guilty temptation)</td>
<td>(internal)</td>
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Case 1 is that of low anxiety over the 'incest-stimulus'—the thought, dream, suggestion or occurrence of brother-sister intercourse. But because of the 'positive aversion' to the act, deviants from the motivational norm will be pulled into line in some mild way, perhaps by nothing worse than a rebuke. Occurrences should be few and interest in the subject minimal. Case 2 is the other extreme. High anxiety is experienced by the actors over the incest-stimulus because of their own strong desire. They are tempted and yet not restrained by internal pressure of guilt; in the event of an occurrence they will perhaps vent their spite on the offenders with severe punishment. The question arises as to why they do not, if they have these strong desires, carry them out. Here we are again in the realm of speculations and conjecture as to historical origins, but have the alternative of supplying an explanation in terms of the motives themselves or of some recurring feature of the society which would prevail upon actors to refrain from executing the promptings of their desires.

McClelland\(^\text{12}\) brings together a body of evidence that suggests three factors which may lead to anxiety-reducing behaviour (that is, behaviour of defence, withdrawal or substitution). These are motive intensity, fear, and conflict of motives. The first case is that in which the strength of drive increases to a point where it becomes frightening. '... any motive, if it becomes intense enough, may orient the organism...'
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around defence and anxiety reduction if it continues to be unsatisfied. And apparently the stronger a motive becomes, the more difficult it is to satisfy it and the more painful frustration it becomes. 13 He distinguishes the second case, fear, from the first in terms of the 'non-specificity of the danger, rather than its intensity, and/or the unavailability of methods of coping with it'. Conflict of motives is simply what it says.

Three methods of reducing anxiety are suggested—withdrawal, conversion and limitation, and aggression and punishment. In the first instance the actor simply tries to withdraw from the anxiety-producing stimulus, in the second he reduces the anxiety by rationalizing or re-interpreting, and in the third he either aggresses or tries to receive punishment. (The latter is obviously a 'super-ego' type defence and relevant only to actors with developed super-ego—see Case 3 in the paradigm above.) The fear of punishment inhibits aggression as a defence and leads to the adoption of withdrawal or conversion.

How does this analysis apply to our problem? We can see that if the 'strong desire' is indeed strong enough, and remains unsatisfied, it will lead to defensive behaviour and non-performance. But why should it remain unsatisfied? Here extraneous features need to be looked at, i.e. reasons why the society decrees non-satisfaction. Conflict of motives may be involved; for example, we have contrasted conditioned with conscious learning. The motives engendered by conscious learning may well conflict with those learned other than by direct tuition. The fact of strong desire being frightening motivates actors to non-performance. They in turn teach their children, by negative sanctions, to avoid what they found frightening in themselves. But, as we have seen, this is self-defeating and also introduces conflict of motives to add to motive intensity, thus intensifying the anxiety. Now while this would lead to defence and hence non-performance, it would not lead to a lessening of 'strong desire'. Actors in societies with this syndrome, while being more anxious to reduce the incest anxiety than the incest drive, would nevertheless still be motivated towards incestuous behaviour. We would expect such societies to be riddled with incest anxiety, horror, and perhaps fierce sanctions. Of the possible defence measures adopted it remains an empirical problem as to just what combination would be used, but McClelland's hints are suggestive.

'Extraneous' features would be such as to 'interfere' with the intensity of tactile contact between siblings. We can assume that unless prevented, siblings will interact, and so we should look for institutions which might prevent this interaction either directly or via the enforcement of norms. Goody has argued that there is a relation between the reactions to incest and the existence of corporate unilineal descent groups.14 There are internal objections to his argument but we could take it as a working hypothesis that matrilineal societies will have more anxiety over sibling incest than patrilineal. This is probably best tested by the
cross-cultural method. The degree of temptation has been mentioned, which can be heightened or lessened depending on the availability of the sibling and the availability of other sex objects. If other sex objects are denied (and also aim taboos added) then the strong desire should be increased. The premium on the girl's virginity may be important and also the customs relating to illegitimate children. The age of marriage of the siblings may affect the issue, as may the sibling relationship in adult life.

All these are institutions which will set limits to the sibling interaction pattern making it harder or easier for the siblings to interact sufficiently to produce positive aversion. A suitable cross-cultural survey would bring out the relative importance of these and enable us to test hypotheses with accuracy. Failing that we will pursue some intracultural evidence.

INTRA-CULTURAL EVIDENCE

Kiryat Yedidim: an Israeli Kibbutz

The socialization unit (our 'siblings') is the kevutza, a bi-sexual children's peer group that inhabits a common living and sleeping quarter. Spiro has recorded the behaviour within the kevutza group from nursery days onwards. Of children between 1 and 5 he says:

Boys and girls sleep in the same rooms, shower together, sit on the toilet together, and often run around nude before getting dressed in the morning or after being undressed in the evening. Heterosexual behaviour includes a number of quite different kinds of activities, both within any one group as well as among groups. In group II, for example (mean age 2 years), its most frequent expression consists in a simple embrace of one child by another, followed in frequency by stroking or caressing, kissing and touching of genitals.

