

THE CAREER ORIENTATIONS AND COMMITMENT
ADAPTIONS OF MALE HOMOSEXUALS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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THE CAREER ORIENTATIONS AND COMMITMENT
ADAPTATIONS OF MALE HOMOSEXUALS

by



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ABSTRACT

This exploratory study examines the contingencies of subjective career growth and sex role commitment in the lives of publicly known homosexuals. The survey, test, and interviews employed in this investigation were conducted during six months field work in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The different adaptations which self-enhancing and self-degrading homosexuals make in order to manage their discreditable status were assessed. An analysis of the homosexual actor's familial, peer group, sub-cultural, and occupational interaction patterns was also carried out. A chronological examination follows the homosexual actor from the scene of his first same-sex experience, through self-admission and coming-out, to management of his present sex status, including his perceptions and feelings about aging.

The theoretical background employed is symbolic interactionist and phenomenological. Emphasis is placed on the dynamic process of commitment emergence and change, unified by career. Hypotheses are generated, throughout, for future verification and replication.

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PREFACE

The task of researching an area such as homosexuality is a difficult one for both the investigator and the subject. The researcher is constantly obstructed by the biases and preconceptions which he carries into the field while the subject, if he cooperates, obligingly tolerates the inadequacies of the investigator, in the hope that some greater good will emerge.

For the straight researcher, however, another problem arises. He must learn to cope with the insinuations and nasty imputations from those around him. He gradually becomes sensitized to some of the discrediting situations that a homosexual must cope with all his life.

The status of studying homosexuals is different from that of investigating other deviant actors. The man who studies criminals is a criminologist, a rather respectable status. The social scientist interested in drug use, abortion, or other non-victim deviant acts is often defined as a problem solver, a concerned man exploring the realities of "relevant" issues. The social scientist interested in the phenomenon of homosexuality, unless he is extremely well established, faces a different set of definitions and labels.

He is suspect. His motives for research are, in the public image, beyond academic or intellectual qualification. When first faced with the suspicions of those around him, the straight researcher is likely to attempt some repudiation of this newly attributed status. He soon finds that any such attempt leads him further into a sordid psychiatric trap. His repudiations become, for a few, compensatory behaviors designed to disguise his "true identities."

It is only after repeated exposure to such imputations that the straight researcher begins to understand, minimally, the oppression such a

generally discredited status can bring. He learns to cope with the discreditors. He no longer hesitates to inform others, on request, exactly what his research involves. Although his sexual status has not changed his psychological one has. He begins, for a time, to identify with those who publicly challenge discrediting moral entrepreneurs. He learns to appreciate accepting and sincerely tolerant people.

This experience does not last forever. The straight researcher will, after time, no longer have to face discredit for research carried out in his past. But, for a short while, he tasted public discredit. He knew, for just a while, the pain of judgmental foreclosure, which some individuals endure all their lives.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND THEORY

The desire to understand, analyze, and to some extent, control those elements of human social behavior which conflict with the modes of propriety and contradict what is considered "normal" has long been an area of interest and concern for students of the social sciences. It might well be said that an interest in the dynamics, functions, and organizations of individual and collective life was nurtured, if not initiated, by the manifest existence of people, groups and structures which somehow did not fit the accepted standards of societal life. It was perhaps the clog in the machine which necessitated a more qualified understanding of the machine.

Social science has responded to the challenge of deviant human differentiation by creating theories and methods of explanation upon which corrective measures could be developed. From this perspective psychology has regarded the homosexual as "sick" and provided treatment methods ranging from the psychiatric couch to the Skinnerian shock. Sociologists have defined adolescent aggregates who sometimes transgress the law as delinquent gangs, resorting to either the street worker or the reformatory as corrective tools. Our social problems seem large and unwieldy, and we have based our theories upon corrective schemes which are similarly cumbersome. As a result there has been a trend towards searching out comprehensive causative resolutions to the problem of societal differentiation. The word "resolution" is important here in that much of the research on crime and deviant behavior has been aimed at correcting or eliminating the

problem under scrutiny. Public policy regarding these problems was, and for the most part still is, based upon the conclusions which emanated from this research. To the layman, the decision-maker, as well as the sociologist the belief that social problems, and the individuals seen as problematic, ought to be corrected was an apparently logical conclusion. What better reason to do research than to try to solve what most everyone considers a problem?

There are, however, different purposes for research. David Matza (1969) writes of the "appreciative" type of research in his work, Becoming Deviant. Rather than assuming that socially defined problems ought to be corrected, need to be corrected, or that the sociologist is in the position to develop a correction, he pursues another frame of reference. The social behavior which has been defined as problematic must first be understood. The researcher must sift through the correctional camouflage created by public antipathy and reversion in order to develop a genuine insight into the people being defined as improper. To accept a public definition of deviance or malaise and necessarily seek a correction of the defined problem casts the sociologist in the position of social controller.

The appreciative researcher is by no means a purist in the frame of reference which he assumes. The reference point which he accepts is sometimes a serendipitous choice from a large number of alternatives, none of which are familiar to him. The study of groups defined as deviant is especially difficult for this type of researcher since most sociologists, due to the socially acceptable character of their occupation and the class bias which they hold, find these subjects of study quite foreign to them. As a result the appreciative researcher quite often resorts to a descriptive analysis based primarily on an idiographic perspective. Because he believes that description is important and because theories about deviant

behavior are as yet insufficiently developed, this type of researcher emphasizes the discovery of an insightful profile of the phenomenon. Howard Becker stresses this point in the Outsiders when he writes:

Just as we need precise anatomical descriptions of animals before we can begin to theorize about and experiment with their physiological and bio-chemical functioning, just so we need precise and detailed descriptions of social anatomy before we know just what phenomena are present to be theorized about. To recur to the example of homosexuality, our theories are likely to be quite inadequate if we believe that all homosexuals are more or less confirmed members of homosexual sub-cultures...How many other varieties of homosexual behavior await discovery? And what effect would their discovery and description have on our theories? (Becker, 1963, 167-168.)

Although comparisons between the natural and social sciences have often proved inadequate and have hindered the public's acceptance of sociology, Becker's point is well made. We cannot assume that society's label of certain types of behavior as problematic are in any way indicative of the true character of the social activity or the people involved in them. Rather we must attempt to discover the nature of the behavior from the point of view of the behaving subjects as well as the public reaction to them.

Theme

The focus of this research is on the career of the male homosexual. Becker's (1952) concept of occupational career is not used however. This type of career, which Stebbins (1970) refers to as the "individual objective" career, relates more to the patterned channels of occupational and professional movement towards a goal. Nosow and Form (1962) also employ the idea of career in their research, the essence of which differs only slightly from Becker's; they concentrate on occupational change as well as success and failure (vertical/horizontal) in certain career lines.

This research will analyze the "subjective career"; the personal and individuated lines of progression or regression that a male homosexual may perceive within the role-identity of homosexuality. The object of concern is the developmental process from early, and by chance, same-sex experiences to the acceptance of varying degrees of commitment to the homosexual role identity.

This concept of career is largely unconcerned with culturally determined courses of action. Hence, the present research traces the individual's interpretations of his past activity as they relate to his role identity of homosexuality as well as his worries, excitements and expectations about the future. Hughes (1958) writes of this type of analysis when he relates a person's "life career" to a:

moving perspective in which the person sees life as a whole and interprets the meaning of various attributes, actions and the things which happen to him (Hughes, 1958:409-410).

This research attempts to discover the types of retrospective analyses the male homosexual makes about himself and how these judgements of past behavior reflect the individual's psychological and behavioral involvement in the activity of the present as well as his ideas and anticipations of life in the future.

The critic might argue that a person's retrospective interpretation of his life in terms of a specific role identity is not scientifically verifiable information. Certainly the subject will emphasize some features of his biography while ignoring others. Indeed, research by Simon and Gagnon (1967) has indicated that an individual's capacity to recall his life's experiences becomes less accurate as the person grows older. In attempting to attack psychoanalytic suggestions of homosexual causation the authors point out that the retrospective analysis fails to provide the researcher with reliable data on the individual's biography. Theories of

causation, in order to be substantive, require that the data upon which the theory is based represent what actually happens. Where the researcher is concerned with this supposed "objective reality" a biographical self-examination by the subject is insufficient. But when the researcher is concerned with relating the subject's perception of his past to his activities and feelings in the present the retrospective approach is useful. MacIver (1942) when writing about "social causation" indicates that these perceptions of the past have a guiding effect upon the actor's behavior in the present. If we can discover how a person constructs his biography we gain insight into the patterns of justification and rationalization required for the assumption of a deviant role identity. The object of this inquiry into the emergence of the homosexual's sex-role identity is not to determine what caused the behavior. Rather, the concern is with discovering how the subject feels about his part in this role as it relates to present and future self-judgment.

Some Practical Matters

Despite the focus on how the individual analyzes his past, certain objective data are also sought. Such factors as who the person's first homophile experiences were with, their frequency, their locale, and their location in time play a part in developing a chronological order of role identity progression. These factors are not considered in order to demonstrate the causes of homosexual activity emergence; instead they are used as phenomenological marking points for role identity development. Robert Bell (1971), when writing about homosexuality, speaks to the issue of causation and the sociological perspective:

What can be said sociologically about the causes of homosexuality? The concern with the basic causes of

homosexuality may be overdone. Even if the causes could be distinguished that knowledge would have limited applications to understanding or even influencing the development of homosexuality. This is true because of the reason for starting the direction of some form of deviant behavior has little to do with the influences that occur once the start is made. For example the initial reason for taking drugs may have little relevance to the developing patterns that make the person into a drug addict. There is a tendency to think of causes as discrete and set in time rather than being diffuse and changing over time (Bell, 1971:261).

As has been stated, the purpose of including objective data inquiries in the analysis of early biography is to describe the social milieu, and as Bell suggests, the influences leading to homosexuality. John Lofland (1967) in his work Deviance and Identity, maintains that the proximate influences of who, what, where and when play a crucial role in the availability of certain alternatives of behavior:

Among the class of proximate and relatively immediately available social acts, the act which is most proximate and performable in terms of the facilitative states of places, hardware, others, and actor himself will be the act chosen (John Lofland, 1967:61).

In other words the physical and interpersonal aspects of the social situation help determine how an individual will behave there. If we know where the male homosexual's first same-sex experience occurred, who it was with, as well as the time sequence of the activity we have achieved some insight into why this person enacted socially disapproved behavior. Lofland again stresses the importance of this information:

Proximate variables evoke the character and consequences of current and relatively immediate interactional situations (Lofland, 1967:100).

Motivation

Despite the fact that the previously mentioned proximate variables do provide us with a skeletal profile of behavioral emergence they fail to

explain completely just how the individual was prepared to accept the activity as possible. It would be inaccurate to suggest that the behavior occurred completely at random or by chance. Still, it appears that theories which seek explanation solely in the antecedent variables of family socialization fail to grasp the essence of the homosexual emergence.

In order to answer satisfactorily the question of how the individual interprets the situation in a fashion that leads to socially unaccepted behavior, we must first analyze the types of influences exerted on him when defining the situation. First, there are cultural definitions that are related to specific situations. Through primary and secondary socialization the individual learns to define many situations as calling for standard, consensually agreed upon modes of propriety. A man, when meeting a new acquaintance often shakes hands and extends some kind of greeting. A child, when he first enters school quickly learns that the classroom calls for different behavior than does the corner candy store. Stebbins states:

A given cultural definition is consensually shared to the extent that those who are members of a particular group are aware that others in it recognize and utilize it in the same way that they do. Thus in North America bar rooms are generally defined as places where people drink alcoholic beverages and talk socially with others and offices of work are typically conceived as locations for occupationally related activity—two widely held cultural definitions (Stebbins, 1969:195).

These definitions, however, are not always accepted. A person may choose to assert his personal definitions in a situation in opposition to accepted cultural prescriptions for behavior. Instead of shaking hands and introducing himself the man may choose to demonstrate no indication of greeting to the newcomer. The child may reject cultural standards in the classroom. These personal interpretations of everyday events are based

both on habit and on individual nonacceptance of expected behavioral reaction. But the important distinction between cultural definitions and habitual definitions is that, in the latter, the individual chooses not to accept the agreed upon mode of propriety or there is no agreed upon propriety to accept. The similarity between these two types of definitions is that both occur frequently, are usual, and therefore, are recurrent mental acts.

A third type of definitional situation which a person can face is one in which he has little or no experience. When faced with an alien or unfamiliar situation, the individual cannot rely upon cultural or upon habitual modes of response because they do not apply. He is unable to plan his action because he and others in the community whom he knows have had no experience with such circumstances. In this instance the individual must rely especially heavily upon the proximate variables of others, place and hardware for direction, as well as, predispositions acquired early in life, which have remained dormant for years. For example the early adolescent who has learned in primary socialization to fear girls and has had personal inter-sex failures that reinforce this fear might be considered predisposed to-homoerotic stimuli. But this predisposition could never be activated unless a situation arose wherein the location, the others, and the hardware were all suited to the enactment of same-sex behavior.

There are other predispositions that the actor may have, which seem totally unrelated to engaging in homosexual activity for the first time. The adolescent male actor may be with a group of peers who decide that exploring one another's bodies would be fun. The actor may agree to go along with the activity because the person initiating it is someone he admires as an important person in his school. Or he may choose to go along

because he is new to this group of friends and values their companionship as a vehicle for peer group acceptance. The actor may be predisposed to accept or reject the proposed activity for a myriad of reasons few of which have anything whatever to do with "libidinal drive", "cathexis", or domineering mothers. This is the first incursion into same-sex behavior and it may well be the last. Some, however, will pursue the activity further. Their motivations for doing so will change as they come into contact with more restrictive sex-role definitions.

These predispositions, which Lofland (1967) refers to as subjective availability, are based on experiences and involvements which the person has had in the past that are unrelated to the specific situation at hand. Campbell (1963) offers a modern definition of predisposition. He limits his statements strictly to acquired states, stressing that predispositions [he calls then "acquired behavioral dispositions"] are enduring and that they remain dormant until activated by situational stimuli. When activated, these products of past experience impinge upon our awareness; equip us with a specific view of the world and guide behavior in the immediate present.

Within the influences placed upon the individual by the proximate variables, the person has to decide, although he has little basis for a decision, whether a prospective act is moral, neutral or immoral. The first two judgements make him subjectively available to the behavior while the third renders him unreceptive to engaging in the activity. The predisposition is not necessarily the crucial element in the individual's decision. In behavior like homosexuality where the activity is most frequently introduced at an early age it would seem unlikely that highly negative or positive moral judgements would have much bearing. Therefore it might be possible, that the proximate factors are the most important ones in

influencing homosexual experimentation. In any case it is difficult to demonstrate what a motive for engaging in same-sex experiences might be at the onset because of the different roles, hardware, place, others, actor and predispositions play for people in different situations.

The willingness to act in a certain way can only be evoked by proximate variables and without them this motivation or predisposition would be meaningless. In other words, when activated predispositions are considered, as Stebbins advises they should be, action is motivated by the definition of the immediate situation (Foote, 1951). Kinsey (1953) is credited with having reached the conclusion that male homosexuality is, indeed, largely a matter of circumstantial phenomena. When writing of Kinsey's report, A.M. Krich states:

Professor Kinsey and his associates insist that preference for homoerotic behavior is the result of the conditioning effects of the first accidental experience and the failure of social pressure to convince the individual that he should reject one pattern of response in favor of another (Krich, 1954:Introduction).

Laud Humphreys (1970), in a more recent study of the same-sex behavior which transpires in men's "tearooms" (restrooms) presents a similar situational hypothesis. Casting away the popular, yet largely unsubstantiated, etiological explanations forwarded by psychology and psychoanalytic theory Humphreys maintains:

Apart from any psychological theories that may be applied to explain preferences for impersonal sex, I believe there are situational and social factors of a relatively simple nature that may cause one to prefer sex without commitment (Humphreys, 1970:153).

It should be noted that Humphreys is referring to the impersonal sex which transpires in tearooms which is substantially different from the commitment or attachment male homosexuals have to a sexual career. Despite this difference, however, it seems reasonable to conclude that situational

factors are prominent in the young male's incursion into homosexual experience as well.

In an early study dealing with conformity Robert Lindner (1956) writes convincingly of the significance of these situational factors on homosexuality:

Sex, in short, throughout the life of an individual born into the society which you and I inhabit, is under a virtual ban, except for a brief period, when, if we manage to satisfy certain requirements of time, place, person, condition, method, manner, intention and frequency - as well as the additional ceremonial duties imposed by law, religion and custom - our erotic potential may be executed (Lindner, 1956:40).

This emphasis on critical situations in the emergence of the behavior defined as deviant is important in that it allows a dynamic explanation of life contingencies as they relate, either directly or indirectly, to the adaptations people make to their illicit behavior. A situational analysis of deviant behavior stresses the notion that reality, as perceived by the actor, is constantly being redefined and reconstructed. Rather than fostering a static conception of the relationship between actor and environment, the interactionist approach goes to great length to demonstrate what different meanings a certain situation might elicit from an individual. The meanings attached to those critical situations during the emergence of homosexuality play a significant role in determining the course which the individual will follow in the future.

The simple behavioral involvement that a pre-adolescent or an early adolescent may have in same-sex activity does not, in itself, require that a homosexual role identity will ultimately be accepted. The young individual may very well forego this form of sexual expression for heterosexuality. Indeed Kinsey's data demonstrates that of the thirty-seven percent of the white male population who do indulge in same-sex activity only ten percent

remain more or less exclusively homosexual for a period of at least three years. Along with this only four percent of the same population are exclusively homosexual throughout their lives (Kinsey, 1953). This movement in an out of types of sexual behavior and as a consequence sex role identity, indicates that there are most certainly different processes through which homosexual males assess their own commitments to their behavior. Homosexuality, for instance, does not exclude heterosexual contact and activity. The lines of same-sex attachment occur with different frequency, intensity and commitment. As a result situational analysis lends itself quite appropriately to this subject of study. Lofland remarks that:

A situational emphasis tends to employ a processual rather than a static mode of causation...A situational emphasis tends to take the phenomenology of the actor rather seriously and to be concerned with discovering and depicting it on its own terms...The actor's own account is important...A situational emphasis tends to highlight processual and phenomenological explanatory variables whose operation is relatively proximate to that for which an account is being given (Lofland, 1969:296-297).

The theory which accompanies an analysis of situations must also account for the different processes through which the subject develops in his specific career orientation. Since we have already dealt with the importance of proximate variables in the emergence of homosexual behavior, the next point of theoretical discussion is the process of the emergence of a homosexual role identity.

