

# A MINORITY

*A Report on the Life of the Male Homosexual  
in Great Britain*

BY  
GORDON WESTWOOD

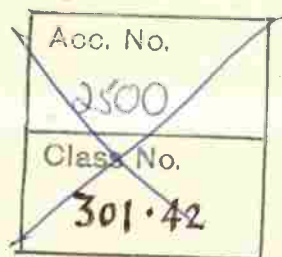


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G. W.

## FOREWORD

BY

SIR JOHN WOLFENDEN

VERY little is known about homosexuality or about those who commit homosexual acts. A good many opinions are expressed, both about the condition itself and about the number and the nature of those who behave homosexually. But these opinions are seldom backed by evidence, still less by anything approaching scientific proof.

I therefore welcome this study, undertaken by Mr. Westwood on behalf of the British Social Biology Council. The spirit of the whole book is gracefully modest and Mr. Westwood admirably avoids the temptation to make exaggerated claims for it; he classes himself with the collectors of facts who precede the scientific interpreters.

Within its deliberate limits the survey seems to me to be excellent. By painstaking enquiries, based on personal conversations, Mr. Westwood has accumulated a great deal of factual information on these difficult and complicated questions. He is, rightly, more concerned to present fact than to seek confirmation of glib hypotheses; and all subsequent workers will be deeply in his debt.

Not the least of his services is the apparently simple one of pointing out the danger of pre-judging the very issues we are investigating. For instance, there is no agreed definition of 'a homosexual'. Indeed, it is probable that the crude popular distinction between 'homosexuals' and 'heterosexuals' misleadingly over-simplifies the problem and should be superseded by the notion of a 'heterosexual-homosexual continuum', with a recognition that in each human being there are present varying proportions of each propensity. Again, on such questions as early family background, professional occupations, frequency of homosexual behaviour, heterosexual interests, and adjustment to society, Mr. Westwood's findings will help to clear up many loosely-worded ambiguities.

Undoubtedly the present state of the law in this country is itself an important factor in this whole complicated situation; and undoubtedly the 'surface morality' of our society today finds it hard to tolerate homosexual behaviour between men, though it is

tolerant (some would say, to a fault) towards other forms of sexual irregularity. For so long as these two conditions prevail, the members of this 'Minority', of whatever size it may actually turn out to be, will constitute a problem, to society, to the law, and to themselves. On such patient work as Mr. Westwood's depends our coming to a closer understanding of the problem, and, in due time, our solving of it.

## I AIMS AND METHODS

### A. OBJECTIVES

THIS research set out to find factual information about the family background, social behaviour, and sexual activities of at least 100 men who regarded themselves as homosexuals. The enquiry was carried out under the general guidance of a committee representative of a variety of professions, but the field work and all the interviews were done by the research worker.

In fact 127 contacts (as these men will be called) were interviewed. Stringent precautions were taken to make sure that none of the material obtained at the interviews was identifiable in any way, and appreciation of this is perhaps reflected in the candour with which the great majority of the contacts answered the questions put to them. Moreover, all but four of the 127 contacts expressed their willingness to be interviewed again.

As the total number of male homosexuals in this country is unknown, it is not possible to say whether this sample is in any way representative. An attempt to make a more refined research would have been incapacitated from the start as there is so little information about the material we set out to study. Anyone looking for a few neat hypotheses to be stated, and then tested by controlling all the variables except one, is assuming that we know enough about the other variables to hold them constant. A research into the problem of homosexuality must be conducted in the real world where variable factors can seldom be artificially isolated. If the purpose of research is to lead to social action, the homosexual must be studied in the wide context of the whole community and the first task is basic fact gathering and description.

In his book *Heaven and Hell* Aldous Huxley<sup>(60)</sup> reminds his readers that in the history of science the collector of specimens preceded the zoologist and followed the exponents of magic; his primary concern was to make a census, to catch and describe as many specimens as he could lay his hands on. Huxley goes on to suggest that in some psychological and social problems we are not yet zoologists; we are mere naturalists and collectors of specimens. 'However lowly, the work of the collector must be done, before we can proceed to the higher scientific tasks of classification, analysis, experiment and theory making.'

This research is not intended to do more than supply the basic groundwork by attempting a quantitative and qualitative



description of the homosexual in the community. It is not expected to yield its full value until it is possible to follow further the many lines of enquiry to which it points the way.

#### B. PROCEDURE

The interview schedule was pre-tested during a three-month pilot survey and, after many amendments and eliminations, the procedure and the questions were standardized for the whole group. The operation of the research falls into seven stages.<sup>1</sup>

(1) Twenty-one (17%) contacts were asked to volunteer for an interview by interested doctors and laymen, and seventeen (13%) heard about the research through references to it in the press. The remainder (70%) were introduced to the research worker through friends who had already been interviewed.

(2) The research worker explained briefly the objects of the research to each contact and assured him that all the information obtained would be treated as completely confidential.