The interaction intensifies among children aged 7 to 12.

Heterosexual behaviour has been observed by the nurse and teacher of the second grade, although they have never observed either attempted or actual intercourse. The nurse is confident that boys and girls often get into bed with each other at night, but she does not know how frequently this occurs, nor does she know what they do. These children frequently play 'clinic', a game in which the boys 'examine' the girls, who are nude. Moreover, boys and girls often lie on top of each other, and hug and kiss each other in public, even in the classrooms and in the presence of the teacher, 'with no sense of shame'. At least one boy would 'kiss like a man of twenty'.

However: 'Sexual shame increases quite conspicuously with age.' What is more,

The sense of shame developed by the sixth grade girls, for example, was not merely a shame phenomenon. It also involved great hostility toward the boys, and their attempt to create unisexual showers was, among other
things, an expression of this hostility. As their nurse pointed out, the relationship between the sexes at that time was ‘terrible’. They practically ‘hated’ each other, would not talk to each other, and were constantly involved in petty altercations.20

These children were either pubescent or on the verge of puberty. During high school (ages 12 and over) the conflict over mixed showers continued. ‘Outsiders’ influenced the children in the form of a city girl who refused to shower with the boys, but the ‘sense of shame’ was already deep.

Much of the sexual shame that led to the abolition of the mixed shower continues to characterize the attitude of some of the girls in their rooms as well. Most of the girls, for example, attempt to conceal their nudity from the boys.21 . . . At this age (ninth grade—15) an interest in sex, restricted almost exclusively to the girls, may be observed. Not directed towards the boys of their own kevutzah whom they view as immature, hence, asexual, this interest is in the older students and the young unmarried males in the kibbutz22 [italics mine].

The sibling hostility continued up to the age of 15 and then relationships became easier, perhaps because alternative sex outlets were found, although this is not certain.

With respect to the adult (15 plus) situation, Spiro remarks (Note: ‘sabras’ are age-mates within the kibbutz):

There are two aspects of sabra sexuality that require comment. The first concerns the choice of sexual partner—whether for intercourse or for marriage. In not one instance has a sabra from Kiryat Yedidim married a fellow sabra nor, to the best of our knowledge, has a sabra had sexual intercourse with a fellow sabra. If, in the light of additional data the latter part of the generalization be rendered false I would be highly confident of the validity of its following reformulation: in no instance have sabras from the same kevutzah had sexual intercourse with each other.

The reason given by the sabras for their exogamy is interesting: they view each other, they say, as siblings. We have then an instance of a self-imposed primary group exogamy, despite the absence of any prescribed—formal or informal—incest taboo.23

Spiro goes on to discuss the paradox that arises from the psychoanalytic theory that siblings have a (repressed) sexual interest in each other. He finds only one deviant (a-typical) sabra who manifests overt interest—the rest deny it. On our theory there would be no paradox. Kiryat Yedidim is an example of a ‘pure’ Westermarck effect (Case 1). It is interesting to note also, that the sabras which Spiro observed reacted away from the ‘sexual freedom’ ethic of their parents, the founders of the kibbutz. What is more they tended to impose voluntary sexual prohibitions, thus giving us an insight into the genesis of ‘mild prohibitions’.
Descent among the Chiricahua is bi-lateral and there is an effective ‘on the ground’ corporate group of kin which lives in a nomadic, mother-daughter extended family. The typical family group will be: one pair of grandparents and their unmarried children, plus their married daughters with their husbands and unmarried children.

Premarital chastity is a rule that is strictly enforced. ‘The girl should come to her first menses and her puberty rite a virgin.’ ‘When a girl who is about to pass through the ceremony is discovered to be unchaste, she is fortunate if she is not cast off to fend for herself.’ In ‘the old days’ the man would have been killed unless he could make a good match for the girl himself. The really serious loss in the event of the girl’s defalcation is economic.

If sexual relations between two young people are discovered, the girl’s family has suffered an economic loss. Should the young man not be considered eligible by the parents, their anger is particularly aroused, for they have probably lost a chance to marry their daughter worthily and yet cannot force a suitable match from the intrigue.

We also learn that it is much more serious to rape an unmarried woman than a married woman.