Drift and Encapsulation

As stated, the simple experience of a homosexual act does not commit a person to a career of homosexuality. There are, however, individuals who, after this experience, pursue and close upon a homosexual role identity. This is a slow process.

Because of the large number of previously undefined situations which every individual faces in life, a certain number of risky decisions must be made. If one encounters opportunities which he did not foresee, expectations which he has not learned to cope with, or pressures to act which he has not learned to control, the individual is faced with a predicament in which he must abandon his usual behavior and either plunge unknowingly into the activity or withdraw completely from it. Take the young male who does not understand the moral and legal restrictions to public indulgence in same-sex behavior and who is largely ignorant of the personal consequences of such behavior. If this activity is satisfying and he decides to continue it, he enters an undefined sphere of activity without the usual role support. It might, in fact, be more accurate to say that he may not even consider his overall identity as related to the activity. He most probably knows enough to conceal the activity from public and parental scrutiny. But this does not necessarily indicate an unambiguous judgement as to the "goodness" or "badness" of the behavior. The tendency to conceal the behavior is evidence of the person's lack of attachment to it or his uncertainty about his involvement in it.

The individual in this circumstance, rather than consciously constructing his identity around homosexuality, "drifts" into it. The concept of "drift" as articulated by Matza (1969) provides the analytical reference point with which to understand uncommitted naive involvement in socially unapproved behavior. To the idea of drift may be added that of "encapsulation":

(encapsulation)....is a state wherein actor is primarily attuned to the immediate management of proximate threat and is largely unencumbered by considerations of long term consequence...Encapsulation in response to threat heightens actors sensitivity to and proclivity to engage in acts that are short term, quick, simple and close at hand and proximate. (Lofland, 1969:51-53).

The drifting process does not, however, carry with it the same proportions of naivete throughout. The actor is, at first, naive in his psychological adaptation to the deviant activity. But as more time, energy, and interest are invested in both the activity and the concealment of it, it begins to have a deeper meaning to him. He eventually learns that he must somehow rearrange his previously untarnished identity to include this new sphere of activity. Before this the individual can resort to any number of psychological strategies which will keep this socially disapproved behavior at some distance from his feeling about himself. He can rationalize his involvement in the behavior, temporarily ignore the fact that the behavior is defined as improper, or go so far as to forget that he ever engaged in it. If he continues his deviant behavior, however, these processes will not suffice. Edwin Lemert (1967), when writing about this drifting process, states:

This [drift] may proceed from one of two kinds of psychological states; in one the individual has no prior experiences that such actions are defined or definable as deviant; he must learn or must apply the definitions to his attributes of actions. In the other the person already has learned the definitions, but progressively rationalizes or disassociates them from his actions. Unequivocal perception of a deviant self comes when the person enters new settings, when supportive (normalizing) interactions with intimates becomes antagonistic, or when contact is made with stigmatizing agencies of social control. (Lemert, 1967:52).

Although Lemert states that either a change in opportunity structure or a change in public disclosure is necessary for a person to accept a deviant identity, other circumstances can precipitate this same result. The "secret deviant" (Becker, 1963) who maintains the seclusiveness of his activity is still apt to undergo a significant transformation in his self-image even without coming to the attention of moral entrepreneurs or disapproving intimates. As we shall see later in this chapter, this does not

invalidate Lemert's remarks. There can be changes in the deviant actor's self-image even without public exposure, although the circumstances of which Lemert speaks demand a more dramatic reappraisal. Although it is possible that a man might be able to keep certain behavior secret from others for an extended amount of time, the persistent concentration and effort required in performing this task itself requires an adjustment in how he feels about himself in relation to others. Over time the adolescent's first effort at behavioral disguise develops, after considerable experience with public reversion, into systematic concealment of sex-role identity which he has, to some degree, accepted. The actor has learned the reactions of society to his behavior and has applied those definitions to himself.

Secret Deviance

The young male homosexual goes through a rather dramatic social-psychological process. Although the mechanics of his behavioral disguise may be the same, the raison d'etre of his performance has changed. His investment of time, energy and concentration teaches him how to handle his discreditable image without exposure to discrediting sources. But in this process the individual has made an informal commitment to a homosexual role identity.

As long as the individual has not decided to "come-out" publicly he may engage in certain public self-degrading ceremonies in order to keep his sex-role identity secret. These self-degrading ceremonies will only depreciate his sexual image, since others are ignorant that the individual's intention is to disguise overtly his involvement in homosexuality. When he interacts with straights he is most likely to agree with their caustic statements and attitudes about "queers". He publicly shares the reversions

and contempt that his family and friends might have for homophile liberation groups. In short the publicly uncommitted male homosexual attempts to present an image that is quite "normal", often assuming what Humphreys calls the "breastplate of righteousness." Christian Bay states:

To the extent that a person is deeply worried about his popularity, his career prospects, his financial future, his reputation etc., he will utilize his political opinions not for achieving realistic insight but for impressing his reference groups and his reference persons favorably (Humphreys, 1970:147).

The extent to which this phenomena occurs depends upon the individual's apprehension about involuntary disclosure as well as the degree to which he sees his homosexual role identity, although secretive, as an inextricable part of his total life pattern.

Coming Out

"Coming-out" is the decision by the male homosexual to engage in public (bar, parties, etc.) same-sex activity. It also refers to a willingness to avoid those social contacts which have placed the individual in a self-degrading situation and assume relationships in the gay world which are more accommodating to his behavior. The homosexual can either choose to live a marginal life between the two worlds of normality and deviance or he can immerse himself in the gay subculture and acquire a self-enhancing role identity within that sphere. Of course coming-out does not necessarily carry with it an absolute acceptance of a homosexual identity. But, the decision to come-out publicly is often antecedent to the person's complete acceptance of the role identity. The actor gradually discloses his identity to trusted straights and then to others who previously had discredited him.

The dynamics of coming-out are, indeed, crucial to these developments. By coming-out the individual transfers his social contacts to those who

have chosen his sexual path from the group of previously discrediting straights. This enables him to participate socially in the gay world while resolving the conflict which he had previously with his straight friends. Once again, proximate variables play a large part in the process of developing the actor's self-enhancing role identity. Who the individual confides in depends upon his distance from the principal sources of degradation (family, boss, etc.). The coming-out process releases the male homosexual from dependence upon a straight world for leisure relationships.

Commitment and Attachment

This coming-out process is indeed a semipublic and personal commitment to homosexual role identity. However, the degree to which the individual makes this commitment is contingent upon many circumstances. Once the actor has decided to come-out he will coordinate his commitment in relation to the number and strength of social situations which he defines as penalizing. Circumstances like family disapproval, occupational insecurity, and educational achievement all present contingencies of possible continuation social penalties that the male homosexual must deal with. (A more detailed analysis of these penalizing situations is presented in subsequent chapters.)

Although the actor may present a strong self-enhancing role image (Goffman, 1968) in some situations, for example with close friends, he may be threatened by other circumstances like work and family, which force him to assume a more self-degrading image in these regards. Throughout his life the actor revises the way he manifests his commitment to homosexuality.

The actor's overall commitment is, of course, determined by the forementioned penalizing social circumstances. There are any number of potentially discrediting situations, all of which carry different degrees

of penalty for disclosure for the actor. These penalizing circumstances exist in the everyday interactions the actor has in the straight world. How the individual reacts to the discrediting circumstance once again is dependent upon proximate variables. Who is making the remark? Where is the interaction occurring? What is the actor's attitude toward himself at this particular moment? The actor not only affixes his commitment around the possibility of penalty from important circumstances like family and occupation but also constructs his commitment with reference to any number of smaller interactional penalties which may arise. To what types of straight associates does the actor disclose? Does he maintain social and leisure time interaction with straight friends or does he spend most of his time with homosexuals?

What we are dealing with is a subjective reality around which the homosexual must construct his life style. The heterosexual does not experience these contingencies in planning his interactional activity, but rather encounters other decision making situations which are prominent under different sets of circumstances. The homosexual is forced to deal with a social taboo against his sexual choice and therefore is dealing in an activity constructing reality that stipulates special considerations. It becomes apparent, then, that the actor who has committed himself or becomes committed to a same-sex role identity has to define different situations consistently with the type of commitment he has assumed.

The group of people under study in this research have already demonstrated a significant degree of self-enhancing commitment by the simple fact that they have all gone through the coming-out process. This research attempts to draw distinctions in commitment levels within this already self-enhanced group. Certainly, the contrast in commitment between people who come-out and those who remain "closet queens" is greater than the

contrasts which I am attempting to make. In any case the committed homosexual exists in a demanding social realm in which crucial decisions about his presentation of self need to be made.

Aging

Much of the literature written about the aging homosexual has either inferred or indicated directly that the aging actor undergoes a significant change in his commitment in conjunction with a youth-oriented gay subculture which no longer seeks his active participation. Reiss (1961) tells us of the lengths to which some aging homosexuals are forced to go in order to find sexual satisfaction. Martin Hoffman (1968) writes about the problems of aging when he states:

As we have pointed out, if one is not young and attractive, the gay world can be a very unhappy place indeed, for it has a very pervasive marketplace character. If one enters a market with very little to offer the buyers to whom he desperately wishes to sell, then various serious personal troubles are likely to ensue, for one's self-esteem is constantly being deflated... If he is viewed as a commodity of low value on the sexual market, he will begin to view himself as of little worth. (Hoffman, 1968:186).

It is this view of aging male homosexuality which predominates the literature on the subject. The aging actor is indeed forced to rearrange his commitment as well as his techniques for acquiring sexual satisfaction. At this point in life the actor does encounter a series of social penalties which require special consideration.

On the other hand Martin Weinberg (1970) suggests that aging homosexuals are better adapted to their life circumstances than their younger counterparts. He maintains that much of the fear and anxiety about the aging process are the projected fears of younger homophiles. Weinberg states:

A. "The Younger Homosexual" - (25 and under): He finds himself between two worlds, clinging to the heterosexual way of life and yet attracted, if not committed, to the homosexual way of life. In homosexual parlance, he often has not "come out". If this is the case, it is not surprising that the youngest have the lower rates of socio-sexual contact with the homosexual world. Since this is, for the homosexual, a time of conflict, identity crisis and lack of direction, it is a period which is sufficiently stressful to account for the low psychological adjustment scores shown by this group.

B. "The Older Homosexual" - (Over 45): The homosexual world places a premium on youth. This means that as far as social interaction and sexual gains are concerned, the older homosexual has less value. There is less socio-sexual contact with other homosexuals. As he ages however, the homosexual is able to adapt to this situation. Moreover, he learns in time to accept his homosexuality. This contributes to his better psychological adjustment. (Weinberg, 1970:535).

Thus we can see that there is considerable difference of opinion as to what actually occurs during the course of aging. In any case, since the actor must often change his methods for finding sex as well as the types of social and emotional interaction which accompany it, certain reappraisals of sex-role identity occur. Once again, the decisions he makes restrict alternatives otherwise open to him.

Conclusions

The theoretical discussion of this chapter provides us with a perspective for understanding human differentiation and adaptation within a socially disapproved realm of activity. The chronological marking points which have been chosen (preadolescent same-sex activity and precommitment psychological adaptation, coming-out, and aging) for discussion are by no means the only points in life when the actor is managing his deviant commitment and career. Rather the actor constructs his commitment

throughout his life. The marking points considered here are major contingencies of homosexual commitment and career. It is from these reference points that this study attempted to discover and describe the processes of career and commitment in homosexuality.

Within the course of the research many social situations which cause discomfort and discredit to the homosexual actor were analyzed. The way in which the actor manages his sex role identity around these circumstances provides us with data about the processes and degrees of commitment which exist in the homosexual world. As stated earlier in this chapter the study sample in this research does not necessarily represent the homosexual universe since this universe remains largely undefined to the social scientist. The commitment levels discussed later give only an indication of the possible types of human adaptation to a socially unaccepted behavioral involvement.

The study also examined the dynamics of the coming-out process. This contingency was singled out for special scrutiny because of its significance for the actor's developing commitment.

The most important aim of career-commitment research is to describe this process in its own form. The definitions people carry with them in their interaction with others is the essence of their reality base. The goal of this research is to identify those definitions and explore the consistencies and incongruities which they create for the human actor in his particular social world.

FOOTNOTE

¹For an excellent discussion of social problems as an issue see Robert Perucci and Marc Pilisuk, *The Triple Revolution: Social Problems in Depth* (Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown and Co., 1968) Introduction.

CHAPTER II

METHODS AND PROCESS

The methods of data collection in this research into the career and commitment contingencies of male homosexuals are in one sense the standard sociological tools of survey and interview. In another respect, however, the methods selected for gaining entrance and acceptance into this highly discreditable and covert social group are unusual. Before entering into a detailed description of method, an explanation as to the "guiding principles" surrounding it are in order.

The methods chosen in this research are directly related to the type of information being sought and the ways in which the information would be put to use. The overriding concern and intention of this research is the generation of hypotheses and the building of theory. Because of the relative scarcity of research on the subject and the indefinite nature of the male homosexual population, attempts at verifying our scanty knowledge would be inappropriate.

In a very real sense the purpose of this research is to advance the social scientist's knowledge about male homosexuality to a point where verification procedures can be implemented. Accordingly, the types of information sought aid the discovery of salient hypotheses and the building of grounded theory (Glazer and Strauss, 1967).

This research is concerned with the social forces at work upon the homosexual in his historical biography, his present social world, and his future commitment and career. The interview is appropriate here. Since

the primary focus of the research is on the individual's subjective reality, the interview provides the most efficient and effective mode of information gathering. Within the interview the researcher can combine the merits of planned and spontaneous probes in discovering personal viewpoints.

It is within the frame of reference of theory development and hypothesis generation that the following description of methodology should be placed.

Description of Method

The research started with the administration of a social-psychological test, which I developed, to 106 male homosexuals in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This test, once scored and tabulated, was used as a basis for sample selection in the second stage of research. Here 31 of the test respondents were interviewed. A research assistant who is active in the Minneapolis gay community was hired as test administrator and interview coordinator. The research was performed in several stages which are described in the order they occurred.

Test

The social-psychological test was designed to separate the survey population into self-enhancing and self-degrading sex role identity groups. It was constructed to determine, in a general way, the respondent's form of commitment to a homosexual sex role career. In addition to this function, the test included survey questions relating to the occupational, age, religious, demographic and family status of committed male homosexuals (see Appendix).

The test consisted of a series of seventeen potentially penalizing situations that a male homosexual might encounter in his everyday living,

at work, with family, and with friends. The respondent then selected from five multiple-choice responses the one that represented best his response to the situation.

I developed twenty-seven test questions, with the aid of my research assistant, which were presented to a panel of three judges from the Minneapolis gay community. (One judge was a graduate student in psychology, one an artist, and one a secondary school teacher.) The judges were asked to weight the strength of self-enhancing commitment required by each situation. By placing the questions in two groups - high commitment, medium commitment, and low commitment and then just high commitment and low commitment - the judges decided upon the character of each circumstance presented in each question. Of the seventeen questions selected for the test, thirteen received the unanimous agreement of all three judges in both groups. Agreement on the four other questions included in the test was achieved in the two category sort but only partially achieved in the three category sort. Where the two category sort produced unanimous results, the three category sort, with its added level of medium commitment, produced small differences as to whether the four remaining questions should be ranked as medium or high or medium or low. In no cases were judgements as discrepant as high and low made. As a result the two category scoring system was adopted.

Then either a strong score load (seven-three) was applied to the five multiple-choice selections for each question or a weaker score (five-one) for the selections to other questions depending upon the strength of commitment inherent in each situation portrayed in the question (see Appendix, Test, p. 7, Tabulated Score Sheet). Each respondent's score indicated his type of commitment to his sex role preference.

In order to check the validity of the test questions and scoring technique, beyond the assessment of the three judges, three hypothetical situations were presented at the end of the test. Again, they depicted potentially penalizing circumstances. The respondent was asked to record his reaction to each situation.

These reactions were coded in two ways. First, they were coded on a plus-minus continuum. When a respondent used a personal pronoun, identifying himself as a homosexual in response to the situation a ++ score was recorded. When he challenged the penalty situation by referring to a gay point of view without a personal reference, he received a + score. When there was a noncommittal response, a 0 score was applied. When the respondent attempted to cast off the pejorative imputations of the others by leading them to believe, without personal reference, that he was a heterosexual, a - score was recorded. Lastly, if the respondent identified himself as a heterosexual or personally derided homosexuals he received a score of --.

The 16 respondents who had the highest scores on the test (self-enhancing commitment) accumulated thirty-seven pluses, sixteen zeros and twelve minuses. The other 15 with the lowest scores on the test (self-degrading commitment) accumulated four pluses, nineteen zeros and twenty-six minuses. The reactions were then weighted: ++ = five, + = four; 0 = three, - = two, and -- = one. The subjects with the highest test scores had a mean of 10.56 on the hypothetical code while the respondents with the lowest test scores had a mean of 7.53.

As Table 1 on the following page demonstrates, this validity check indicates that the respondents did, indeed, show consistency in the type of their commitment on both the multiple choice and the unstructured hypothetical situations.

Table 1 Objective-Hypothetical Question
Validation Check

Hypothetical Code Scores	Highest Survey Score (self-enhancing)	Lowest Survey Score (self-degrading)
+ Score	37	4
0 Score	16	19
- Score	12	26
Mean Point Score	10.56	7.53

Survey Sample

Having described the character and content of the survey, some discussion of the nature of the survey sample is in order. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, with its emphasis upon hypothesis generation, sampling was nonrandom. Indeed, the secretive character of much male homosexuality precludes population definition by both the social scientist and the homosexuals themselves. In light of these facts, respondents had to meet four requirements: 1) They had to be between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five. 2) They had to define themselves as homosexual. 3) They had to be "out" for at least six months. 4) They had to have exclusively homosexual sex relations for the past three years.

The sample was intentionally limited to individuals in the eighteen to thirty-five age group because they are easier to find and appear to be more socially visible. Also, it was important that the respondent have some recollection of the development of his adolescent sex behavior.

The second sample requirement needs some explanation. Much argument has taken place in the social sciences over what exactly a homosexual is (Churchill, 1967). Indeed, Kinsey's (1953) continuum of sexual choice clarified for many that homosexuality is a relative six-point condition,

at least in terms of sexual activity. Most, if not all, of the respondents fall somewhere between four and six on Kinsey's scale.

One out of every eight males (13% of all adult males) has more of the homosexual than the heterosexual in his history, i.e., rates 4-6 throughout a period of at least three years (Churchill, 1967:54).

