


Second Edition

HUMAN SEXUALITY AND ITS PROBLEMS

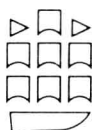
JOHN BANCROFT

Churchill Livingstone 

Human Sexuality and Its Problems

John Bancroft MD FRCP FRCPsych
MRC Reproductive Biology Unit, Edinburgh

SECOND EDITION



CHURCHILL LIVINGSTONE
EDINBURGH LONDON MELBOURNE AND NEW YORK 1989

CHURCHILL LIVINGSTONE
Medical Division of Longman Group UK Limited

Distributed in the United States of America by
Churchill Livingstone Inc., 1560 Broadway, New
York, N.Y. 10036, and by associated companies,
branches and representatives throughout the world.

© Longman Group Limited 1983
© Longman Group UK Limited 1989

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may
be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or
transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic,
mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise,
without either the prior written permission of the
publishers (Churchill Livingstone, Robert Stevenson
House, 1-3 Baxter's Place, Leith Walk, Edinburgh
EH1 3AF), or a licence permitting restricted copying
in the United Kingdom issued by the Copyright
Licensing Agency Ltd, 33-34 Alfred Place, London,
WC1E 7DP.

First published 1983
Second edition 1989

ISBN 0-443-03455-9

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Bancroft, John, 1936-

Human sexuality and its problems. — 2nd ed.

I. Man. Sexuality

I. Title

612'.6

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Bancroft, John.

Human sexuality and its problems/John Bancroft;

Includes index.

1. Sexual disorders. 2. Sex (Psychology) 3. Sex
(Biology)

I. Title.

[DNL.M: 1. Sex. 2. Sex Behavior. 3. Sex
Disorders. WM 611

B213h]

RC556.B333 1989

616.85'83 — dc19

Produced by Longman Singapore Publishers (Pte) Ltd.
Printed in Singapore

Human Sexuality and Its Problems

This volume is dedicated to Frank Beach.

Acknowledgements

Beth Alder, Judy Bury, Derek Chiswick, Alan Dixson, Judy Greenwood, Philip Myerscough and Pam Warner read through drafts of the revised chapters and made many useful comments. Alan Dixson drew a diagram of a sagittal section of the brain for me. I very much appreciate their help.

I am also grateful to D T Baird, C Carati, W C de Groat, J Gillis, H G Forest, J Forrest, A McInnis, S Ratcliffe, R Green, T F Lue, A McNeilly, J C van Wieringen and G Wagner for their kind permission to reproduce photographs or figures.

Contents

1 Introduction	1
Using this book	3
A personal statement	5
2 The biological basis of human sexuality	12
The psychosomatic circle	12
Basic concepts	14
Hormones and the reproductive system	22
Sexual responses	38
The role of sex hormones in sexual behaviour	89
Psychological processes	127
3 Sexual development	146
The developmental process	146
Sexual differentiation and the development of gender identity	153
The sexual response system and sexual behaviour	165
Sexual preferences	172
Biological abnormalities in development	187
Conclusions	196
4 Patterns of sexual behaviour — heterosexuality	201
The source of our information	201
Masturbation	211
Premarital sex	217
Marriage	240
Sexual fantasy	263
Personality and sexual behaviour	270
Comparison of men and women	271
5 Sexuality and ageing	282
Changes in sexual behaviour with age	282
The effects of ageing on sexual response	287
Reproductive and hormonal factors	289
Psychosocial factors	295
Conclusions	296

