

## Parent-Child Relations in Transsexual and Non-transsexual Homosexual Males\*

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Since Freud's remark that unavailability of a strong and friendly father figure favours the development of homosexuality, the notion has prevailed that, in males, homosexuality and/or 'femininity' are due either to the father's physical unavailability or to a disturbance of the father-son relationship. If this hypothesis were valid, one would expect that such gross defect in male role learning as appears in transsexual males should be quite clearly associated with unreplaced father loss or various forms of gross deficiency in father-son relations.

### METHOD

The subjects of the present study were 52 homosexual males who applied for surgical sex reassignment (hereafter T; mean age 26.8, age range 18-44), 206 paid volunteers from a homosexuals' club (hereafter NT; mean age 27.5, age range 18-65) who preferred physically mature partners, and 193 heterosexual controls (hereafter HC; mean age 28.2, age range 19-60). The relevant data were obtained from a Sexual Deviation Questionnaire, described elsewhere.

### RESULTS

#### *Unreplaced loss of father*

There was no significant difference between the 52 T and 204 NT (12 vs. 33 cases) in unreplaced loss of father before age 13 (Fisher exact probability test (hereafter F.e.):  $p = .9125$ ). There were 20 such cases among 192 HC. The difference between NT and HC is close to significance (F.e.:  $p = .0619$ ). If one considers unreplaced father loss before age 5, the difference between T and NT (8 vs. 23 cases) was again not significant (F.e.:  $p = .8529$ ), but the difference between NT and HC was significant (F.e.:  $p = .0282$ ).

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#### *Unreplaced loss of mother*

Before age 13 there were no significant differences between the T and 205 NT (4 vs. 18 cases, F.e.:  $p = .5249$ ) in unreplaced loss of mother, but a significantly greater number of NT claimed unreplaced loss of mother before age 13 years than did HC (8 among 192 cases, F.e.:  $p = .0479$ ). In the entire sample unreplaced loss of mother before age 5 was a very rare event. There were 2 such cases among the T, 4 cases among the NT and 2 cases among HC.

#### *Raised by relatives or foster parents*

There were 11 such cases among the T, and 23 among 205 NT. The difference is not significant (F.e.:  $p = .9794$ ). However, there were only 8 such cases among the HC who indicated that up to age 12 they were brought up for the longest time with foster parents or relatives. The difference between NT and HC is significant at  $p = .0068$  (F.e.). Only 6 among the 451 subjects in the total sample indicated they were brought up for the longest time in an orphanage or similar institution.

#### *Closeness to parents*

Those subjects raised by a couple for at least three years were also asked whether they had felt: (a) closer to mother or other female who helped raise them; (b) closer to father or other male who helped raise them, or (c) whether there had been very little difference. This was assessed for the periods between ages 6 to 12 and 13 to 16, separately. The frequencies of each answer 'closer to mother' and 'closer to father' were compared separately as follows: 'a' vs. 'b'+ 'c', and 'b' vs. 'a'+ 'c'. For both periods there were no significant differences between T and NT in closeness to mother (F.e.:  $p = .4444$  and  $p = .1785$ ) and closeness to father (F.e.:  $p = .1018$  and  $p = .1004$ ). However, there were significant differences in the expected direction between NT and HC. Between 6 and 12 years of age, NT felt significantly closer to mother than did HC ( $\chi^2 = 43.496$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and there was a trend for them to feel

less close to father (F.e.:  $p = .0621$ ). Between 13 and 16 years of age the results were the same but more pronounced. NT felt significantly closer to mother than HC ( $\chi^2 = 71.249$ ;  $p < .001$ ), and significantly less close to father (F.e.:  $p = .0007$ ).

#### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Transsexual and non-transsexual androphilic subjects did not differ significantly in unreplaced loss of father in childhood or in father-son relationships. This contradicts the assumption that transsexualism *per se* is due or mainly due to an unavailability of a father figure. There were also no gross differences between transsexual and non-transsexual subjects with regard to unreplaced loss of mother, mother-son relationship or having been raised by foster parents or relatives.

There was, however, a significant difference between homosexual and heterosexual subjects in unreplaced loss of father and/or mother, and significantly more homosexuals reported they were raised for the longest time by relatives or foster parents. In these cases father and mother figures were definitely available. These three differences between homosexual and heterosexual males could possibly be explained by the finding of Slater (1962) and of Moran (1968), Abe and Moran (1969) and Moran and Abe (1969), that the age of the parents, partic-

ularly of the fathers, at the birth of homosexual sons tends to be higher than in the general population. Whether this indicates a biological or psychological causal factor is to be left open.

The homosexual subjects indicated a significantly poorer father-son relationship than the heterosexuals and indicated more often that they were closer to mother. However, again this fact *per se* does not convey any information as to whether the disturbed father-son relationship was basically due to the behaviour of the father, the son, or both, and whether the high degree of closeness between mother and son was basically due to an overpossessiveness of the mother or to the son's not breaking away from his mother's protection. In either case, parent-child relations did not relate significantly to degree of gender identity disturbance.

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