Although Kinsey's continuum and its subsequent interpretations have done much to clarify the range and extent of same-sex activity, it fails to provide us with a basis for identifying "true" homosexuals. Churchill attempts to clarify the definition of homosexuality thus:

Throughout this book the word "homosexual" is used to refer to all sexual phenomena, overt or psychic, that involved like-sexed individuals. Individuals may respond sexually to stimuli originating in other individuals of the same sex in diverse ways and for virtually an infinite number of reasons. Some such responses may occur in a context that makes them appear fortuitous. In other instances such responses may occur in a context which makes them appear situational, experimental, transitory, opportunistic, compulsive, psychopathological or in any one of a great number of other contexts. In either case the sexual nature of the response and the fact that it involves another individual of the same sex define the response as homosexual, rather than the context in which the response occurs (Churchill, 1967: 35).

Although Churchill's apparent reluctance to define persons as homosexual (as opposed to defining their behavior thus) is certainly well founded and legitimate, it leaves little room for finding a working definition of the phenomena for social-psychological research purposes. Persons who engage in same-sex behavior in North America have been legally and socially oppressed. Churchill's use of the word as a description of an act rather than a condition of personality is welcome. But the researcher is still left with the problem of defining his research area. How does the researcher define what a homosexual is, particularly when he is concerned with social-psychological dynamics rather than frequency of behavior?

In response to this dilemma this research defines homosexuals as those persons who identify themselves as such, regardless of frequency of sex activity and other forms of homosexual contact. In working terms, they are those who identified themselves as such to the research assistant administering the test and survey. Schofield (1965), in his research, employs a similar definition of homosexuality. He states:

A homosexual for the purposes of this research is a male of twenty-one or over but under sixty-one who regards himself as a homosexual and is prepared to say so to the interviewer (Schofield, 1965:4).

Concerning the third sampling requirement, different individuals define their coming-out in different ways. The purpose of the research was to explore those subjective definitions and realities which homosexuals create and carry with them, using the six month restriction as an arbitrary guide.

The fourth requirement was employed to ensure a high degree of exclusively homosexual commitment among the respondents. The sexual orientations of homosexuals and ambisexuals are not mutually exclusive. This requirement focused attention on the commitment levels and career contingencies of men living in an exclusively same-sex identification system.

Sampling Technique

The sample was established by means of the "snow ball" technique (McCall and Simmons, 1969). The research assistant learned from one respondent the whereabouts and cooperativeness of another. A total of 111 homosexuals were contacted to fill out the test and 106 actually completed it. There were only five refusals. It should be stated here again that this was not intended to be a representative sampling device, but rather a theoretical one. The survey respondents were told they would probably

be contacted for an interview, which they accepted as a condition of completing the survey.

Survey Data and Sample Description

The test included a series of survey questions relating to occupational, demographic, familial, educational, socio-economic and age statuses.

1) Age. The mean age of the total survey group was 23.98, while the mode was twenty-three years of age. The ages ranged between eighteen and thirty-two years.

2) Religion. Almost two-thirds of the survey population was Protestant with a majority of the remaining respondents being Catholic (see Table 2). This is the religious identification of the respondent's childhood. It does not necessarily indicate his present religious preference.

Table 2 Religious Socialization of
Test Group

Religion	N	%
Roman Catholic	31	29.2
Protestant	70	66.1
Jewish	2	1.9
Other	0	0.0
None	3	2.8
Total	106	100.0

3) Education. The educational level of the survey group was quite high, with all but 7.1 percent of the respondents having attended at least some college (see Table 3). Those respondents who finished grade twelve

and went on to trade school are included in the trade school category. Those who went to both college and trade school are coded in their appropriate college category.

Table 3 Education Level of Test Group

Grade Level	N	%
1 - 8	1	0.9
9 - 12	7	6.6
Some college	50	47.2
Finished College	30	28.3
Graduate School	13	12.5
Trade School	5	4.5
Total	106	100.0

4) Urban-Rural. A significant number of the test group came from rural and small town environments. This is not surprising since there is considerable general in-migration to Minneapolis from the rural areas of the upper midwest. Around twenty-five percent of the group came from large urban centers outside the state (see Table 4).

Table 4 Size of Home Town of Test Group

Size of Town	N	%
0 - 4,999	27	25.3
5,000 - 24,999	23	21.8
25,000 - 99,999	9	8.5
100,000 - 499,999	21	19.8
500,000 - 999,999	13	12.3
1 Million and over	13	12.3
Total	106	100.0

5) Income Level. A large-majority of the test respondents came from, at least, middle-class socio-economic status. A large portion of the respondents (31.1%) came from families whose annual income was over \$15,000 (see Table 5). These facts help explain the high educational level of the group.

Table 5 Family Income Level of
Test Group

Income Level (\$)	N	%
0 - 3,999	5	4.6
4,000 - 7,999	19	17.5
8,000 - 11,999	27	25.4
12,000 - 14,999	19	17.5
15,000 and over	33	31.1
No Response	<u>2</u>	<u>1.9</u>
Total	106	100.0

6) Occupational Status. The test respondents could be found in a wide range of occupations from the legal profession to factory workers. The most usual occupations which the actors maintained were teachers, hair-dressers and designers. A further analysis of occupational status is provided in Chapter Five. (Table 6 is on following page.)

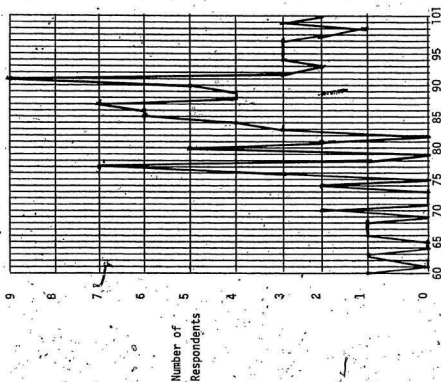
Test Scores

The possible scores on the multiple choice questions ranged from thirty-three to one hundred and one. The actual range of scores was from sixty to one hundred and one. The modal score was ninety-one, the mean scores 86.05, and the median score was eighty-seven (see Figure 1 on following page).

Table 6 Occupational Status and Composition
of Test Group

Occupation ¹	N	%
Professional, Managerial	19	17.9
Clerical, Sales	18	16.9
Craftsmen	14	13.2
Operatives	4	3.8
Service	16	15.1
Artists	6	5.7
Student	15	14.2
Labour	6	5.7
Unemployed	6	5.7
No Response	2	1.8
Total	106	100.0

Figure 1 Frequency Chart of Test Scores



Interview

Having completed the test, a group of thirty-one respondents were selected for an interview. These respondents had scored either very high (self-enhancing commitment) or relatively low (self-degrading commitment) on the test questionnaire. Thirty-eight test respondents were actually contacted for an interview, but seven had either moved or could not be reached. No test respondent refused to accept an interview.

Those chosen for the interview were contacted by the research assistant and directed to meet at his apartment, which is located centrally in a residential district of Minneapolis purported to contain a large number of homosexuals. Only three of the interviews were held outside of the assistant's apartment. Two were conducted at the subjects' apartment. A third was held at Gay House, a gay social action organization.

The interview respondents were first informed as to the nature, purpose and direction of the research. Time was allowed to answer questions which the respondent had either about the test he had completed or the interview at hand. After this I proceeded with the interview (see Appendix). All notes were taken by hand.

The interview schedule consisted of four divisions dealing with early adolescent and preadolescent sexual and social experiences, the coming-out process, commitment construction and career maintenance in the present, and attitudes about aging. The interviews lasted approximately two hours each with a range from forty-five minutes to four hours. Unbeknown to both myself and my assistant, several men who identified themselves as ambisexual found their way into both the test and the interview samples. This probably happened when the survey was administered to two or three persons at one time. The novelty of the experience, or the desire to be interviewed, apparently overcame the respondent's sensitivity to the requirements of the

research. Ambisexuals in the interview sample were, at first, a source of frustration. But when I finished the interviewing I discovered that the four ambisexuals who had been interviewed provided an interesting contrast in commitment level to the other two groups.

Research Assistant

Contracting of a gay research assistant, active in the community, served as a great aid in conducting this research. The initial assistance came indirectly during the translation of theory into research design. In order to communicate my research intentions I was forced, step by step, to explain the purposes and procedures of the research to the assistant. In doing this I became aware of what was practical and possible, given the limitations of time, finances, and location. Further, the heterosexual and academic research biases which I undoubtedly carried into the field were constantly being challenged by the assistant.

Beyond this other advantages were derived from his presence. The test respondents willingly gave to the assistant their names, addresses and telephone numbers, all of which were essential for interview contact. This information would have been especially difficult to obtain by a newly arrived outside researcher. Indeed, the time required to develop the needed trust would have made the research an impossibility.

The test respondents demonstrated a high degree of trust in the research in that every person who was contacted for an interview agreed to participate in it. This is especially significant for those who received low test scores, for they are particularly concerned with concealing their sex role identity.

Another positive consequence of having an insider as assistant was that as I took information out of the community, money was being put into it. The assistant was paid a salary for his services. Sociologists

studying socially oppressed people might consider paying money to local social action groups or individuals representing them in return for their expertise as contact and resource personnel. This is, perhaps, the least the researcher can do to assist those groups of people who provide him with his means of career advancement.

FOOTNOTE

¹Except for the category of artists, which comes from Leznoff and Westley (1956), and those of students and unemployed, which are my additions, the occupational classification comes from the National Opinion Research Center of the United States.

CHAPTER III

THE FIRST EXPERIENCE; A CAREER BEGINS

The following interpretation of results is presented in three parts - first experience, coming-out and coping. This sequential method has been chosen because it elucidates, most efficiently, the progressions and social-psychological developments involved in becoming committed to homosexuality. This phase analysis (Lofland, 1971) is similar to the interpretive reference which Davis (1968) used in studying the socialization and role acceptance of student nurses. Davis describes this manner of scrutiny as:

...Those feelings, states, inner turning points, and experiential markings which, from the perspective of the subject, impart a characteristic tone, meaning and quality to his status passage (Davis, 1968:237).

The intention of such a presentation form is to capture the growing and progressing reality of the subjects within an identifiable and definitive system of explanation and description. The emphasis of the form is on the movement and career growth through which the subject moves. The ages at which people begin their commitment adaptation as well as the time lapses involved in status passage are, indeed, different for each subject.

First Experience: Commitment Emergence

Proximate Variables

It is difficult to determine exactly what influence the factors involved in the actor's first same-sex experience have upon him. It is certainly true that these factors have been given second billing to the

more popular, although often pernicious, etiological explanations emanating from psycho-analytic theory. To some individuals the first same-sex experience influences them only in that it is a place to start their homosexual career. For others the first experience is defined as traumatizing. John, who was molested by a man at age twelve, speaks of his experience:

Because of those two incidents [being molested] it was really hard for me to accept it [homosexuality]. If those two incidents hadn't happened I would have been more open to it. As a result it took me quite a while to accept the fact that I was gay.

How the actor defines his first experience in relation to the proximate variables involved in the incident is significant in understanding its personal influence. As a result a brief description of the circumstances wherein the respondents first encountered homosexual activity is in order. In essence this description of proximate variables establishes the paradigm for analysis of initial homosexual encounter for this interview sample.

The proximate variables surrounding first homoerotic contact were rather consistent. The most striking variable arising from the data is that the novice's experience is likely to be with someone older than himself. In many cases the older individual initiates the experience and chooses the setting for it. This is not to suggest that older homosexuals make a habit of cruising young adolescent boys. Rather, the novice seeks out someone whom he is reasonably certain knows what to do and how it should be done. The man may be only two or three years older than the adolescent or he may be thirty years his elder. The data indicate that the greater the distance in age between the novice and his partner, the greater the social distance is likely to be between them. The young boy who goes into the downtown area of a large city and allows himself to be picked up by a much older man, either for money or for kicks, has little in common with his partner. Peter describes how his first experience with a much older stranger occurred:

It was at a county fair at an outdoor bathroom. I was about fifteen and I was hanging around there for quite a long time and an older man noticed me, about forty-five or forty years old. And he noticed I was hanging around and looking, and he asked me to go behind the barn and I went...My feelings up till this time were really mixed up and as a result of this they even were more mixed up. He had to convince me. He almost pulled me back but I wanted to. It left a bad taste in my mouth for a number of years.

The anonymity which accompanies an experience like Peter's represents one type of circumstance wherein same-sex activity can begin. This is not, from the data, the commonest situation for the initial behavior, but the tone of the occurrence is similar to others. That is, 1) the act was with a much older man, 2) the man was a relative stranger, 3) the act occurred in a public place, 4) the situation was anonymous, 5) the actor defined the situation as unpleasant and inhibiting. Initial same-sex experiences which include these factors seems to limit the immediate growth of homosexual career. The actor is scared, ashamed and guilt ridden. He is unable to face or initiate a homoerotic circumstance again for quite a while. However, shame and guilt, which frequently accompany the novice's first experience, are alone, incapable of checking the homosexual career.

Although first same-sex experience with an older stranger was most frequent, a large number also had their homosexual initiation with friends. The friend was, most often, older than the actor and was considered to be either a "best friend" or a "good close friend." This introduction with friends to homosexuality appears to be less traumatic and restrictive than one with strangers, in that it seems to promote a more gradual career movement. In any case the sex groups into which both adolescent males and females are socialized seem to provide a supportive milieu for the development of such relationships. Pre-adolescent and early adolescent same-sex activity between friends evokes little concern because most boys at that

young age are relatively unaware of the public definitions of their behavior.

The average age of the initial experience for the combined interview sample was 16.1 years. When compared, the self-enhancing group, on the average, began their careers at approximately fifteen years of age (14.8), while the self-degrading group started on the average almost two and one-half years later at age seventeen and one-half (17.4 years). The modal age of first experience was seventeen years for both groups, while the age range ran from five years to twenty-five years of age.

Another interesting factor is the setting in which the first experience was performed. Among the respondents there was considerable variety in the types of places where the behavior was first enacted. For younger boys the first experience usually occurred within their own house when a friend was staying overnight, or in some concealed place like a tree house or a barn. The youngest were the only ones who often began their careers in the presence of more than one individual. One respondent related:

I suppose the first time was mutual masturbation. I was twelve and in the seventh grade and I was hanging around a lot of kids and we were exploring sexuality and stuff. We masturbated to Playboy and some did it to the centerfold and I did it to the dudes in tight pants in the advertisements. I was aware of it in looking back. It first happened in a tree house. We smoked corn cob pipes and masturbated. That's really far out.

As the age of initial experience increases, however, there is a shift in environmental setting. Due to increased mobility the actors shifted their location to the privacy of apartments, hotels, and occasionally, cars. Most often, in middle and late adolescence, the initial experience occurs in the partner's territory. This is, perhaps, why so many first partners are older and more experienced. They can usually provide the secrecy required by the uncertain actor. While the majority of interview

respondents began their careers in private settings a rather large proportion of the self-degrading interview group commenced their activity in a public place such as a "tearoom," an adult movie theater, or in a downtown hotel after being cruised by an older man. It should be noted that almost all the respondents admitted some degree of intention in pursuing their first experience. Matza (1969) refers to this as a "willing" attitude which the actor carries into the behavior. Only one respondent suggested that he was taken completely by surprise, but even he indicated that he would have developed a gay career with or without his unfortunate molestation.

Here we see the environmental circumstances in which the interview group's homosexual careers were initiated. The variables of older more experienced partners, sufficient isolation from discrediting others, and initial partners that are either complete strangers or close friends seem to encourage the emergence of this behavior. In no case was the first partner reported to be either a sibling or a casual acquaintance.

Predisposition

Although the proximate variables describe the environs of initial experience they fail to provide understanding of the actor's predisposition to homosexuality. What are the forces at work when an adolescent defies, what is often considered by parents, an absolute, universal taboo? What are his interests such that he transgresses a social and moral code? What attitudes does he have about sexuality?

Although most of the interview respondents reported they had learned, before their initial experience, that the activity was rejected by the dominant segments of society, they indicated that this knowledge had little direct effect upon their behavior. One way the actor receives unfavorable

information about homosexuality is through religious training. One respondent remarked:

I learned it was bad in church and stuff and the usual kids in schools that would call other kids queer or whatever.

But religious training is not the major source of such information. Rather it is the peer group and the family. Unfortunately, the erotophobic character of Canadian and American child rearing equips the individual with only an inadequate view of sexuality. Rather than learning about sexuality and its various forms in society, the child is subjected to an informal and subtle program of sexual restraint and prohibition. The child is apt to learn that sex with girls is especially bad, as is the "unnatural" act of masturbation. The boy also learns that dirty old men who offer him ice cream cones constitute a threat, and that such things as "queers" exist in the world. The child's sexual education is general and ambiguous. The moral sexual socialization which he typically receives provides him with little basis for practical everyday decision making.

Neutralization

The type of religio-sexual information which the adolescent receives from church, family and school aids in his neutralizing any deterrent effects which the moral and social prescriptions are intended to provide. Neutralization of the deterrent effects is made possible by the ambiguity of the moral directives about sex and the lack of specific and factual information about homosexuality in religio-social instruction. Many of the respondents indicated that they were much more aware of sex with girls or masturbation as being wrong rather than homosexuality. One respondent stated:

You know, a very outcast type thing. The Catholic Church

seemed to stress that masturbation was a sin so I had more guilt feelings from masturbation. My parents never expressly mentioned the word [homosexual]. They still don't like to use the word.

Another interviewee stated:

It was always preached that it was wrong and you're supposed to save it till marriage. I never viewed homosexuality as homosexuality, just boys will be boys, but a guy and a chick making it was taboo. That just added to my frustration and made me feel guilty about wanting it with a chick and it probably pushed me to boys because the moral end of homosexuality never touched me.

Where homosexuality is presented as a distinct evil, the adolescent novice still tends to be immune to the cultural deterrents. In most instances the uninformed parent, religious or peer portrays the homosexual in terms with which the novice does not identify. One respondent related:

I was brought up in a very strict Catholic family. I was taught that being gay meant child molesting and being an animal. They [parents] still think that.

A second respondent related:

... I learned that it was sinfully wrong, perverted, sick, an unhappy life, a lonely life... I also remember reading that once you tried it you can never turn away from it, like heroin.

In many cases the individual who is about to engage in same-sex contact for the first time cannot identify with such negative descriptions of homosexuality. He is, quite likely, unaware of what a homosexual is. His first act is performed, in many cases, without either knowledge or acceptance of social and moral definitions about being gay. He is unaware that he can be discredited.

In Chapter I encapsulation was defined as a significant element in the entrance of a person into deviant career. The data demonstrates this to be so. The actor, when confronted with the possibility of a same sex act for the first time, is concerned with immediate actions. He may have

anticipated the event, but his attention at the moment is on the concerns of performing those actions well.