Avoidance of sex play is inculcated from six onwards for all children. Although the boys and girls play house realistically there is no overt sexuality involved. This is because ‘boys rarely continue to participate in this form of amusement after the age of six or seven’. Thus at this age close contact between children of the opposite sex ceases. ‘An informant, when he was questioned about sexual play among children, claimed that he had never heard of children engaging in sex games but added that, if two children had been caught at “such a thing” the parents “would certainly have whipped them both”.’ The avoidance training between brother and sister (the term for the latter being extended to all female relatives of the same generation) is begun early and carried to extreme lengths. ‘Brother and sister are so carefully trained to be reserved when they are together that any inclinations to exhibit overt sexual interest in each other are almost certain to be repressed.’ All informants stress the extreme avoidance between brother and sister. To ‘come where your sister is alone’ brings disgrace on the whole family. ‘Many households where there are older children find it convenient to erect an additional shelter where the boy can stay if he should find his sister the sole occupant of the family dwelling.’

Does not this avoidance, with the concomitant rule of exogamy, make it difficult to find a legitimate sex object? It does in many cases, especially as sex outside marriage is ‘illegal’ with any woman, especially an unmarried one. ‘Young men have been known to journey far from
their homes for the purpose of making contacts which could lead to marriage.’

Incest is equated with witchcraft, thus ‘the gravest crime in the religious sphere and the most abhorrent act in the social realm have been combined’. Informants are very emphatic about the treatment that would be meted out to an offender.

If two persons committed incest and were found out, a crowd would gather and any headman would say, ‘I know those two had intercourse together; get them!’ Everyone considered them witches and they were burned. Incest sometimes goes before a council of people and sometimes the parents kill them outright. Usually the parents handle them.

A striking parallel to the Trobriand situation is found in the story of the brother and sister who, on discovery, committed suicide together on the occasion of their final liaison, by means of a stick pointed at both ends which they placed between them. Unlike the Trobrianders this pair did this to escape the more terrible punishment that would have followed their capture. Punishment for incest between distant relatives was ‘milder’. ‘A person might be whipped until he couldn’t stand, but that’s all.’

Incest is then a crime at least as abhorrent as witchcraft. In fact some informants say that ‘even witches wouldn’t do that’. The punishment in the case of intercourse with a near relative is always a very painful death. Brother and sister who offend will commit a terrible suicide rather than face the punishment that the irate society would otherwise inflict upon them.

Tallensi

Tallensi social structure is based on the alliance between patrilineages and clans tracing relationship to a depth of fourteen generations and more. Children sleep in their mother’s hut and play with the children of their co-mothers and the children of members of the medial lineage who form an in-group of playmates.

Play groups of children of both sexes and including all siblings and half siblings are composed of children up to the age of eight and possibly after. Fortes noted that in these groups there is full freedom of contact, squabbling, fighting, and soothing being common. Brothers and sisters are together for sleeping, playing and eating until the age of nine or ten. It is worth quoting in full Fortes’ comment on the behaviour he noted between siblings of opposite sex:

The psychological undercurrents of these conventional attitudes do not concern us here, but it might be remarked that there is probably a strong and partly overt sexual component in the affective relation of brother and sister. I was struck by this when I once had an opportunity of observing the behaviour of Yamzooga (aged about 11) and his soog (real) sister (aged about 9) who were playing together in a corner of the room where I was
chatting to their father. The children, who were quite naked, stood embracing each other, the boy with his legs round his sister’s, and they twisted and wriggled about as if they were engaged in a mixture of an orgiastic dance and a wrestling match. They were both in a state of high excitement, panting and giggling and muttering to each other, with obvious sexual pleasure. They seemed oblivious of their surroundings. This game went on for about twenty minutes, after which they separated and lolled back as if exhausted. These children were most attached to each other.\(^{35}\)

There are many sex objects for the boy. These are his clan ‘sisters’ (related females in the patrilineal line with whom sexual relations are permitted but between whom marriage is strictly forbidden). An unrelated woman is not a permitted object of premarital intercourse. The only possible relationship a man could want with an unrelated woman would be marriage. There is a low premium on the girl’s virginity and if she has a child it is welcomed by her future husband. In adult life there is high ritual co-operation as well as mutual affection between brother and sister.

The treatment of incest is mild in the extreme:

There are no penal sanctions against any form of incest, nor are the culprits believed to be subject to automatic mystical retribution. Incest is so incompatible with the pattern of co-operation and the structure of disciplinary and affective relations in the family that this in itself serves to banish it from the field of family relationships.\(^{36}\)

A breach will be treated with ridicule. The man who commits it is obviously not mature and in possession of himself. Incest with a full sister arouses feelings of disgust but is less reprehensible than intercourse with the wife of a member of the lineage.

