

Chapter 1

Introduction: History and Context

The Anthropological Perspective

In one ruling by the Supreme Court, sex has been declared as “a great and mysterious motive force in human life [that] has indisputably been a subject of absorbing interest” (in Demac 1988:41). As children we have heard our parents speak euphemistically about the “birds and the bees” and as adolescents we may have shared late night discussions with our friends about the “secrets” of intimacy. As adult Americans our concerns are expressed in an array of new self-help books on the subject flooding the market every year. We even have two new disorders of human sexuality that have captured the imagination of the news media: sexual addictions and inhibited sexual desire (lack of interest in sex). Obviously the subject entralls more than Masters and Johnson (1966) or Dr. Ruth.

Our intent is to offer a unique way of understanding ourselves as sexual beings through the perspective of anthropology. Some of our readers may not be familiar with what anthropology is and might be wondering what exactly “Raiders of the Lost Ark” has to do with sex. For those of you unfamiliar with anthropology, we welcome you to an exciting new viewpoint. For those of you majoring or minoring in anthropology, we hope that our text inspires you to conduct further research on the subject of human sexuality.

Sex as Biology

Confusion about what anthropology is stems from the interdisciplinary nature of the field. An anthropological approach is one that incorporates an understanding of humankind as biological, as well as cultural beings. We use the term bio-cultural to describe our perspective. While bio-cultural approaches in anthropology may

not be appropriate for all the subjects anthropologists might research, for a number of topics such a view lends a fuller and more complete understanding. Bio-cultural perspectives are widespread in fields such as medical anthropology, biological anthropology, and the anthropology of sex and gender to name just a few of our many specializations.

The interweaving of biology and culture into a bio-cultural perspective is the distinguishing feature of this textbook and the theme that unifies the multiplicity of anthropological studies of human sexuality. We are not suggesting that these are the only two dimensions for interpreting sex; indeed, sex has a very important psychological component as well. As anthropologists, we regard the psychological component as part and parcel of culture that shapes our personalities in characteristic ways, yet also allows for the diversity of individuals as unique genetic entities.

The term "sex" has many meanings. Sex is part of our biology. It is a behavior that involves a choreography of endocrine functions, muscles, and stages of physical change. It is expressed through the "biological sex" of people classified as male or female (Katchadourian 1979). Despite this physiological component, the act of sex cannot be separated from the cultural context in which it occurs incorporating meanings, symbols, myths, ideals, and values. Sex expresses variation across and within cultures.

An anthropological definition of sex is necessarily a broad one that includes the cultural as well as biological aspects of sex. We shall offer you a definition of sex, but urge you to remember that defining sex is far more complex than our definition suggests. For example, our definition cannot limit sex to only those behaviors resulting in penile-vaginal intercourse, for by doing that we would eliminate a variety of homosexual, bisexual, and heterosexual behaviors that are obviously sexual but not coital. Therefore, we shall define **sex** as those behaviors, sentiments, emotions, and perceptions related to and resulting in sexual arousal as defined by the society or culture in which it occurs. We qualified our definition by referring to cultural definitions of sexual behaviors since these differ a great deal among ethnic groups and among different cultures. For example, petting as we know it in western society is not universal, that is, it is not necessarily considered a form of arousal among all other peoples of the world. As you read this text, you will begin to broaden your horizons of understanding yourself, your own society and the multicultural world in which we live.

Anthropological Perspectives on Human Sexuality

The study of human sexuality is a cross-disciplinary one. Six major perspectives dominate the study of human sexuality. Included are: the biological with a focus on physiology; the psychosocial with an emphasis on the developmental aspects of sexuality and the interaction of cognitive and affective states with social variables; the behavioral that stresses behavior over cognitive and emotional states; the clinical with a concern with sexual disorders and dysfunctions; the sociological, with a focus on social structures and the impact of institutions and socioeconomic status factors on sexual behavior; and the anthropological which includes evolutionary and cultural approaches with emphases on sexual meanings and behaviors within the cultural context. By **culture** we mean: the skills, attitudes, beliefs, and values underlying behavior. These are learned by observation, imitation, and social learning.

