

thoroughly examined of all **Freudian concepts**. Although some **psychoanalysts** cling to it, the results of a variety of investigations make the conclusion inescapable that it is untenable.

It may well be that, for reasons independent of the Freudian system, a somewhat larger proportion of homosexuals and lesbians incline to paranoia in the clinical sense. This finding would not be surprising in view of the **homophobia** to which they have been subjected. However, no serious or sustained consideration has been given to the matter.

In recent decades members of some gay organizations have also shown paranoia in the more ordinary sense of collective fearfulness that some sectors of society, primarily the government, are out to get them. To some extent these fears came in the baggage of the **leftist** sects who were influential in the years of gay liberation following the **Stonewall Rebellion** of 1969. They were not entirely groundless, inasmuch as the Federal Bureau of Investigation did engage in surveillance of gay groups. Nonetheless such fears can take exaggerated form, as in the belief that the **AIDS** virus was deliberately spread by some governmental agency. Prudence requires that one be on guard against inimical activities by state agencies, but—in the absence of any real evidence—this is a belief that clearly illustrates the possibilities of exaggeration and panic that lie in wait for those who are overly eager to detect conspiracies.

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## PARENTS, LESBIAN AND GAY

Society has traditionally treated parenting as the exclusive prerogative of

heterosexual couples whose union is sanctioned by marriage. Of course when children were born outside of wedlock, both parents and children have been made to feel the stigma of illegitimacy. In advanced industrial countries, however, recent social changes have eroded the dominant position of the nuclear family, and made single-parent units virtually of equal significance. In this context families headed by lesbians and gay men have become more numerous and more visible.

*Origins of Lesbian and Gay Parental Units.* Some persons, who eventually come to acknowledge their homosexuality, marry while still under the impression that they are bisexual or that their homosexual feelings are merely a phase that they will leave behind once they enter a stable union with a member of the opposite sex. Although they may become uneasy as the feelings emerge or persist, nonetheless children may be conceived and born in the initial years of the **marriage**. A few persons, mainly gay men, discuss their homosexuality with their fiancées before the wedding and, with candor and mutual understanding, the marriage may hold. However, increasing numbers of parents who become aware of their different orientation seek and obtain a divorce. In keeping with the tradition of allowing the parents to remain with the mother, lesbian parents then raise the children. It is much less common for a gay father to retain custody of the children. In other instances childless lesbians and gay men may adopt children, though this has led to some controversy.

Some lesbians have conceived and given birth as a result of artificial insemination by donors. Since many doctors frown on this practice, associations have been formed to help prospective parents to accomplish the insemination themselves. As in the case of childless heterosexual couples seeking artificial insemination, the potential donor must be screened for genetic and health reasons. In many instances a gay man is the semen donor, and

in a few cases both parents agree to bring up the child together ("coparenting"). In the latter situation it is essential for the parties to sign an agreement drafted by a lawyer, so that custody battles do not occur later. Some potential lesbian mothers prefer to obtain the semen from a sperm bank—where the donor renounces all rights—so as to avoid the possibility of a custody dispute.

After establishing a new household, the lesbian or gay male parent will date others of the same sex, which often leads to a permanent arrangement. There are then two persons of the same gender to raise the child. Sometimes the lover is called "aunt" or "uncle," but many children accept calling both "mother" or "daddy."

*The Children.* It is generally considered advisable for the lesbian or gay parent to "come out" to the children at an early age, indicating that she or he is "different." If the child learns of his or her parent's homosexuality through hostile remarks of playmates and relatives, they may have a negative reaction. In general girls accept the news of the orientation with some ease; boys initially resist, but then also usually come to accept.

Studies have shown that children of lesbian and gay parents are no more likely to become homosexual than those of heterosexual parents. Many lesbian and gay parents raise their children in traditional sex roles, others in less determinate modes. Sometimes boys are subject to "reverse sexism" on the part of lesbian separatist parents, or this result may occur indirectly, as when a lesbian mother is told to leave an all-women commune when her son reaches the age of twelve. On the whole, however, lesbian mothers and gay fathers—despite the economic difficulties that they often face—prove loving and supportive parents for their children.

*Custody Problems.* For the last hundred years, the usual position has been that when divorce occurs the mother is the best person to raise the children. With the

current general questioning of sex-based privileges, this principle too is less firmly situated than formerly. Hence the heterosexual father in a divorce case is more likely to contest the granting of custody to a lesbian mother. In many instances the court battles that ensue are the result of bitterness that has accumulated over the course of an unhappy marriage. Such procedures are expensive for the litigants and often disturbing to the children. Inasmuch as custody decisions are never final, a lesbian mother may later have her right to keep her children challenged. In some cases the lesbian or gay parent is simply seeking visitation rights, but these too may be contested. Gradually a body of law is being developed which makes custody and visitation decisions more predictable, if not always more just.

To deal with these and other problems support groups of lesbian mothers and gay fathers have been formed. Many members find, however, that they derive benefit from these groups even when they are not experiencing any problems. Being a homosexual parent is a life situation all its own, and sharing experiences in a positive atmosphere is rewarding.

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## PARIS

From the high **Middle Ages** onward Paris was the political and cultural capital of **France**. After the religious and political turbulence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the city emerged in the eighteenth century with its modern