

**A Very Straight Gay: Masculinity, Homosexual Experience, and the Dynamics of Gender**



R. W. Connell

*American Sociological Review*, Vol. 57, No. 6 (Dec., 1992), 735-751.

Stable URL:

<http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0003-1224%28199212%2957%3A6%3C735%3AAVSGMH%3E2.0.CO%3B2-O>

*American Sociological Review* is currently published by American Sociological Association.

---

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/about/terms.html>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/journals/asa.html>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

---

JSTOR is an independent not-for-profit organization dedicated to creating and preserving a digital archive of scholarly journals. For more information regarding JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

---

## A VERY STRAIGHT GAY: MASCULINITY, HOMOSEXUAL EXPERIENCE, AND THE DYNAMICS OF GENDER\*

---

R. W. CONNELL

University of California, Santa Cruz

*I develop a conceptual approach to changes in masculinity that emphasizes the dynamics of the gender order as a whole. Homosexual masculinity is an important locus of these dynamics. After a critique of conventional discourses of masculinity I develop a theorized life-history method for researching gender. Analysis of eight life histories from an Australian gay community finds (1) initial engagement with hegemonic masculinity, (2) sexuality as the key site of difference, and (3) gradual closure based on relationships or on bodily experience that eroticizes similarity. Conventional masculinity is an aspect of the object of desire, yet is subverted by this object-choice; a contradictory masculinity is produced. Though the men in this study do not directly contest the gender order, the reification of "gayness" provides a social basis for sexual freedom, and the stabilization of a dissident sexuality opens possibilities for change in the social structure of gender.*

Recent media attention to masculinity and male initiation, fueled in the United States by enormous sales of *Iron John: A Book About Men* (Bly 1990), does not represent a sudden discovery. Over the last 20 years, in the wake of the new feminism, debates on men's position in sexual politics have taken place in most Western countries, including Britain (Tolson 1977), Germany (Brzoska and Hafner 1990), Sweden (Bengtsson and Frykman 1987) and Australia (Lewis 1983). These debates have given rise to a body of descriptive research, termed "male sex role" or "masculinity" research in the United States (Kimmel 1987; Brod 1987).

Within this literature, change in men's character or in the "male role" have most often been explained by the psychological discomfort of the individual or by generalized processes of modernization and technological change. I argue that we must focus on the social dynamics generated within gender relations. The gender order itself is the site of relations of dominance and subordina-

tion, struggles for hegemony, and practices of resistance.

I explore these issues by examining gender dynamics among a group of men who have sex with men. Using eight life histories I investigate their encounters with conventional masculinity, the contradictions of sexuality and identity, and the potential for change in the gender order that their social practice implies. Their homosexual masculinity simultaneously depends on and disrupts the existing gender order in ways that illuminate long-term possibilities of change in the structure of gender relations.

### MASCULINITY IN GENDER DYNAMICS

The current popular literature "about men" has an unrelentingly psychological focus. Authors speak of archetypes and "father wounds," of men's pain and healing; they offer therapeutic programs to resolve crises of emotion and personal meaning. They have little to say about the social dimensions of these issues, and most are startlingly ethnocentric and class-bound in outlook. The research literature has a broader perspective — it has begun to document masculinities in a range of class and ethnic contexts. The conceptual framework is usually based on the idea of a "male sex role" (strictly, a masculine gender role) and masculine identity. The conceptualization of gender through role theory, however, reifies expectations and self-descriptions, exaggerates consensus, marginalizes questions of power, and can-

---

\* Direct all correspondence to R. W. Connell, Stevenson College, University of California, Santa Cruz CA 95064. I am deeply indebted to the men interviewed, to Norm Radican and Pip Martin for interviewing, and to colleagues Tim Carrigan, Gary Dowsett, Mark Davis, Rosemary Pringle, Marie O'Brien, Mike Messner, Alice Mellian, and the late John Lee. This research was supported by a grant from the Australian Research Grants Committee with supplementary funding from Macquarie University and Harvard University.

not analyze historical change (Stacey and Thorne 1985; Connell 1987).

But gender is an area to which the classic sociological questions of power, institutionalized inequality, and dynamics of social change do apply. These questions have been posed in an international feminist literature centering on the concept of "patriarchy" (Walby 1989). Seeing gender as a structure of social power has immediate implications for research on men. To understand a system of inequality, we must examine its dominant group — the study of men is as vital for gender analysis as the study of ruling classes and elites is for class analysis. With this perspective the scope of research "about men" expands from the conventions of gender — the focus of gender-role studies — to the full range of ways in which men's social practices shape the gender order, including economic relations, institutions (such as the state), and sexuality (Segal 1990).

This is an important advance; yet masculinity cannot be treated as a simple reflex of patriarchal power, for two reasons. First, the concept of "patriarchy" has been sharply criticized within feminism (Rowbotham 1979) as ahistorical, implying an unchanging, universal domination of women by men. This is inconsistent with the historical record. Second, some of the very writing that identifies men as holders of social power (MacKinnon 1987) rests on a categorical model of gender that treats men as an undifferentiated class. This view is inconsistent with contemporary research, which documents a considerable range of masculinities, both in terms of cultural representations of men, and in terms of the institutionalized practices of men in gender relations. Differences are found not only across cultures (Herdt 1982) and through historical time (Roper and Tosh 1991), but also — a point vital for theory — within a particular culture at any given time, e.g., heterosexual and homosexual masculinities and the masculinities of different ethnic and age groups (Kimmel and Messner 1989).

The problems of change and difference are closely connected. The possibilities of historical change in a gender order are reflected in divisions among men as well as in the practices of women. At the same time, differences among men can only be understood with reference to the structure of the gender order. The recognition of multiple "masculinities" in recent research need not reduce the sociology of masculinity to a postmodern kaleidoscope of lifestyles. Rather, it points to the *relational* character of gender. Different masculinities are constituted in relation to

other masculinities and to femininities — through the structure of gender relations (Connell 1987, pp. 175–88) and through other social structures (notably class and colonialism, Phillips 1987; ethnicity, Blauner 1989). In modern social formations, certain constructions of masculinity are hegemonic, while others are subordinated or marginalized.

My approach to social change is based on this relational perspective on masculinity. Relations of hegemony reflect and produce a social dynamic: struggles for resources and power, processes of exclusion and incorporation, splitting and reconstitution of gender forms. To analyze this dynamic is to explore the crisis tendencies of the gender order as a whole. (The concept of "crisis tendencies" is borrowed from Habermas [1976], who did not, however, apply it to gender.)

In the dynamics of hegemony in contemporary Western masculinity, the relation between heterosexual and homosexual men is central, carrying a heavy symbolic freight. To many people, homosexuality is a *negation* of masculinity, and homosexual men must be effeminate. Given that assumption, antagonism toward homosexual men may be used to define masculinity, a stance Herek (1986) summed up in the proposition that "to be 'a man' in contemporary American society is to be homophobic — that is, to be hostile toward homosexual persons in general and gay men in particular" (p. 563). The resulting oppression of gay men, as Pleck (1980) observed, provides a symbol for all cases of hierarchy among men.

While Herek's formulation is oversimplified, it captures the significance of heterosexual-versus-homosexual relations for *heterosexuality*. The emergence of "the homosexual" as a social type in the last two centuries of European and American culture and as documented in the new gay history (Kinsman 1987; Greenberg 1988) has a reciprocal. In the same historical process, erotic contact between men was expelled from the legitimate repertoire of dominant groups of men, and hegemonic masculinity was thus redefined as explicitly and exclusively heterosexual. The process of expulsion constructed hegemonic masculinity as homophobic, in Herek's sense. The view that homophobia is a means of policing the boundaries of a traditional male sex role (Lehne 1989) grasps the dynamic character of the process but misconstrues its history: Heterosexual masculinity did not predate homophobia but was historically produced along with it.

Herek's formulation misses the significance of gay masculinities. Some groups of openly gay

men emphasize masculinity as part of their cultural style (Humphries 1985). Closeted gay men enjoy the general advantages of masculine gender, and even effeminate gay men may draw economic benefits from the overall subordination of women. In our culture, men who have sex with men are generally oppressed, but they are not definitively excluded from masculinity. Rather, they face *structurally-induced conflicts* about masculinity — conflicts between their sexuality and their social presence as men, about the meaning of their choice of sexual object, and in their construction of relationships with women and with heterosexual men. Out of these conflicts have come unusually sharp observations of heterosexual men and pioneering movements in sexual politics.