In today's global community it is increasingly important for us to incorporate multicultural perspectives in our knowledge base. Since this approach is at the heart of anthropology, we offer a brief historical overview of some of the more well-known cultural anthropologists who have shaped the study of human sexuality. The contributions of anthropologists studying the evolution of human sexuality are discussed in chapter 3.

Anthropology as a discipline developed in the nineteenth century. From its inception, anthropologists have been interested in the role of human sexuality in evolution and the organization of culture. Darwin, most well known for the biological theory of evolution (see chapter 2 for definition and chapter 3 for discussion), also formulated theories on culture that included ideas on human sexuality. These were presented in *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1874, orig. 1871). Darwin argued that morality is what separated humans from animals. In his theory of morality, Darwin regarded the regulation of sexuality as essential to its development. According to Darwin, marriage was the means for controlling sexual jealousy and competition among males. In the course of moral evolution, restrictions of sexuality were first required of married females, then later all females and finally males restricted their own sexuality to monogamy. Darwin's approach incorporated notions of male sexuality and assertiveness, and female asexuality. These views reflected Darwin's own cultural beliefs about sex and gender (Martin and Voorhies 1975:147-149).

Other nineteenth century anthropologists also produced theories of social evolution that included the regulation of sexuality. John McLennan (1865), John Lubbock (1870) and Louis Henry Morgan (1870) conceived of societies as having evolved through stages. These stages represented increasing restrictions on sexuality as societies progressed from primitive stages of promiscuity to modern civilization characterized by monogamy and patriarchy (Martin and Voorhies 1975:150). These theories were flawed by thinking that esteemed western European culture was superior and viewed social evolution as an unwavering linear trend of "progress."

The twentieth century brought new approaches to the study of human sexuality as anthropology shifted from grand evolutionary schemes with little rigor to empirically oriented studies. This turned to a new methodology for which anthropology has gained acclaim. Bronislaw Malinowski is the acknowledged parent of this anthropological research method known as **ethnography**. Ethnography is the research method of participant observation in which the anthropologists becomes entrenched in the lives of the observed. The ethnographic method serves as the basis for an ethnography, the detailed study of the culture of a particular group of people. Malinowski is known for his analysis of sex as part of the ethnographic context. His groundbreaking work entitled *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia: An Ethnographic Account of Courtship, Marriage and Family Life Among the Natives of the Trobriand Islands, British New Guinea* was first published in 1929. While others were writing in the 1920s on the subject of indigenous peoples and their sexuality, unlike Malinowski theirs was not based on firsthand research but rather missionary and travelers' reports or short-term field projects (Weiner 1987:xiii-xiv). Malinowski's two-year-term living with the Melanesian Trobriand Islanders and his scientific and systematic methods of data collection left an important legacy for the field of anthropology and the study of human sexuality.

Malinowski was interested in the relationship of institutions to cultural customs including sexual behaviors. His perspective stressed the importance of the cultural context and emphasized how social rules ordered sexuality among the Trobriand Islanders. What appeared to Europeans as unrestrained sexuality were in actuality highly structured premarital sex rules and taboos based on kinship classification (Weiner 1987:xvii). Malinowski seriously challenged the dominant nineteenth century cultural evolutionism of McLennan, Lubbock, and Morgan. He rejected the notion that

early human life was represented by sexual promiscuity. The Trobriand Islanders illustrated that even the most nontechnologically complex peoples regulated their desires through systems of kinship. Rather than promiscuity as a prior condition, Malinowski focused on the ordering of sexual relations in creating the family (Weiner 1987:xxv–xxvi).