Tallensi do not regard incest with the sister as sinful. When they say it is forbidden . . . they mean it rather in the sense that it is disgraceful, scandalous . . . They deny the temptation exists. ‘Look’, said Sinkawol, arguing this point with me, ‘my sister, is she not marriageable? And here am I, however attractive she is, I do not even notice it; I am never aware she has a vagina; she is my sister and someone will one day come and marry her and I will give her to him and get my cows. You and your sister grow up together, you quarrel and make it up, how can you desire to have intercourse with her?’ This is a stock argument among the Tallensi.\(^{37}\)

The children also learn conscious norms about their behaviour. To play at actual coitus with their ‘real’ sister they know is wrong. If they do it they will be smacked by their parents, and ridiculed by the other children. As we have seen, however, they are otherwise allowed complete intimacy of contact.

*Trobiand Islanders*  
Malinowski’s description of the matrilineal Trobrianders is too well known to require much comment. We will simply note that they have
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many sex objects, high indulgence of sexual play, no premium on virginity but a strict separation of brother and sister in childhood. The degree of temptation is high, in that the sister is in contact with the boy, but as Malinowski says:

Brother and sister thus grow up in a strange sort of domestic proximity: in close contact, and yet without any personal or intimate communication; near to each other in space, near by rules of kinship and common interest; and yet, as regards personality, always hidden and mysterious. They must not even look at each other, they must never exchange any light remarks, never share their feelings and ideas. . . . Thus, to repeat, the sister remains for her brother the centre of all that is forbidden.38

He rates the stringency of incest taboos in the order brother-sister, mother-son, father-daughter; while the second two are regarded as unthinkable, the same emotional intensity does not occur over them. In the case of a breach of the taboos 'in the old days' the couple, or at least the man, would have committed suicide. But it is interesting to note that Malinowski seems to think that this self-punishment would occur if the couple were publicly accused and 'shamed' about their conduct. If this did not happen there would be disapproval and public ostracization; the couple might commit suicide, but they might just go away. There appears to be a certain reluctance to inflict direct punishment in the Trobriand Islands, and social control is effected by pressure of communal scorn and sorcery. Thus it is significant that in the case of public exposure of incest the individual will probably commit suicide.

While illegitimate children are not approved, it seems that the incidence of illegitimacy is low, possibly due to physiological reasons induced by early intercourse. Cases of actual breach of the brother-sister taboo are rare, but incestuous dreams seem common, although they affect the sister only, not the mother. In answer to his questions regarding these dreams, Malinowski records some interesting reactions:

To the question: 'Do you ever dream of your mother in this way?' the answer would be a calm, unshocked negation. 'The mother is forbidden—only a tonagowa (imbecile) would dream such a thing. She is an old woman. No such thing would happen.' But whenever the question would be put about the sister, the answer would be quite different, with a strong affective reaction. Of course I knew enough never to ask such a question directly of a man, and never to discuss it in company. But even asking in the form of whether 'other people' could ever have such dreams, the reaction would be that of indignation and anger. Sometimes there would be no answer at all; after an embarrassed pause another subject would be taken up by the informant. Some, again, would deny it seriously, others vehemently and angrily. But, working out the question bit by bit with my best informants, the truth at last appeared, and I found that the real state of opinion is different. It is actually well known that 'other people' have such dreams—
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'a man is sometimes sad, ashamed, and ill-tempered. Why? Because he has dreamt that he had connection with his sister.' 'This made me feel ashamed', such a man would say. I found that this is, in fact, one of the typical dreams known to exist, occurring frequently, and one which haunts and disturbs the dreamer. That this is so, we will find confirmed by other data, especially in myth and legend.39

There can be little doubt as to the state of sibling incest anxiety in the Trobriand Islands.

Pondo40

The Pondo live in scattered groups of huts with a tendency to reside near patrilineal relatives of the same clan. The immediate set of relatives around the child will be the wives of his father and their children, and the child's paternal grandparents who are responsible for much of his upbringing.

Own brother and sister play much together as small children and although from about six years when the boys go out to herd and both boys and girls begin to go about in gangs with those of their own age and sex from other imizi, they do not see so much of each other, nevertheless they live on intimate terms in the umzi. Often I have seen a small sister snuggling up to an older brother, keeping warm under the cover of his blanket and getting titbits from his plate. Even when grown up sisters will sit and chat with their brothers, near the Kraal. To an elder brother, who in time may be in the place of her father, a girl should show respect, but 'a younger brother doesn't matter'.41

There is high indulgence of premarital sex and plenty of objects and although virginity at marriage is the ideal it seems rarely to be a decisive factor and there is division of opinion over the examination of girls. The sanction against any breach is mild.