6 Homosexuality	299
Cross-cultural aspects	300
Historical aspects	302
Who is gay or lesbian?	312
Homosexual identity	315
What are they like as people?	317
What do homosexuals do?	321
AIDS	326
Conclusions	328
7 Other sexual minorities	332
The concept of sexual deviance	332
Fetishism	334
Sadomasochism	337
The polymorphous perverse	341
Transvestism and transsexualism	341
Conclusions	356
8 Sexual problems	360
The incidence of sexual problems	360
Clinical presentation of sexual problems	366
The causes of sexual problems — the psychosomatic circle	372
The classification of sexual dysfunction — the psychosomatic circle revisited	400
Problems related to homosexuality	405
Problems relating to transsexualism and other types of sexual deviance	407
9 Assessing people with sexual problems	412
The current state of some investigative procedures for sexual dysfunction	432
Conclusions	452
10 Helping people with sexual problems	456
The historical background	456
An approach to treatment — couple therapy	467
Individual therapy	502
Group therapy	515
The use of surrogate partners	518
The therapeutic use of drugs and hormones	519
Sexual aids	523
Surgical treatment	524
Management of the transsexual patient	527
Appendix: Counselling notes for couples in sex therapy by Judy Greenwood and John Bancroft	535
11 Sexual aspects of medical practice	552
General medicine	555

Malignant disease	579
General surgery	581
Gynaecology	584
Sexually transmitted diseases and genital infections	587
Sexual side-effects of therapeutic drugs	600
Sexual aspects of alcohol and drug addiction	608
Sexual problems in psychiatric illness	614
Sexuality and mental handicap	618
12 Sexual aspects of fertility, fertility control and infertility	630
Pregnancy and the puerperium	630
Contraception	633
Sterilisation	649
Induced abortion	654
Infertility	655
13 Sexual offences	664
Types of sexual offence	665
Incidence of sexual offences	668
The sexual offender and his victim	676
Child sexual abuse, paedophilia and incest	689
Helping the victims of sexual offences	714
The management of sex offenders	719
Index	733

Introduction

The thread of sexuality is woven densely into the fabric of human existence. There are few people for whom sex has not been important at some time and many for whom it has played a dominant part in their lives.

Sex is a motive force bringing two people into intimate contact. They may have nothing in common except mutual sexual interest. Their encounter may be brief or it may lead on to the principal relationship in their lives. This is important not only at an individual, personal level, but also socially and politically. The nature of the relationships between men and women is crucial to our social and political systems. The dominance of men over women is one important dimension of the more general issue of dominance of one group over another. Sex is a political issue in another sense. The sexual values of a society are clearly identified with the establishment, and rejection of sexual value has always been one expression of political revolt or alienation. Perhaps only recently has such sexual revolt figured in political theory.

Sex and gender are inter-related in complex ways. Sex permeates our symbolism and much of our art. In many languages, inanimate objects are endowed with gender.

The quality of sexual attractiveness has a wide influence. In a materialistic society it is used to impart appeal to non-sexual objects — the commercial exploitation of sex is all around us. This stems from the powerful link between sexual attractiveness and self-esteem. For many, sexual appeal will be or will be seen to be the most powerful asset they possess.

And beneath all this is some biological substrate, ill understood except for its clear link with reproduction. The biological quality of sexuality is perhaps that aspect of human behaviour which reminds us most strongly of our place amongst the animal kingdom. In spite of this, comparative study of human and animal sexuality has been limited. There are a few notable exceptions (e.g. Ford & Beach 1952) which are rewarding and informative. They indicate that in addition to some striking universals of sex amongst animals, including humans, there are many species differences. Perhaps the characteristic of human sexuality which sets it most clearly apart from that of most other animals is its relative separation from

reproduction. Sex has obviously come to play a much wider sociobiological function than the production of offspring. We see this to some extent in other animals, particularly certain primates. In the chimpanzee, for example, sex may have a socially cohesive role (see Chapter 2) which is perhaps organised in a way which reduces tension in male groups. More commonly, when sexual selection operates, and male competes with male for the female, we see sexually related intermale aggression which may be instrumental in determining the dominance hierarchy of the male group. In such circumstances we also see the associated development of male physical supremacy over the female with various patterns of male dominance evolving (see Chapter 4). The physically dominant, exploitative male is by no means a uniquely human phenomenon! Thus we can see how evolution of the sexual process can have major repercussions on other aspects of an animal's existence.

