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The Birds and the Bees: Sex and Personnel Security

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Abstract: The author discusses gender identity and sexual activity as they relate to security personnel in the context of espionage.

Was Cole Porter on to something? When he wrote “Let’s do it, Let’s fall in love” in 1928, those in the know knew that doing it referred to sex, not love. Everyone and everything from educated fleas, Boston beans, courageous kangaroos, cold Cape Cod clams, and Argentines without means were said to do it. We were told that sometimes on the sly you (the reader?) do it, and then that maybe you and I (the author?) might do it. Past, present, and future were all present and accounted for.

Even for musically challenged personnel security authorities helping to decide who would be entrusted with sensitive jobs, awarded security clearances, and get to keep both, doing it was perceived as an important criterion. Doing it was collected on or considered fair game for collection for potential hires and for employees. Doing it the wrong way meant that one’s sensitive, secure, and security career would be done in. But were security authorities doing it right when they judged how people were doing it?

At least since World War II, the salient part of doing it for United States Government security communities has been the matching of the social construction of one’s sexual identity with that of with whom one was doing it. If two men were doing it, or two women, the wrong doing was being done. Sexual identity has been largely based on, but not limited to, the size and shape of genitalia and breasts; degree and location of body hair; pitch, amplitude, and timbre of the voice; and clothing, gait, mannerisms, professional career, off the job activities, associates and associated behaviors both on the job and off it, hobbies, and methods of sexual gratification.

Although not true even a generation or two ago, in today’s era of elective surgery and ever more accessible and alternative sexual imagery, much more of sexual identity is becoming performative—i.e., the intentional acting out of a stable, known narrative which masks something which is more unstable and unknowable. But whether performative or not, the matching of one’s sexual identity with that of with whom one was doing it became the Holy Grail of something called sexual orientation. And sexual orientation has been the basis of the judgment about how doing it affected one’s worthiness to obtain and keep a sensitive job and security clearance. One might have expected the degree to which one’s sexual partner(s) would approach Plato’s nobility of the soul, good works as defined by St. Thomas Aquinas, or the Mahayana status of Bodhisattva to be primary, but this was not how the personnel security authorities were doing it.

Again, two people doing it with certain matched sexual identities have been judged to not be security worthy—viz., two men or two women. Two people doing it with different sexual identities—viz., a man and a woman—have been judged security worthy at least from a sexual perspective. A person doing it both with someone with a matched sexual identity and another someone with an unmatched sexual identity—but for the sake of argument, each session of doing it not overlapping—has been treated as someone doing it only with someone with a matched sexual identity. (This seems somewhat Orwellian

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(as in 1984) from the ignored third party's perspective who may even have been the primary and even prime partner for doing it, but who is now not even a non-person but instead a person who never existed.) A person doing it with no one usually was security worthy, even if thought odd. If one was doing it with oneself, one was security worthy but usually didn't talk much about how great it might be doing it in that way. A person doing it with other living organisms might or might not be security worthy, most often not in the United States. (Again, Orwell springs to mind, this time with *Animal Farm* and the book's closing just when things were beginning to heat up between the pigs and human farm owners.) And a person doing it with inanimate objects also might or might not be security worthy. (However, such a person might be praised by Gestalt psychologists at least as far back as Karl Duncker for avoiding something called functional fixedness.

But for personnel security authorities, doing it also was conflated with gender identity—viz., one's self-construction (admittedly influenced by social construction) of one's sexual identity as opposed to its social construction. Admittedly, the constructs of gender and sexual identities are difficult to isolate with separate meanings, because each, in turn, and their putative differences are unstable and socially and culturally bound. It is as if we are playing the language games of Wittgenstein with the very nature of what a game is, as well as its rules changing more bizarrely than anything occurring in the Queen's playing of croquet in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. It has seemed to be the case, however, that one's own perceptions of one's gender and sexual identities may match or may not. One's perceptions also may or may not match with the perceptions of others about one's gender and sexual identities. And what one thinks sexually of others may not be what they think of themselves sexually.

Most importantly, if one's perception differed from others' perceptions about one's own sexual identity, especially socially powerful others, one often has no longer been security worthy. This would most often occur when one believes one is a woman in a man's body, or a woman in a woman's body that others perceive as a man's, some of the converses, or some other combination of sexual and gender identities including transcending man-ness or woman-ness for both or for one or some or all of an infinite variety including none at all. (Here's a simple exercise to emotionally 'get this.' Assuming you and others agree that your sexual and gender identities are that of a man, try singing along with Chaka Khan to "I'm Every Woman," Helen Reddy to "I Am Woman", or Doris Day to "I Enjoy Being a Girl" while at a red light on Main Street in a red state at high noon. See what I mean?)