While the actor is initially well protected against discredit from moral and social codes, his shield often begins to crumble soon after his first series of experiences. As a result of the novice's relative ignorance of homosexual reality he looks for definitions and explanations of his activities after the fact. The feelings which the actors had after their first experience demonstrate this.

Feelings and Judgement about First Experience

Two predominant emotional reactions characterize the first same-sex experience. In the first instance the person is relieved that his morbid anticipation and seemingly senseless self-restriction have passed him by. The individual feels a sense of relief when many of the fears, self-doubts, and guilts he has maintained for so long are cast away. The newcomer to the same-sex experience is faced with two problems. He must, first, accept this physical relationship himself when he has, all along, been instructed to accept heterosexual contacts. Joe related his experience this way:

During high school I had dated a lot and we were taught to live a heterosexual life. I always had feelings for men, but I didn't know how to express them. I worried about if friends found out...Certainly you see the stereotyped feminine person and I was afraid I was going to become certain things that I didn't want to become and some people do and you're afraid that you'll change overnight. But I didn't.

In other words, the actor is insecure about his incursion into deviant behavior. This, however, is not his only fear. He is also uncertain whether he will be accepted by his more experienced partner. This, of course, is similar to the young man or woman who engages in his first premarital intercourse. He too, is concerned as to the personal rightness or wrongness of the behavior, as well as the acceptability of his performance to

his partner.

Respondents who defined their first sexual experience as one of relief were most often initiated at a later age and had anticipated it for a longer time. Sam was a Ph.D. student in science when, at the age of twenty-five, he had his first same-sex experience. He describes it like this:

I sort of was in a daze. I had an unreal feeling before I had sex. When we went back to his place we talked for two hours before going to bed, almost like I was trying to avoid it. Overall I enjoyed it, but from an esthetic, a technical viewpoint, it wasn't a great thing and I had a lot to learn. I suppose I had some sort of feeling of happiness about it and relief. I had a very agonizing time for many years so that when I finally did come out there was a sense of relief to having broke some barriers. I was looking forward to a better life.

Most every respondent who spoke of relief did so by describing the conclusion of a long struggle. In a very real sense these individuals had approached this event with considerable anxious anticipation. One interviewee remarked:

I was rather drunk and the details come through rather foggy. It wasn't terribly unpleasant in certain aspects. I was going through psychotherapy at the time. I talked about it with my analyst. I've always been kind of a hedonist. It had been of concern to me for quite some time whether I was gay or not and that was a great stepping stone.

In order to feel relieved about the first same-sex experience it seems that several conditions must be met. First, the individual must have consciously expected the event. Second, he must have been prohibited, either by himself or by other factors from engaging in the behavior. Third, he must have anticipated the event by planning, in some degree, the interactions and behaviors he would enact.

The other most prevalent reaction to the first experience is that of fear or guilt. Many (approximately sixty percent) of the respondents

reacted to the experience with insecurity and uncertainty. Thus, for some the first experience resolved conflicts and problems, whereas for others the first experience created new difficulties. The element of fear was generated by several social factors the most important of which were family, peer group and religion. One respondent related his reactions to the initial experience thus:

How? A certain amount of guilt. I didn't want my parents to find out. I didn't think it was actually wrong myself, but I was aware that it went against society. As it was my first adult sexual experience it took on a lot of significance. I felt very much alone for the first four or five months and I didn't know how many gay people there were in the world.

Many self-doubts arose in the individual from religious training. That is not to say that homosexuality was mentioned directly, but that they suspected, due to the erotophobic character of many western religions, it was wrong or immoral.

Only once did I feel guilt with him when I had just come home from confession and he attracted me to him in about fifteen minutes. So much for the Catholic resolve.

Another source of fear for the newcomer to the same-sex experience is the homosexual world, or what he perceives that world to be. Due to the fact that most individuals who are socially active in the gay world begin their participation sometime after their first same-sex experience, the newcomer is anxious over the unknown aspects of his future socio-sexual activities. One respondent indicated his uncertainty:

I was a combination of frightened, of course I liked it, and confused as to how to react to him after that. I was afraid that he [the partner] might spread the word around. I was afraid of the possibility, which never happened, of becoming a cheap trick.

There were those who used their first experiences as money making propositions. They had hustled older men in the downtown districts of large cities. Like Reiss's (1961) young hustlers, they did not consider their

certain adaptations. And, since this study deals with committed adult male homosexuals, it is safe to assume that homosexual behavior did continue beyond the first experience.

The adaptations are varied, yet related. First, the person can immediately pursue same-sex social life and enter actively into the gay world. Second, he can continue his same-sex behavior, but conceal it from all, consciously avoiding the creation of a social life around it. Third, he may refrain from sexual contacts with men or boys for an extended period of time.

Approximately sixty percent of the respondents with low commitment scores immediately pursued the behavior in a semi-public way, while seventy-five percent of those with high scores completely refrained from any immediate public activation of their new sexual behavior. In general, the person who entered the gay world immediately after his first experience was in early adulthood (the mean age of a person who pursued it immediately was 19.3 in contrast to 13.8 years for those who were secretive about it). The combined circumstances of age, freedom from parents and mobility all contribute to the novice actor's perception as to whether it is safe for him to immediately pursue a public involvement in homosexual society. The individual who pursues a gay social life right after his initiation often experiences a different homosexual reality than the boy who conceals his behavior for any duration of time. The actor who conceals his novice activity must deal with the pressures of behavioral disguise and information control without support from a sympathetic peer group, while the immediately public homosexual actor, to a relative degree, will not have to face these same contingencies in his career development.

The actor who has his initiation in early adolescence will have to make different career adaptations. His behavioral adaptation will, most likely, be a surreptitious one. He may only occasionally have sex with his

sexual identity to be involved in their activities. Their only guilt came from the acceptance of so large a sum of money. Both respondents who hustled were fifteen at the time of their initiation. One described his experience:

Oh, I felt kind of shitty actually...Because I did it for money, I suppose. I was still straight actually and still seeing girls. So I felt kind of bad.

The second hustler was less concerned as to the meaning of his experience: "I felt very blah. It was a very matter of fact experience. I had set it up."

Fearfulness also played its role in a positive way. Lofland (1967) speaks of the "pleasant fearfulness of deviant acts" when referring to the satisfaction individuals may discover in their illicit activity. One respondent described it this way:

That was the first time I had ever had sex with anybody. I remember walking down the street and looking at people's faces and saying to myself: "If they only knew what I just did!" I liked it. It brought me closer to this person.

Although the respondents' feelings concerning their first experience were varied, it is apparent from the data that the stage of life in which the actor was initiated will be an important determinant of career development and orientation. From the data comes the hypothesis that the young adolescent who must live in disguise, peer group rejections, and sexual frustration for many years enters his gay career differently from the early adult who has already left home to make his way in the world. Their contrasting perspectives are demonstrated by comparing the emotions of relief and fear regarding the first experience.

Adaptations to the Behavior as a Novice

Once the novice has had his first gay experience, he must make

partner in the first experience or he may secretly go to adult movie theaters and downtown hotels to solicit partners. The personal interactions which he has with others also contribute to his unique career adaptation.

Confidences.

The pressures on an actor who has experimented, for the first time, with a socially disapproved activity are significant. This becomes apparent when one studies whom the actor confides in early in his deviant career. Among the homosexual men interviewed in this sample, very few had even confided, before coming-out, in an intimate or acquaintance outside of their own homosexual world. Those who did confide in peers (16.1%), before coming out, did so almost exclusively to females. In only two of the thirty-one interviews was a male peer taken as a confidant. Steve related his experience with confiding in a straight male friend while still "in the closet":

I decided to tell my best friend. Gay bar people are so closeted that they didn't support me so much. I gave the pamphlet [this was a pamphlet the respondent had prepared so that he could explain the pro's and con's of homosexuality with his confidences] to my friend and he read it and he started talking about what was going to happen when he married Cindy. It was weird, but he said nothing at all about the pamphlet and the fact that I was gay. So I thought that was cool because he would have to be really sort of together to take it that well. When he was leaving I told him not to tell anybody else about it and that I would tell everyone in due time. But he didn't even wait to get to the frat house. He got on the phone and called all of my frat brothers and told them about it. It was strange and hard to take because he had been my best friend for three years or so, that bastard.

This does not indicate that male peers are always so unreliable but rather demonstrates the degree to which young secret gay males can be alienated from their straight counterparts. Steve was confiding in his best friend, and still his trust was unfounded.

From the interview data one may hypothesize that young secret male

homosexuals do not generally trust their male or female peers as confidants. Often in pre-adolescent and early adolescent same-sex activity, little discussion takes place about homosexuality, due to ignorance of the meaning of this behavior or to negative definitions they have already learned.

Family

The family is sometimes taken into confidence by the young secret homosexual. This is unusual but the times at which it does arise are interesting. In one instance a nineteen year old boy was about to re-enter the psychiatric ward of a large hospital when his father asked him about his problem. The boy informed him of his gayness, trying to convince him that this was the emotional problem which forced him back into the hospital. This, however, was false, and the boy knew it. He was informing his father about his sexual preference, in order that other problems might remain concealed. Whereas many youths disguise their same-sex activity by such simple explanations as "Oh, we're just good friends, ma," this boy disguised the genuine character of his emotional problem by an explanation that, although false, would bring fewer penalties than one of discussing his mental illness.

Another respondent waited until after his parents were divorced before he disclosed himself to them. By this time his nuclear family had dissolved to the extent that self-disclosure brought new continuation penalties. These two were the only cases where the parents were informed by the young secret gay of his sexual preference. By and large the family is not a trusted group. It appears that only in moments of crisis, trauma or extreme anger will the young novice let his family in on the secret. Occasionally a sister or a brother is informed, but their separation from the family, either by age, geographic distance or social role is usually great.

Authority

The novice homosexual sometimes turns to the helping professions for support in facing his gayness. Psychiatrists, priests, nuns, and ministers are mentioned as sources for disclosure. The manner in which these agents are approached does not seem to fit the classical images of the wretched and lonely neurotic seeking counsel in either god or his counterpart, the psychiatrist. Rather, the subjects seem to go to a person who will simply tell them they are alright and encourage their behavior.

I. Who were the people, if anyone, that you confided in during those adolescent years about your homosexuality?

R. A nun that I had as a teacher in high school.

I. What was her reaction?

R. Acceptance of course. That's why I confided in her.

One respondent spoke of "shopping around" for a psychiatrist he felt responded to his homosexuality in a way that he appreciated. Only four of the thirty-one respondents sought assistance through established helping agents.

Although we have touched on the effects of peer group, family and professional counselors, the general tendency was to make no disclosure. Most of the respondents passed through their adolescence allowing only their sex partners to know their activity. When disclosure was made it was done from a safe distance. The pressures upon the novice homosexual are great and his wariness of social penalty acute. But this should not be taken out of proportion. Novice heterosexual males are not known for revealing their sexual activity to parents and professionals in any large degree, although they often share their experiences with peers (Jourard, 1964).

Disguise

The novice also achieves information control by disguising his sexual preference. For some the use of this strategy is short-lived, and occurs while they are insecure and unadjusted in their commitment. For others, its use lasts a lifetime. Indeed, the extent to which a person expends time and energy to conceal his sexual preference has long been considered a good indication of the type of commitment he maintains. For most men who commit themselves to a same-sex role identity, however, disguise and conscious concealment of the discreditable behavior plays some part in their lives at one period or another. Three forms of concealment emerged from the data - from parents, siblings, and peers - all being most prominent in the beginning of the respondents' sexual commitment development.

Parents

Although parents of adolescents usually live and interact in close proximity with them, it appears, from the data, that discreditable behavior is easily concealed from them. Many of the respondents indicated that very little energy was required to conceal their activity from parents. Since so much of a young man's educational, recreational and occupational life occurs outside the home, this is understandable to a certain degree. The parents are separated from adolescent peer group relations by age, structural position and other arrangements. In the first instance, most parents do not even consider a gay sex role identity an alternative for their children. They seldom, if ever, think or talk about homosexuality. When they do, it is, most probably, in reference to dirty old men in the park. They are unaware of the gay sub-culture where young people are very much involved. Their children, in fact, are probably ignorant of such a world. Further, parents are uninformed and insensitive to the sexual realities of their

children. The children, on the other hand, are uncertain as to how to approach sexual situations. One respondent recalled:

I just don't recall that any discussion of them sexual activities, ever came up. I was just very shy and not too interested in girls and such.

The parents do, sometimes, learn of their children's homosexual involvement, mostly by accident. John related his unfortunate experience:

I never got caught except for one time. They found out--I was gay in high school in junior year, and I propositioned a student teacher and they called my family and I overdosed on Compoz. After that my parents sent me to a shrink for about a year. I did see him and was able to work things out in my head a little bit. My dad's reaction was very good. It was quiet, and I think he understood and my mom had a rough time accepting and she still can't.

Just as most parents maintain their sexual lives in secrecy from their children, so too, the children are indisposed to speak of their sexual encounters. In situations like John's a child is forced to reveal his shameful secret. In general, however, parents present little obstacle to success in concealing the behavior. They may have succeeded in inculcating guilt and anxiety about sexual expression in their child, but they do not learn of his sexual preference until much later in life, if ever.

Siblings

A young novice homosexual's brothers and sisters appear to present a more formidable challenge to maintaining secrecy than parents. Brothers and sisters are closer in age, experience and social world. Therefore they are more apt to learn of the deviant behavior than parents. Joe recounted his history:

No. My older brother told me nothing surprised him anymore. My younger brother said "you're a fag?" But that was only a defensive mechanism, as I think he is going through the same rigors.

But discovery by siblings depends upon many factors. First, the

actor must have other siblings. (Only one respondent was an only child.) Second, they must be approximately the actor's age. If they are much older or much younger they are apt to be too far removed from the subject's life. Third, they must interact, at least marginally in the peer group with which the actor identifies. Where brothers and sisters are closely related by age and peer group affiliation, they will likely learn of their brother's sexual preference. Still many respondents indicated that their brothers and sisters posed little more threat than their parents. One noted: "I never saw them [brothers and sisters] for a lengthy enough time period to get into my sex life." As many brothers and sisters do, alliances are made, such as "I won't tell on you, if you don't tell on me," thus maintaining information control from parents. The thorniest problem the homosexual novice faces is within his own peer group.

Peer Group

The types of acceptance and rejection which an adolescent peer group can exert upon a young person are many. Although the peer group may be the most important socializing agent for the adolescent it is not always the most trusted social group. Almost all the respondents indicated respect for the power peer groups had upon their sexual information management. Most respondents consciously managed some form of sex role charade in which they presented themselves, as much as possible, as like their peers in sexual preference.

Disguise

The types of disguise which the actors took on are not unusual. They would act out the rituals of dating and courtship with the conscious motivation of allaying suspicions. Tom related:

- I. What techniques did you employ to conceal your activity from your peers?

Tom. Having a steady girlfriend. Trying to be active in sports. Joined a gang. I think ultimately I did these things to allay suspicions. I think I probably did it for my own comfort because it would have been kind of rough if everyone had known cause I would have been eighty-sixed [blackballed] all over the place.

Colin spoke of his disguise:

- I. Did you have girlfriends?

Colin. Yeah, in junior high school. I had one in eighth and ninth grade. Extremely convenient in that she would only kiss with her mouth shut and wouldn't let me touch her so she provided a great cover.

This type of disguise closely resembles the process of "passing" employed by racial and ethnic groups. The novice homosexual is trying to avoid discovery as such. Often their homosexual behavior is so separated from a supporting social world that the actors have no understanding of or insight into the social definitions of their activity. They are only aware that it is not accepted, that it is perhaps "immoral", and that few of their social contacts engage in it. In short they have no basis on which to define the sex role behavior positively. They are well aware of the negative definitions which peer groups apply to "those kinds of people,":

R. I guess naturally I enjoyed things most men do. Sports, I enjoy all sports. I was raised on a farm. Occasionally dating. It was hard but it wasn't hard to disguise if you tried to hide it.

- I. Did you consciously try to hide it?

R. Yes, especially in mannerisms. I put on this big butch image all of the time.

The novice homosexual does not want to open himself to public definitions, particularly because he is so uncertain as to what the behavior means for himself. As a result he forces his behavior underground.

Courtship with Girls

The novice homosexual who is caught in the pressures of peer group acceptance is likely to consciously cultivate relationships with girls that appear to be "normal". Although he, too, has been socialized to date girls and interact with them socially, the problems arise when sexual activity is expected. Many respondents indicated that they enjoyed the company of females, but that the whole game of sexuality created penalizing circumstances. One respondent related:

I petted and stuff with my last girlfriend but it wasn't very exciting. That was in high school. It was what was known as having a good time and there were usually boys watching me go through these actions. It was part of being one of the guys, a feeling I never did quite grasp.

Another respondent stated:

I went out on dates occasionally and I was very passive and what few occasions there were I had to force myself to act a lot. It was like following a script, and consequently I got no stimulation at all. It just seemed very unnatural. I just felt unnatural. I felt detached from it. I felt I was supposed to do it because of peer group pressure and in senior year of high school my experience with this one girl I really liked was really blah. I alluded to the fact that maybe it wasn't just her but women in general in an effort to explain my own feelings and let her know that it wasn't just her. She said "no, no, it must have been just me."

Other respondents indicated that they had a tendency to fail sexually with girls. Although they did feel sexually attracted to them, they met with little success in sexual exploits with females. Several respondents indicated that this sexual failure poisoned them against sex with females.

Mark, when speaking of his heterosexual problems, stated:

I was engaged. A friend of mine from out of town came and told me this chick had given him a blow job and a screw and things and after I questioned him a little more it turned out she was the same chick I was engaged to. This was a year after high school graduation. I was about eighteen or nineteen.

Another respondent shared his failure:

I must have gone with fourteen girls before I got married. Petting and intercourse as we got older. It varied from girl to girl. I was never excited about intercourse. Petting was always exciting. With intercourse the sooner it was over the better. In terms of my wife she has her own sex hang-ups, frigidity and inhibitions. That's what pushed me out. She couldn't satisfy me sexually.

A third respondent spoke of how he always tried to have sex with girls, but to no avail:

Yes, I was a horny little bastard and I always tried to go all the way with girls but they never would. It was just more like my emotions running wild. I always found that they didn't want to do that sort of thing. Even to this day I find it hard to realize how a woman gets satisfaction out of it. It was probably a guilty thing in that I was frustrated with girls.

This emphasis on sexual failure was not the only reaction which the respondents had. There was a marked indication that the respondents were uncertain as to their sexual role. They did not really understand how they were to deal with girls on a social or a sexual basis.