The experiences and practices of homosexual men, therefore, are important for understanding contemporary gender dynamics and the possibilities for change. Research on masculinity must explore how gender operates for those men most vehemently defined as unmasculine: how masculinity is constructed for them, how homosexual and heterosexual masculinities interact, and how homosexual men experience and respond to change in the gender order.

#### DISCOURSES OF HOMOSEXUALITY

These questions have *not* been central to the traditional discourses about “homosexuals” in the human sciences. (Using the term “homosexual” as a noun already reifies sexual object choice into a type of human being.) Yet there is a convergence with gender analysis, especially in recent critiques.

The discourse of homosexuality most familiar to sociologists is the sociology of deviance. In classics of this field, one routinely encounters lists like “alcoholics, mentally disordered persons, stutterers, homosexuals, and systematic check forgers” (Lemert 1972:78; cf. Becker 1963; Goffman 1963). The “labeling” approach in the sociology of deviance raised useful questions about the apparatus of social control, the process of stigmatization, the moral entrepreneurs who stigmatized, and the need to negotiate assigned identities. But placing homosexuality within a “normality/deviance” framework virtually erased the dimension of gender and sexual politics. For example, Goffman (1963, pp. 98–99) quoted an episode in which a gay man was severely bashed for revealing his relationship with a man passing as straight, but dismissed the episode with a joke

as an example of “disciplinary action”, failing to see a dramatic and violent moment in the politics of masculinity. When Plummer (1975) applied interactionist labeling theory in fine detail to gay men, the result was a useful catalogue of pressures experienced in the individual life-course, but a conceptual retreat from the structural and dynamic questions being raised by gay movement theorists (Altman 1972).

Homosexual men have been the objects of a more individualistic discourse in psychiatry, psychoanalysis, and psychology. The focus here is the “etiology” of homosexuality — homosexuality being understood as a condition of the individual for which causes must be found, whether family pathology, gender aberration, or biological predisposition (Friedman 1988). Gender was emphasized by psychoanalysis, but the *social* dimension of gender was ignored. Lewes’s (1988) remarkable history of psychoanalytic conceptions of homosexuality showed how Freud’s radical but ambiguous formulations, which linked homosexuality to the universal bisexuality of human beings, were gradually displaced by a doctrine of homosexuality as a specific condition, and an inherently pathological one to boot. Psychoanalysis thus merged with the medical and juridical apparatus that treated male homosexuality as “other” to a “natural” heterosexuality.

This discourse was challenged in the 1960s and 1970s by therapists who found no particular pathology among homosexual men, though some among the homophobic (Weinberg 1973), and by gay liberationists, who considered psychiatrists attempting to “cure” homosexuality as direct agents of oppression. This position was given support by studies of sex that documented widespread same-sex experiences and failed to find pathology (Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin 1948; Bell and Weinberg 1978). Kinsey’s positivist sexual science, however, left little space for desire, culture, or social relations. It was displaced in turn by social constructionist views, which saw homosexuality as scripted sexual performance (Gagnon and Simon 1974) or as the effect of an apparatus of surveillance and classification (Foucault 1980).

The social constructionist view of homosexuality (Plummer 1981; Greenberg 1988) has become the meeting point of sexology, sociology, anthropology, history, and gay theory. It has the conceptual power to integrate a wide range of evidence from a range of disciplines, and has become so accepted that it is now the target of dissenting polemics (Stein 1990). The central

claim of social constructionism — that homosexual relations exist only within culture and show deep historical and cross-cultural variation — is now well established (Altman et al. 1989). Social constructionism underpins a widespread view of homosexuality as an *identity* formed gradually through a series of steps or stages (Troiden 1989) and as a *subculture* (or set of subcultures) maintained in a pluralistic society by socialization and boundary negotiation (Herdt 1992).

However, a focus on identity and subculture takes the emphasis off large-scale social structure, in this case structural questions about gender. In this respect, social constructionism has followed the sociology of deviance in leaching gender out of group process. Paradoxically (given the HIV epidemic) it also takes the emphasis off sexuality, which in much of this literature is primarily a criterion of group membership. These tendencies are clear in recent work on gay culture and identity in North America (Epstein 1987; Herdt 1992).

These trends have turned gay studies away from questions about masculinity and the large-scale dynamics of gender. There are, however, alternative versions of social constructionism. Blachford (1981) reflected on the interplay between the gay world and the culture of male dominance in society. He found both reproduction of that dominance, and resistance to it, in what is ultimately a "controlled space." Weeks (1986) recast social constructionism by treating sexuality as the domain of a complex and constantly changing political struggle. A post-structuralist view of social order allowed Weeks to see sexual subcultures as more diverse and having greater potential for change than did Blachford. Weeks also emphasized the agency of gay men in the construction of sexual subcultures. This brings Weeks closer to the Sartrean view of social process, which emphasizes collective practice in the making of history (Sartre 1976). Finally, even the subcultural approach can lead back to gender if it focuses on gay subcultures that dramatize gender issues. Klein (1990) and Levine (1992), studying hypermasculine bodybuilders and gay "clones" (a style of dress and interaction evolved in the 1970s), point to significant contradictions over masculinity within homosexual experiences and show the fruitfulness of exploring how those contradictions get resolved.

Although these debates about the nature of homosexuality have not focused on gender, they help refine the research agenda on gay masculinity. To understand the construction of homosexual

masculinities requires an examination of gender relations in the family (the terrain of psychoanalytic discourse) and the shared social life of gay men (the terrain of subcultural studies). The construction of sexuality, in its problematic relationship with identity and subculture, must be on the agenda. Finally, the debates on etiology as well as some recent subcultural research indicate that contradictory social and emotional processes are likely to be involved.

## METHOD

Four issues are the foci of this study: the construction of masculinity in the lives of gay men; the construction of sexuality and its relationship to identity and subculture; the interplay between heterosexual and homosexual masculinities; and the experience of change in gender relations.

This agenda requires close-focus methods. The classic approach to the dynamics of sexual object choice is through life-history case studies. Of these, Freud's (1955) "Wolf Man" case study remains the model exploration of internal contradictions in masculinity.

Life history studies are enjoying a revival as a way to include formerly unheard voices in public discourse (McCall and Wittner 1990). The method has problems, including the limitations of conscious memory (Rubin 1986), difficulties of corroboration, laborious data gathering, and time-consuming analysis. At the same time it has virtues as a tool of *verstehen* that is flexible in design and application (Plummer 1983). I chose the life-history method because of its capacity — less discussed in the methodological literature but clear in classic life-history research (Thomas and Znaniecki 1927) — to document social structure, collectivities, and institutional change at the same time as personal life. The fundamental connection between life-history and social structure has been theorized by Sartre (1963), whose conception of personal practice as a project developing through time underpins the method of this study.

To decode structural effects in personal practice, the basic unit of study must be the single case. Personal trajectories reveal the interplay of constraints and possibilities, and the interaction of structures. Accordingly, the single case is the basis of this study. However, if the research problem concerns the dynamics operating in a given social location, a group of cases from that location must be examined so that the range of practical possibilities and the character of collective

practice become clear. Further, exploring a dynamic like the reconstruction of masculinity that operates across different social locations requires comparison of a range of groups. Accordingly, the study design had three levels: the single case, a group of cases from a particular location, and comparisons between groups in different locations. This report focuses on a group of cases from a particular location, but refers to the other levels.

This logic requires features of design and interpretation that take the life history well beyond unstructured narrative. The socially theorized life history, to give the approach a name, requires prior analysis of the social structure involved. Interviews in this study were based on an analysis of gender as a structure of social practice and of its three main substructures: the division of labor, the structure of power, and the structure of cathexis (Connell 1987), each realized at both collective and personal levels. For the substance of the autobiographical narrative, interviewers sought descriptions of concrete practices (e.g., what a boy and his father actually did in interaction, not just how the relationship was experienced). We used institutional transitions (e.g., entry to school, entry to workforce) as the framework for memory, and asked for descriptions of interactive practice in institutions (particularly families, schools, and workplaces). We explored the sequencing of relationships in order to understand the construction of gender as a project through time. To gain clues to emotional dynamics, we also sought accounts of early memories, family constellations, and relationship crises.

