

lished on American college campuses. They tended to be concentrated in the Northeast and on the West Coast and to be most vigorous in older private universities and major state institutions. A decade later the number had at least doubled, and the groups were well represented in the mid-west and south as well as the older areas. Even many religious colleges had their groups, though the gay students at Georgetown University in Washington DC (Catholic) had to take their case to the federal courts. Although the gay groups were sometimes resented by insecure heterosexually identified students (and feared by administrations as a potential focus of alumni grumbling), the new associations fit well enough into the existing kaleidoscope of campus clubs which catered to blacks and Asians, to vegetarians and chessplayers. A new factor is diversification: twenty years after the founding of the Student Homophile League, Columbia University boasted fifteen separate groups spread out among the affiliated institutions on Morningside Heights instead of just one. Some schools even provided special counseling services for gay and lesbian students, though funding shortages tended to make the future of these uncertain.

Gay student groups sprang up in other English-speaking countries, notably Canada and Australia. On the European continent the American model did not take root, because European universities do not usually have campuses as such. In a few countries gay youth groups fulfilled some of the same functions.

A number of North American campus groups sponsored annual conferences attended by hundreds of students from their respective areas, which were an opportunity to hear talks by prominent activists and leaders of the national gay movement, as well as to discuss the problems of coping with enemies on the campus and around it. In recent years regional conferences with a long list of workshops

and speakers have been held at major schools in the Northeast and elsewhere.

In the history of the gay movement, the student groups have been significant as pioneers of intellectual innovation, as seminars for leaders who went on to mainstream organizations, and as a source of "out front" militants willing to take risks their job-holding seniors were reluctant to undertake.

Gay studies as a unified academic discipline have not fared so well; after some promising beginnings in the 1970s they largely disappeared from college curricula, and the Gay Academic Union founded in New York City in 1973 was unable even to produce a textbook for an introductory course, while in the same time women's studies were able to take root and create institutes for research and teaching. In 1987 two separate projects for similar institutions that would promote academic investigation of homosexuality were launched at Yale University and the City University of New York; the future of both is problematic. While the social needs of the gay undergraduate and graduate student are far better served than before the late 1960s, the academic side of the movement faces many tasks and challenges in coming decades.

*See also Education; Public Schools; Youth.*

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## SUBCULTURE, GAY

The term "subculture" (introduced as recently as 1936 by the sociologist Ralph Linton) applies to ethnic, regional, economic, and social groups showing special worlds of interest and identification which serve to distinguish them within the larger culture or society.

*Basic Features of the Subculture Concept.* A subculture differs from a category of people or a common behavior by virtue of its heightened sharing of values, artifacts, and identification. It is intensified by the degree of social separation between its members and the rest of the larger society. This formulation implies a two-level analysis, society and subculture, but in fact there are multiple layers, so that subcultures themselves have what might clumsily be labeled subsubcultures, subsubsubcultures, and so on, almost ad infinitum; in practice the definition of a particular subculture must be seen as relative to the larger context in which it is set by the definer.

There is, furthermore, a range of emotional attitudes between the larger society and the subculture; for the former they range from acceptance (e.g., of yachtsmen) through disdain (gamblers) to hostility (heroin addicts). This range appears also in the response of the subculture, which may support the larger society (radio hams) or actively oppose it (bikers). In the latter case, the term "**counterculture**" is often used; here the sense is of a more broadly applied and more conscious emphasis on an alternative to the larger society rather than an enclave within it. In general, there seems to be a relationship between the degree of alienation from the larger society and the relative powerlessness of the subculture members. Social separation tends to correlate with alienation, so that the more emotional distance between the subculture and the larger society, the stronger the subculture becomes, developing independent values, beliefs, roles, status systems, communications networks, and even economic structures. Conversely, as a larger society attenuates its hostility to a subculture and becomes more accepting (in modern consumer societies often exploiting the subculture as a ready-made market), the hold of the subculture on its members tends correspondingly to weaken; at some point

an expanding subculture crosses the line over into mass culture.

It has also been noted that subcultures play major roles in the process of social change, being both powerful agents for change and bulwarks against it. Examples of the latter would include religious fundamentalists and ecological conservationists. The concept of the subculture remains, however, a somewhat amorphous one, and for that reason perhaps, has resisted attempts to provide a general theoretical explanation accepted by a wide range of scholars.