Malinowski was also influenced by another trend impacting anthropology: that of psychoanalysis. He was impressed with the psychoanalytic openness to the study of sex, but was critical of Sigmund Freud's theory of the incest taboo and the Oedipus complex. In a nutshell, Freud's argument is that unconsciously little boys experience a desire to marry/have sex with their mothers and murder their fathers. (See chapter 9 for further discussion). In *Sex and Repression in Savage Society* (1927), Malinowski “. . . argued that Freud's theory of the universality of the Oedipus complex had to be revised because it was culturally biased. Freud based his theory on the emotional dynamics within the patriarchal western family” (Weiner 1987:xxi). This resulted in a heated debate with psychoanalyst Ernest Jones. Malinowski again argued that the Oedipus complex was a result of the western patriarchal family complex. The Trobrianders presented quite a different picture from the western nuclear family because the Trobriand culture is a **matrilineal** one; that is, people traced descent through their mother's family. This produced different family dynamics so that Malinowski concluded that the Trobrianders were free of the Oedipus complex. Unfortunately his work did not influence the psychoanalytic position to any great degree.

Ruth Benedict and Margaret Mead loom large in the history of anthropology and in their respective contributions to the study of sex. Both were students of Franz Boas, the parent of American anthropology. Benedict's contribution continues to be felt today. Her perspective, in revised form, is embedded in contemporary anthropology in the concepts of ethos (the “approved style of life”) and world view (the “assumed structure of reality”) (Geertz 1973:126–141). Benedict's *Patterns of Culture*, published in 1934, offered an approach in which cultures were regarded as analogous to personalities. She stressed how each culture produced a unique and integrated configuration. This was known as the configurational approach (Benedict 1959:42–45).

That Benedict was light years ahead of her time was demonstrated in her concluding chapter where she reiterated points from her paper “Anthropology and the Abnormal” (1934). She was concerned with individuals whose temperaments were not matched to

their cultural configuration and the psychic costs to those such as homosexuals who were “not supported by the institutions of their civilization” (1946:238 in Bock 1988:52). She proposed that “abnormality” was not constant but is rather culturally constituted. She suggested what, at that time, was a radical view: tolerance for non-normative sexual practices such as homosexuality. Implicit in her view is that sexuality is no different than any other social behavior, it was culturally patterned. Benedict argued that “. . . in a society that values trance, as in India, they will have supernormal experience. In a society that institutionalizes homosexuality, they will be homosexual” (1934:196 in Singer 1961:25). Benedict challenged prevailing notions of homosexuality as pathology. In 1939, in her “Sex in Primitive Society,” she concluded that homosexuality was primarily social in nature, shaped by the meanings of gender and sex roles (Dickermann 1990:7).

For the study of human sexuality, Benedict’s major contribution was that sex, which is a part of culture, is patterned, fitting into the larger society, the cultural whole or the **gestalt**. The configurational approach was certainly not without flaws and anthropology has moved well beyond regarding cultures as personalities. But, Benedict has left an important legacy for anthropology in her emphasis on patterning and cultural holism. For the field of sexology, Benedict was bold and unafraid in her perspective on sexual variation.

Margaret Mead was also an important and powerful figure in anthropology and sexology. Before her death in 1978 she was more widely recognized for her work than any other anthropologist in the world. In numerous books and articles, Mead addressed the subject of sex and gender. While her contributions are many, we shall focus on her first book *Coming of Age in Samoa* (originally 1928) investigated when she was not yet 24 years old.¹

Mead was a proponent of cultural explanations for understanding human behavior. She explained this approach by saying:

It was simple—a very simple point—to which our materials were organized in the 1920’s, merely the documentation over and over of the fact that human nature is not rigid and unyielding, not an unadaptable plant which insists on flowering or becoming stunted after its own fashion, responding only quantitatively to the social environment, but that it is extraordinarily adaptable, that cultural rhythms are strong and more compelling than the physiological rhythms which they overlay and distort . . . We had to present evidence that human character is built upon a biological base which is capable of enormous diversification in terms of social standards (Mead 1939 in Singer 1961:16).