The mode of analysis in life-history research is as important as the interview design. In this study, the individual cases were intensively worked over and written up before the analysis of groups was undertaken. A standard format for the case studies was developed with three main components, each examining the whole interview material from a different point of view: (1) the life course (i.e., the narrative sequencing of events); (2) a structural analysis, using a grid of the substructures of gender relations defined by the theoretical model; and (3) a dynamic analysis that traced the construction (and deconstruction) of masculinity in the individual life.

After the case studies were completed, the group analysis began. The goal was to explore the similarities and differences between the trajectories of men in a given location and their collective involvement in the historical dynamic of gender. Cases were systematically compared

by mapping them on a synoptic grid that, for each topic, kept all cases in view while preserving the gestalt of each life-course.

Because this project concerned contemporary transformations in masculinity, four social locations were chosen in which the institutionalization of masculinity was likely to be under pressure, and thus crisis tendencies might be decoded: urban gay community networks; environmental or "green" activism (a location with a strong feminist influence); unemployed working-class youth; and knowledge-based occupations outside the old professions. My approach is similar to what Glaser and Strauss (1967) called "theoretical sampling." I judged that about 10 cases from each location would reveal the diversity of dynamics without being unmanageable in terms of funding and reporting. Thirty-six case studies were completed.

This report presents the results for one location — a group of eight men recruited from an urban gay community in Sydney, Australia. The aim was to find respondents who had a reasonably well-defined, shared location in gender relations. This group reflects the social character of the Sydney gay community as established in a subsequent quantitative study (Connell et al. 1989). The group also reflects the predominant style of sexuality. It includes no drag queens, leathermen, or aficionados of sexual exotica. (Such sexual styles may be prominent on the gay cultural scene, but only a small proportion of the gay community is committed to them in practice [Connell and Kippax 1990].) Although representativeness is not measurable with a small group of case studies, I am confident that these cases are not atypical. Interviews, lasting one to two hours, were conducted from 1985 through 1986; interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

Reporting on a study like this is difficult. The design emphasizes intensive analysis, rather than numbers of cases, while focusing on social process. Condensation is essential; but condensation can undermine the goal of the life-history method — to show life courses. In addition, a project on gender tensions related to sexuality can hardly avoid sensitive material that places ethical constraints on reporting. It is not easy to achieve a faithful representation of such data. My approach to writing this text is a compromise: For each research question, I select enough detail from one or a few cases to document the main process revealed by the full data set while giving enough of other cases to indicate variations or alternatives. Although all cases were con-

sidered in the analysis of each topic, not all cases are quoted.

Although the study is set in Australia, the analysis centers on topics having close parallels in North America and Western Europe. These regions are similar in the overall patterns of gender relations (Bottomley, de Lepervanche and Martin 1991) and the recent history of homosexual masculinities (Aldrich and Wotherspoon 1992) because of shared cultural history and contemporary global economic and media integration.

### THE PARTICIPANTS

The participants were recruited by word of mouth through interpersonal networks in the Sydney gay community, inviting participation in a study of "changes in the lives of men." Participants came from mixed class and regional backgrounds, though their present lives converge.

*Mark Richards* is in his early twenties, unmarried, and a nurse trainee. The oldest child of a business family, his childhood was dominated by conflict between his parents, their separation, and his mother's illness and death. He bore heavy responsibilities early. Sent to a boys' private school, he formed his first long-term sexual relationship there and failed his exams. Rejecting social conservatism and a career, he went to live in a radical communal household. Women friends suggested nursing, and he started work in a hospice for the dying.

*Dean Carrington* is in his mid-twenties, unmarried, and works as a heavy-vehicle driver. The youngest child of a close-knit family that ran a small business, he had a religious upbringing but lost faith after a sibling died. His family migrated several times. (He is the only one of the eight men who was born outside Australia.) His parents encouraged education, but he failed university and then supported himself in a variety of manual jobs. He eventually migrated alone to join the gay community in Sydney.

*Alan Andrews* is in his late twenties, unmarried, works as a technician. He was a younger child in a large family in a small country town. His father, a tradesman in a family business, and his mother, a housewife, were embedded in an extended family. Successful in school, he moved away to attend college and began to break with country conservatism. He worked in the city because no jobs were available in the region. He linked up with gay social networks and eventually formed a long-term couple relationship.

*Jonathan Hampden* is in his late twenties, unmarried, and is a tradesman's assistant. The middle child in an affluent professional family, he was sent to private schools where he did poorly. His anxious relationship with an overworked father meant that his father's death precipitated an emotional breakdown as well as a family economic crisis. He made a slow recovery through a series of relationships and casual jobs. Recently he has been deeply involved in growth-movement therapy.

*Damien Outhwaite* is in his early thirties, unmarried, and is an unemployed taxi driver (works only occasionally). He was the middle child in a working-class family in a remote country town. He moved to the regional city for higher education and to escape country conservatism. A flamboyant student, he was pushed out of his professional course on suspicion of being gay. He moved to Sydney and discovered the gay community, but lost his white-collar job for being gay. Living on the dole and working periodically as a driver, he has become involved in creative arts.

*Adam Singer* is in his early thirties, unmarried, and works in the city office of a large organization as a professional specialist. His family was upwardly mobile from the working class; he was pushed toward a profession and succeeded at university, but lacks enthusiasm for the work. However, the environment is secure, and he has stayed with the same employer. His main enthusiasms lie in an active and varied sex life and a strong interest in the art world.

*Gordon Anderson* is in his early forties, divorced, a father, and is a company manager. He was the oldest child in a rural family that was disrupted by his father's alcoholism and supported by his mother's manual work. From school he went to white-collar work in the city, married, and started a family. He entered the "yuppie" (his word) social world, but disliked its snobbery. He became prominent working for a voluntary organization that had a high public profile. His marriage gradually broke down and separation followed; he keeps in touch with the children. He shifted his career to business management. He has established a long-term couple relationship, but remains closeted.

*Gerry Lamont* is in his late forties, married, a father, and is a professional in private practice. He was the oldest child in a working-class family marked by violent conflict. Rejecting this background he became upwardly mobile via schooling and religion. He entered a conventional mar-

riage and built a successful, but increasingly unsatisfying, bureaucratic professional career. Personal crises and encounter groups led to a "period of transition" in which he consciously reconstructed his sexuality, personal relations, and working life. He formed gay relationships during and after this period.

CONSTRUCTING MASCULINITY

Traditional discourses of homosexuality have been preoccupied with the "causes" of homosexuality. The psychiatric discourse in particular has connected the "etiology" of homosexuality with some abnormality in family relations or gender development, although debate has raged about what that abnormality is. Recent opinion has been influenced by a San Francisco study that found little support for the seductive-mother/weak-father thesis (Bell, Weinberg, and Hammersmith 1981). However, homosexual men in the study often reported gender nonconformity in childhood.

Neither view of the origins of homosexuality throws light on the life histories in this study. All the men grew up in families with a conventional division of labor and a conventional power structure. Dean Carrington jokingly refers to his father as a "Victorian male." One-half of the fathers were physically abusive toward their wives. The mothers worked as housewives and child caregivers; a few had occasional paid jobs. The family constellations of these eight men clearly fell within the range of what was numerically "normal" or socially conventional in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s (Game and Pringle 1979).

There is little evidence of "gender nonconformity" either. The masculinizing practices in these families parallel those in the study's heterosexual life histories. What I have called the "moment of engagement" with hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1990) also occurred for these men. Their mothers put them in pants rather than skirts, their fathers taught them football, and they learned sexual difference. After leaving the family, they were inducted into the usual sex-typed peer groups, received the usual sexist informal sex education, were subjected to the gender dichotomies that pervade school life (Thorne forthcoming).

Jonathan Hampden's father, for example, was the dominant person in his household, although he increasingly withdrew as his energies focused on building up his professional business. Jonathan's father had been an academic and sporting success at the private boys' school to which he later sent Jonathan, and Jonathan was pres-

sured to perform similarly. Rebellious and resentful in early adolescence, Jonathan became involved — even something of a leader — in a school-resisting peer network that engaged in heavy smoking, group sex play, playground fighting, antagonism toward teachers, and poor academic performance. In puberty, Jonathan grew physically large and became a successful footballer. He recalls episodes of violence on the football field in which he bashed opposing players, a practice that is in tune with rugby's hyper-masculine culture (Dunning 1986).