But in few if any other species has fertility and population growth reached such a level that fertility control becomes a major biological need for proper survival of the species. It is therefore not surprising that it is only in the human species that the reproductive aspect of sexual behaviour has ceased to be of primary significance (see chapter 12).

If human sexuality has a wider function than in most other species, it is because there are fewer biological constraints. Hence the need for social constraints. Human sexuality is, in my view, an enigma or riddle. After 25 years of studying the sexual behaviour of humans it has lost none of this mystery for me. I suspect that the essence of this riddle is that whilst there are uniquely human difficulties in containing our sexuality, it is far from certain that the consequences would all be beneficial if those difficulties were resolved. There is a tension or conflict between our identities as rational, civilised beings and our sexual identities and less rational sexual drives. Our sexuality endows us with an absurd quality which gives some immunity against pomposity and excess dignity. On the other hand, our sexual vulnerabilities have become incorporated into some of our least attractive or most questionable characteristics. Our sex role stereotypes, for example, institutionalise the sexual irresponsibility of the male, whilst assuming sexual responsibility and other less enviable virtues in the female.

And of course, our basic vulnerability is not confined to sex. Human beings are constantly showing themselves capable of the most appalling inhumanities to each other when placed in certain circumstances. If sex stops us getting too pompous, then our inherent and it would appear universal potential for inhumanity should stop us from becoming too self-righteous.

But the riddle remains. If we were to become sexually controlled, biologically and socially tidy in our sexual expression, what sort of people would we be?

Given this complexity and the conflictual nature of human sexuality, we should not be surprised to find that sexual problems of various kinds are

common. Animals are not immune to sexual difficulties. Prize bulls may become impotent. It is difficult to judge how much their self-esteem is affected, or how much distress they experience; with the economic consequences of their plight, the distress of their human owners is more obvious. In many species male may sexually mount male, or female female. Apart from the temporary irritation that this may cause the recipient, there is no evidence that such animals become socially stigmatised because of such behaviour. In general humans are more vulnerable to sexual problems.

USING THIS BOOK

This book is primarily intended for health professionals who are especially interested in working with sexual problems. But it also has a wider purpose, that is, to emphasise the broad variety of factors and the complexity of their interactions which must be taken into account when attempting to understand human sexuality. In an age when scientific disciplines are becoming increasingly specialised, it is more and more difficult to bring together new knowledge in a manner that helps us comprehensively to understand the human condition. Sexuality is a prime example of the growing need for such a synthesis, and there are many others. For the medical profession, sex provides as good a model of psychosomatic relationships as one can find. But still medical thought tends to evade the complexities of mind-body interaction, perhaps to a large extent because of the intellectual discomfort of doing otherwise. A proper understanding of human sexuality *demands* a truly psychosomatic approach.

Bringing together and integrating ideas from the wide variety of disciplines which impinge on sexuality is a formidable challenge, and a never-ending one. The possibilities for pursuing relevant lines of enquiry are almost limitless. It has therefore been difficult to know how to structure a book of this kind. My method has been somewhat idiosyncratic. I have aimed to discuss, and hopefully clarify, those areas of knowledge I have found important in my own understanding of human sexuality, and to dwell on those aspects I regard as particularly difficult or fundamental. That is the explanation for the somewhat arbitrary selection of basic biological issues in Chapter 2. I have given extra emphasis to those issues which are central to my own research — in particular hormone-behaviour relationships — though I also believe that such issues are central to a psychosociobiological approach. This book inevitably contains a very personal selection. There are some areas of knowledge, such as molecular biology, which are expanding at a phenomenal rate and on which I have scarcely touched. There are other areas which are not new, but my interest in them has developed only relatively recently, such as social history and social anthropology; these subjects have received greater attention in this second edition. I have paid more attention to marriage and love, but there are many other areas which remain more or less neglected (e.g. prostitu-

tion). It is my hope that these inadequacies will be rectified in further editions. Clearly each reader will need to be selective in his or her use of this book. I hope experts in each area will be understanding and tolerant when I have oversimplified their special knowledge, though I expect no mercy if I have misinterpreted it.