Formerly if a couple were caught in incest (either ukumefiha or adultery) a beast provided by the man was killed at the girl's house, and a fire made of the pole used for closing the kraal gate. The couple were made to sit naked in the inkundla. A strip of meat was cut from 'any part' of the beast killed and roasted on the fire mentioned. The meat was not nicely cooked but scorched. The pair were then made to eat the strip, each nibbling from an end until it was finished. The whole community came to look on, and the pair were sworn at, exhorted, and told, 'There your filthiness has been exposed'.42

The ceremony is never performed now. A supernatural sanction for a breach is found in the belief that the child of an incestuous pair will not suckle unless they confess. It would appear that the ritual eating acts as a purification. Incest and adultery are treated alike.
SIBLING INCEST

Mountain Arapesh

The patrilineal Arapesh live in hamlets, clusters of from three to four households comprising a father-son extended family. It is clear from Mead’s account that the Arapesh children have complete freedom of interaction.

Small children are not required to behave differently to children of their own sex and those of opposite sex. Four-year-olds can roll and tumble on the floor together without anyone’s worrying as to how much bodily contact results. Thus there develops in the children an easy, happy-go-lucky familiarity with the bodies of both sexes, a familiarity uncomplicated by shame, coupled with a premium upon warm, all-over physical contact.

This seems to be a case of the warm rewarding relationship we spoke of. There is, for example, none of the hostility evident in the Kibbutz case. The response of the Arapesh to Mead’s questions about incest shows them to be remarkably unconcerned and academic about the whole thing.

To questions about incest I did not receive the answers that I had received in all other native societies in which I had worked, violent condemnation of the practice combined with scandalous revelations of a case of incest in a neighbouring house or a neighbouring village. Instead both the emphatic condemnation and the accusations were lacking: ‘No, we don’t sleep with our sisters. We give our sisters to other men and other men give us their sisters.’ Obviously. It was simple as that. Why did I press the point? And had they not heard of a single case of incest? I queried. Yes, finally, one man said that he had. He had gone on a long journey, towards Aitape, and there in the village of a strange people he had heard a quarrel; a man was angry because his wife refused to live with him, but instead kept returning to her brother, with whom she cohabited. Was that what I meant? That, in effect, was what I meant. No, we don’t do that. What would the old man say to a young man who wished to take his sister to wife? They didn’t know. No one knew. The old men never discussed the matter. So I set them to asking the old men, one at a time. And the answers were the same. They came to this: ‘What, you would like to marry your sister! What is the matter with you anyway? Don’t you want a brother-in-law? Don’t you realize that if you marry another man’s sister and another man marries your sister, you will have at least two brothers-in-law, while if you marry your own sister you will have none? With whom will you hunt, with whom will you garden, whom will you go to visit?’ Thus incest is regarded among the Arapesh not with horror and repulsion towards a temptation that they feel their flesh is heir to, but as a stupid negation of the joys of increasing, through marriage, the number of people whom one can love and trust.

There is no incest anxiety evident here—in fact there is simply indifference: ‘We give our sisters to other men and other men give us their sisters.’

Some curious features of Arapesh betrothal are worth noticing. The girl is taken to the house of her betrothed at the age of 6 or 7. He will
be older by a few years. They live together 'like brother and sister' for 'long years' during their betrothal. They may indulge in 'overt sex expression' but not intercourse. Mead sums up the position:

Towards her young husband, her attitude is one of complete trust and acceptance. No constraining taboo marks the ease of their relationship. He is just another older male to whom she looks up and upon whom she depends. She is to him another small girl, his special small girl, whose hand must be taken in rough places on the paths. He calls out to her to light his pipe, or to feed his dog. And all of his brothers share his attitude towards her, and she includes them in the circle of her affection. With the smaller ones she romps and plays. To all of them she becomes warmly attached. Her feeling for her husband and his father and brothers is practically identical with her feeling for her own father and brothers. Ease of companionship, lack of taboo, lack of fear, characterize all of these relationships.48

Thus there has been a 'sibling' relation of the warm, rewarding type between husband and wife. But, even if in our theory this should lead to aversion, for the Arapesh there is little or no sex outlet outside marriage. What is the result? A marked muting of the sex relationship in marriage amounting to an unwillingness to copulate. The sex act itself has to be slow and unexcited; no climax is aimed at. Mead writes:

A man must approach his wife gently, he must make 'good little talk', he must be sure that she is well prepared to receive his advances. Otherwise even she, who has been reared by his side, on his food, may become a stranger, the inimical one. There is no emphasis upon satisfaction in sex-relations; the whole emphasis for both men and women is the degree of preparedness, the completeness of the expectancy. Either man or wife may make the tentative advance that crystallizes a latent consciousness of the other into the sex act. It is as customary for the woman as for the man to say, 'Shall I lay the bed?' or, 'Let us sleep'. The verb 'to copulate' may be used either with a male subject and a female object, or with a female subject and a male object. More often the phrase 'They played together' or 'They slept' is used. Women express their preferences for men in terms of ease and lack of difficulty of sex-relationships, not in terms of ability to satisfy a specific desire. There is no recognition on the part of either sex of a specific climax in women, and climax in men is phrased simply as loss of tumescence. The emphasis upon mutual readiness and mutual ease is always the dominant one.47

Thus, if the genital sexuality has to intrude on the warm relationship—it has to do so with great care or the wife 'may become a stranger'.