*Sexual Implications.* The homosexual subculture is often regarded as constituting the individuals who have come out or emerged from the closet and are openly pursuing a **gay lifestyle**, often in the setting of the urban gay ghetto. In keeping with the preceding discussion, emphasis should, however, be laid rather on the self-identification of the participants (as "gay" or "lesbian") and on their common interests (same-gender sex, opposition to **homophobia**), artifacts (publications, jewelry, buttons), and values (sexual autonomy, social pluralism). In this sense, the homosexual subculture is much smaller than the aggregate of those engaging in homosexual acts, or even those who consciously define themselves as homosexual, inasmuch as many of these do not participate in group activities or acquire artifacts. **Sociological theory** also has difficulty in accounting for people who identify themselves not as homosexual but as **bisexual** (or even, in some cases, such as with many male **prostitutes**, as heterosexual), but who are otherwise seen to participate widely in major aspects of the "homosexual subculture."

Even conceding these limitations, it is apparent that the description of an overall "gay subculture" remains problematic, particularly in respect to common values and interests, and retains validity primarily when placed in the context of social separation from the majority

(heterosexual) society. The gay subculture or community is far from homogeneous, its members have widely varying individual power positions and attitudes toward the larger society, and the latter displays a considerable spectrum of attitudes (compare those toward, say, a pair of **macho cowboys** and those toward promiscuous **pedophiles**). An even stronger argument can be made against the grouping of lesbians and gay males in the same subculture. For many purposes it seems more helpful to think of the gay or lesbian social worlds as collections of subcultures or subsubcultures: participants in the leather "scene," street **transvestites** (drag queen), **bar-goers**, call boys, **opera buffs**, and so forth.

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*Historical Perspectives.* Some light is thrown on the origins of European homosexual subcultures by a debate between the **social constructionist** scholars and their opponents. A major thesis of the social constructionist school is that the "modern homosexual" began only in the last two decades of the nineteenth century in response to the **psychiatric** concept of **homosexuality** as a psychological state differentiating a minority of individuals from the remainder of the population.

This view can be challenged on a number of grounds. The major argument against the social constructionist thesis is that there is sound evidence for homosexual cliques and groupings as far back as the **Middle Ages**. The question is rather, how did they define themselves in relation to the environing society? This question can best be answered in three time segments:

(1) 1280–1780. In this period the homosexual groupings probably defined themselves, or would have been defined by Christian society, as part of a heretical or criminal subculture. In not a few respects they paralleled such historical phenomena as the Marranos, the crypto-Jews in Spain and Portugal after the Reconquista; the Recusants, who were secret Catholics in Elizabethan England; the Nicodemites,

secret Protestants in countries where the Counterreformation triumphed over the opponents of the Church; the crypto-Christians in the Ottoman Empire after the conquest of the former Byzantine possessions and the Balkan peninsula; and the crypto-Catholics in Japan between 1630 and 1865. All these are instances of clandestine rejection of the official religion of the state and obstinate adherence to proscribed beliefs and practices—often, if not always, at the risk of death if their covert activities came to the attention of the secular authorities.

(2) 1780–1880. Following the penal reforms of the **Enlightenment** and the granting of religious tolerance, the death penalty for heresy receded into the past, but the homosexual subculture now took on the character of an erotic **freemasonry**, with its rites, passwords, and traditions known only to a limited circle of initiates. Their counterparts in the political macrocosm were the Freemasonic lodges, the Rosicrucians, the Illuminati, and similar bodies that played a signal role in the modernization of European life at the end of the eighteenth century—as nuclei of the "new society" within the old. This is the situation attested by the *Don Leon* poems in England, and by August von Platen's poem of January 31, 1823, with the line "Was Vernünft'ge hoch verehren/ Taugte jedem, der's verstünde" ("What gay people greatly honor/ Well served all who understood it"); in this poem *vernünftig*, "rational" was a code word meaning "gay."

(3) 1880–present. This so-called modern period was inaugurated not by the work of the psychiatrists, but by the vanguard of homophile propagandists beginning with Karl Heinrich Ulrichs and Károly Mária Kertbeny in the 1860s, and continuing with Magnus Hirschfeld and the **Scientific-humanitarian Committee** in the late 1890s. The "new homosexual" saw himself as a member of an aggrieved minority, and therefore as a political **activist**, one who not simply gratified his sexual drive

with members of his own sex, but openly called for the emancipation of all individuals so oriented from the taboos and prejudices of Christian society, and above all from its restrictive laws. From 1918 onward, the view formulated by Kurt Hiller, that such individuals were a **minority** entitled to the same protection accorded ethnic groups in Central and Eastern Europe by the "minority treaties" appended to the peace settlement in the spirit of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, gained sway among politically conscious homosexuals first in Germany and then in other countries. (Psychiatrists—apart from those who endorsed the homosexual emancipation **movement**—did little or nothing to encourage or promote this view, as they preferred to argue that homosexuals were mentally ill and should be compelled to undergo treatment, not that they had rights of any kind.) The **gay liberation** organizations that sprang up in the English-speaking countries inherited this political tradition, in many cases in the indirect form adopted by racial and ethnic groups struggling for equality, and on it have based their own demands and aspirations for justice, to which only a few countries have thus far adequately responded.