I have retained the overall structure of the first edition, whilst substantially rewriting the text. Chapter 2 is considerably expanded to deal with recent advances in our knowledge of sexual biology. Sexual development has been dealt with more extensively and now follows the basic biological chapter. I have been more adventurous in proposing my own theoretical ideas about development. There is a new brief chapter on sexuality and ageing (Chapter 5), reflecting increasing knowledge in this area as well as the author's increasing age. I have also formed a separate chapter on the assessment of sexual problems (Chapter 8), allowing detailed consideration of the many new developments in the investigation of sexual dysfunction, especially in the male. In Chapter 12 I have included a section on pregnancy and the puerperium to balance the contraceptive and infertility aspects.

Compared with most other areas of human behaviour, the study of sex has lacked scholarship. There are some exceptions, the most notable in the English language being Havelock Ellis and Alfred Kinsey. Freud obviously comes to mind and one cannot dispute his major influence. But he and his followers have brought to the subject the style of thought, characterising psychoanalytic psychology, which is outside the mainstream of conventional scientific scholarship and which, in my view, has erected as many barriers to scientific progress as it has dismantled.

There are obvious reasons for the shortage of scientific endeavour in this field. There has been widespread and powerful opposition to any objective enquiry. This has not only discouraged scholars from venturing into the field but has often had an adverse affect on those who have. Masters & Johnson, two other major influences, are often and justly criticised for their lack of conventional scientific method and their idiosyncratic approach. But it nevertheless seems likely that they were encouraged on to this path by the medical and scientific community's inability to apply the same level of dispassionate and objective appraisal which would have been given to most other areas of enquiry. The situation has changed since their first book was published in 1966. An increasing volume of scientific research is now being subjected to the usual procedures of peer group criticism when results are published in reputable scientific journals. Obstacles to such research are still substantial but for reasons discussed later in this introduction, we are entering an era when human sexuality is being actively reappraised on many levels; the next 10 years may be very different from the last in the opportunities for research that may arise.

As the resistance to objective enquiry lessens, other adverse reactions

take place. The scientist who aims to present scientifically rigorous objective findings in this field will fall prey to criticism that he is reducing sex to physiological or mechanical absurdities. There is a strong resistance in many quarters to scientific expertise in such an emotive area of human behaviour. Obviously some of this criticism has been justified. The intellectual vacuum that has been created by these various obstacles has been partially filled by people with less than intelligent ideas. The expanding field of sex therapy has been readily exploited in this way. If there has been a bias of ethical values amongst sexologists and sex educators, good or bad, it has been towards the radical, permissive, liberated end of the spectrum, providing further fuel for reaction.

One lesson to be learnt from all this is the need, when discussing emotive issues such as human sexuality, to take both objective fact and personal values into consideration. Whatever your intentions, a discourse on human sexuality will rarely be accepted by others as morally or emotionally neutral. It is not possible to give a lecture on sexual anatomy or physiology without conveying, unwittingly or otherwise, some additional message about sexual values. Because these are more likely to be misinterpreted if communicated unwittingly, it is therefore advisable to present them explicitly after proper consideration. The reader will therefore find this author's personal values made clear at various points in this book, as well as more systematically in the next section.

A PERSONAL STATEMENT

To help the reader judge to what extent the presentation of evidence in this book is influenced by my personal prejudices, I will provide here an explicit statement of my sexual values. In fact, at the time of writing, sexual values are being vigorously debated and reappraised as a consequence of two dramatic developments in our society: the AIDS epidemic and the apparent increase in child sexual abuse. It is therefore timely for me to offer a more detailed and considered comment than I gave in the introduction to the first edition.