Sexually, I was aroused just as any guy. Actually all through this time it was the only way I could get aroused. The most uneasy feeling I have felt with girls was how to be with them, how to act with them in public, as I would tend to treat them not any more special than a guy.

It appears, then, that in adolescence the novice homosexual can perceive visible interactions with females to be penalizing. Although many of the respondents found women easier to talk with and more sympathetic in private interactions, social or sexual involvement with girls was often considered threatening. There were respondents who indicated a strong sexual desire for women, but almost all spoke of frustration in finding satisfaction for their wants because the girls refused to have sex. It seems that the respondents who were not attracted to women had girls waiting at their doorsteps, while those who had a desire for females were without much luck in finding willing partners.

Social Polarization

To a large extent the respondents felt themselves to be psychologically and socially separated from their peers throughout adolescence. We have already seen how the actor is psychologically separated by means of his disguise and efforts at concealment. Tom related his experience:

Yeah, well, I didn't hang around with very many boys at school because they were always making jokes about queers aimed at me and I guess it was obvious to them but it certainly wasn't to me. I didn't know what gay was then.

The separation of which the respondents spoke deals with more than being labelled queer by the peer group. Reasons, such as personal health and geographic environ, were also explanations as to feeling of psychological and social distance from peer group.

I guess I always felt socially separated because I lived on a farm and psychologically alien because of most of my peers. The social separation was because I lived on a farm. Psychologically there was a lot of inferiority because I lived there. The farmers kids were considered dumb and not very good prospects intellectually or economically. I achieved as much as the city kids, honor society and all that, but my achievements were not as much in the limelight as were those of town kids. Most of my farm friends were dumb and they fit the stereotype and I didn't fit in there because I wasn't into the things that they were.

Another respondent stated:

Well not that in itself. The fact that I had polio and I had a lot of harassing about my arm. That really separated me. The night I was graduating someone circulated the rumor that I wasn't graduating and when I showed up everyone was shocked. I was totally incapacitated when I had polio and I taught myself to walk.

The theme of isolation was very consistent throughout most of the interviews. The respondents felt themselves to be different from their peers in situations like school, aesthetic tastes, and organized activities. I am not suggesting that this separation is a cause of homosexuality. Rather, the novice homosexual's inability to arrive at a positive sexual

identification for himself would tend to differentiate him, at least in his own mind, from the peer group. Several respondents felt separated from the peer group because they had, indeed, accepted the negative definitions society offers about homosexuality. It was their feeling of depravity, perversion or sinfulness which made them feel segregated from their peer group.

The preconceived ideas I had about myself were terrible. I was punishing myself and feeling guilty and couldn't get along with anyone or so I thought. I knew I couldn't change it [sexuality]. It was the main separating factor. I was uncomfortable in large groups of males, especially like in gym.

On the other hand, some of the respondents indicated that they made this separation work to their advantage. In one instance the actor felt an abiding need to excel at whatever he engaged in. Mike, now a piano salesman, related:

Well, it forced me to feel the need to excel and to develop those things fully which I did have in my favour since the homosexuality was so obviously a negative factor...I'm thinking my whole approach was not to question the negative but to accentuate the positive things in my life.

In another case the respondent used his social separation to his own advantage in that he became the most knowledgeable about the social underground, in his high school. Thus, he was able to transform somewhat his negative status. By doing this he achieved a marginal acceptance in the peer group and was able to develop positive identifications within his same-sexual status.

The reality of social and psychological separation which the novice experiences indicates a definite difference in the subjective career movement, when compared with the heterosexual adolescent. The harsh fact of isolation forces a self-reliance and self-dependence to emerge in the actor that will be of service to him in later life.

Drift

Throughout adolescence the novice homosexual is drifting towards a commitment to the gay life. He is unlikely to accept the definitions of "fairy," "sissy," and "queer" which he learns about homosexuals. He does not learn to identify himself as gay. He is, rather, moving through adolescent sexual socialization with little strong identification of any sort. He is uncommitted to any particular sexual preference. Peter, a grammar school teacher, spoke of the drift he experienced:

I was continually frustrated, not knowing how I would act in society because I didn't like girls and I didn't know how to like boys. All the time I was really frustrated, especially the last couple of years.

As demonstrated in the previous section on social polarization the homosexual novice actor has a strong sense of aloneness. Being adrift over his sexual preference, the actor moves through life isolated from many collective definitions. Bob related:

Well, I had no qualms about being right or wrong, just another way of being. I never felt that it was bad once I realized what it was. But I was alone, I thought I was unique.

Conclusion

The novice gay actor has come through the traumas of first experience, information control, disguise, peer group alienation and the ambiguity of drift. He soon learns, as he matures, that he must, indeed, confront his sexuality. This conscious realization emerges as part of the committed homosexual's career pattern. His realization arises both as a result of his frustration with ambiguous circumstances and as a result of changes in tolerance levels that had previously allowed him to maintain his marginality. He makes the decision, at least temporarily, to commit himself publicly to the gay world.

CHAPTER IV

COMING-OUT: PROCESS, FUNCTION AND EFFECT

The coming-out process is an essential element of the career development of the committed male homosexual. For some, the ordeal marks the end of a long and arduous struggle of self-acceptance and self-affirmation, while for others coming-out is a relatively simple and immediate progression within the realm of career development. Coming-out is, indeed, a rite of passage. It is perceived by many in the gay world as a crucial turning point in the individual's life style, and social science investigations into the process tend to bear this out (e.g., Hoffman, 1968).

Coming-out can be defined behaviorally as an actor's first voluntary entry into a gay bar or some other homosexual establishment. For those in the interview sample, however, coming-out was defined more broadly. It was conceived as a predominantly social-psychological process which usually involves experimenting with new behaviors and activities. The basic elements of the process include the self-acceptance of a homosexual identification, the positive judgement of that identification, and the willingness to act socially upon the newly derived positive identification. Bill spoke about coming-out:

I've hit on an idea. I don't think going to a gay bar is positive. It's like watching television, kind of a waste of time. I've always felt myself as separated from the gay life as I have from the heterosexual life. Coming-out implies admitting to yourself and to other gay people that you are a homosexual. It implies accepting it as a fact and I had done that a long time ago.

Bill's view of coming-out, although it includes the three elements of self-acceptance, positive definition and willingness to act, is a status conception. He construes coming-out as having happened in his biography. Although this is the most common view of the phenomenon, it is not the only one. Those actors who seem to develop both a personal and a political commitment to gay life sometimes view coming-out as an on-going phenomena. Ralph related:

I guess I think that coming-out is always a continuing process. I think it's a continuing process and I think there are many points.

Developing a peer group in a bar is important. Starting to make decisions in my life revolving around being gay and, for me, moving to Minneapolis to do gay liberation work, are all points in the process.

In a very real sense Ralph's definition of coming-out suggests an awareness of career. He is sensitive to inter-related progressions in his life which bespeak his particular homosexual adaptation. The static conception of coming-out was most typical of the low score (self-degrading) respondents. Although they have an attachment to a homosexual life style, their career orientation seems to be primarily aimed at accommodating their gay sex role to the mandates of the straight world. On the other hand, many of the high score (self-enhancing) respondents indicated that they are looking for gay career growth. Instead of accepting society's values, several of them perceived themselves as in the vanguard of redirecting social values and public policy as they relate to homosexuality.

Tolerance Levels

Before dealing with the functions and meanings which coming-out have in the actor's life, some discussion of the roots of the process are in order. What, exactly, causes the actor to come-out? Why does he decide to reorder his personal priorities and move from sexual secrecy to relative openness?

The most important element in the actor's decision to come out appears to be that he sees a change in the opportunity structure (Cloward, Ohlin, 1961) for his behavior. The actor's residence may change. His parents may become divorced. He may discover that some of his friends are homosexuals. It appears from the data that, in order to facilitate coming-out, the actor must either consciously rearrange his opportunities or he might, inadvertently, stumble upon a circumstance where this has occurred. Fred related his story:

I knew that Minneapolis was a big city and I knew that big cities offered a lot more than small towns and I had a place to stay at school. I just knew that going to art school in a big city would provide me with an atmosphere to get into something sexual.

Another respondent indicated:

I didn't come out full till I came to Minneapolis and started working as a hairdresser and realized there were other people like me and they were very open and blatant about it.

Thus we can see that a move to a different location, usually more anonymous, facilitates the emergence of gay attachment. This is an extremely important proximate variable for the career growth of many gay men. There are, however, other variables which contribute to the perceived change in opportunities for enactment of their behavior.

Any significant modification of peer group associations and interpersonal relationships can facilitate the actor's coming-out. This can stem from an accidental change in leisure partners or it might stem from the exchange of mutually discrediting information between friends. Paul, a guitarist, changed his sphere of leisure activity in order to be around other people interested in music. He relates his experience:

I had broken off all my old friendships with high school friends and moved my whole focus of life from St. Paul to the West Bank and became aware at the Extempore [a hip

coffee house] of a group of men who were homosexual. Had I never broken off those relationships with friends, had the Extemp not been there I could be in a whole different situation right now.

Another interview respondent explained how the tolerance levels between him and his friend changed:

I can't explain it. When I was in high school I subdued all my activities but when I was in college I got into something one weekend. There was no transition, just a sudden change from nothing to everything. My best friend admitted to me that he was gay and if he could be so could I and it no longer meant it was just something weird that I did. He told me he was gay and I told him I was as we were driving in a car. We thought we were the only two then.

Another important force in the emergence of gay career during coming-out is the identification of gayness as something positive. Throughout childhood and adolescence the actor is taught to consider homosexuality as dirty, immoral and perverted. Although they have tried to neutralize this information, they still remain unsure as to whether these definitions might really apply to them. This information forces the actor underground. In order for the individual to come-out, it must be demonstrated to him that homosexuals do not fit that pejorative mold. He must be able to see a favorable self-image in the gay people he encounters. The young boy who has sex exclusively with "dirty old men" is unlikely to come out until he finds a positively identified gay associate or group of associates. In the last quotation the actor came out only after he had learned that his best friend was also gay. Another respondent related the motivating force behind his coming-out:

What had the biggest influence was meeting perfectly healthy, together people. So I realized that for me to admit I was gay didn't mean I was sick or perverted. Nothing had to tell me it [coming-out] was possible. I was moving out of my house and was free to do whatever I wanted.

There are other proximate variables which relate to the change of

tolerance levels. Age can be a crucial factor in reference to coming-out. In the first place as the adolescent gets older his parents are less apt to question his social contacts. His leisure activities may occur further from the home. He is, accordingly, exposed to a greater number of varied social realities. One respondent, when asked about the crucial factor in his coming out, replied this way:

Age. I was old enough to go into a bar. That's what did it. For a long time I was looking forward to that. I didn't realize that there might be places available before I was twenty-one.

Thus far, much of the discussion revolving around coming-out and tolerance level change has dealt with variables outside the person. Changes in place, peer group others, and age are elements in the actor's social milieu. It is possible, however, that the actor may simply grow tired and frustrated with his hidden sexual identity. He may look at himself with a critical eye and decide that something has to be done about his sexual expression. It is true that this critical self-reflection is often brought on by changes in the activities of the peer group. A respondent demonstrated this when he stated:

All the time I was really frustrated, especially the last couple of years before nineteen and twenty mainly because all my friends were either marrying off or pairing off. Our little gang was dwindling and I had no one.

Whatever the precipitating factor, the actor becomes tired of his sexual disguise. His environment facilitates his coming-out. One respondent related his story this way:

I was twenty-five, in graduate school and going through a great deal of mental anguish and it was a central thing in my life and it seemed obvious that the conflict had to be resolved. For me it wasn't a positive thing. It was the only resolution. I was gay and part of my mind was trying to suppress this. Either the repression would win out or I would have to face it honestly. Coming-out resolved this crisis, at least some of the crisis. It wasn't a matter of attraction.

When asked why coming-out was attractive to him another interview respondent stated:

Well, first of all I'd like to substitute the word necessary for attractive. You have to live with yourself so that does make it necessary to go out and socialize.

A third respondent indicated:

I was very frustrated. I was really suicidal when I was young. I knew that to be happy I had to experiment sexually. It seemed more realistic to turn to that than prayer or something. It was my only alternative.

The actor becomes increasingly aware of his different sexual preference. His peers are marrying or pairing off with girls. As he enters early adulthood he realizes that a greater share of freedom from discrediting intimates like parents, siblings and peer groups is possible to achieve.

The actor is frustrated with sexual concealment. He begins to make decisions affecting his life that are related to his same-sex identity. In short, he makes the first attempts at self enhancing commitment to homosexuality.

These decisions may lead to moving across the country or they may lead only to telling a close friend. They may mean walking into a gay bar for the first time or attending a college away from home.

Visibility

Before moving on to the analysis of the function of coming-out, mention must be made of the societal attitudes manifested toward gayness.

The general tolerance which society does have for homosexuality affects the actor's coming-out. Where there are movies, newspaper articles, magazines, homophile services, and activist institutions to present homosexuality in a positive light, the actor will be encouraged to confront honestly his sexuality. An interview respondent stated:

One night when we were drunk he [a friend] took me to a gay bar and I was very upset and I didn't like it at all. I wanted to get out of that place. I was twenty-one.

Two months later I went to see "Boys in the Band" and then I went back to the bar. I just got tired of having to be so secretive all the time. It's kind of a big thing to keep bundled up inside of you.

Another respondent said:

The fact that FREE [a homophile group which existed in Minneapolis several years ago. The initials mean "Freedom from Repression of Erotic Expression"] could have an office in Coffman union [student union] that the movie "Boys in the Band" could be viewed by anyone who wanted. I was just optimistic at that point.

The visibility of an active and socially viable gay world facilitates coming-out.

Drift and Encapsulation

Although the concepts of drift and encapsulation were used to describe the behavioral and psychological processes surrounding the first experience, they can also be readily applied to coming-out. The actor, while coming out, is still relatively uncertain as to what his gayness means. He is ignorant as to what goes on in the gay world, yet he is making an identity, committing steps towards entering it. As a result the actor, once again, will be primarily attuned to circumstances of immediate consequence. Sam described his experience:

I don't know. I just felt something strong enough and did it [came-out]. I didn't weigh the consequences at all. I never stopped to consider. I never stopped to think of job discrimination or career alteration. For the first time in my life I felt very strongly about doing that.

Although some individuals move immediately and directly into active participation in the gay world, others find their way more gradually. They tend to drift into gay social activities. One respondent stated:

It just kind of evolved that way. I just met straights that were understanding and the more I met the more confident I became. Little by little I just eased my way into it.

It would be inaccurate to suggest that coming-out is necessarily a

gradual process. The behavior which accompanies coming-out can change quickly and sporadically. The actor's behavior change is usually rather immediate. His sexual activity is no longer as secretive; in fact, it becomes much more frequent. His accompanying psychological transformation, however, does not occur quite as suddenly. He has entered a rather undefined realm of activity. He is uncertain as to his place there. One respondent described what can happen to the novice in the gay world:

People are always ready to jump into a prefabricated life style without making their own niche. Gay people, especially, do this in order to feel comfortable...

The novice in the gay world has reason to feel uncomfortable there, at first. The social amenities, expectations and interactions there, are all rather new to him. The novice is, in fact, dependent upon his confreres for support, advice and direction.

Some Functions of Coming-Out

Perhaps the most important rôle which coming out plays in the actor's life is that of an occasion for transferring dependence on and participation in one group of peers to that of another. Coming-out provides the actor with an avenue of self acceptance, for it affords him the opportunity to discard those straight associates who might discredit him. Throughout this time the actor is developing a set of acquaintances in the gay world who will support him and remove his dependence from his straight associates. Coming-out provides the actor with the opportunity to face, at least some, of his straight associates with less fear and insecurity. This is a gradual process. The actor must come to feel comfortable with his new suit of armor. He will, most likely, begin to decide about those few he can trust for self-disclosure and those in whom he is unable to place confidence. This again is the first sign of emerging commitment. The actor attempts to

begin some semblance of conscious gay career adaptation during this time, but, by and large, many of the commitment contingencies which he faces in the future he adjusts to unwittingly. Coming-out does provide the first testing grounds for the actor's incipient commitment. One respondent tried to describe his experience this way:

I guess maybe the coming-out was before I was twenty-one. Increased activity; increased awareness; losing my naivete; becoming more self-aware and aware of those things around me. I guess physical success; not having trouble finding things or being found. It's a real ego trip I suppose you could say. Fear, anxiety, all that. Fear about being caught but that was not for long. Seeing all this at once threw me. I kept saying to myself, these people can't all be gay.

In a sense coming-out for the gay man functions in a fashion similar to the institution of the wedding, honeymoon and marriage for the straight man. In both the actors go through an, at least, semi-ritualized system of announcing the commencement of self-enhancing erotic activity. Both are times of turbulence wherein sex roles and commitment adaptations relating to socio-sexual behavior begin to take shape. Both time periods are filled with a relatively high frequency of sexual activity. Although it might well be argued that there are more differences than similarities between these two situations, it is important to note that with coming-out the actor faces the many insecurities, as well as excitements, which often confront the newly announced public heterosexual union. Bill talked about disclosure and his emotional feelings during coming-out:

No, I didn't attempt to hide it nor did I flaunt it. I was just too wrapped up in the excitement. I was having an intense affair for a month. The rest of the world didn't exist.

Self-Disclosure

There is a marked attempt, on the part of many gay actors, to disclose their sexual identities during the coming-out period. It is

interesting that this is the point where differences in commitment (self-enhancing and self-degrading) begin to show themselves. Only five of the fifteen respondents in the self-degrading interview group began to open up more to their associates and reveal their sexual identities in the coming-out period. In the self-enhancing group all but three out of the sixteen respondents reported a definite increase in self-disclosure.

Disclosure plays an important part in the coming-out process. The actor is testing out his particular homosexual adaptation. The individual is most apt to disclose himself to his straight friends. In only one case in the sample was a relative, a cousin, disclosed to during coming-out. Only one respondent specified women as his only source of confidence. In this fashion coming-out provides the actor with an opportunity to evaluate himself in the gay world, as well as, in the straight world. The actor can gauge his straight friend's reaction and either accept or reject this judgement. Joe related:

I told a close friend of mine I had known for five years that I was gay and that's the last time that I saw him.

Another respondent told his contrasting story:

Before I saw "Boys in the Band" I ran around with two girls and on my twenty-second birthday I told them I was gay and Ginny, who was Mexican said OK and Kathy was very upset. Our relationship has just grown since then. We talk and carry on together a lot.

The actor can disclose under different circumstances and in different ways. The most usual fashion is in the form of a discrete, private conversation. It may well be simply a casual remark which the actor makes. There are, however, more complicated and contrived means of self-disclosure.