So personnel security authorities have had formal grounds for denying and withdrawing sensitive positions and security clearances based on combinations of sexual identity through sexual orientation and based on combinations of one's and others' perceptions of one's sexual and gender identities. The problem for those authorities is that the epistemological foundations of knowing that and how these aspects of sex are linked to unworthiness for sensitive positions and security clearances often have been insufficiently explored.

Here are some of the more common foundations. (1) An aspect of sexuality is against the will or desires of God or God-fearing and God-complying people. Being against God in this way renders one more likely to violate trust through sabotaging sensitive and classified activities and mishandling sensitive or classified information including the commission of outright espionage. (2) An aspect of sexuality is a crime against nature, a violation of some secular moral law or the law—viz., a legal prescription or proscription—even some abomination against some cultural aesthetic. Then the same argument kicks in about the likelihood of security related transgression. (3) An aspect of sexuality is presumed to lead to higher probabilities of security-related transgression, but the real issue is any stigmatization. There is nothing intrinsic to a specific sexual aspect, which would lead to a security related transgression, but

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there is something extrinsic because stigmatization may lead to shame, shame to attempts at concealment, and concealment attempts to blackmail.

The collection of sex-related data for everyone ever engaged in a violation of trust through sabotage, information mishandling, even espionage, might give us an empirical base for what the personnel security policy for sex should be. However, only some of those who have ever engaged in such violations of trust have been identified, of those only some have known sexual histories, and of those the mere commission of a proscribed sexual aspect does not necessitate the conclusion that sex caused the violation of trust as opposed to being a consequence, an epiphenomenon, or an extraneous factor. With insufficient samples, come not only the problematic of a faulty generalization based on specific instances via inductive logic, but faulty premises leading to a logically correct but faulty consequence via deductive logic.

There are two further problems with personnel security policy and sex. First, there are an infinite number of sex-related characteristics which have not been explored in any systematic fashion within a security context. These include a myriad of fantasies, subjective intensities of feeling, erotic permutations of touch, body position, seamy narratives, explicit and implicit performatives of power, and old-fashioned psychodynamic transference.

Second, there are aspects of sex—as with other components of personality—which need to be more systematically explored, seem to be empirically linked to a higher probability of violating trust, and which have both a deductive and inductive foundation. They include but are not limited to sexual gratification directly based on knowingly engaging in sabotage, mishandling of information; sexual practices leading to shame and then to blackmail even if what feels shameful is nothing to be ashamed about; intense sexual gratification with and dire fear of losing access to certain people controlled by political enemies or who otherwise pose significant security risks; sexual practices leading to psychological states threatening security such as autoerotic asphyxiation leading to memory dysfunction; and aspects of sex suggesting significant impulsivity, compulsivity, and obsession inviting, for example, public attention when a low profile is required.

It is here that any aspect of sex may contraindicate trust from missionary position monogamy to that which there are not yet words or images. For the personnel security authorities, when it comes to sex, Duke Ellington's right, it don't mean a thing, if it ain't got that swing, and anything can swing the right or wrong way. Given the increasing ease of capturing the most private of behaviors with recording devices and instantaneously sharing them worldwide, such matters warrant increasing attention.

So back to Cole Porter. The most refined ladybugs do it when a gentleman calls. And the lazy jellyfish and chimpanzees do it. Whether love and/or sex, our quest to understand both in the context of personnel security is not yet done.

(Suggested readings. Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990) popularized performative as a useful concept in studying sexuality. John Money (see "Sin, Sickness, or Status: Homosexual Gender Identity and Psychoneuroendocrinology" (1993) in a textbook entitled *Psychological Perspectives on Lesbian and Gay Male Experiences* edited by Linda Garnets and Doug Kimmel) has been a guidon for developing sex-related research on a biopsychosocial continuum. A very recent article by David Sylva et al. entitled "Concealment of Sexual Orientation" (2010) in the journal *Archives of Sexual Behavior* bears on detecting sexual orientation by identifying allegedly uncontrollable social cues. And a document from the American Psychological Association entitled *Report of the APA*

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Society of Military Psychology (Division 19) & APA Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Issues (Division 44) Joint Divisional Task Force on Sexual Orientation and Military Service (2009) at <http://www.apa.org/pi/lgbt/resources/19-44-taskforce-report.pdf> bears on sex and security policy.) (Comments may be sent to bloomr@erau.edu)

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