It should be self-evident, since I am the author of this book, that I regard sex as a profoundly important aspect of human existence. I see it as a force working for both good and bad, with much of the good stemming from its potential for causing harm. But first, without going into philosophical niceties, I will explain how I attempt to judge the good and bad in human behaviour.

I do not believe that we are provided with a fundamental morality which is beyond our questioning or doubt. Hence I have little in common with those who resort to the Scriptures on the assumption that this fundamental morality is in some sense written on tablets of stone, presumably by God. The Scriptures provide us with many interesting and useful accounts of moral analysis which need to be interpreted in their historical context.

It is becoming apparent how variable such interpretation can be by modern theologians, let alone theological thinkers across history. On the other hand, I am not a simple utilitarian — not because I regard basing one's moral standards on the consequences of one's actions as inherently wrong, but because I believe it is impossible to have sufficient awareness of the consequences to make moral decisions on purely rational grounds. In other words I accept that a priori judgements about morality are inevitable. Such judgements, however, require every now and then to be reappraised and sometimes modified. In medicine at the present time an increasing number of situations of a completely novel kind confront us with new moral challenges. In vitro fertilisation and antenatal screening are two recent powerful examples. Confronted with such issues it is not possible, in my view, to resolve them on the basis of some given immutable moral principle. There is no alternative to working out a moral position to suit the new situation. In doing so we must not be surprised if we sometimes get it wrong or if we need to modify our position in the light of experience or new evidence. There is a need for moral humility.

Sexuality presents us with several such challenges. In judging sexual morality I look for the functions or purposes of sexual behaviour (see Chapter 3). But it seems to me inescapable that sexuality has evolved in the human species to serve more than the reproductive function. As mentioned earlier, such non-reproductive functions of sex have sometimes emerged in other subhuman primates. These non-reproductive functions include pair-bonding and fostering intimacy, providing pleasure, bolstering self-esteem, asserting masculinity or femininity, anxiety or tension reduction, the expression of hostility, and material gain. I find I am comfortable with some of these functions but not others. I approve of the way that sex can bind a couple and foster intimacy. I have no problem with sex as a source of pleasure, providing that the pleasure is mutual. I am not comfortable with the use of sex as a way of asserting one's masculinity or femininity. Perhaps if I had lived 200 years ago I might have reached a different conclusion on that point. But at this stage in our social development I regard the nature of relationships between men and women, and the need to reduce the exploitation of one sex by the other, to be of the utmost importance for the successful continuation of our species. Hence, any way in which sex is used to reinforce old stereotypes of masculine dominance and exploitation, even those from our biological heritage, cause me concern. This is not an entirely straightforward issue. It may be that for both men and women to get the real benefits of being sexual some distinction between 'maleness' and 'femaleness' will continue to be necessary, at least as far as heterosexual sex is concerned.

My particular view of the binding effect of sexuality is somewhat idiosyncratic. Experience of sexual pleasure may be seen as a potentially uncomplicated positive consequence, particularly when shared by two people. But more important, in my view, is the binding effect of sexual *in-*

timacy, which in turn depends on the vulnerability inherent in the sexual situation. To enjoy sex requires us to let go, to become abandoned to a degree, undefended. In such a state we are vulnerable. For many species this vulnerability is probably an important reason why sexual behaviour is controlled and limited to the minimum time required for the purposes of reproduction. Otherwise the animals would be exposing themselves to undue danger. For humans, it is not physical but psychological or emotional attack which is most likely — risk of being exploited, rejected or humiliated. These are some of the bad consequences of sex. But to be able to expose oneself to such a risk and yet remain safe reinforces the feelings of security in a relationship, and has a binding effect. Few would disagree that if sex works well it strengthens a relationship, whilst if it goes badly it may weaken it. But opinions may vary as to whether this beneficial effect is a consequence of the sexual pleasure or the emotional security which is involved. I would emphasise the latter. To a considerable extent, the emotional security of a sexual relationship is undermined when sex is used for other purposes such as asserting masculinity or dominance, or bolstering self-esteem.