Thus, Jonathan Hampden was engaged in the public construction of a hegemonic form of masculinity — entering a set of interpersonal and institutional practices that connected him to a public world and gave him a masculine position and stance within it. These practices are resilient: Jonathan remains socially masculinized, despite tremendous turbulence in his personal life since leaving school — his father died, his family faced economic disaster, and he suffered a near-psychotic episode. He is, for instance, working comfortably in a male-dominated manual trade. A similar social masculinization is seen with other men in the group. Dean Carrington drives heavy vehicles. Regardless of his sexual preference for men, Dean defines masculinity as sexual agency, i.e., taking an active and directing part. Gordon Anderson runs his office along conventional boss-and-secretary lines and has the controlled, authoritative manner that goes with the well-cut gray suit he wore when interviewed. Gordon is a skillful business tactician and a knowledgeable commentator on politics. He is as effective a participant in the public world of hegemonic masculinity in business as Jonathan Hampden was in the adolescent peer world of hegemonic masculinity as a rebel.

Yet psychoanalysis cautions us not to take such appearances for granted. The fundamental point of Freud's "Wolf Man" study is that adult masculinity is the product of a long, complex process that leaves a layered and contradictory structure of emotions. Institutional contradictions also emerge. For example, competitive sport institutionalizes masculinity in contemporary Australia as it does in North America. But if skill and success are masculine, most participants are distanced from hegemonic masculinity as well as inducted into it, because the hierarchy of competitive sport has many more places for the unsuccessful than for champions (Messner 1992).

Moreover, the existence of a masculinized public culture — in peer groups, schools, workplaces,



sport organizations, media — makes gender a candidate for *resistance*. Resistance may mean seizing on a hypermasculine persona, as did Jonathan Hampden and others (Connell 1991). Resistance may also mean doing something outrageously unmasculine. Damien Outhwaite, who moved from a stifling rural background to college in the city, broke out by dyeing his hair, wearing hipster jeans, wearing nail-polish, and taking up knitting. Mark Richards, uncontrollable and hostile as a teenager, reversed gears as a young adult and became a nurse.

The current popular literature on masculinity argues that true masculinity is formed only by initiation among men and urges men to withdraw psychologically from women (Bly 1990; Keen 1991). The psychoanalytic discourse on homosexuality and Chodorow's (1978) psychoanalytic/sociological theory of the reproduction of gender have a more accurate perception of the importance of boys' and men's relations with women (especially their mothers) in the production of masculinity. But these relations should not be treated as deterministic. The eight cases in this study all show that the family setting is a field of relationships within which gender is negotiated — and the configuration of the field often changes. Given households with a conventional division of labor, relations with mothers and sisters are the primary means of marking sexual difference *and* the source of identifications that provide alternatives to identification with the father. Thus, the conventional structure of the patriarchal household opens up a range of possibilities in emotional relations and in the construction of gender.

Thus, in Jonathan Hampden's case, there is a powerful identification with his father, but also a distinct identification with his older sister — a relationship that developed as his father's affection was withdrawn. At a later stage, Jonathan vehemently repudiated the relation with his sister. Alan Andrews, a country boy like Damien Outhwaite, was always closer to his mother, had mainly girls as friends in childhood, and generally admires and feels close to women. While Alan had to be pushed out of the nest by his mother, Damien dodged his mother's control and escaped to the city, although he remains emotionally linked to her.

The construction of masculinity, then, is a powerful dynamic in these men's lives. Their homosexuality is clearly not built on a lack of masculinity. All the men had some engagement with hegemonic masculinity. But the construction of

gender operates simultaneously through a variety of relationships and cultural processes (West and Zimmerman 1987). The complexity of the process allows it to be inflected in different ways. In these men's lives, the important occasion usually was a sexual experience — a discovery of sexuality, or a discovery in sexuality.

## SEXUALITY AND IDENTITY

For the majority of the participants, the first major sexual encounters were heterosexual. Two have been married and have children, others have been close to marriage. For Alan Andrews, growing up in the country, sexuality was effectively defined as relationship with a girl. His mother and his peer group pressured him to find a girlfriend. His mates tried to find one for him. He tells a comic tale about being pushed into the girls' tent — one night when the peer group was camping out in the bush — and grabbing the wrong girl. What Rich (1980) called "compulsory heterosexuality" was taken for granted as part of growing up:

There was a lot of pressure on boys at the age of 16 or 17 to not be virgins, and I was a virgin. So I always thought it will be really good when I meet the right girl. But it happened to be a boy.

The public discourse of sexuality is unreflectively heterosexual, but compulsory heterosexuality was not always realized in practice. The men's narratives document childhoods in which both same-gender and cross-gender experiences are common. Adam Singer recalls being "very sexual from as young as I can remember." He tells of sex games with peers of both genders in primary and secondary school, including a delightful vignette of a "nudist colony" set up by primary school boys in the bush just beyond the school fence. Likewise, Jonathan Hampden recalls childhood sex play with both genders, though less idyllic — he was caught.

Such childhood sexual experiences with partners of both genders appear in life histories of heterosexual adults as well as homosexual adults. Early sexual contact with boys or men does not in itself disrupt heterosexuality. General population surveys find that many more adults have had such contact than become wholly or mainly homosexual (Turner 1989). Freud (1953) pointed to free-form childhood sexuality (his joke about the "polymorphously perverse disposition" of the child is usually taken as a solemn theoretical statement), but confined it to early childhood. Cases

like those of Adam Singer and Jonathan Hampden show polymorphous sexuality extending up to, and sometimes well into, adolescence.

Adult homosexuality, like adult heterosexuality, represents *closure* of this structured-but-open field. It is something that *happens*, that is *produced* by particular practices, and is not predetermined. The sexual closure involves choice of an object (in Freud's sense), and this narrowing of focus can be traced in some of the interviews. With Mark Richards, a period of severe adolescent unhappiness and rejection of authority was resolved by falling in love with a classmate after he was sent to an all-boys boarding school. He calls it "a classic boarding-house story . . . a very close friendship and on top of that . . . quite a strong sexual relationship as well." It was furtive, but intense:

We didn't get caught — and where we didn't do it! I mean, under the Assembly Hall and under the stairs. He took up music lessons just because I was taking music lessons; we'd go out on the same days. . . .

(*Did people in the school know about it?*)

Oh God no. No. Absolutely not. I don't know how, but no.

From then on, Mark's choice of men as objects of cathexis was never in doubt. This choice was not a fetishistic fixation on a particular feature of the object; rather it represented a consolidation of Mark's sexuality around the *relationship*, creating a structure that Mark transferred to later attachments. Mark's sex life has, accordingly, been conducted through several relatively long-term relationships. He rejects fast-lane sexuality and speaks with heavy irony of the "wonderful" effects of AIDS, which "stop everyone fucking around everywhere."

Sexual closure can happen, as in Mark's case, without any reference to homosexual identity or any social definition as gay — the relationship itself is its basis. Adam Singer's sexuality, freeform to an extreme in childhood, also consolidated around emotional relationships, including relationships with women but placing much more emphasis on men. In high school Adam became sexually aware of the masculine aura of senior students: "They were students just like me, but their maleness was very, very strong." As an adult he expresses his desire, facetiously but effectively:

A big muscley man who I feel I can cuddle up to; and I love being nurtured.

The choice of object here is defined through a contradictory gender imagery — "muscley" con-

ventionally contradicts "nurtured" — and this contradiction is not abstract, but embodied.

The social process here cannot be captured by notions of "homosexual identity" or a "homosexual role." The sexuality concerns gendered bodies — the giving and receiving of bodily pleasures. The social process is conducted mainly through touch. Yet it is unquestionably a *social* process, an interpersonal practice governed by the large-scale structure of gender.

Dean Carrington, who has had relationships with men and women, evokes a similar pattern. When asked about the difference, his answer focused on bodily sensation:

In the traditional sense it's been the same. I mean anal sex, or anything else: kissing, touching, sucking, licking, the whole works has been the same physically. But I've decided to think perhaps how much more exciting it is with a man. Because I know I can stimulate a man. I know how I like to be stimulated. And that's good, it's fantastic, I'm actually relating more. Whereas my lover B (female) never would say. She loved everything but she wouldn't point out one thing and say "I'd like you to do it this way, I'd like you to put pressure on, or do a certain thing, or wear certain clothes. . . ." I feel I can relate more to a man because his body's the same as mine. . . . Having sex with a man, I'm able to find out how I feel better. . . . I'm actually finding out more about my body. . . . I've developed two breasts, I know what they're like, these two tits there: They're not very big, they're very flat, but they're beautiful. And I've missed out on so many things. Such a shame, such a bloody waste.