In *Coming of Age in Samoa*, her commentary addressed female adolescence in Samoa as well as in the United States. She proposed that the turbulence of the American girls' adolescence was not typical of adolescence throughout the world. Mead was responding to a popular biological theory of adolescent stress and storm believed to be caused by the changes in hormones during puberty. Her study of Samoan adolescence provided a very different picture. Unlike American adolescence, for the Samoan youth, this was not a period of turbulence and high emotion. Based on evidence of a carefree Samoan adolescence, Mead reasoned that the conflict experienced by the American teenagers was due to culture rather than hormones. The latter part of *Coming of Age in Samoa* explained the strife of American adolescence as a cultural phenomenon. Mead offered cultural explanations. For example, she identified the importance of rapid culture change in American society as contributing to the adolescent unrest.

In contrast, the Samoan girls' adolescence was conflict free. This was due to Samoan culture which was relatively homogeneous and casual. So casual that according to Mead the young woman:

defers marriage through as many years of casual love-making as possible . . . The adolescent girl's total interest is expended on clandestine sex adventures . . . to live with as many lovers as possible and then to marry into one's village . . . (Mead 1961:157).

Samoan society was one in which extremes in emotion were culturally discouraged. It was characterized by casualness in a number of spheres including sexuality, parenting, and responsibility. In contrast to western culture, the young Samoan woman's sexuality was experienced without guilt. She concluded that the foundation of this casual approach to sex and painless adolescence could be explained by the following: 1) a lack of deep feeling between relatives and peers, 2) a liberal attitude toward sex and education for life, 3) a lack of conflicting alternatives and 4) a lack of emphasis on individuality. In this work, she established the importance of the study of women when little information was available (Howard 1983:69). She also challenged notions of biological reductionism that even today are all too often used to support status quo politics.

While the approaches of Malinowski, Benedict, and Mead contributed to the creation of the ethnographic study of sexuality with an emphasis on the cultural, Clellan S. Ford and Frank A. Beach's *Patterns of Sexual Behavior* deserves credit in 1951 for offering the first synthetic study that incorporated biological, cross-cultural, and

evolutionary considerations. Their work is distinctive for its inclusion of homosexual and lesbian data, a trend continued in Gregerson's 1994 *The World of Human Sexuality: Behaviors, Customs and Beliefs*. According to Miracle and Suggs (1993:3), Ford and Beach's book is "[t]he single most important and provocative work on sexuality to date . . . It also provided the intellectual—if not the methodological—foundation for the subsequent work of Masters and Johnson." (See chapter 11 for discussion of Masters and Johnson). *Patterns of Sexual Behavior* integrated information from 190 different cultures as well as provided comparative data on different species with an emphasis on the primates (humans, apes, and monkeys). Their work includes an encyclopedic collection of sexual behavior cross-culturally. For example, Ford and Beach offer discussion and information on sexual positions, length (time) of intercourse, locations for intercourse, orgasm experiences, types of foreplay, courting behaviors, frequencies of intercourse, methods of attracting a partner, among numerous other topics.

Ford and Beach's study of human sexuality employed the cross-cultural correlational method. This is a statistical method for comparing attributes (variables) in large samples of cultures (Cohen and Eames 1982:419). This approach is valuable for testing hypotheses about human sexuality, establishing patterns and trends, and formulating generalizations. Their study relied on ethnographic data that is collected and coded in the HRAF files (the Human Relations Area Files). HRAF is a rigorous classification scheme for information on the world's societies. Categories of information for over 1,000 societies are now coded and available to researchers.

The cross-cultural correlational statistical method was subsequently used by Martin and Voorhies in *Female of the Species* (1975). Like Ford and Beach, Martin and Voorhies included evolutionary and biological issues. Their focus was broader in that they were interested in the relationship of human sexuality to gender status/roles, social organization, and type of subsistence (how people make a living). Martin and Voorhies tested hypotheses to arrive at generalizations about the relationships of these factors. In a sample of 51 foraging societies Martin and Voorhies found that 30% of them allowed premarital sexual experimentation (1975:188–189). This pattern was related to matrilineality (where descent is traced through the mother's side of the family) and matrilocality (where the couple resides in the village of the wife's mother). Their studies of horticultural groups also revealed a statistical correlation between matrilineal societies and sexual permissiveness toward premarital sex, while patrilineal (tracing descent through the father's

side) societies tended to control female premarital sexual behavior (1975:246–247).