Tikopia48

The patrilineal (non-exogamous) island-dwelling Tikopia present a curious problem. Various hints suggest that children are allowed great freedom of interaction. They remain unclothed for some years and there are no taboos on bodily contact. They simulate intercourse and
there is familiarity and freedom in the relation between brother and sister. This familiarity is carried to remarkable lengths in adult life. Although they do not mention sex matters to each other, and although there is an extremely high premium on virginity:

Brother and sister may take part freely in all joint household affairs, tend the oven together, eat together, sit together, and even more strange, sleep side by side, covered by the one blanket. When the wife of my neighbour Pa Taitai was soon to have a child, she slept some distance away from him, while his sister lay next to him on the floor of the house. This evokes no comment from the Tikopia; it is quite normal.

With regard to occurrences, Firth states:

In Tikopia incest between brother and sister is abhorred, and often stated to be impossible; its occurrence is denied point-blank by most people. Sometimes, however, an informant will admit that the temptation may be too much for a man, and that he may yield to an overpowering urge for sexual satisfaction. Such conduct is always represented as the fruit of his momentary sex passion, not the attainment of a long-cherished desire. It is the presence of an accessible female that is held to be the cause of the incest, not the wish to embrace the sister as such.

This suggestion that it is ‘momentary sex passion’ rather than ‘long-cherished (strong) desire’ which accounts for occurrences, makes sense in our theory.

Brother-sister intimacy is, then, of a close physical nature. The sister can approach the brother in a way forbidden to anyone else:

If a man has been fishing, for instance, he comes up to his house, removes his wet waistcloth, and covering his genitalia with his hand—a practice in which the Tikopia are peculiarly expert in preserving their modesty—hands the garment with no trace of embarrassment to his sister to wring it out for him and lay it on the sand to dry. Upon request also she brings him a fresh cloth, with no discomposure.

But there are occurrences (for whatever reason) and the supposed sanction is suicide (self-punishment). What is more, the analysis of dreams shows that temptations to incest do occur. Note the Tikopia man’s reaction to these dreams: ‘Thereupon the man who is having this dream wakes with a start and ponders: it is not good.’ ‘Hence the reaction upon waking is not one of shame, but of anger mingled with fear—a man does not conceal such a dream, he curses aloud.’ How different from the Trobriand reaction! The Tikopia dreamer is vociferously furious at what he considers to be a trick played by spirits in the dream—or he is reflective, he ‘ponders’. The ‘temptation’ in this case, we suggest, is physical, There is some ‘positive aversion’ to the sex act as such, but constant physical proximity of two opposite sex adults during the night is bound to lead to sheer physical stimulation. As the
brother does not wish to have intercourse and is largely indifferent to his sister sexually, he is annoyed or upset because the temptation arises to do something to which he is positively averse. It is a trick—somehow unfair.

The fact that the Tikopia case is so well documented gives us a chance to see some of the complexities of the Westermarck effect and shows how much societies may differ in detail while remaining within the aegis of our theoretical expectations.

**SUMMARY**

We could go on citing such evidence, but enough has been presented to establish a prima facie acceptance of the paradigm as a working hypothesis. If we have over-emphasized examples of the Westermarck effect, it is only to counteract the assumption of ‘universal horror’.

What this evidence seems to suggest is that Freud and Westermarck were both right, but about different societies (groups). Freud overlooked the fact that prohibitions are *not* always stern and Westermarck that some people do have designs on their sisters. Let us sum up the reactions of sexually mature adults to the incest stimus.

The *severe* separation and harsh denial of sex outlet for the Chiricahua leads to furios resentment of the incestuous pair. The boy and girl have been brought up in close proximity spatially, but harshly separated, and they have also been denied other sex objects. The result seems to be an incestuous ‘witch-hunt’ (the malefactors are equated with witches) in which projective mechanisms have free play and resentment and fury are unleashed on the wrongdoers.

The Trobrianders, whose sex life shows a steady upward curve, except with regard to the sister, react quite differently. They are more or less obsessed with the problem of brother-sister incest, and it is the symbol of ‘all that is forbidden’, but the wrongdoers are not hauled out and burned. On the contrary the scandal can stay under cover for some time—but public denunciation leads to suicide.

The Tallensi and Pondo do not seem to have a problem here at all. The Tallensi think of an occurrence as unthinkable except in the case of idiots and they show none of the concern and fear that Malinowski found in his Melanesian informants. They are matter-of-fact and rational about it, as are the Pondo. With both people incest is regarded as disreputable, but nothing savage is done to the offenders by others or by themselves.