(3) An interview was arranged either at the contact's home or in a place arranged by the research worker. Wherever possible the research worker preferred to visit the contact at his home, as much can be learnt from noting his home background and he would feel more at ease in his own surroundings. But when the contact felt it would be difficult to obtain complete privacy at his own home, the research worker arranged to see him, not at the British Social Biology Council offices, but at a place in Central London. No one in the district knew that this place was being used for the research, and the contact was informed of this fact beforehand so that he would not be disturbed at the thought of being seen entering and leaving the house.

(4) At the start of the interview, the research worker told the contact about the research and described in detail the precautions taken to ensure complete secrecy. The contact was encouraged to talk generally about the subject for the first 20-30 minutes. This part of the interview was non-directive. The interviewer concentrated upon gaining the confidence of the contact, but it often happened that some of the areas in which information was sought were covered during the first half-hour.

(5) The research worker then explained that it would make the survey more useful and more accurate if he followed a schedule and made notes. No contact objected to notes being taken. From this point the research worker directed the course of the interview, making sure that all the items on the schedule were covered.

<sup>1</sup> A more detailed description of the design of the research is given in Appendix A.

Occasionally it was impossible to cover all the points in one interview, but in such cases it was possible to arrange for a second interview and in a few cases a third interview had to be arranged. The interview was brought to a close by asking the contact whether he agreed to submit to another interview at a later date, and if he could persuade any of his friends to be interviewed.

(6) The following day all the material was classified into quantitative form as far as this was possible. The actual words of the contact were written out alongside the classified answers. A note was also made of the contact's behaviour, appearance, responsiveness, and concentration. In effect most of the classification work was done at the same time as the field work.

(7) The final stage of the operation occurred six months or more after the interview. This was the follow-up, either by letter or interview, and is described in Appendix A.

#### C. THE SAMPLE

This group consists of 127 individuals who at some period of their lives have admitted to themselves that they are homosexual. All of them agree that at the time of the interview they still have homosexual tendencies. The 127 men cover a wide range of ages and social groups. The age of the oldest person interviewed is eighty-four and the youngest is eighteen. The distribution of the ages into four age groups gives the following result:

Age Group	No. Interviewed
18-27	37 (29%)
28-37	50 (39%)
38-47	20 (16%)
48 +	20 (16%)

A large number of different professions and occupations are included in this group of homosexuals. In the last two years the research worker has interviewed an accountant, actor, architect, chef, chemist, civil servant, clerk, company director, doctor, engineer, farmer, fireman, hairdresser, labourer, lorry driver, musician, porter, shop assistant, school master, solicitor, stable lad, student, university lecturer, vicar, waiter, and many others. After each interview the contact was graded on the Hall Jones Scale.<sup>(47)</sup> The distribution over the seven grades of the scale is as follows:

- 9 (7%) in H.J.1 (Professional and High Administrative)
- 12 (9%) in H.J. 2 (Managerial and Executive)
- 23 (18%) in H.J.3 (Inspectional and Supervisory Higher Grade)
- 18 (14%) in H.J.4 (Inspectional and Supervisory Lower Grade)
- 29 (23%) in H.J.5 (Skilled Manual and Routine Grades of Non-Manual)

16 (13%) in H.J.6 (Semi-Skilled Manual)  
20 (16%) in H.J.7 (Unskilled Manual)

Most of the contacts lived in London, but people from other places were also interviewed. The place of residence was divided into four types and the distribution over the whole group is as follows:

80 (63%) from London  
9 (7%) from cities and large towns  
26 (21%) from small towns  
12 (9%) from villages and rural communities

Each member of the group was placed in one of four educational grades:

A	Higher Certificate, Higher National Certificate, Public School, University, left school at 18+	22 (17%)
B	School Certificate, G.C.E., Ordinary National Certificate	24 (19%)
C	Some full time or part time beyond 14/15	25 (20%)
D	Left school at 14/15	56 (44%)

#### D. PRESENTATION

The aims of this research are twofold. The main purpose is to provide some basic information for investigators who are required to study this subject.<sup>1</sup> But this research will show that the attitude of the general public towards homosexuality is one of the factors that help to create the problem, and so it is hoped that this book will be read by a wider public. This raises certain problems of presentation.

The problem is exemplified in the use of the word *homosexual*. Recent publications<sup>(2: 132)</sup> have pointed out that it is inaccurate to call an individual a homosexual. Homosexuality<sup>2</sup> is a condition, but homosexual acts may be committed by men who are not usually regarded as homosexual. The distinction between propensity and behaviour is important, but the writer of this report has balked at the monotonous repetition of phrases such as 'those men who are predominantly homosexual'. In this report an individual is described as *homosexual* if his sexual desires are directed exclusively or predominantly towards members of the same sex. Individuals who have been interviewed are referred to as *contacts*, and so this word is used to mean 'the self-confessed homosexuals in this sample'.