There are many research applications for this methodological approach to sexological research. For example, Schlegel and Barry in *Adolescence: An Anthropological Inquiry* (1991) report that premarital restrictiveness occurs in societies in which a dowry is given (wealth from the bride's family is included in the marriage transaction). They conclude that "[f]amilies guard their daughters' chastity in dowry-giving societies in order to protect their property (dowry) against would-be social climbers and to ensure that they can use their daughters' dowries to attract the most desirable sons-in-law" (Schlegel and Barry 1991:116). Chastity rules guard against a lower status man impregnating a higher status women and thereby making claim on her dowry and inheritance by trapping her into marriage. In this way property exchange and status considerations are factors in restricting premarital sexuality (Schlegel and Barry 1991:117–118). Davis and Whitten report that the general pattern found in HRAF studies such as these is that sexual restrictions tend to be associated with complex societies (1987:74).

Frayser's *Varieties of Sexual Experience* (1985) is in the tradition spawned by Ford and Beach incorporating the cross-cultural correlational approach with biological and evolutionary concerns. Frayser presents an integrated model in which human sexuality is regarded as ". . . a system in its own right, related to but not subsumed by social, cultural, psychological, and biological factors" (in Frayser and Whitby 1987:351). For Frayser, although the cross-cultural record reveals an almost infinite variety in sexual expression, there is continuity with our evolutionary past. In regard to evolution, Frayser examines cross-species sexuality, particularly that of our close relatives, the non-human primates. For example, she points out that human sexuality is distinguished by unique sexual and reproductive attributes; these include the ability for sexual arousal that is not limited to estrus ("heat"), and the evolution of the female orgasm. These capabilities are present in our relatives to a limited extent, but emerge full blown in humans and may be linked to extraordinary amounts of non-reproductive sexual behavior among humans in contrast to other animals.

Frayser has distinguished the social and cultural aspects of human sexuality in terms of the **social system** defined as patterned interactions. The social system is contrasted to the **cultural system** which is defined as the patterned beliefs and meanings that influence sexual expression (Frayser 1985:7). This model is one in which the biological, the social, and the cultural system

converge to influence the sexual system. It is a valuable approach for understanding sexual patterning and for recording the continuities and heterogeneity within and between cultures.

Sex as Culture

The regulation of human sexual expression as to when, where, how, and who—may serve diverse socio-cultural goals. George Peter Murdock's pioneering study, *Social Structure* (1949), offers us a classic approach to the different ways that the regulation of sexuality contributes to the organization of cultures. In all societies sexual access among members of a society is regulated. The most obvious example of this is the incest taboo. With an almost universal prevalence, the **incest taboo** prohibits sexual access between siblings and between siblings and their parents. But, even those societies which have allowed incest have regulations surrounding it that are integrated in the wider social organization and belief system. The exceptions include Hawaiian royalty, kings and queens of ancient Egypt, and Inca emperors. These elites were regarded as so powerful and sacred that only their very close relatives had the equivalent status to qualify as a mate and to perpetuate the lineage. Such sexual unions and marriages were not allowed, however, for the population at large (Murdock 1949:13).