The incest stimulus is not anxiety-provoking to the sabras of Spiro’s kibbutz, and the Mountain Arapesh treat the matter with academic detachment. The kibbutz provides what is probably the most conclusive evidence for the contention that intensive tactile interaction provokes positive aversion, while the Arapesh provide an example of a
possible variation in which not frustration and mild hostility, but something more like caution and suspicion of the sex act are the results of childhood interaction of a soothing type. The Tikopia reaction is curious, but the adult behaviour of siblings does not suggest anxiety but quite the opposite. Adult siblings sleep together and are physically intimate with seemingly no problem. If they do have intercourse it seems to be a matter of 'physical temptation' rather than as a result of deep-rooted desires.

Thus we have the two ideal types more or less approximated to in our examples: the separation—desire—temptation—anxiety type, and the interaction—aversion—non-temptation—non-anxiety type. We can sum up our findings so far in the form of a hypothesis.

The intensity of heterosexual attraction between co-socialized children after puberty is inversely proportionate to the intensity of heterosexual activity between them before puberty. In other words, the more intensive the bodily interaction between opposite-sex children during sexual immaturity, the more likely the possibility that they will voluntarily abstain from sexual relations with each other after puberty. What is more, the reaction will be one which varies from 'disgusting' or 'unthinkable' to 'indifferent'. It is this reaction of indifference which we find most interesting, and most neglected, due to the too facile rejection of Westermarck's observations. Freud's experience stems from the Jewish family system—which was itself an example of the separation (low interaction)—propinquity syndrome. The sibling was near as an object of temptation at puberty, but was 'out of touch' before puberty. In the endogamous Jewish community, sex outlets were potentially, and possibly actually, fewer than in the Gentile. This probably led to heightened temptation, which coupled with strong desire (however repressed) generated high anxiety to the incest stimulus.

The situation today is different for someone approaching the problem of sibling incest. Permissiveness has greatly increased in child rearing and Victorian body-fears are less prevalent. Attitudes to the sister are less highly charged (judging impressionistically). This 'sexless' brother-sister feeling is of course quite common in our own society, but the influence of psychoanalysis has side-tracked us from taking it at its face value. What this paper suggests is that it should be taken at its face value, and merely repeats the experience of many other societies. Where the separation syndrome operates in our society we might expect the 'super-ego' effect to step in. There will, of course, be many differences between and within groups.

These conclusions are essentially tentative and need proper testing before the hypothesis can have the status of a law. Even if significant results emerge, we still need to know much more about the mechanics of the tactile interaction process before the explanation advanced in this paper can be taken as valid. Animal experiments might add to our
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knowledge here. For groups characterized by strong-desire motivation, we still have the problem of accounting satisfactorily for the separation of siblings in the first place. In future publications tentative results in the latter direction will be presented, although it should be stressed that for the purposes of understanding incest motivation as such, both sanctions and reasons for sibling separation can be taken as given.

A NOTE ON OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

This line has not been pursued, but obviously the proximity to the mother and the sexual approaches to her which are inevitably frustrated will lead, if we are correct, to the avoidance behaviour described for the sister. (This is implicit in Malinowski’s description of the Trobriand situation.) Thus the mother would be universally avoided as she is always proximate and in tactile contact with the child and the subject of his ‘sexual’ advances. The ‘unthinkable’ syndrome may prove to be almost universal here.55

The father-daughter relation seems to show the greatest frequency of actual occurrence. The father and daughter of course would have, in most societies, least contact of any two family members. Hence, where temptation is great we would expect high occurrence unless sanctions were strong and effective or some inhibiting mechanisms were at work.

The frequency of occurrence, then, should follow our predicted direction: most interaction between mother and child, hence mother-son incest most ‘unthinkable’ and least occurrence; variable interaction between brother and sister, hence variation between ‘unthinkable’ and ‘strong desire’; least interaction between father and daughter, hence highest incidence.

Nothing, of course, is that simple. But the trend suggests that even in its raw form our theory has some predictive and explanatory merit. However, in the mother-son and father-daughter cases we have interaction (or lack of it) between a sexually mature and a sexually immature organism, in the early stages of the relationship.56 We would suspect that tactile interaction would stimulate the mature organism, while, if our theory is correct, it would create aversion in the immature if coitus did not take place. In the mother-son case, then, while the mother would derive sexual stimulation from her contact with her son, the latter would gradually develop aversion. This case is not really covered by our hypothesis which refers to sexually immature organisms. A more general statement of the nature of heterosexual activity could no doubt be made from which hypotheses covering all these cases could be derived.
NOTES

1 The major part of this work was completed under the auspices of Professor J. W. M. Whiting and the Laboratory of Human Development, Graduate School of Education, Harvard University. I should like to thank all the staff of the Laboratory, and particularly the Director, for their help and encouragement. Dr. M. Freedman of The London School of Economics started me on this line of research, and Dr. F. R. Oliver of Exeter University and Dr. Lucian Marquis of The University of Oregon, contributed helpful criticisms. Professors M. Ginsberg, I. Schapera and D. G. MacRae helped to correct many errors. The final conclusions are, however, my own, and I doubt if any of the above-mentioned would subscribe to all the arguments.