Phil related his story:

My one friend and I would talk in ways we never talked before. Feminine stuff, the homosexual lingo. "Mary this and she did this." One time it consisted of putting

makeup on and seeing how these people would react and when they got it through their head what was happening anybody who didn't know soon found out through them. They didn't understand it so they discussed it among their friends when I wasn't around.

This type of "camp" when used around unknowing and unsympathetic straights, can function as an ideological challenge or form of gay pride and bravado. Newton (1972) describes "camp" when she states:

The camp ethos or style plays a role analogous to "soul" in the Negro subculture. Like soul, camp is a "strategy for a situation...Like the Negro problem, the homosexual problem centers on self-hatred and lack of self-esteem. But if the "soul ideology ministers to the needs for identity," the camp ideology ministers to the needs for dealing with an identity that is well defined but loaded with contempt (Newton, 1972:105).

The author goes on to state:

While camp is in the eye of the homosexual beholder, it is assumed that there is an underlying unity of perspective among homosexuals that gives any particular campy thing its special flavor. It is possible to discern strong themes in any particular campy thing or event. The three that seemed most recurrent and characteristic to me were incongruity, theatricality, and humor. All three are intimately related to the homosexual situation and strategy. Incongruity is the subject matter of camp, theatricality its style, and humor its strategy (Newton, 1972:106).

Camp functions at once to inform and sensitize the gay man that he need not be contrite and apologetic about his supposed condition. Of course, one can disclose himself in less direct fashion:

Being involved with FREE, people at the Extemp knew I was gay. When we got involved at the University at Coffman, everyone knew even though I never associated with them much, which probably made it easier.

The functions, means and roles of self-disclosure of a discreditable status is a research project in itself. The gay man, once he comes out, employs self-disclosure selectively. Eventually he learns that he can no longer accept the leisure activities of his straight friends. He has entered a new social world which involves certain types of commitment. Through

disclosure the gay actor explains his new leisure patterns to straight friends. Many times the gay actor finds that he has developed a new set of acquaintances and social activities. One respondent related:

For quite a while my friends were all straight except for a few I had made friends with. After the time I went to bed it began to change until now most of my friends are gay, at least the people I'm hanging around with.

The Correlates of Coming-Out

Coming-out does different things to different people. There are those who cultivate a new group of intimates or confidants. Some include old straight friends in their new circle of confidants. Others reject the gay world as a source of social contacts, avoiding the development of any friendship ties. But, in all cases, coming-out is the spawning grounds for positive gay attachment. It is here that the actor sets the groundwork for his future career growth.

Because of the novelty of coming-out for the gay actor certain distinguishable types of behavior seem to arise in this period. First, sexual activity increases greatly. The previously suppressed emotions now have an avenue of expression. The availability of partners is much greater. Second, a noticeable camp is associated with coming-out. One respondent related:

I did a lot more coming-out, dresswise, after we broke up. I decided that if I was gay I might as well advertize the fact that I was available.

Another respondent spoke of his newly developed camp and the tendency the novice has to pick up the behavioral patterns of those gays with whom he is most immediately and frequently associated. He stated:

R. The people who frequent this club, as I know it now, were more or less the stereotype "nellie faggots" and I started developing the same characteristics consisting of walking around and grabbing people

and this lasted about thirty days and I just really had a good time. I got to know a whole bunch of stereotyped homosexuals and I learned. From there it was just a matter of realizing this kind of life just wasn't me.

I. What kind of life?

R. A lot of femininity involved in my actions. Nobody said anything. I had come-out. I didn't need to have anybody to tell me to try this or that. I was ready for any kind of new learning experience.

A third respondent indicated:

When I first came-out I thought it was the right thing to do to be a screamer and wear makeup and then I got into a real drag thing. After I realized I was getting nowhere like that I tried to direct myself in a more masculine route and I'm still trying, but to be anymore masculine than I am right now would be a facade.

Thus we can see that the emergence of a positive homosexual attachment can bring with it a, usually temporary, camp-demeanor. The actor tends to act out the stereotypic roles of homosexuality until he finds a comfortable place in his personality for his gay identity. For some that comfortable niche may, indeed, be continued camp. For most, however, the more feminine behavioral traits of limp wrist and lisping voice lose prominence quickly. The actor, after a time, is able to adjust psychologically to his new self-attitudes about his sex role. Coming-out behavior often precedes the individual's complete acceptance of the gay life.

Positive Labelling

Coming-out is a type of self-labelling process wherein the actor learns to find a positive image in the identity. The coming-out ritual offers the actor an alternative to the negative labelling process which society invokes against the publicly identified homosexual. Lemert states:

Thus becoming an admitted homosexual [coming out] may endanger one's livelihood or his professional career but it also absolves the individual from failure to

assume the heavy responsibilities of marriage and parenthood, and it is a ready way of fending off painful involvements in heterosexual affairs (Lemert, 1967:75).

The Effects of Coming-Out

All but two of the interview respondents indicated that coming-out changed their lives greatly. The most frequent change reported was a sort of relief. The respondents felt that coming-out had provided them the opportunity to deal with their lives as a whole, and end the anxiety which plagued them about the direction of their sexual preference. Mike related his experience:

It [coming-out] just made me more content. It's like I found a part of me. It's given me self-respect. My grades improved and I have some direction. That was after I'd been out for a while. For a period of time it consisted of going out, cruising and as I learned more about the whole thing that I started having direction.

When I first came-out I didn't have any roots and I didn't want any. I quit school, played for a long time, and went back to school and had some directions. That's when I got into just anything new whether it be sex, drugs, appearance and then acting my age. I started learning something. My whole life was more mental at that time and up to now. Before that it was just physical.

Another respondent spoke of his new feeling of comfortableness:

I'm at peace with myself a little more. I'm at peace inside. The daily hassles still go on but they're just a little easier to handle. Right now I am less responsible only in the framework of building a future and family. I guess the best description I can give is that I went from age twenty-two to eighteen again.

My standard of living has gone up considerably. I'm more fashion conscious, sexual conscious. My interests have changed from intellectual to economic. I'm more money conscious.

I'm totally open about it now. Well about ninety percent open. I feel a sense of pride whereas before I felt shame. I'm delighted at the people I know who are gay and I value their friendship.

Coming-out can also have other effects. It can make the actor realize the changes he has gone through and the consequent barriers that have arisen

as a result. Steve, a gay liberation activist, related some of the problems which coming-out created for him:

I find myself always at odds with society. I think I'm at a major war with society. That can be a bum trip. I try to keep my sense of humor. My values are very, very different than the people in the bar and I find that hard.

There's kind of really big walls between me and some of the people I work with. These people are good, honest, sensitive but they can't relate to my being gay. In taking some walls down I built other walls up. I can survive it but it would be easier if there were more gay people with values like mine. It also effects my love life. I won't have a love affair with someone who can't share some of my basic values.

Perhaps the most important effect of coming-out is the laying of groundwork for the construction of a positive gay self-image. This point has been stressed throughout the chapter. Coming-out is a special turning point in gay career growth. The actor begins to learn to weigh his gayness in relation to other contingencies such as work, school and family. He has gone through the stages of drift and encapsulation and now begins a conscious planning. The actor becomes aware that coming-out has both given him room for growth in some areas, and restricted growth in others. One respondent talked about the changes in his life resulting from coming-out:

It's changed it quite a bit. I've never sat down and purposely figured this out. I'm a more sociable person now than before and not just in gay circumstances so I'm less of a loner. Its dictated a certain constraint on me that might be crucial. I was in graduate school hoping to become a professor or a government bureaucrat. I'm neither one of those now. I have some doubts as to whether I'd be a good teacher now but no doubts about being a good bureaucrat. I came-out as a grad student. Occupationally, I'm drifting. Being gay has put restraints on my going to apply for teaching jobs. One of the constraints is that I've told the teachers agency that I'm not so much concerned with income but since I've come-out and accepted a gay identity I have no intention of giving it up. I told the teachers agency that I would not accept a position outside the metropolitan area. I put my gay identity before my occupational one. I think its made me less neurotic since I've come-out. I'm less uptight about being with people. I've become more of a whole person in that before the reality of my existence...

I'm much more of who I really am now than who I was before. Most of the problems I have today are any of the problems a gay person would have in Western Society. I think I've sort of matured late, not just in terms of sexuality. I think I can empathize more now with people than before. I'm not as good at this as I would like to be. I would like to become empathetic with people.

Another respondent stated:

It [coming-out] had made a career difference. I might have been a nuclear physicist but then I would have had to undergo security checks and all that stuff in order to keep the job. I selected occupational areas where I would avoid these problems.

Conclusion

The importance of coming-out, in reference to the emergence of the actor's positive homosexual self-image cannot be minimized. This is a crucial and often stormy period in the gay actor's life. After learning to accept himself and his sexuality, the individual sets about reordering personal priorities and examining future contingencies. An active and individuated gay career orientation takes shape.

CHAPTER V

COPING: THE ADULT HOMOSEXUAL IN HIS WORLD

Having gone through the often turbulent transitional period of coming-out, the actor must learn to manage his same sex identification in his everyday affairs. Gradually he integrates his sexual preference into his life as a whole. The decisions which the actor makes about work, family, life-style, and choice of relationships all lead to an emergent and stabilizing commitment to a gay career.

Relationships

One of the first adaptations which the gay actor must make, once he has come-out, is to decide what form of relationship he is seeking in homosexuality. Many times coming-out marks a promiscuous period in the actor's life. But, due to the exigencies of everyday living, the individual's compulsion for finding sex partners eventually diminishes somewhat. According to Sonenschein (1968) a number of sex partner decisions are made by homosexual actors. The most frequently mentioned relationship goal by the respondents in this research was a long term "lover" relationship. Many indicated they would welcome and actively solicit such a relationship which provided them with some security and permanence. One respondent stated:

I'm looking for a relationship with someone who can share most of themselves with me in an honest and constructive way. I'm not looking to possess anyone sexually only for myself but only want someone I can share a sexual and deep friendship with that flighty sexual encounters can't demolish.

I'm looking for someone I feel comfortable with but who, where we won't possess each other; the freedom to be

ourselves. It would be monogamous in the way of just friendship in that nothing petty could destroy it.

The types of relationships sought are evidence of the actor's commitment adaptation. A significant number of the self-enhancing interview group indicated a desire for a monogamous, long-term relationship. This liaison, the respondents stated, would be characterized by friendship and social compatibility. In fact, the self-enhancing respondents placed a greater emphasis on the necessity of good affective bonds than on any other variable. Interesting as well, was the fact that more than half the self-enhancing respondents described themselves as presently living with a partner in a sociosexual relationship. In very few cases, however, did the respondents indicate that a permanent relationship was possible. In essence, the partners in these relationships do not expect their co-habitation to be permanent. Sonenschein (1968) describes these "permanent sociosexual relationships":

The second kind of mateship was less formalized, often the only event being a personal exchange of rings and/or the setting up of a household. It too was based on a conception of love but the relationship was less predominately sexual as was the previous variety; there was a more conscious attempt by the individuals involved to aim at a congruence of values and interests. This kind of stable pairing may be called simply "co-habitation" to differentiate it from the actual homosexual marriage (Sonenschein, 1968:81).

Indeed, several respondents were careful to mention that they did not consider themselves "married" in the heterosexual sense and that they made conscious attempts to avoid imitating such a relationship. Several self-enhancing respondents, however, demonstrated that they were relatively uncertain as to what form their homosexual liaisons would take in the future. Steve stated:

Long lasting, monogamy? I don't know. I've had five affairs of major consequence. At least at the beginning of a relationship tricking would be bad. As far as tricking, I'm not into it. I've done most of the

tricking things to do. Sex is not as significant as the other things. I think its really important to share values in relationships but it will be hard because there are so few people who share my basic values of being right out front. I very rarely have sex outside of a relationship.

Steve, a highly political gay activist, shows the importance self-enhancing actors often place on the social elements of the sociosexual gay relationship. It seems as though this emphasis on shared values and social compatibility is a commitment adaptation which arises out of the actor's self-admission of homosexuality. The more willing an actor is to admit that he is a homosexual the more likely he is to place importance on the social aspects of a relationship. Consideration of a homosexual relationship, which connotes duration and involvement, rather than a homosexual experience, suggesting temporariness, is a direct outgrowth of self enhancing gay commitment. The more a gay actor sees his homosexuality as an inextricable part of his future, the more disposed he is to consider relationships which have some longevity. None of the ambisexuals who were interviewed reported any intention of pursuing a long relationship. One self-enhancing respondent indicated that chance played a significant role in the type of relationship he would pursue. He worked as a medical aide in a hospital:

Right now I'm not looking for a long term relationship. I really don't think about it much. I just take what comes. I guess I'm not anxious for a long term relationship now because I've just gotten out of one. My emotions are really uncontrollable. In the hospital I probably fall in love maybe ten or twelve times a day. I could say I'm not looking for a long term relationship and then walk out the door and start hitch-hiking and that relationship could last for maybe five years.

The character of sociosexual relationship goals was somewhat different for the self-degrading group. More than half these respondents indicated they were not seeking monogamy. Although they seemed interested in developing "lover" relationships with other men, only three were, at the time of

the interview doing so. For the actor with a self-degrading commitment adaptation, monogamy and cohabitation seemed to be penalizing. Self-degrading commitment means that the actor wishes to remain free of affective ties which could discredit him. One self-degrading respondent, although he valued monogamy, explained his difficulty:

I enjoy physical sex. I enjoy it so that obviously there's some importance attached to that. I would place a high value on affection. I would like to be able to live the kind of life a straight person would live. Because of what society is and has done to me I can't live the kind of life you can. I would like a one to one relationship with someone that was sexual, emotional, and intellectual. I'm promiscuous but while I'm promiscuous I still recognize the hold that monogamy would have on me...

Perhaps the most striking difference between the self-enhancing and self-degrading commitment groups in relation to sex partner goals is that the self-enhancing group is greatly concerned with the social aspects of relationships. The self-degrading group is more sexually promiscuous than the self-enhancing group. These differences arise, mainly, out of the different commitment adaptations the actors have made to homosexuality. The type of relationship the gay actor aspires to bears directly on other commitment related contingencies he has to face.

Ideology

Along with sociosexual commitment the gay actor, often-times, develops a sort of sexual ideology to justify his activity. Although an actor's sexual ideology relates to many behaviors this investigation only studied his attitudes to two related gay phenomena: gay liberation and drag. The respondents were asked about these activities so that their attitudes toward them could be placed on an ideological continuum.

The self-enhancing group almost unanimously judged gay liberation to be a positive force. Four of the sixteen respondents in this group were

themselves politically active in the movement. Only a few had reservations about the influences which gay liberation might have. On the other hand, only one in this group felt that public camp and drag were beneficial activities. Interestingly, none of these respondents was willing to make an openly pejorative judgement about it. One respondent stated:

I kind of like it [drag]. It's just so absurd that the only thing I can do is laugh at it.

Another respondent from the self-enhancing group indicated:

It [drag] must require an incredible amount of energy. They're interesting people. They're valid, a little bit obnoxious sometimes, but they make the world interesting.

The ideology of the self-enhancing group was consistent. They accepted and supported the gay liberation movement, while they accommodated the idea of drag as a social phenomenon. Although not one of the respondents in this group reported having indulged in drag and none planned on initiating such behavior in the future, they were, by and large, willing to accept it as a social force. The only hint of criticism about drag came from those respondents who were most politically active in the gay liberation movement. This indicates that those in the self-enhancing group can tolerate a heterogeneous conception of homosexuality. Although he did not subscribe to the activities of drag and "hellie" homosexuality, he was not willing to criticize those who did. This willingness to accept a homosexual form, quite unlike their own, is related to the actor's sensitivity to the tolerance which straight society has shown for him.

The self-degrading interview respondents reacted differently to the two issues of gay liberation and drag. Half the respondents considered the gay liberation movement a liability to homosexual rights, while only three thought drag had merit. Humphreys (1970) refers to this as the "breastplate of righteousness." The self-degrading group are more concerned with

maintaining an acceptable public image and with the control of personal information. Although almost half this group admitted having been involved at sometime in drag and similar activities, only three accepted it. One respondent in the self-degrading group, a grade school teacher, showed his feelings in an interview:

I. What are your feelings about gay liberation?

R. I don't have feelings about it. I wouldn't get actively involved. There are certain rights we should have and don't but it doesn't bother me. I don't feel as though we need gay liberation. I feel this way about a lot of other liberations too. I feel I can live a normal life.

I. How about camp and drag queens? What are your feelings about those?

R. It's something like gay liberation. As far as I'm concerned it doesn't involve me at all. They are continuing to allow the straight people to see this false image. Then I guess it's kind of good for me too because then if I portray the straight image more no one will bother me. They can go ahead and do it.

Humphreys (1970) assertion that the more an actor is concerned about discredit and information control the more other-directed he will be in the formation of his political and social opinions, appears from the data in this research, to be valid. The self-degrading interview group presented many objections to both gay liberation and drag, while the self-enhancing group found little to criticize in either. Thus, we can see that gay commitment adaptation is likely to manifest itself in the development of a politico-sexual ideology as well as in other areas of social behavior.

Work

Perhaps the circumstances where gay commitment adaptation can most clearly be determined is in the world of work. The gay actor must develop and plan his sexual career in relation to the occupational career he pursues. Work can present a strongly penalizing set of circumstances. The gay actor

may be able to withdraw from the straight social world far enough to avoid penalty, but often this is impossible at work. The actor may be dependent upon his wages for support, and any sexual discredit might endanger that. Leznoff and Westley (1956) demonstrated that occupation is a crucial variable in relation to the gay actor's commitment management. The authors state:

The mode of adaptation is largely dependent upon the extent to which identification as a homosexual is a status threat. While economic status cannot be equated with social status the individual's position within the work world represents the most significant single factor in the prestige scale. Therefore, the extent to which homosexuality is tolerated in various occupations determines to a great extent the mode of evasion chosen by the homosexual...The overt homosexual tends to fit into an occupation of low status rank; the secret homosexual into an occupation of relatively high status rank (Leznoff and Westley, 1956:167).