<sup>1</sup> The full report, the list of questions on the interview schedule and all the tables may be seen by research workers (by written appointment), at the offices of the British Social Biology Council, 69 Eccleston Square, London, S.W.1.

<sup>2</sup> Some writers prefer the word *homosexualism*, and this version can be supported by etymological arguments. If these are accepted, perhaps the men who commit homosexual acts should be called *homosexualists*.

The main part of the report is given over to recording the responses of the contacts to a series of questions. The number who answer a question in a particular way is usually followed by a percentage figure in brackets. This figure is rounded off to the nearest whole number and is always a percentage of the whole group, 127, unless otherwise stated. Very occasionally the number of answers to a question is less than the total 127 in the sample because information on that point is incomplete. In a few tables also, small numbers of people are excluded for the same reason. The 'Not Known' answers are always noted in the text if they number more than 5 per cent. of the total responses. A few of the more interesting tables have been left in the text, but most of them have been left out for reasons of space. The tables are designated by the numbers of the questions which were used in their compilation (i.e. a table made up by correlating the answers to the question numbered B8 with the question numbered B15b is designated Table B8/B15b).

In a survey of this kind the qualitative information is often as valuable as the quantitative material. It was felt that the tenor of the homosexual's life and the texture of his attitudes could best be given by quoting extensively from his actual words. The only danger in this method is that too many quotations from the same person may lead to his identification. Therefore no long case histories are given and the individual quotations are not identified. Names of people and places have been changed.

With so many answers to choose from and with so varied an assortment of responses, the quotations chosen for this report are bound to be selective. In the circumstances the research worker found that the best method was to have all the relevant replies before him as he considered each question, and to choose those which seemed the most representative and the most revealing.

It is important to note that there are two criteria here. Some of the answers, while not typical of the majority in the sample, give valuable insight into the behaviour and attitudes of certain types of homosexuals, and for this reason they have been used in the report. The quotations most likely to be chosen are those which make a point dramatically or reveal aspects of the contact's personality.

Some of the answers quoted contain that mixture of smart sophistication and bland cynicism that is typical of some homosexuals. It would be a foolish observer who found much that was amusing in the homosexual scene. Yet the neat turn of phrase, the occasional paradox, or even the cynical aside, mellows the unfriendly world for the homosexual, and little harm may be done, and perhaps some insight can be gained, by recording the actual



words of these contacts. But it should not be supposed that all homosexuals are ready with a smart reply to every question. As will be amply illustrated in other quotations, not all the contacts viewed their circumstances with humour or even detached cynicism.

Very occasionally it has been necessary to paraphrase the words of the contact, and where this has been done the substituted words are put in brackets. Apart from this, the actual words of the contacts are used. Some of the words come from the homosexual vernacular and a glossary of these words will be found in Appendix C.

Some of the quoted answers are logical and sensible, but so that the wide range of answers should be fully represented, some of the strange and ridiculous answers have also been included. Much can be learnt even from answers that hardly make sense. If occasionally their remarks appear shallow or supercilious, it is not because the contacts do not realize the seriousness of their predicament. It is certainly an important problem for them, but not necessarily a dull one.

## 2 BACKGROUNDS

### A. DISRUPTED HOMES

PSYCHOANALYSTS have suggested a distorted relationship between the boy and his parents as the main causative factor in the development of homosexuality. Freud<sup>(40)</sup> suggested a breakdown in the Oedipus relation, Brill<sup>(17)</sup> suggests a mother fixation and Young<sup>(127)</sup> notes a strong attachment of the son to the mother. It follows that the death of one parent may be an important factor in the development of homosexuality. Martensen-Larsen<sup>(81)</sup> investigated the family constellations of sixty-three homosexual men in Copenhagen. He found that sixteen of the men had lost their fathers before the age of fifteen, whereas only four had lost their mothers before that age. Moreover, in comparison with a group of doctors, the number of these homosexuals who had lost their fathers was four times greater. In our sample 13 per cent. lost their father and 6 per cent. lost their mother before the age of twelve.

TABLE B1/B3  
*Death of Parents*

	Under 12	12-18	Over 18
Father died . . .	16	10	33
Mother died . . .	7	5	25

In a hundred cases (79%) the father is either still living or lived until after the contact reached the age of eighteen, and the mother is still alive or lived until the boy was eighteen in 115 (91%) of the cases.<sup>1</sup>

Fifteen (12%) of the parents were divorced or separated when the contact was under twelve, four (3%) between the ages of twelve to eighteen, and two (2%) over the age of eighteen. But 116 (84%) of the contacts' parents were not divorced or separated.

Other reasons besides death or legal separation may cause one of the parents to be absent for a long period. If either the mother or father are dead or absent from the home for a period of over five years between the age 0-15, the contact is said to have come from a disrupted home.

In twenty-seven (21%) cases there was no man in the home.

<sup>1</sup> In the five cases where the child was adopted and has no memory of its true parents, the above information refers to adoptive parents.