Dean's answer rocks back and forth between similarity and difference. He experiences no categorical erotic difference between the sexes and does not engage in different practices with the two sexes. His answer is in accord with the conclusions of our quantitative study of the sexual repertoire among gay and bisexual men in this milieu (Connell and Kippax 1990): The most common practices in male-to-male sex in this culture (kissing, erotic hugging, and so on) are the same as those in female-to-male sex. What is different with a man, Dean makes clear, is the gestalt of the body — a configuration whose similarity is both disturbing and reassuring. The similarity allows exploration of another's body to be a means of exploring one's own.

A gendered sexuality, the evidence implies, is likely to be a gradual and provisional construction. But the social *identity* of being gay is another matter. The category is now so well-formed and readily available that it can be imposed on

people. As a late-adolescent rebel, Damien Outhwaite experienced the process that labeling theory describes, when he was still actively interested in women:

There was one guy at college that immediately identified me as being gay, and he used to give me a bit of a hassle about it . . . , used to identify things I would do to being gay. One of the things was that I was one of the first to wear hipster jeans when they came in — he thought of that as being gay. And the other thing that I did was that I used to carry my books around in a shoulder bag — he thought that was particularly gay too.

In due course, Damien embraced this definition of himself, which was confirmed by oppression — losing jobs — and by increasing embeddedness in gay social networks.

Gayness is now so reified that it is easy for men to experience the process of adopting this social definition as discovering a truth about themselves. Gordon Anderson speaks of having “realized” he was gay; Alan Andrews uses the same term. Alan offers a classic coming-out narrative encompassing six stages. *Prehistory*: Growing up in a country town; a relaxed, conservative family; no particular tensions. *Preparation*: Adolescent uncertainties — liking to be with girls, but not having a girlfriend; sex play with a boyfriend who backs off. *Contact*: Age 19, he stumbles across a beat (a venue for semipublic encounters, similar to the U.S. “tea-room”) and has sex with men. Then he goes looking for beats, gets better at it, has a “wonderful” sex-filled beach holiday. *Acknowledgement*: Age 20, “I finally came to the conclusion I was gay, and I went to my first gay dance.” *Immersion*: Does the bars on his own, has multiple relationships. *Consolidation*: Age 22, meets Mr. Right and settles into a couple relationship; has more gay male friends; joins some gay organizations; comes out to his parents.

Although these sound very much like the stages of “homosexual identity formation” in the models proposed by Cass (1990) and Troiden (1989), the neatness of the sequence is deceptive, and the outcome is not the homogeneous identity posited by the ego-psychology on which such models are based. Alan’s first sexual experiences on the beat were disappointing — it took time for him to become skilled and to experience much pleasure. When he hit the bar scene in Sydney — “notoriously antisocial . . . , very cold places” — he was exploited. A big, handsome, slow-talking country boy, he must have been something of a

phenomenon around the Sydney bars and did not lack for partners. He was looking for love and affection; his partners wanted sex. He even feels he was “raped” by a couple of partners — “I was forced into anal sex by them.” He became critical of gay studs, interpreting their expertise as an overcompensation for insecurity. He learned to dissemble in heterosexual groups, to flirt surreptitiously. Coming out to his parents was hard and was not successful: His mother was upset, his father refused to talk, and both did their best to keep Alan’s younger brother away from him, lest the corruption be passed on. Alan is not so hostile to them that this can pass without hurt.

In a story like this, “coming out” actually means coming *in* to an existing gay milieu. Gay theoreticians, especially those influenced by Foucault, have debated whether the collective identity sustained in this milieu is a means of “regulation” and ultimately a means of oppression (Sargent 1983; Weeks 1986). Certainly Damien Outhwaite’s experience — being accused of gayness because of his jeans and his shoulder bag — could be read that way. So could Alan Andrews’ passage through beats and bars. Mark Richards distances himself from the fast-track lifestyle and the gay subculture, from both effeminates and leathermen, in an implicit critique of what he sees as the conformities of the gay world.

But there is no doubt that Damien, Alan, and Mark also experienced their gay sexuality as freedom, as the capacity to do what they really wanted to do. This was not false consciousness. Dean Carrington vividly expresses the festival element in coming out:

Rage, rage, rage! Let’s do everything you’ve denied yourself for 25 years. Let’s get into it and have a good time sexually. And go out partying and dancing and drinking.

Festival was a key part of the original experience of Gay Liberation (Altman 1979), and it remains in the post-AIDS era; the Lesbian and Gay Mardi Gras is always one of Sydney’s largest popular gatherings of the year. For Gordon Anderson, who remains closeted for powerful reasons (he would certainly lose his job and probably lose access to his children), gay sexuality and friendship networks are less flamboyant, but nonetheless are experienced as a realm of freedom and pleasure outside the severe constraints of other departments of his life.

Sexual freedom, “partying” or “kicking up one’s heels” (Gordon Anderson’s phrase), important as it is, does not define the most wished-

for kind of sexual connection. Adam Singer calls his first sexual experience with a man "not a relationship, but a sexual encounter." Most of the men recognize this distinction and agree with Adam in valuing the "relationship" far more. Their shared ideal is a long-term couple relationship, perhaps open to casual sex, but with an emphasis on a primary commitment. Its value is *both* in sexual pleasure and in "honesty . . . , caring and sharing and learning from each other," in Alan Andrews' words. Others mention mutual emotional involvement, common interests, and just sitting and listening to each other, as components of relationships that work.

How does the wish translate into practice? This is the most difficult part of the interview material to report, and for some participants it was the most difficult to discuss. Three of the men are currently living with male lovers in long-term relationships — 11 years in one case. The most troubled of these relationships involves a large age difference, which makes mutuality hard to achieve. Three other participants are consciously searching for a long-term relationship — either rekindling an old flame or finding a new partner — and are making do with "encounters" or just waiting, as one of them put it, for "the drought" to break. Another has been involved mainly in short-term encounters with men (longer-term with women) and is now worrying about the ethics of short-term relationships. Only one of the eight men places the emotional emphasis on casual encounters, and he is trying to weave together a mainly gay erotic life with a continuing domestic relationship with the mother of his children.

Thus, the preferred pattern, as in the heterosexual world, is a committed long-term couple relationship; but such relationships are not easy to come by. Casual encounters (in beats, bars, saunas, and so on) remain an important part of the total experience. All the men have had short-term encounters — this was one path into gay sexuality — and "encounters" remain a significant possibility even after couple relationships are established.

#### RELATIONS BETWEEN HETEROSEXUAL AND HOMOSEXUAL MASCULINITIES

A specific masculinity is not constituted in isolation, but in relation to other masculinities and to femininities. This relation is partly a question of differentiation, as in the distinctions only recently drawn between homosexuality (erotic attraction within the same gender), cross-dressing, and

transsexuality (King 1981). But *difference* is only part of the story; institutional and personal *practices* are also vital. The relation between hegemonic masculinity and homosexual masculinity includes criminalization of male-to-male sex, homophobic speech and culture, and a bitter history of intimidation and violence (Greenberg 1988). Modern gay politics bears the collective memory of the Nazi final solution for homosexuals in the concentration camps (Plant 1986). At the time I began writing this paper a group of young Sydney men had recently been convicted for beating a gay man to death in an inner-city park. Attacks on gays are common enough that they have become an issue in Sydney's urban politics. Ethnographic research has documented deep homophobia in inner-city youth culture in the same area (Walker 1988).

None of the men interviewed in this study had been bashed, but some had been intimidated. Their conversation takes it for granted that they live in a homophobic environment. Damien Outhwaite has lost jobs, and Adam Singer stuck with a not very engaging career partly because it provided a safe milieu for a gay man. Gordon Anderson stays in the closet for fear of losing his job and his children:

I don't want to stop what I am doing, I don't want to stop being a good father, I can never see myself being very prominent about my lifestyle. That's the price I suppose.