Although Leznoff and Westley's definitions of secret and overt homosexuals are somewhat simplified, their position as to the significance of employment in the determination of commitment adaptation remains valid. The gay actor must construct his gay commitment in conjunction with considerations of his work environment. While the data from this research did not yield any marked differences in the status (high/low) of occupation level between the self-enhancing and self-degrading actors, some distinguishable characteristics did emerge. It was obvious from the data that the self-enhancing group worked in an environment where their gayness was considered less of a status threat,

Table 7 Difficulty Arising from Sex
Status at Work

Test Group	Yes	No	Total
Self-Enhancing	4	12	16
Self-Degrading	6	9	15
Total	10	21	31

As seen in Table 7 a greater number of self-degrading interview respondents felt that their status as homosexuals created problems for them on the job. These problems arise out of a number of circumstances. One respondent related:

I don't have a gay identity at work. To assure myself of a job I even go the other way. Whenever I see a woman I more or less talk about that and they naturally assume it has sexual connotations.

Another interview respondent stated:

There are uncomfortable moments. If given the option to make no remark that's one I'll take. If somebody's running a person down because he's gay I'll say "He always seemed like a nice guy to me." or something like that. I can't help but think that since I go to work parties alone there must be some people who would figure it out.

Most self-enhancing respondents felt that they could adequately deal with the possible discredit in the work world. They seemed to be involved in a work environment which they did not find threatening. There were no status differences however, between the occupational levels of the two groups (see Table 8).

Table 8 Occupational Composition of Self-Enhancing and Self-Degrading Homosexual Groups

Occupation	Self-Enhancing	Self-Degrading	Total
Professional and Managerial	1	2	3
Clerical, Sales	5	2	7
Craftsmen	3	4	7
Operatives	0	0	0
Service	4	5	9
Artists	1	0	1
Students	2	2	4
Total	16	15	31

Bill, a telephone operator, spoke about his work environment when he stated:

Well, Ma Bell isn't exactly friendly to the gay movement. I asked all my employers about their hiring and firing practices against homosexuals as most companies are restrictive. I wear my gay rights button to work but I really haven't been as open as I would like to be. It is a most uncomfortable situation for them anyway. It's a little uncomfortable for me because I'm not as open as I'd like to be and the girls give jokes to the fact that I don't date although they've all made come on's to me. They're more uptight than I am.

Another self-enhancing respondent related:

I haven't run into any difficulty because I'm a musician probably. Although I ran into an agent manager two days ago who was quite a bigoted bastard. That was the first situation where I ran into somebody in my business who was extremely bigoted and I said I'd never work for him and he said he wouldn't have me anyway. Rather an envigorating experience. It feels good to call someone an ignorant bastard every so often.

The self-enhancing group seemed to be more willing to challenge the discreditor. While many in the self-degrading group were concerned with keeping their sexual preference out of view the other group appeared more disposed to risk their occupational status.

Table 9 Presence of Knowledgeable Others
in Work Environment

Test Group	Yes	No	Total
Self-Enhancing	13	3	16
Self-Degrading	6	9	15
Total	19	12	31

In Table 9 we see that members of the self-enhancing group were more likely to be in a work environment where some of their fellow employees knew about their sexual preference. This fact helps explain why the self-enhancing group are more willing to challenge public discredit while at work. The

self-degrading individual's hesitation to disclose his sexual status isolates him, at least partially, from any support against discredit which fellow employees might be able to provide. Explanations for these differences arise when we analyze the occupational goals which the respondents established for themselves. The majority of self-enhancing interviewees were planning occupations either in the arts or in fields of service to the gay movement. Steve related:

I fully expect that gay organizations will come about where I can be working on affirmative action programs. What we're going to ask is for the dissemination of information asking them to publicly state that they don't discriminate socio-sexually. The hassles are fun for me. I run the gay rights program at the state legislature. The movement is where my life is going to be from now on. I'll definitely run for the state legislature but not for four, six, eight years.

Joe also plans to work in the movement, but feels some regret about the avenues closed to him:

I've got two degrees. I feel as though, at the present time my goal is into counseling. I want to become involved in helping someone else sexually get adjusted. If I lean back on my degrees it will be biology, not pharmacy because the pharmaceutical companies are so straight that I couldn't take it. Interestingly enough I applied to many companies to be a salesman and two companies refused me because I was divorced. Several companies didn't hire me because I had too many degrees. One company wanted to transfer me to Nebraska and I didn't want that. I can't go back now to a small area where people are so narrow minded, conservative and afraid. I don't have the patience to deal with that.

On the other hand, the self-degrading respondents tended to aspire to occupations which would allow them less freedom of movement. Table 10 demonstrates that far more self-degrading respondents hoped for professional positions, whereas only a few in the self-enhancing group had such aspirations. Almost fifty percent of the self-enhancing respondents looked forward to careers in the fine arts. These distinctions in occupational career orientation help account for differences in sex role commitment and the

Table 10 Occupational Goals of Self-Enhancing
and Self-Degrading Homosexuals

Occupation	Self-Enhancing	Self-Degrading	Total
Professional and Managerial	3	8	11
Clerical, Sales	0	1	1
Craftsmen	0	0	0
Operatives	0	0	0
Service	5	1	6
Artists	7	4	11
None	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
Total	16	15	31

signs of emerging gay career which arose between the two groups. One respondent, a speech pathologist, who aspires to teach at university related:

I think every chairman of a department I meet has had a wife. Dinner parties and that bit. Being single, much less being gay, it would be a hard situation to face...

Another interviewee, a nurse, stated:

My nursing and my being gay, that's my life but I don't mix the two though. Doing nursing care I would not be gay because I'm not even thinking about it. I would never make a pass at a patient. For the present being a homosexual is grounds for termination in a hospital. You could never use that hospital for a reference. That has never happened but the possibility is there that it could.

The gay actor arranges his present commitment in reference to the occupational roles he sees himself filling in the future. This is a strong indication of the subjective planning of career which a homosexual actor goes through. The actor anticipates his future interests and activities and constructs his present actions accordingly. One ambisexual actor who scored low in the test provides an interesting contrast. Although this fellow was entering the highly professional field of medicine, he had few

worries about his sexual status interfering with occupational success.

His lack of exclusive commitment to a gay identity allowed him greater freedom of movement. The actor related:

I'm not so sure that if I ended up in plastic surgery being gay might be a help in some respects. I imagine there are a lot of guys who, when they go for their thirty-five year face lift would feel comfortable knowing that the surgeon was gay too. They like to have gay hairdressers. I'm really interested in trauma disruption. With a reasonable amount of discretion one can avoid problems by not allowing it to become common knowledge.

Thus, we can see that gay commitment is constructed with reference not only to the occupation of the actor but also to the employment aspiration which he has. The occupational environment is, perhaps, the most critical ground for commitment adaptation. The occupational career decisions which the actor makes, and their consequent effects upon subjective gay career will, in large part, determine what type of career adaptation the gay actor will assume.

Family

Although occupation is, perhaps, the biggest commitment contingency in adult life, family situations also present the individual with substantial decision-making adaptation. We have already stressed the importance of family in the emergence of early gay commitment during the initial experience. Although most men move away from their families once they enter adult life, the influences a family exerts upon them remain. All thirty-one respondents lived away from home. The most consistent and distinct difference between the two groups arose within the realm of family relations. All but two respondents who scored high enough on the survey to be interviewed and placed in the self-enhancing group had either told their parents of their sexual status or their parents had discovered the actor's sexual preference

inadvertently. In the self-degrading group the families of three respondents only were informed about their homosexuality. It appears from this information that family continues throughout his career to be a source of discomfort and penalty for the self-degrading actor. He is not only restricted by his occupation but also required by family considerations to enact further information controls.

Table 11 Family Knowledge about Sexual Status

	Family Knows	Family Ignorant	Total
Self-Enhancing	14	2	16
Self-Degrading	2	13	15
Total	16	15	31

The three self-degrading actors whose parents were informed of their sexual preference tried to keep from speaking of it while in their presence. Although both his parents know about his sexual direction, this respondent stated:

We family are very close, very sympathetic to each other due to a long illness of my mom. I don't feel it at all pertinent to relate to them my sexual identity because this illness is such a strain on all of us. At this point in my life I couldn't live with my father and be gay, but this is not discussed.

Another respondent in the self-degrading group described his family relationship this way:

Fairly close. The distance has cut it down. It's a close relationship, but I don't confide in them about any of the gay activity. They know it but I don't flaunt it in their face.

The most common problem for the self-degrading gay actor is keeping the information away from the family altogether. It appears that the family

strongly influences the form of commitment experienced by gay actor. One respondent explained why he did not inform his family:

- I. What type of relationship do you have with your family now?
- R. I visit them usually once a week.
- I. Do they know about your sexual preference?
- R. I think it's like most parents. They know subconsciously but it's something that's kept in the back of their mind and nothing is ever said about it. I think they see 'hope' in the straight life for me.
- I. You never told them?
- R. No. Because it would hurt them. If they found out, that's different. I think at first I wouldn't admit it but then maybe I would.
- I. How about your brothers?
- R. No. They don't know. I don't think I'd ever tell them. I know I wouldn't.

Another self-degrading respondent stated:

I see them [parents] infrequently. I haven't told them. I don't see how I would be able to in the future. The reasons I haven't; first, I don't want to tell them. Second, I know what their reaction would be. Third, I'm not really emotionally attached to them.

Although this actor claims to be emotionally unattached to his parents, it would seem that, in general, the self-degrading actor is still very concerned with his parent's judgements. They consider their reaction so penalizing that they restrict their gay involvement for the sake of information control. All but two respondents in the self-degrading group considered their relationships with family as good. Almost all had continuing communication with their families, while few respondents in the self-enhancing group maintained familial relationships on such an even keel. In short, the self-degrading actor seems to maintain an even relationship with his family. He is not disposed to risk taking in the form of disclosure in order that they might know him better. On the other hand, he

leaves, unthreatened, his rapport with family by means of information control.

The self-enhancing group provide a relatively distinct comparison in family matters. Where the actor had told his parents, as all but two did, there was little hesitancy to remind them of the character of his sexuality. Steve related:

I told them [parents] because I wanted to be able to relate to them about all of me. Then Mike told me not to tell them and then make believe that it had never been said; I really started a re-education process. When I'll be riding in a car with them and they ask me "Do we go straight here to get to such and such a place?", I'll tell them, "No, we go gayly to the right." So they have had to adjust and because I'm political and in the papers I had to get them ready for their neighbors' comments.

Another respondent stated:

My parents are divorced and my father is in Florida but we still have a good close relationship. He tries to ignore it [homosexuality] which, I don't let him get by with.

There were, however, several respondents whose decision to disclose proved to be almost catastrophic. While some parents were able to accept their son's sexual preference, others found it impossible to cope with.

Joe related:

I've told my parents unfortunately and they won't have anything to do with me. If parents could acknowledge the fact that their sons or daughters live a different life-style. My mother will have nothing to do with me, and when my father died they didn't even call to tell me. I get bored with people that are completely closeminded about people, that never take a look at themselves sexually.

Another interview subject stated:

I had decided not to tell them so they could live their life without undue hassle. My sister had been having a lot of problems and they induced a nervous breakdown in her. It was basically my father's doing and so she felt the need to hurt him I think so she could get out from beneath his influence. She told them about me. Once my mother started crying and said that there were doctors who could help me. My two brothers are hostile and so is my father.

The self-enhancing actors were apt to describe their family relationships as being either very good or very poor. Those individuals who had disclosed their sex preference to their families without alienating them indicated that their relationships with parents and siblings had benefited greatly. On the other hand, where families were unable to accept the idea, the quality of relationship was reported to diminish. The gay actor who informs his family takes a great risk. He usually changes, for better or worse, the relationship he has with them. In so doing he increases his freedom of movement within a gay sex role identity. If his parents are accepting he may well seek their support and maintain emotional contact. If the parents fail to accept his sexuality, he may be forced to reject them. In both cases, however, the actor has shed the cloak of invisibility and made a significant step toward a self-enhancing conception of his sexuality.

It is clear from the data that family disclosure is an important key to the type of homosexual adaptation the actor assumes. While research into family etiology of homosexuality has produced little in the way of generally accepted propositions, this research indicates that family and familial relationships play a significant role in the gay actor's acceptance or rejection of a self-enhancing homosexual attachment.

Identity Prominence

In the interview portion of the research, some attempt was made to discover the degree of importance homosexuality has in the actor's life. In order to conduct such an analysis some estimation of the salience of the actor's sex role identity was needed. McCall and Simmons tell us that "role identities are loosely patterned in a somewhat plastic hierarchy of prominence" (1966:76). They go on to state that this hierarchy depends upon three variables:

...the degree to which person himself supports his own imaginative view...the degree to which one's view of self has been supported by relevant others...the degree to which the individual has committed himself to the particular contents of his role identity (McCall and Simmons, 1966:76).

In accordance with these propositions it would seem likely that the self-enhancing group would consider their homosexuality of greater prominence in their lives than the self-degrading group. This was, in fact, the case, but the distinctions between the two groups were less noticeable than McCall and Simmons statement might lead us to believe. In the self-enhancing group the interview respondents were likely to see their homosexuality as an inextricable part of their occupation and their world view. Steve related:

I suppose the most salient feature of my life is politics and because I'm gay its gay rights. If I wasn't political it would probably be secondary.

Another self-enhancing respondent described the place homosexuality plays in his life:

This fall I was campaign director of the DFL Gay Action Committee. I was campaign director of bid for the state legislature. I'm always aware of being gay. If I hear "queer" being mentioned or "faggot" being mentioned I call the people on it whether I know them or not. I think its really important to call them out because they don't know there are gay people around and if I call them on it they'll have to think about it.

Thus the self-enhancing actor actively incorporates his gay identity into the other major concerns of his life. It would be incorrect to suggest that homosexuality is a conscious and prime motivator in the everyday lives of these men. It is, rather, a theme. It appears to be an integral part of their world view. Paul indicated:

I don't know. I'm just living it. I'm not a liberationist. I'm not a militant. I go to the bars once a week. I don't feel like I have to be involved with it. It goes hand in hand with everything now. It's just the way I live now. Like everything else I'm just conscious. I don't think about being homosexual. I just think about what I am.

The homosexual identification is prominent in the self-enhancing actor in that the individual has embraced it without hiding his tracks. It gradually becomes part of his life. Unlike the self-degrading actor whose information control is greater, the self-enhancing actor manages his occupational, familial and social relationships in such a fashion that a gay identification facilitates rather than obstructs the routine course of his life. Edwin Schur (1965) stated:

Even if homosexuality becomes a major status and role for those who are "in the life" it is not the only one. Such persons will most likely have to interact to be placed according to "straight" standards in some significant spheres of their nonsexual behavior (Schur, 1965:91-92)..

While the researcher may interpret the gay actor's presence at a homosexual bar, enactment, almost exclusively, of leisured behavior with other gays, and other such homosexual phenomena to be directly related to a search for sexuality the best explanation of this behavior lies elsewhere. A homosexual goes to a gay bar to drink and talk just as a doctor or lawyer attends a country club. Many of the homosexual's penalizing social interactions arise from his status as a bachelor rather than as a homosexual. Especially the self-enhancing gay actor, approaches other aspects in his life without consciously attempting to manage his deviant identity. The greater the attachment or voluntary commitment which a gay actor has to his sex role identity, the less situationally managed his homosexuality will be.

The self-degrading actors also indicated that they were able to integrate their gayness into their routine lives and that their homosexual identification is prominent in their daily routine. They differ from the self-enhancing group in that they must maintain greater control of information. This tends to diminish slightly effective integration of their sex role into everyday life. Conscious information control pushes the gay

identity to the front of the actor's awareness, but indicates that he values other activities more highly than the unrestricted expression of sexual preference. The self-degrading actors were also more likely to play down the importance of their sexual preferences. One respondent stated:

I just feel its not that important and that's why I don't tell anybody because it's not that important. Like there are people I could tell but I can't see any reason to bring it up like testing a friendship or something.

The differences between the two original comparison groups were slight, except for the consequences of information control by the self-degrading individuals. A very interesting comparison arose, however, between those singularly committed to a gay sex role identity and those actors who found their way into the interview as ambisexuals. The ambisexuals all denied the prominence of being gay in their life. Although they admitted it was an activity which demanded much of their time, they were certain that it was not a focal point. One ambisexual respondent indicated:

Well let's put it this way. If you were to make a list of attributes which were important to me it would fall tenth or eleventh on the list. It's part of what I am, but it isn't what I am or who I am.

Thus it is apparent from the data that exclusive commitment to a homosexual role identity figures heavily in the prominence that sex role will have in the actor's self-conception. While differences between the self-enhancing and self-degrading groups were slight in this regard, the ambisexual actors demonstrated a distinct integration of sex role into general self-attitude.

Aging

Perhaps the most widely accepted, yet scarcely researched,

proposition relating to the life of a homosexual is that he fears aging. In only one study (Weinberg, 1970) is this view challenged. Ruitenbeck writes about the "overt" homosexual:

His is often slightly or even strongly effeminate. He cultivates a snobbery of his own, a "wit", an interest often superficial - in the arts. He lives fast and moves often; today he is in New York, tomorrow in California. He cherishes his youth and has an all but pathological fear of aging. (Ruitenbeck, 1963:90-91).

Weinberg (1970) indicates that the aging homosexual fails to manifest the signs of anxiety and fear usually attributed to him by research accounts. Indeed he fares better on tests of psychological adjustment and stability than his younger counterpart. In all thirty-one interview sessions none of the respondents spoke of or demonstrated great fear concerning their aging. Though some uncertainty about the gay sex role in old age was mentioned, the dread found in other researches was nonexistent in the present study. The respondents treated the prospects of their aging with relative cool and gave little indication of what Ruitenbeck calls a "pathological fear."

Weinberg shows that the younger homosexual tends to project his own fears of aging onto the older gay associates he encounters:

As for worrying about one's homosexuality becoming known there was an inverse relationship to age, with the younger groups worrying the most. The younger group was also lowest in self-acceptance, lowest in the stability of their own self-conception, highest in negative feeling states on a psychological adjustment scale used in replication, and highest in psycho-somatic symptoms and feelings of interpersonal awkwardness (Weinberg, 1970:534-535).

Although comprehensive psychological indices were not employed in this research, the results tend to support Weinberg's conclusions. There is a tendency on the part of the younger gay actor to be more uncertain about his place in both the straight and gay worlds. He is unsure as to the present and future character of his gay sex role, while he has yet to

become familiar with techniques for coping with the discredit and hostility from the straight world. One respondent spoke about his fear of aging:

I suppose. Well, I guess as you grow older you're less appealing to other people. I thought that would bother me much more but the older I get it doesn't seem to bother me.

Jeff related:

When I was nineteen the idea of being thirty-five was appalling. Now that I'm nearly thirty the idea of being forty-five seems inviting. When I was twenty-one every relationship was just like the first and last. You just reacted strongly, money was tight. After working for a while the money keeps coming in, you just stabilize. The last five years were good so I welcome the next twenty... Ten years ago who I was going to sleep with the next night was important. Right now I'm just happy waiting to see who will come along this month.