Rules for sexual access also extend beyond the immediate nuclear family. **Exogamy** is a rule requiring that people marry outside their group, while **endogamy** specifies marriage within the group (not the immediate family). These rules create kin groups through different kinds of restrictions on sexual access. Rules of exogamy and endogamy are defined by reference to marriage. This illustrates how sexual ideologies are integrated in the social organization of kin groups. One should, however, not make the error that sex and marriage are always equated. This is a mistake often found in the literature on human sexuality, but one seldom made by the people involved in extramarital affairs. "**Marriage** is a publicly recognized union between two or more people that creates economic rights and obligations within the group . . . and guarantees their offspring rights of inheritance" (Crapo 1987:148). It is regarded as an enduring relationship and includes sexual rights (Ember and Ember 1988: 13). Murdock (1949:8) offers clarification:

Sexual unions without economic co-operation are common, and there are relationships between men and women involving a divi-

sion of labor without sexual gratification, e.g., between brother and sister, master and maidservant, or employer and secretary, but marriage exists only when the economic and the sexual are united in one relationship, and this combination occurs only in marriage.

Ford and Beach's pioneering *Patterns of Sexual Behavior* (1951) proposed that sexual partnerships consist of two types: **mateships** defined in the same way as marriages; and **liaisons** "... less stable partnerships in which the relationship is more exclusively sexual" (1951:106). Sexologists and anthropologists generally subdivide human liaisons on the basis of their premarital or extramarital character (Ford and Beach 1951:106).

The regulation of sexual partnerships makes it possible to define groups of people by relationships based on offspring and kinship. These kin relationships are formalized through marriage systems. Sexual prohibitions function to "... minimize competition among relatives and to increase the bonds of cooperation and friendship between neighboring groups" (Crapo 1987:61). Because descent is important for a number of reasons such as inheritance, obligations, and affiliations, we can regard sexual unions as having the potential to shape kin group formation. Sexual access therefore defines kin groups. The importance of sexuality is socially recognized through marriage as an institution with sexual rights and obligations. But, it should be kept in mind that there is a great deal of sexual activity that occurs prior to and outside marriage, and this includes sexual activities between people of the same gender, ritual and ceremonial sex as well.

Societies differ as to their tolerance of premarital and extramarital activities and the conditions under which it is acceptable and/or prohibited. According to Broude and Greene's (1976) survey of the cross-cultural record, in 69% of the societies studied, men "commonly" participated in extra-marital sex while in 57% of the societies women did so as well. This leads us to another thorny issue for sex researchers, the contrast between **ideal** and **real** culture. The ideal culture or normative expectation is that in 54% of the societies extra-marital sex is allowed only for men, while only 11% allow it for women. But the data suggests that many more people actually violate this ideal, particularly in the case of women.

In summary, human sexuality is a central force in the origin of kin groups. In Murdock's words: "All societies have faced the problem of reconciling the need of controlling sex with that of giving it adequate expression" (1949:261). The regulation of sexual

relations is the basis for descent and inheritance, critical factors for human societies in the maintenance of social groups. Yet, sex and marriage do not necessarily “go together” like a horse and carriage. Sex is not the central factor in the bonding of two individuals through marriage. To think so is to engage in a bias shaped by recent modern U.S. views of marriage. Sex is indeed critical for kin groups and their perpetuation; and while sex is a right and an obligation in marriage, it is not necessarily the basis upon which marriages are made. Economic cooperation emerges as an important factor in marriage both in evolutionary terms and in the cross-cultural record. This will become more evident in our discussion of “The Patterning of Human Sexuality.”

The Patterning of Human Sexuality: The Bio-Cultural Perspective

Human sexuality has a foundation in human biology which provides us with certain inherited potentialities. “. . . The inherited aspects of sex seem to be nearly formless.” It is only through culture that sex assumes form and meaning (Davenport 1976:161).

Our human biological wiring is very different from what we think of as animal instincts. For example, the drive for food that allows us to survive is fulfilled through learning how to get food; so in some cultures people collect food, some fish and yet others like us go to the grocery store. The drive for sex is also shaped by culture and is very unlike a mating instinct. When a female animal comes into heat, she automatically (through hormonal mechanisms) becomes sexually responsive and follows her mating instinct. Humans, however, may ignore their drives; for example, Catholic priests and nuns deny their sexuality in order to live in celibacy (Scupin and DeCorse 1992:164). Others delay sexuality until marriage which may not occur until their twenties or later.