Gordon describes how the illusion of heterosexual masculinity is sustained when visiting businessmen have to be entertained. He has female friends who will come to his apartment and act as hostess, although the illusion wears thin when they have to ask him where he keeps the pepper.

Heterosexual masculinity, then, is encountered in everyday relations with straight men that often have an undercurrent of threat. Wariness, controlled disclosure, and turning inward to a gay network are familiar responses. However, legitimacy is not necessarily conceded to heterosexuality. Straight men may also be seen as pathetic bearers of outmoded ideas and a boring way of life. Dean Carrington went back to the country town of his childhood:

I've seen friends, like a chap I went to school with. . . . He's now 25, third child, and he's stuck in a rut. I went back to see him. I did one of those terrible things of going back to your home town; and God, what an eye-opener! There's all these people grown up, and I hadn't got married and they had. They'd "done the right thing."

Alan Andrews had a similar experience watching his brother become a drunken boor. Compared with these images of hegemonic masculinity, gay masculinity is all sophistication and modernity. Negotiating the relation between the two is mainly a question of establishing cultural, and often physical, distance.

Personal relationships, however, do not exhaust the relation between masculinities. Hegemonic masculinity is also an institutional and cultural presence — *collective* practices are involved. A clear example is the football cult in Jonathan Hampden's school, which was sustained by school policy and institutionalized bodily confrontation and aggression. Masculinized authority in the workplace was a source of friction for Damien Outhwaite and Mark Richards, and Adam Singer and Gerry Lamont distanced themselves from male-dominated professions.

The institutional dimension of hegemonic masculinity gives it a social authority that shapes perceptions of gayness. Gordon Anderson, committed to his strategy of evasion, is critical of men who "flaunt" their gayness. Although Gordon sees this as characteristic of Australian gays, a similar criticism is made by "suburban homosexuals" in the United States (Lynch 1992). Adam Singer, Damien Outhwaite (despite his outrageousness), and Mark Richards reject hypermasculinity, but also dislike queens, i.e., effeminate gays. Mark puts the issue succinctly:

If you're a guy why don't you just act like a guy? You're not a female, don't act like one. That's a fairly strong point. And leather and all this other jazz, I just don't understand it I suppose. That's all there is to it. I am a very straight gay.

Here Mark has identified a sexual/cultural dynamic of some importance. The choice of a man as sexual object is not just the choice of a body-with-penis; it is the choice of embodied-masculinity. The cultural meanings of masculinity are (generally) part of the package. In this sense, most gays are "very straight." Being a "straight gay" is not just a matter of middle-class respectability — similar positions are taken by working-class men outside the gay community (Connell, Davis, and Dowsett forthcoming).

#### FACING CHANGE

Dean Carrington's story of his boyhood friends who had "done the right thing" says something about small-town life as well as masculinity. Dean moved to Sydney and immediately began to have

sex with men, to come out as gay, and to "rage" around the bars and nightclubs. Movement between milieus is common, whether from country conservatism to the city lights, or, within the city, from the bourgeois school to the radical household (Mark Richards), from the business workplace to the gay social network (Gordon Anderson), from the professional career to the encounter groups of the therapeutic "growth movement" (Gerry Lamont).

The process of coming out, establishing oneself as homosexual in a homophobic world, almost necessarily gives this structure to the narratives. The life history is experienced as a journey to one's current place. Contrary to Foucaultian arguments that see homosexual identity as regulation, I emphasize the agentic nature of this journey. Dean Carrington pictures it as both escape and self-exploration:

And this is one of the big things that led to me coming [to Sydney], to be able to get away from my parents, to think, and to find out who I really am, and what I really want, and why I was doing these things over the years, why I was changing, what was I hiding from.

Contrary to the traditional psychiatric view that men's homosexuality results from disorders of relationships with parents, the majority of these cases show successful ego-development that allows separation from both mother and father. Most of the men still maintain as good relations with their parents as the parents allow.

Personal change may further take the shape of a deliberate reform of masculinity, of the kind now undertaken in certain countercultural and radical groups (Connell 1990). Damien Outhwaite, in particular, is working to overcome his "competitiveness" and dominance, and enjoys breaking conventions of masculinity. He has been to a "men's movement" event, and wants to pursue nonsexual physical closeness between men. Jonathan Hampden, despite an uncontrollable distaste for vegan coffee, has been living in a vegetarian household, has done "re-birthing" therapy, and now has the "dream" of setting up a center for workshops on sexuality.

Deliberate reform is only one possibility. A sense that gender relations are changing is widespread among the groups of men in this study, and a demand for change in masculinity does not require the support of the counterculture. It is widely believed that sex differences are lessening and that men are coming emotionally closer to women. Such a change may be occurring within

gay masculinity as well. Damien Outhwaite recalls a party put on by a young gay man in a provincial city. The host had invited some women, and when they arrived, the older gay men at the party left. The older men's social network excluded women, and their outlook was misogynist — but this was not true of the young men. Consistent with this, the three youngest men among the group of eight — Mark Richards, Dean Carrington, and Alan Andrews — are the ones who most value and cultivate their friendships with women.

This consciousness of change has had few political effects. The dilution of Gay Liberation politics into an affirmation of gay identity and a consolidation of gay communities (Altman 1982) has had a containing effect. The men have little sense of being connected to a broad reform movement. The only commitment to a practice beyond the self is to a *therapeutic* practice (Gerry Lamont's workshops, Jonathan Hampden's sexuality center) that assists other men in pursuing individualized reform projects.

The apolitical character of their outlook is indicated by their stance toward feminism. Although most of the men express some support for feminism, they disapprove "Those Who Go Too Far":

I can't stand the butch dykes [who think] that males are shits. (Mark Richards)

I have never had a personal conflict about it. I don't like extremisms of anything — the burn-bra thing sort of went over my head. (Gordon Anderson)

Their attitudes toward feminism and level of ignorance about it match the views of feminism among heterosexual groups interviewed.

#### CONCLUSION: THE HISTORICAL PROCESS

In the introduction to this paper, I posed the question of how homosexual masculinities are related to the historical dynamic of the gender order. The life histories discussed here show that familiar interpretations of homosexuality — both the traditional schema of "normal/deviant" and the newer schema of "dominant culture/subculture" — are too monolithic to capture the historical process. Subcultural diversity among gay men is important to recognize (Weeks 1986). The life-history material, however, shows another level of complexity beyond this, the internal complexity of the relationships through which a homosexual masculinity is constructed. Even the for-

mula of "structurally-induced conflict" about masculinity is inadequate. The narratives reveal multilateral negotiations of emotional relations in the home and in the sexual marketplace, negotiations of economic and workplace relations, negotiations of authority relations and friendships. These relationships often push the person in different directions and are linked in different sequences for different men.

These observations do not deny the significance of social structure. Rather they underline the complexity of the social structuring of gender and of the ways individual lives are linked to this structure. These links are complex, but not random. Despite the variety of detail, the same logical "moments," or elements of historical process, appear in all these narratives: (1) an engagement with hegemonic masculinity, (2) a closure of sexuality around relationships with men, and (3) participation in the collective practices of a gay community.

These moments should not be construed as a new model of "homosexual identity formation." Many men who have sex with men never enter a gay community (Connell et al. forthcoming); some men who do enter a gay community have additional significant moments in the construction of sexuality, e.g., the "leather and all this other jazz" mentioned by Mark Richards. Rather, these are the logical components of the project that can be documented in this specific setting as the social making of a homosexual masculinity. This is not socialization into a stigmatized identity. Rather it is an agentic, multilevel collective project, of the kind analyzed in Sartre's (1976) theory of social process. Its outcome is not a necessary structure of personality, as mechanistic etiologies of homosexuality assume, but a historically realized configuration of practice. Analysis of how this configuration was realized illuminates other historical possibilities in the same field of social relations.

It is the interconnection of these three moments that defines the project. The closure of the sexual field around relationships with other men is determined by the engagement, however ambivalent, with hegemonic masculinity. Gay men are not free to invent new objects of desire any more than heterosexual men are — their choice of object is structured by the existing gender order. Adam Singer desires not a male body but a masculine body doing feminine things; Dean Carrington's eroticism revolves around bodily similarity seen in gender terms, e.g. his attention to breasts, a major gender symbol in our erotic cul-

ture. Such gendered eroticism underpins the urban gay community which currently defines what it is to be a gay man.