It can be stated categorically that always, even in times of the worst intolerance, beneath the surface of society there has lurked a gay subculture, for the simple reason that the anathemas of the church could no more abolish homosexual activity than they could have altered the function of an internal organ of the human body. Such matters are the outcome of human macroevolution, which probably ended some 57,000 years ago, and certainly would not undergo major change even in a hundred generations. The historical differences lie in the mode of adaptation to the religious and political beliefs and practices of the environment, hence they belong to social and cultural history rather than to sexual psychology.

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*Conclusion.* As currently being conducted, the debate between the social constructionists and their opponents masks problems of definition that have been insufficiently addressed. It is necessary to distinguish whether one is dealing with (a) homosexual networking—patterns of association and meeting places, together with a rudimentary argot and "semiotics" as facilitators; or (b) consciousness of belonging to a distinctive segment of society, of being in short a "homosexual" (or "sodomite" in earlier days); or (c) a complementary sense of *not* belonging to the larger society with its obligatory heterosexuality.

It is evident that (a) can precede (b) and (c), and almost certainly did. Those in quest of the origins of subculture, looking for earlier versions of the contemporary gay scene, tend to confuse these separate aspects. Moreover, what is termed the homosexual subculture in the first sense was, in early modern Europe, immersed in the larger sphere of deviance or marginalization, so that homosexuals formed part of an underground comprising thieves, vagabonds, entertainers, cardsharps, sorcerers, and so forth.

Even in recent years the degree of social separation (c, above) exhibited by gay people has displayed considerable fluctuation. Until the late 1960s, the general tint of social rejection was considerably attenuated by the widespread practice of "passing," and this worked against the development of a strong subculture. In the "gay liberation" period of the seventies, social separation increased as large numbers of homosexuals "came out," joined gay baseball teams, attended gay churches, read gay periodicals, marched in gay parades, voted against homophobic politicians, and swelled the "gay ghettos." The proliferation of gay special interest groups and the radical stance of movement activists in this period tended to push the subculture toward the counterculture pole. In the latter part of the decade, however, the

pull of greater acceptance by the larger society and the attractions of increased power (political and financial) for the members of the subculture acting together were already evident. We may expect that a continuation of that trend, once the AIDS crisis has ebbed, will tend to undermine the cohesion of the gay subculture further, while conversely strengthening the internal unity of such emerging sub-cultural-type groupings as **sadomasochists** and **pederasts**.

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### SUETONIUS (BORN CA. 69)

Roman biographer. Suetonius led a largely uneventful life as a bureaucrat, but his access to the records of the imperial palace lends his writings authenticity. Of the books that he wrote the only one to survive in full is the *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, presenting biographies of **Roman emperors** from Julius Caesar through Domitian.

Suetonius' *Lives* have been criticized for their lack of chronological organization, making it hard for later historians to date the anecdotes he presents. In comparison with his contemporary **Tacitus**, whose powerful moral vision caused him to edit and shape the material to make points, Suetonius presents facts without any particular tendency.

Of the rulers he profiles, only one, **Claudius**, seems to have been purely heterosexual. Often criticized by earlier generations for the profusion of racy details, his sexual material is used to illustrate the character of his subjects. In the

case of **Julius Caesar**, his affair with **Nicomedes** of Bithynia shows his charm and resourcefulness. But in the **Life of Nero**, the "marriages" with **Sporus** and **Doryphorus** reveal the wilful profligacy of that emperor's later years. In a period in which imperial power was absolute, it is not surprising that the emperors should have been tempted to have their way with the attractive bodies that surrounded them at every turn. The mores presented are those of the highest society rather than of the people, whose lives must have remained more prosaic and conventional. Refraining from making such contrasts, in his attitudes Suetonius is a naturalist rather than a moralist.

Much read through the centuries, Suetonius' portraits have—probably contrary to his intention—contributed to the image of the **decadence of Rome**. In fact he treats the rising age of Roman rule, with its very height—the second century—still to come. The material he provides therefore represents sidelights on an era of exuberant prosperity and imperial ostentation, rather than object lessons of the decline that was to come two centuries later.

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### SUFISM

Sufism, Islamic mysticism, is that aspect of Islamic belief and practice in which believers seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. A difficult term to define, it consists of a great variety of mystical paths that give rise to different kinds of personal feelings and experiences. All paths are aimed at culmination in the ultimate union of lover and beloved, signifying the abandonment of the personality (or self) of the mystic in the Absolute Reality. The western term "Sufism"