Human biological predispositions are not “. . . rigidly determined . . . They may orient us in particular directions in pursuing certain goals, but they do not determine our behavior in a mechanical fashion without learned experiences” (Scupin and DeCorse 1992:164). This biological underpinning to our sexuality and other behaviors is part of what is called an **open biogram**, “an extremely flexible genetic program that is shaped by learning experiences” (Scupin and DeCorse 1992:164). Through socialization humans acquire their culture. This capacity to learn and to adapt to one’s environs is a part of our unique bio-cultural evolution as humans. We can say that our biology sustains us as cultural beings by providing us with an unusual capacity to learn.

Sexual behavior is culturally patterned; it is not accidental or random but is integrated within the broader context of culture and is intermeshed in a web of other cultural features as we have seen in our discussion of sex, marriage, and kinship. A number of cultural characteristics are associated with patterns of human sexuality. These may include: the level of technology, population size, religion, economics, political organization, medical practices, kinship structure, degree of acculturation and culture change, gender roles, power and privilege (stratification). Consequently, larger cultural patterns are important in shaping reproductive and non-reproductive sexual behaviors and values in a society. Sexuality is patterned across cultures in relation to these variables as well as within a culture. Davenport suggests that sex is molded by the "internal logic and consistency of the total culture. As one sector of culture changes, all other sectors that articulate must undergo adjustments" (1976:162).

Cultures are integrated systems that exist within particular environmental and historical contexts. We have discussed the biological basis of human sexuality, we offer now an overview of the cultural basis of human sexuality. To comprehend how sexuality is embedded in culture necessitates an understanding of the culture concept. We can think of culture in terms of architecture² (see figure 1.1). The basement represents our biology as humans; including our evolution and physiology. The floor in figure 1.1 is the foundation for understanding that cultural variation lies in how people have adapted to their environments. This includes how people make a living, their technologies, and economics. There are a number of ways people have found to survive in the world. Anthropologists have classified societies in terms of: foraging, horticulture, agriculture, pastoralism (herding), industrial, and post-industrial adaptations.

Adaptation to the environment impacts the social system including social organization and social structures which may be likened to the frame of a house. The social system is the means that people adapt to one another. It includes social organization and its elements including kinship and marriage, various institutions and structures such as religion and political organization. The social system is influenced by how people make a living through demographics, the relations of work such as age, gender, and kinship; who controls the means of production and the power relations of society. Societies have been classified in terms of their social systems as bands, tribes, chiefdoms, pre-industrial states, and industrial states.

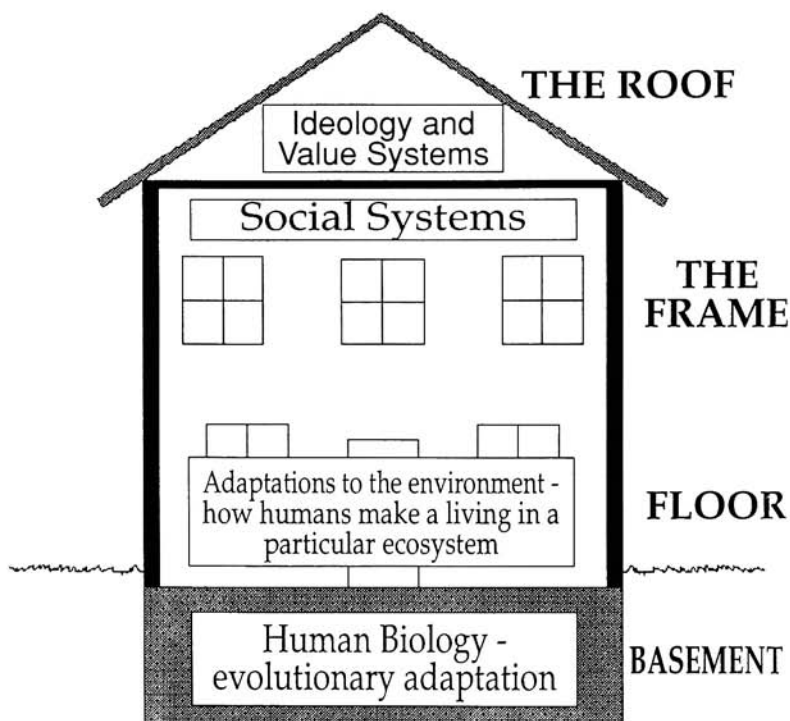


Figure 1.1 Culture as architecture.