Relationships in this milieu are usually peer relationships marked by a higher level of reciprocity than that characterizing heterosexual relations. Reciprocity is emphasized as an ideal and is to a large extent practiced. The conditions for reciprocity include similar ages of partners, shared class position, and shared position in the overall structure of gender. Ironically, the difficulty of establishing long-term couple relationships may also push toward reciprocity in the sexual culture. In short-term encounters, in which giving and receiving pleasure is the only agenda, there is an approximate equality of position. Finally, there is the specific way the body is implicated in sexual practice — that mirroring of lover and beloved, naively but vigorously expressed by Dean Carrington, in which the exploration of another's body becomes the exploration of one's own.

What is the historical direction of a collective project structured in this way? What are the possibilities for transformation of social relations?

These men are more easily seen as products than producers of history. Their privatized politics offer little leverage on the state of gender relations. The life course shaped as a journey between milieus, exemplified by Dean Carrington's literal migration to the gay community, presupposes the history in which the milieus were formed. The men can adopt, negotiate, or reject a gay identity, a gay commercial scene, and gay sexual and social networks, all of which already exist. Although they are the inheritors of a world made by the gay liberationists and "pink capitalists" of the 1970s — the generation now devastated by AIDS — they have little awareness of, or commitment to, this history.

In these respects the picture resembles the "controlled space" theorized by Blachford (1981), who saw only limited social change effected by gay politics. The gendered eroticism of these men, their predominantly masculine social presence, their focus on private couple relationships, and their lack of solidarity with feminism, point in the same direction — there is no open challenge to the gender order here.

But in two ways, the processes documented here do point toward change. First, the reification of homosexuality that is usually theorized as a form of social regulation, is in these men's lives a condition of freedom. This reification is a necessary counterbalance to the institutionalized compulsory heterosexuality that surrounds them.

It allows the realization of forbidden pleasure, the element of festival in their sexuality, and the building of long-term relationships with other gay men. The longest couple relationship in the group began at a beat — a site for casual encounters.

This is an effect specifically about homosexuality. Although most of these men have sexual experience with women, in this cultural context there is no positive social category of "the bisexual" on which a collective practice can be based. For these men, both object-choice and personality are formed within a framework of masculinity.

Second, the familiar heterosexual definition of homosexual men as effeminate is an inaccurate description of men like the ones interviewed here, who mostly do "act like a guy." But it is not wrong in sensing the outrage they do to hegemonic masculinity. A masculine object-choice subverts the masculinity of character and social presence. This subversion is a structural feature of homosexuality in a patriarchal society in which hegemonic masculinity is defined as exclusively heterosexual and its hegemony includes the formation of character in the rearing of boys. So it is not surprising to find, jammed in beside the elements of mainstream masculinity, items like Damien Outhwaite's flamboyant fingernails, Mark Richards's nursing, or Alan Andrews's and Jonathan Hampden's identifications with women.

Hence gay theorists (notably Mieli 1980) who see a necessary effeminacy in male homosexuality have a point, if not quite in the way they intend. At the same time, heterosexual men must deny desire except for the gendered Other, while making a hated Other of the men who desire them (or desire the embodied-masculinity they share). The historical exclusion of homosexual object-choice from heterosexual masculinity builds contradiction into the masculinity of *both* homosexual and heterosexual men.

Put in these abstract terms, this contradiction is merely a possible crisis tendency in a gender order structured in the way modern Western systems are. But the study of these men reveals that the possibility has been realized. The apolitical character of the group indicates the stabilization of a public alternative to hegemonic masculinity — they do not have to fight for their existence as gay men, in the way gay men in earlier generations did. This is all the more significant because the men started out within the framework of hegemonic masculinity. Their trajectories began in conventional settings and moved some dis-

tance toward hegemonic masculinity. "A very straight gay" neatly summarizes the contradiction introduced into the politics of gender.

Sexuality is the point of disruption of orderly gender relations. Under the influence of Foucault (1980) and Marcuse (1964), sexuality is taken to be a stabilizing force in social relations, or at least a site where social control is accomplished. It is time to revive the insight of Reich (1972) and Freud (1959), that sexuality is also disruptive and creative.

The creative possibilities can be seen in the shaping of sexual practice itself. Hegemonic heterosexuality, which eroticises difference within a large structure of gender inequalities, hinders equality and mutuality in the conduct of sexual relations. Observed in earlier research (Rubin 1976), this has been rediscovered in studies of heterosexuality and AIDS prevention (Waldby, Kippax, and Crawford 1990). A higher degree of reciprocity has been created in gay men's sexual practice. The relative equality that permits this is not easily reproduced in heterosexual relations; but the contrast does suggest directions for action in heterosexual life.

Despite the lack of commitment to feminism, the younger men in the group studied here are already forming friendly, pacific relationships with young women in their workplaces and households. A more reciprocal sexuality and pacific everyday interactions are necessary if relations between men and women are to move beyond the current state of inequality, violence, and misogyny. Although far from revolutionary, this group of homosexual men defines possibilities and provides some models for major changes in the social relations of gender.

**R. W. CONNELL** is Professor of Sociology at the University of California, Santa Cruz. He was Foundation Professor of Sociology at Macquarie University, Sydney, and 1991–1992 Professor of Australian Studies, Harvard University. He is author or coauthor of *Rethinking Sex, Gender and Power, Making the Difference, and Class Structure in Australian History*. His recent research focuses on poverty and education, AIDS prevention and gay sexuality, changes in masculinity, and historicity and politics in social theory.

## REFERENCES

- Aldrich, R. and G. Wotherspoon, eds. 1992. *Gay Perspectives: Essays in Australian Gay Culture*. Sydney: University of Sydney.
- Altman, Dennis. 1972. *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*. Sydney: Angus & Robertson.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1979. *Coming Out in the Seventies*. Sydney: Wild and Woolley.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1982. *The Homosexualization of America, the Americanization of the Homosexual*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Altman, Dennis, et al. 1989. *Homosexuality, Which Homosexuality?* London: GMP.
- Becker, Howard S. 1963. *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: Free Press of Glencoe.
- Bell, Alan P. and Martin Weinberg. 1978. *Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
- Bell, Alan P., Martin Weinberg, and Sue Kiefer Hammersmith. 1981. *Sexual Preference: Its Development in Men and Women*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
- Bengtsson, Margot and Frykman, Jonas. 1987. *Om Maskulinitet: Mannen som forskningsprojekt* (About Masculinity: The Male as a Research Project). Stockholm: Delegationen för Jämställdhetsforskning.
- Blachford, Gregg. 1981. "Male Dominance and the Gay World." Pp. 184–210 in *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*, edited by K. Plummer. London: Hutchinson.
- Blauner, Bob. 1989. *Black Lives, White Lives: Three Decades of Race Relations in America*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Bly, Robert. 1990. *Iron John: A Book About Men*. Reading, PA: Addison-Wesley.
- Bottomley, Gillian, Marie de Lepervanche, and Jeannie Martin, eds. 1991. *Intersections: Gender/Class/Culture/Ethnicity*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Brod, Harry, ed. 1987. *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies*. Boston: Allen and Unwin.
- Brzoska, Georg and Gerhard Hafner. 1990. "Männer in Bewegung?" (A Men's Movement?). *Sozialistische Praxis* 90(5):4–6.
- Cass, Vivienne C. 1990. "The Implications of Homosexual Identity Formation for the Kinsey Model and Scale of Sexual Preference." Pp. 239–66 in *Homosexuality/Heterosexuality: Concepts of Sexual Orientation*, edited by D. P. McWhirter, S. A. Sanders, and J. M. Reinsch. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Chodorow, Nancy. 1978. *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Connell, R. W. 1987. *Gender and Power: Society, The Person and Sexual Politics*. Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1990. "A Whole New World: Remaking Masculinity in the Context of the Environmental Movement." *Gender and Society* 4:452–78.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1991. "Live Fast and Die Young: The Construction of Masculinity Among Young Working-Class Men on the Margin of the Labour Market." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 27:141–71.