Thus I judge my sexual values on two levels. One concerns 'good use': whether, in my view, sex is being used constructively for the benefit of a relationship between two people. Sex which is simply recreational is not necessarily immoral, but is unlikely to serve the purposes of intimacy and security which I espouse. It is therefore, in my value system, 'wasted sex'.

On the second level, I regard sexual behaviour as immoral when it is used by one person to exploit the vulnerabilities, either psychological or physical, of another, whether for sexual pleasure, the bolstering of self-esteem, or other self-directed benefits.

On this basis, I have no problem in accepting that homosexual intimacy can be as valid as heterosexual. There is plenty of 'wasted sex', in my terms, in the homosexual world, and no shortage of immoral sex. The main difference from the heterosexual world, in this respect, is that the homosexual is living in a society which rejects his or her sexuality however it may be expressed, regarding any overt expression as sinful. Some of the evolution of homosexual behaviour in modern society therefore needs to be understood as a reaction to this rejection, and a rejection, in turn, of the values of heterosexual society. This has led in some respects to a celebration of casual uncommitted sex, much of which, in my view, comes into the category of 'wasted sex' and with recent developments in sexually transmitted disease, has to be seen increasingly as 'dangerous sex'. But it has served other purposes. The homosexual world has in recent times been exploring sexual relationships unfettered by conventional restraints and with an almost frantic intensity. There are many thoughtful gay men and women for whom this has provided important lessons about human sexuality. There is much that the heterosexual community can learn from these homosexuals if we are prepared to listen. (see Chapter 6 for a fuller

discussion). The reaction of the gay community to the spectre of AIDS provides us with another tragic but powerful learning opportunity. One of the most poignant lessons of the AIDS epidemic is the vivid evidence it provides of the love which exists between many gay couples as they contend with the disease. Anyone who has doubted that homosexual love can be of the highest order should doubt no longer.

It is thus my belief, crucial to my sexual value system, that homosexual love and intimacy can be as valid as heterosexual love, and that the rejection of homosexuality, regardless of the nature of the homosexual relationship, is as unjustifiable as the acceptance of heterosexuality whatever form it takes.

I have been privileged to have my views on this matter subjected to theological analysis and criticism. In October 1982 the Pope John Center in St Louis, Missouri, USA, organised a meeting of scientists and Catholic theologians to discuss issues of sex and gender, with a particular emphasis on homosexuality. I was one of the scientists invited and each scientist's paper was published in a book arising from the conference (Schwartz et al 1983). Each scientific paper was followed by a theological cum philosophical critique. Mine was provided by Prof. W. A. Frank of the Benedictine College, Atchison, Kansas, who expressed the view, presumably representative of Catholic thought, that I was wrong in my basic assumption that homosexual love can be as valid as the heterosexual variety. He based this on the belief that sexuality is ineradicably linked with fertility, even if the fertile aspect is only symbolic, and that homosexual sexuality is essentially sterile.

I suspect that the Roman Catholic Church has difficulty in accepting sexual behaviour in any form (reluctance to accept the absurd and undignified passion of sexual excitement has a long history, at least in European religious thought) but sexuality clearly cannot be entirely rejected. So it is accepted by the Church, providing it is linked in some sense with reproduction, the one inescapable part of God's plan.

I react to the reproductive consequence of sex in a rather different way. It confronts us with another balancing act between good and bad; this choice is probably our most important task as sexually responsible individuals. The fact that a third person may be created by such activity leads us to some extremely complex moral issues. I reject the view that the responsibility for the creation of a third person is in the hands of God rather than the individuals concerned, and believe most strongly that one of our principal moral obligations is to avoid the creation of life when we are not in a position to ensure, to the best of our ability, the well-being of the new person. To assume that all that is required is that the two people should be married is missing the moral point. And to advocate that the responsibility should be met by avoiding all sexual contact is not only hopelessly unrealistic, but, with the availability of effective methods of fertility control, unnecessarily rejecting the considerable advantages of sex.