2 A motive or drive in this analysis will be defined as any strong stimulus which impels action. See Miller and Dollard, Social Learning and Imitation, Yale, 1941.

3 Homans and Schneider make a similar point in their critique of Lévy-Strauss (G. Homans and D. Schneider, Marriage, Authority and Final Causes, Free Press, 1955). See also Miriam Kreiselman Slater, ‘Ecological Factors in the Origin of Incest’, American Anthropologist, vol. LXI, no. 6, 1959. D. Emmet, Function, Purpose and Powers, Macmillan, 1958, treats some aspects of this matter, but is not really concerned with unconscious motivation, which we hope to demonstrate is important. Writers with ‘final cause’ theories of incest taboos include T. Parsons, British Journal of Sociology, vol. V, 1954, for whom they prevent the fixation of libido within the family; B. Z. Seligman, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, vol. LIX, 1929, for whom they prevent the disruption of authority patterns within the family; and J. Goody, British Journal of Sociology, vol. VII, 1956, for whom they (along with adultery laws) prevent the disruption of the lineage in unilineal societies. Lévy-Strauss, Les Structures Élémentaires de la Parenté, Paris, 1949, ends up at a loss for an explanation. We simply have to have incest taboos, he says, if we are to have culture at all. While this may be true, it is not helpful.

4 This cavil because sometimes it is condoned as a brief, usual ritual, activ-

ity, e.g. a Thongan hunter was allowed to have intercourse with his daughter before a great hunt (H. Junod, The Life of a South African Tribe, London, 1912).


6 E. Westermarck, A Short History of Marriage, London, 1926, p. 80. His use of ‘exogamous’ is confusing, but as sex out of the family implies marriage out of the family (but not vice-versa), his monolocution is understandable. Have-lock Ellis, The Psychology of Sex (London, 1934), shares Westermarck’s opinion on this issue.


8 Westermarck, op. cit., p. 86.

9 J. Goody, op. cit.


11 ‘Sexual’ is here used in the wide (Freudian) sense. When we speak of ‘sexual immaturity’ we do not mean that the organism is non-sexual, merely pre-pubertal. On the question of childhood intercourse, there seems to be little conclusive evidence. By and large we would imagine that coitus is not achieved because of ignorance of technique or because this is not the goal of the stimulating activity. In any case, the simple lack of tunescence in itself would be highly frustrating.

This argument rests on the assumption that the interaction described is in fact ‘sexual’ even in the wide sense. An objective glance at reports from primitive societies, or at children in our own, would convince anyone that this is so.

12 D. C. McClelland, Personality, New York, 1951, ch. 13.

13 Ibid., p. 502.

14 Goody, op. cit.


17 Ibid., p. 221.

18 Ibid., p. 225.

19 Ibid., p. 278.

20 Ibid., p. 280.

21 Ibid., p. 330.

22 Ibid., p. 333.

23 Ibid., pp. 347–8.

Ibid., p. 82.

Ibid., p. 145.

Ibid., p. 79.

Ibid., p. 59.

Ibid., p. 60.

Ibid., p. 62.

Ibid., p. 250.


These children, then, are the ‘siblings’ for our purposes, as in the kibbutz *kevutza*. Note that in both cases premarital intercourse takes place *outside* this group.

Fortes, op cit., p. 251.

Ibid., p. 111. But note that the kibbutz has no family and that there is still ‘primary group exogamy’.

Ibid., p. 250.

B. Malinowski, op. cit., p. 440.


Ibid., p. 32.

Ibid., pp. 185–6. ‘Ukumetjha’ is premarital sex play.


Ibid., pp. 43–4.

Ibid., pp. 67–8.

Ibid., p. 70.

Ibid., p. 81.


Ibid., p. 192.

Ibid., p. 193.

Ibid., p. 194.

Ibid., pp. 328–9.

Ibid., p. 328.

Ibid., p. 329.

Stimulus generalization in cases where the mother-son relationship is very intense (physically) may lead to the son’s ‘positive aversion’ to the sex act with a wide range of women, perhaps all. Some of the antecedents of homosexuality could lie in the conditioning process of ‘positive aversion’ that we have described.

It is worth pointing out here that the relationship between siblings born with, say, a ten-year age gap, would be more like the parent-child relationship discussed here, than like the ‘brother-sister’ relationship dealt with earlier. *Relative age* of siblings is then another important variable to be taken into account in any comparative study.