The roof of our building may be conceptualized as the ideological value system. This is the system of meanings and beliefs in a culture. It includes expressive elements of culture like art, music, rituals, myths, folklore, cosmology. It is the meanings and beliefs behind and sustaining the patterning of cultures such as marriage norms, gender roles, courtship, etc. The foundation, the frame, and the roof are all interrelated parts of the cultural whole.

Human sexuality is part of that cultural whole. We may first encounter it in the basement in terms of our evolution and our unique human physiology. To grasp human sexuality as part of a cultural matrix we may locate it in any of our architectural levels. For example, in investigating beliefs about human sexuality, we might begin with our roof (ideology and the value system). We may

observe that a particular culture has very few restrictions on premarital sex. This culture may regard premarital sex among adolescents as an amusement (Schlegel and Barry 1991:21), as part of an experiential kind of sex education, or perhaps as a way to find a marriage partner. In short, there are numerous meanings and beliefs around premarital permissiveness among cultures which allow and encourage its practice.

In order to see how the meanings behind premarital sex are part of the "internal consistency and logic" of a culture, we will want to investigate how premarital sex relates to the social system. As we saw earlier, Martin and Voorhies (1975) found a correlation between matrilineal social organization and premarital permissiveness, while patrilineal organizations restricted female premarital sexuality. From this information explanations may be proposed.

To be even more rigorous in our investigation of premarital sexual permissiveness requires an analysis of the foundation of culture, adaptation to the environment. For example, agricultural systems are associated with higher populations, stratification, and generally greater complexity. Earlier we noted in the work of Davis and Whitten (1987:74) that the greater the socio-cultural complexity, the more likely there are to be premarital restrictions on sexuality. Since subsistence type is associated with complexity, it has been proposed that foragers and matrilineal horticulturists are more likely to be permissive (Martin and Voorhies 1975).

Our analysis could go even further and include the biological. For example, research into premarital permissiveness among foragers will reveal that **adolescent sterility** may be a variable to be considered (see chapter 11). Adolescent sterility is a period of infertility among young females after the onset of menarche. They are not fertile until their late teens or early twenties. If premarital sex is allowed in societies in which this occurs, young people may explore their sexuality without the consequences of pregnancy and responsibilities of parenthood.

We offer this architectural approach to culture and sex to illustrate that culture is a complex whole in which the parts are inter-related. One can begin anywhere in our bio-cultural architecture and explore human sexuality. Some researchers prefer limiting their research to one area; for example, Masters and Johnson's investigations of human sexual response have focused on the biological. Others, such as the anthropologists cited, may be more interested in the relationship between beliefs and premarital sex practices and how these are related to social organization. Even others may

want a bigger picture and explore how premarital sex norms are related to the types of subsistence adaptation.

These are the kinds of opportunities for understanding human sexuality offered by a bio-cultural perspective. We hope this approach will allow our students a greater awareness of themselves as sexual beings, a greater understanding of themselves as cultural creatures, and an appreciation of our evolutionary past and biological heritage.

Summary

Chapter 1: Introduction: History and Context

1. Human sexuality is a bio-cultural experience and phenomenon.
2. Human sexuality is a means used by human groups to achieve socio-cultural goals such as the creation of kin groups.
3. A variety of anthropological perspectives were introduced including: Malinowski, Benedict, Mead, Ford and Beach, Martin and Voorhies, and Frayser.
4. We concluded that human sexuality has two components, one in human biology which provides us with certain potentials and limitations, and the other in culture, wherein our sexuality is learned and integrated in the broader cultural context.