- Connell, R. W., June Crawford, Susan Kippax, G. W. Dowsett, Don Baxter, Lex Watson, and R. Berg. 1989. "Facing the Epidemic: Changes in the Sexual Lives of Gay and Bisexual Men in Australia and Their Implications for AIDS Prevention Strategies." *Social Problems* 36:384-402.
- Connell, R. W., M. Davis, and G. W. Dowsett. Forthcoming. "A Bastard of a Life: Homosexual Desire and Practice Among Men in Working-Class Milieux." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*.
- Connell, R. W. and Susan Kippax. 1990. "Sexuality in the AIDS Crisis: Patterns of Sexual Practice and Pleasure in a Sample of Australian Gay and Bisexual Men." *Journal of Sex Research* 27:167-98.
- Dunning, Eric. 1986. "Sport as a Male Preserve: Notes on the Social Sources of Masculine Identity and its Transformations." *Theory Culture and Society* 3:79-89.
- Epstein, Steven. 1987. "Gay Politics, Ethnic Identity: The Limits of Social Constructionism." *Socialist Review* 93/94:9-54.
- Foucault, Michel. 1980. *The History of Sexuality, vol. 1: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1953. "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality." Pp. 125-243 in *Complete Psychological Works*, standard ed., vol. 7. London: Hogarth Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1955. "From the History of an Infantile Neurosis." Pp. 3-122 in *Complete Psychological Works*, standard ed., vol. 17. London: Hogarth Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1959. "'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness." Pp. 177-204 in *Complete Psychological Works*, vol. 9. London: Hogarth.
- Friedman, Richard C. 1988. *Male Homosexuality: A Contemporary Psychoanalytic Perspective*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Gagnon, John H. and William Simon. 1974. *Sexual Conduct: The Social Sources of Human Sexuality*. London: Hutchinson.
- Game, Ann and Rosemary Pringle. 1979. "Sexuality and the Suburban Dream." *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology* 15:4-15.
- Glaser, Barney G. and Anselm Strauss. 1967. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. New York: Aldine.
- Goffman, Erving. 1963. *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Greenberg, David F. 1988. *The Construction of Homosexuality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Habermas, Juergen. 1976. *Legitimation Crisis*. London: Heinemann.
- Herd, Gilbert. 1982. *Rituals of Manhood: Male Initiation in Papua New Guinea*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. 1992. *Gay Culture in America: Essays From the Field*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Herek, Gregory M. 1986. "On Heterosexual Masculinity: Some Psychological Consequences of the Social Construction of Gender and Sexuality." *American Behavioral Scientist* 29:563-77.
- Humphries, Martin. 1985. "Gay Machismo." Pp. 70-85 in *The Sexuality of Men*, edited by A. Metcalf and M. Humphries. London: Pluto.
- Keen, Sam. 1991. *Fire in the Belly: On Being a Man*. New York: Bantam.
- Kimmel, Michael S., ed. 1987. *Changing Men: New Directions in Research on Men and Masculinity*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Kimmel, Michael S. and Michael A. Messner, eds. 1989. *Men's Lives*. New York: Macmillan.
- King, Dave. 1981. "Gender Confusions: Psychological and Psychiatric Conceptions of Transvestism and Transsexualism." Pp. 155-83 in *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*, edited by K. Plummer. London: Hutchinson.
- Kinsey, Alfred C., Wardell B. Pomeroy, and Clyde E. Martin. 1948. *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Philadelphia: Saunders.
- Kinsman, Gary. 1987. *The Regulation of Desire: Sexuality in Canada*. Montreal, Quebec: Black Rose Books.
- Klein, Alan M. 1990. "Little Big Man: Hustling, Gender Narcissism, and Bodybuilding Subculture." Pp. 127-39 in *Sport, Men, and the Gender Order*, edited by M. A. Messner and D. F. Sabo. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Lehne, Gregory K. 1989. "Homophobia Among Men: Supporting and Defining the Male Role." Pp. 416-29 in *Men's Lives*, edited by M. S. Kimmel and M. A. Messner. New York: Macmillan.
- Lemert, Edwin M. 1972. *Human Deviance, Social Problems, and Social Control*. 2d ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Levine, Martin P. 1992. "The Life and Death of Gay Clones." Pp. 68-86 in *Gay Culture in America*, edited by G. Herdt. Boston: Beacon.
- Lewes, Kenneth. 1988. *The Psychoanalytic Theory of Male Homosexuality*. New York: Simon and Schuster.
- Lewis, Glen. 1983. *Real Men Like Violence*. Sydney: Kangaroo Press.
- Lynch, Frederick R. 1992. "Nonghetto Gays: An Ethnography of Suburban Homosexuals." Pp. 165-201 in *Gay Culture in America*, edited by G. Herdt. Boston: Beacon Press.
- McCall, Michal M. and Judith Wittner. 1990. "The Good News About Life History." Pp. 46-89 in *Symbolic Interaction and Cultural Studies*, edited by H. S. Becker and M. M. McCall. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- MacKinnon, Catharine A. 1987. *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Marcuse, Herbert. 1964. *One Dimensional Man*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Messner, Michael A. 1992. *Power at Play: Sports and the Problem of Masculinity*. Boston: Beacon Press.

- Mieli, Mario. 1980. *Homosexuality and Liberation: Elements of a Gay Critique*. London: Gay Men's Press.
- Phillips, Jock. 1987. *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male, A History*. Auckland, Australia: Penguin.
- Plant, Richard. 1986. *The Pink Triangle: The Nazi War Against Homosexuals*. New York: Holt.
- Pleck, Joseph H. 1980. "Men's Power with Women, Other Men, and in Society." Pp. 417-33 in *The American Man*, edited by E. H. Pleck and J. H. Pleck. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Plummer, Kenneth. 1975. *Sexual Stigma: An Interactionist Account*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. 1981. *The Making of the Modern Homosexual*. London: Hutchinson.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1983. *Documents of Life: An Introduction to the Problems and Literature of a Humanistic Method*. London: Allen and Unwin.
- Reich, Wilhelm. 1972. *Sex-Pol Essays 1929-1934*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Rich, Adrienne. 1980. "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence." *Signs* 5:631-60.
- Roper, Michael and John Tosh, eds. 1991. *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain Since 1800*. London: Routledge.
- Rowbotham, Sheila. 1979. "The Trouble With 'Patriarchy.'" *New Statesman* 28 Dec.
- Rubin, D. C., ed. 1986. *Autobiographical Memory*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Rubin, Lillian B. 1976. *Worlds of Pain: Life in the Working-Class Family*. New York: Basic Books.
- Sargent, Dave. 1983. "Reformulating (Homo)sexual Politics: Radical Theory and Practice in the Gay Movement." Pp. 163-82 in *Beyond Marxism?*, edited by J. Allen and P. Patton. Sydney: Intervention.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1963. *The Problem of Method*. London: Methuen.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1976. *Critique of Dialectical Reason*. London: New Left Books.
- Segal, Lynne. 1990. *Slow Motion: Changing Masculinities, Changing Men*. London: Virago.
- Stacey, Judith and Barrie Thorne. 1985. "The Missing Feminist Revolution in Sociology." *Social Problems* 32:301-16.
- Stein, Edward, ed. 1990. *Forms of Desire: Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy*. New York: Garland.
- Thomas, William I. and Florian Znaniecki. 1927. *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*. New York: Knopf.
- Thorne, Barrie. Forthcoming. *Gender Play: Girls and Boys in School*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Tolson, Andrew. 1977. *The Limits of Masculinity*. London: Tavistock.
- Troiden, Richard R. 1989. "The Formation of Homosexual Identities." *Journal of Homosexuality* 17:43-73.
- Turner, Charles F. 1989. "Research on Sexual Behaviors that Transmit HIV: Progress and Problems." *AIDS* 3 (Supplement 1):S63-S69.
- Walby, Sylvia. 1989. "Theorising Patriarchy." *Sociology* 23:213-34.
- Waldby, Cathy, Susan Kippax, and June Crawford. 1990. "Theory in the Bedroom: A Report from the Macquarie University AIDS and Heterosexuality Project." *Australian Journal of Social Issues* 25:177-85.
- Walker, J. C. 1988. *Louts and Legends: Male Youth Culture in an Inner-City School*. Sydney: Allen and Unwin.
- Weeks, Jeffrey. 1986. *Sexuality*. London: Horwood and Tavistock.
- Weinberg, George H. 1973. *Society and the Healthy Homosexual*. New York: Anchor.
- West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman. 1987. "Doing Gender." *Gender and Society* 1:125-51.