There were a few who thought that aging would present genuine, although tolerable, problems. One interview subject related:

Well everyone does. I'm planning my thirty year old face lift and a hair transplant if need be. As long as I keep going I'll keep trying to look as good as I can. The older I get the more I'll have to try and achieve the look I want.

Table 12 Fears about Aging

	Yes	No	Uncertain	Total
Self-Degrading	4	10	1	15
Self-Enhancing	6	10	0	16
Total	10	20	1	31

Table 12 shows that a significant proportion of the respondents lacked the assumed fear of homosexual aging. Many felt aging to be a process which brings with it both rewards and liabilities. Several respondents, who indicated some uncertainty about growing old, did so in terms removed from their homosexual identification. Their fears were related to their

participation in a society which generally equates aging with loss of value. Further, respondents disliked the fact that their sexuality would restrict them from raising families. Some actors wanted children to help support them in old age:

I don't think it has anything to do with being gay. I think it's just a fear of being old. I guess it would be easier to accept being old if you had a family. If you have a family it's obvious that you're nurturing something but in the gay world you can't. I guess you can but it's so hard to do.

The contrast between our data on aging and other data is understandable. First, society has changed in its acceptance of homosexuality. Due mostly to the efforts of gay liberation groups, homosexuality is much more visible now than it was even five years ago. Consequently younger gay actors face the world with less anxiety regarding their aging. They can also see older homosexuals who exemplify success and contentment. Second, the sample interviewed here consisted of people who had already developed a strong commitment to homosexuality. Thus they had already come to grips with aging as a possible penalizing circumstance.

Changes

Although there were no strong attitudes toward aging, the actors did anticipate temporal changes in their sexuality. They tended to see diminishing frequency of sexual contact as one consequence of aging. Weinberg (1970) also found this:

The younger homosexual, like the old homosexual, scored lower in the extent of his association with other homosexuals and higher in his association with heterosexuals. In frequency of homosexual outlet, the young homosexual was also lower, as was the old homosexual (Weinberg, 1970: 531-532).

Interestingly, some respondents felt they could consider establishing heterosexual relations in the future. Table 13 demonstrates that nearly

Table 13. Inclined to Develop Future Heterosexual Relations

	Likely	Possibly	Unlikely	Total
Self-Degrading	5	1	7	13
Self-Enhancing	2	3	9	14
Ambisexual	<u>1</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
Total	8	7	16	31

half the respondents saw some possibilities of future heterosexual relations. The self-enhancing actors showed uniformity about the direction of their future sexual preference. Steve related:

No, if somebody were to hand me a pill and say, "Take this and you can become straight," I would spit in his face. I'm not suggesting that a person doesn't have a choice to be gay, but it just means different things to different people.

The self-degrading respondents manifested a less absolute attachment to their sexual orientation. Although they had little reason to expect a change in the near future, nearly half saw a possibility of heterosexual relations later in life. In no case, however, did the respondents describe this possibility as an exclusive attraction to women. Instead they believed heterosexual interactions would help them achieve other ends. One respondent stated:

The way I feel now I can't see that happening but I can't rule it out. I still would like to have a son. I somehow expect that one day I'll get married. If it happens, fine, but I'm not planning on it. The idea of being the head of a household and having a family, yeah, that might be a good deal.

Another respondent described the circumstances under which he could accept a heterosexual union:

Curiosity and maybe being hurt by the gay world. I'd like to try it with a girl who was not fat and ugly. I'd like

to father a child but I'm just going to have to get my head together. My relations with the female have been zero since I came-out.

The ambisexuals all considered future heterosexual union a possibility. Although their present sexual behavior was predominately gay it did involve women occasionally. One ambisexual respondent stated:

I think it's pretty likely. I wouldn't say it's absolute. I've been engaged before and was truly in love with the girl. I would have been happily married to her. It's possible.

The ambisexuals demonstrated a noncommitment to either sex. Although their sexual relations were usually homosexual, they refused to accept or consider an ultimately exclusive gay sex role.

Although many of the respondents anticipated moderate amounts of change in their sexual lives, they demonstrated no inordinate fears relating to their aging. Diminished sexual frequency, sexual experimentation with women, growing desire for security and a developing openness to others were, however, expected future developments.

CONCLUSION

Through the last three chapters I have tried to specify some of the career contingencies and commitment conditions involved in arriving at and maintaining the status of a homosexual. Some closing discussion as to the general applicability of these concepts to the behavior in question is now in order.

Although Lemert (1967) rejects career as a fruitful analytical concept it seems that, in conjunction with social-psychological theories of commitment, it is, indeed, a useful idea. The notion of career carries with it the essential elements of dynamism and change. It is a standpoint from which the social scientist can view the actor's behavior, intentions, meanings and definitions in the moving perspective in which they occur. To the extent that social-psychological research seeks to provide situationally based and situationally focused explanations of individual behavior, a career perspective is useful.

The preceding research has, by no means, provided the taxonomy of homosexuality Becker (1963) recommends and which is required for solving the problems of sampling and population description. The interview group was dichotomized into two social-psychological categories (self-enhancing, self-degrading) in reference to the forms of commitment which the respondents indicated on a test. Endeavors of this sort help display the heterogeneity, of a group often considered uniform. Within the world of publicly committed homosexuals alone, there exists a wide range of behavioral forms and adaptations.

Commitment can also be seen with reference to types of homosexuals. Humphreys (1970) divides the homosexual world into four types: trade, ambisexuals, gay, and closet queens. These categories, too, serve as

guidelines for studying and understanding the different forms which homosexuality takes. But, they are time-locked conceptions. Throughout his life a gay actor could easily manifest all four types. As a youth he could be ambisexual, then become gay and later in life develop salient trade and closet-queen characteristics. Without the unifying and dynamic character which a career analysis provides, these four concepts would lose much of their strength and relevance.

Humphreys homosexual categorization provides the skeletal structure from which to view homosexuality as a social phenomenon. Social-psychological commitment research, such as in the preceding text, helps fill out such a structure. "It tells us how these people are both similar and different within their category. Combined with a career perspective, the social scientist can also capture the personal meanings of the behavior. The concepts of career and commitment are mutually enriching. In fact, they are inextricable.

This research has not dealt with the relationship between homosexuals and the law. None of the respondents indicated directly that the Minnesota state statutes about "unnatural" acts had an everyday personal effect on his life. The primary sources of penalty are the attitudes of other people. The law does discriminate against the homosexual in employment and other spheres of life. Analysis of this situation was omitted, not because it lacks significance but because of the lack of time and financial resources.

It is interesting to note that when the more politically active respondents spoke of required changes in society, necessary for homosexual acceptance, they directed most of their attacks to the oppressive attitudes of employers, educational institutions, and the general public. Although the law requires change so, too, do the attitudes and behaviors which daily

penalize the gay actor. In Canada, where homosexual relations between consenting adults in private are legal, there is still little evidence of a sympathetic public attitude. To provide a legal status for those who manifest their particular sexual preferences in private with legally acceptable partners, is not enough. These people, whose behavior the law legitimates, are seldom ever visible to the agencies of social control. To declare their behavior as legal is tantamount to saying that they merely have the right to privacy in their own homes. This is hardly a progressive or enlightened posture.

From the data in this research it became apparent that the visibility of a functioning gay social world is a crucial variable in the actor's emerging self-acceptance. If the novice actor can find an acceptable homosexual image in the world, he is likely to try to overcome the restrictions that ultimately root in moral and psychiatric teachings. The strictures of morality, psychiatry, and law do not change homosexuals into heterosexuals. They only create neurotic homosexuals. Thus, homosexual rights groups, such as Gay House in Minneapolis, serve both the homosexual and the public in general. Their goals of attitude changes and public education, rather than being prohibited, should be accepted and implemented as public policy.

Sociological research into the character and content of homosexuality has been at the vanguard of social scientific inquiry in this field. Research by Hooker (1957;1965a;1965b), Humphreys (1970;1972), and Weinberg (1970;1971) have been the catalysts for still more imaginative and productive empirical scrutinies. And the field is rich with problems yet to be explored. From the data of the present study it is increasingly apparent that the concepts of subjective career and commitment will play a large part in future empirical explorations.

APPENDIX

- a) Survey questions and Social Psychological Test
- b) Interview Schedule

Part I

This survey is part of a social study being done in the Twin Cities. After data from the questionnaire have been analyzed you will be contacted for an interview, hence the need for your name, address and telephone number. You can be assured that the information you provide will be kept in the utmost confidence.

- 1) Age _____
- 2) What Religion were you raised with? (Check one)
 - a) Roman Catholic _____
 - b) Protestant _____
 - c) Jewish _____
 - d) Other (Please Specify) _____
 - e) None _____
- 3) What is the size of the town or city in which you spent most of your youth?
 - a) 0-4,999 _____
 - b) 5,000-24,999 _____
 - c) 25,000-99,999 _____
 - d) 100,000-499,999 _____
 - e) 500,000-999,999 _____
 - f) 1 million and over _____
- 4) What is the approximate annual income of your parents?
 - a) \$0-\$3,999 _____
 - b) \$4,000-\$7,999 _____
 - c) \$8,000-\$11,999 _____
 - d) \$12,000-\$14,999 _____
 - e) \$15,000 and over _____
- 5) Do you have any brothers or sisters?

Yes _____ No _____
- 6) If yes, what are their ages?

Sisters	Brothers
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7) What was the last grade you completed in school?

- a) 1-8 _____
- b) 9-12 _____
- c) Some College _____
- d) Finished College _____
- e) Graduate School _____
- f) Trade, Art, or Music School _____

8) What is your present occupation?

- a) (Please indicate occupation) _____
- b) Student _____
- c) Unemployed _____

The following questions describe situations with which you may or may not have had personal experience. Please consider the situations and indicate how you responded or would have responded under the circumstances.

In each situation assume that anyone else who is mentioned is ignorant of your sexual choice, unless specified otherwise. Please respond to the questions as honestly and realistically as possible. Thank you.

Part II

Please check the most appropriate response.

1) Would you defend homosexuals' rights in discussions with your parents?

- Very Likely _____
- Likely _____
- Uncertain _____
- Unlikely _____
- Very Unlikely _____

2) Would you try to educate your younger teen-age brothers or sisters to understand homosexuality when they make false or inaccurate statements about gay people?

- Very Likely _____
- Likely _____
- Uncertain _____
- Unlikely _____
- Very Unlikely _____

3) Would you actively maintain a straight image in the presence of your parents (e.g., dating girls, making antihomosexual remarks)? (over)

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 4) Would you try to educate your older brothers or sisters to understand homosexuality when they make false or inaccurate statements about gay people?

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 5) Would you hesitate to mention to your parents that a friend of yours was a beautician or a dress designer?

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 6) Would you bring your lover home for a meal with your parents?

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 7) If he expressed interest, would you encourage your younger brother to pursue a gay way of life?

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 8) Would you try to avoid admiring attractive men when in the presence of unknowing and unsympathetic straights?

Very Unlikely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 9) Would you show physical affection for a man in public? (over)

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 10) Would you be embarrassed to greet a "flamboyantly" gay friend on the street while in the company of unknowing straights?

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 11) If you went to a V.D. clinic with a "social disease" would you reveal that you were gay?

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 12) Would you feel embarrassed when walking from a conspicuously gay bar onto the street?

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 13) Would you correct an unknowing and unsympathetic straight if he spoke of a homosexual man as a queer?

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 14) If given the opportunity, would you give a class presentation on "homosexuality" at the school you were or still are attending?

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 15) If, in a class, the professor made statements about homosexuality which you disagreed with would you challenge him? (over)

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 16) Assume you had no desire to enter the military. If you were faced with only two choices relating to military service, either you get drafted or request a deferment on the grounds of homosexuality, would you choose the deferment?

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

- 17) Would you move to another city in order to avoid unwanted discovery or to eliminate hassles with parents and relatives resulting from your homosexuality?

Very Likely
Likely
Uncertain
Unlikely
Very Unlikely

Part III

The following paragraphs present situations in which the interaction at hand requires some type of response. Again it is possible that you have experienced some or all of these circumstances. Please indicate, in your own words, your reactions to the situations.

- 1) You have been working in an office for two months as a clerk and as far as you are concerned no one is "in the know" about your choice of sexual expression. You need this job for financial security and, although it appears that all the employees are straight, you enjoy your colleagues association. It is Friday at 5:00 p.m. and you are heading for the door, ready for the weekend. Your boss spys your departure and with a gleam in his eye says "Hey, you gonna score with a few chicks this weekend? How about lining me up with one?"

What is your response?

2) You are returning from lunch at a restaurant with three straight acquaintances from your office. During this time a person whom you met at a bar the night before is walking up the street. He is dressed in a rather "flamboyant" style and as he passes you and your associates he says hello with a lilted voice that catches the attention of the others. One of them questions: "Hey man, where did you meet that faggot, anyway?"

What is your response?

3) You are sitting with a group of unknowing and seemingly unsympathetic straights having a discussion. The topic gets around to sex and one of them says: "And what do you think of those gays? I don't understand why they insult society by demonstrating out in the open. Why can't they live their own lives and keep their problems to themselves?"

What is your response?

4) We would appreciate any comments you may wish to make about this questionnaire?

Thank you for your cooperation.

TABULATED SCORE SHEET

Question 1

7
6
5
4
3

Question 2

7
6
5
4
3

Question 3

1
2
3
4
5

Question 4

5
4
3
2
1

Question 5

3
4
5
6
7

Question 6

7
6
5
4
3

Question 7

7
6
5
4
3

Question 8

3
4
5
6
7

Question 9

7
6
5
4
3

Question 10

3
4
5
6
7

Question 11

5
4
3
2
1

Question 12

1
2
3
4
5

Question 13

5
4
3
2
1

Question 14

5
4
3
2
1

Question 15

5
4
3
2
1

Question 16

5
4
3
2
1

Question 17

1
2
3
4
5

Question 18 (remarks)

Question 19 (remarks)

Question 20 (remarks)

Total (Col. 1)

Total (Col. 2)

Total (Col. 3)

Total Score

Interview Schedule

I. Early pre-adolescence and adolescence.

- 1) Could you please describe the circumstances surrounding your first homosexual experience? (Probe: place, age, relation or partner, age of partner)
- 2) Specifically, what were the factors which motivated or convinced you to engage in that first experience? (Probe: Attraction phy., admiration social, fear, curiosity)
- 3) What was the frequency of your homosexual activity after your first experience?

seldom - once each year _____
infrequent - one each month _____
frequent - one each week _____
very frequent - one each day _____
- a) For how long did this frequency continue? What changes, sporadic or otherwise occurred before "coming-out"?
- 4) Can you remember how you felt about your experience after the first time you tried it? (Probe: scared, guilty, regret, shame, proud, glad, etc.)
- 5) How did your involvement in homosexuality develop between the time of your first experience and your first stages of coming out? (Probe: types of partners, number of partners, location, age limits, ages of partners, differing frequencies, lengths of relationships.)

- 6) What were the most usual ways in which you met partners? (Probe: introduced by a friend, pickups, self-disclosure and seduction, enticement, etc.)
- 7) Who were the people, if anyone, that you confided in during those adolescent years about your homosexuality? (Probe: school friends, brothers, parents, teacher, counselor, religious person, etc.)
- 8) Were any of your confidants also gay?
- 9) How did you manage to disguise or hide your activity from your parents?
- 10) How did you hide your behavior from brothers and sisters?
- 11) What techniques did you employ to conceal your activity from your peers?
- 12) Did you have girlfriends? Did you engage in petting, dating, and other courtship activities with girls? (Probe: frequency, depth, length)

13) Could you describe the feelings which you had about adolescent sex-play and courtship with girls?

14) What types of morality information about homosexuality did you have when you were first entering into the behavior? (Probe: parental discussions about sex, clergyman's teachings, hearsay, etc.)

15) Did this information have any effect upon you? If so what? (Probe: non-incriminating talks with ministers, and priests seeking information about moral and ethical consequences)

16) Would you say that your sexual choice as an adolescent separated you socially and psychologically from your peers?

a) If so, how, and in what situations?

II. Coming-Out

17) How do you explain the early movements from sexual secrecy to consideration of more public (bars, etc.) social involvement?

18) What were the factors which made this movement towards coming-out seem feasible as an alternative?

19) What made it seem attractive to you?

20) Up to about 3-6 months before "coming-out" what types of recreational, education, social or occupational activities were you engaged in? (Probe: new friends, new groups, new activities, etc.)

21) Who were you living with prior to "coming-out" and where?

22) During coming-out?

23) Can you describe the whole process of your coming-out? (Probe: Did you start by going to bars? Who did you go with? How often did you go?)

24) Were there any group of friends or associates who supported you in the decision to come-out?

25) If so, were they relatively new friends or had they been associates of yours for a long time?

26) Just prior to and right after coming-out did you disclose your sexual choice to more people? (straights)

27) If so, who were they (close or good friends, associates, enemies) and please be as chronologically accurate as possible?

- 28) What were the circumstances under which you usually disclosed yourself?
(Probe: Place, time, hardward, others)

- 29) How, if at all, has coming-out changed your life?

III. Coping

- 30) How long has it been since you came out?

- 31) Has your style of life changed any since then?

- 32) How has it changed in reference to your homosexuality? (Probe: frequency, types of people, permanent lovers)

- 33) What types of physical and emotional relationships are you looking for now in homosexuality? (Probe: for information about success with long-term relationships and whether the person wants this type of involvement)

- 34) What if any difficulties do you face at work (at school) in managing your homosexual identity?

- 35) Does anyone at work know of your sexual orientation?

- 36) What types of occupational goals do you have?
- 37) Do you foresee any difficulty in integrating these goals with your life as a homosexual? (Probe: what obstacles do you foresee)
- 38) How did you deal with the draft?
- 39) How would you describe your involvement in the gay world at present?
- 40) What degree of significance does homosexuality have in your present life? (Probe: Would you say that it was the most important feature of your personality?)
- 41) In what situation and at what times are you most conscious of your homosexuality?
- 42) What types of relationship do you have now with your family? (Probe: parents, sisters, brothers - when, if at all, did the subject disclose to each?)
- 43) How do you feel that homosexuality relates to heterosexuality? (Probe: Hooker-Dichotomous, continuum, separate sex.)

IV. Aging

44. As far as you can tell now would you have any inclination to develop heterosexual involvement in the future?
45. What changes, if any, do you foresee in your sexual life as you grow older?
46. What feelings do you have now about older men (40-50) who are actively homosexual? (Probe: admiration, sympathy, fear, anxiety, pity)
47. Do you have any fears about the consequences of aging?

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