

Chapter 3: Methods

Epistemology

When Foucault (1980: 85) asks ‘What types of knowledge do you want to disqualify in the very instant of your demand: “Is it science?”’, he is asking us what we may fail to see if we elevate positivistic research over interpretivist. In the context of this discussion, ‘positivist’ refers to realist scientific empiricism, not logical positivism. Although Foucault is specifically highlighting the origins of science’s domination and silencing folk knowledge during the Medieval age, his comments also pertain to rupture that occurred in the move to post-structuralism/post-modernism. But it is the dominant position which positivism attained that Foucault rails most strongly against: positivism is just one of the many discourses of what constitutes ‘knowledge’. It is the ability of some discourses to ‘speak’ louder than others, drowning out dissenting or competing positions (Cheek 2004), that has allowed positivism to rise above earlier, accepted discourses. Its domination continues today.

It is not only positivist discourses that are elevated. Examples of dominant and subordinate discourses can be found in almost any field of human activity: e.g. Western medicine dominates ‘alternative’ medicine; monotheistic Christianity dominates polytheistic, pagan or anthropomorphic religions; capitalism, consumerism and economic rationalism are currently ascendant in socialism’s decline; Developed World economic imperatives dominate Developing World needs.

In the pre-modern world, ‘knowledge’ was held by the churches, with the course of the universe set by the gods. Creation stories, religious customs and ceremonies represented a local, accepted view of the world, and their gods’ roles were the accepted discourses. In the West, the spread of the teachings of Jesus from the conversion of Constantine, meant that the discourse of Christianity silenced those of local religions, or at least absorbed some of the pagan influences into Christian readings. The Church remained the seat of knowledge until Copernicus and Galileo challenged its position through reason. Thus, positivism grew out of The Enlightenment’s belief that causal laws rule the world (Neuman 2000), and opened up

the realm of science to investigate the world (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Discourses of faith or superstition were superseded by rationality and local discourses were replaced by the grand narrative of science and its presumed ability to explain all. The scientific method, in its purely positivist incarnation, works well when studying natural phenomena (although quantum physics points to limits of its applicability), but it has shortcomings when studying human interaction. And science itself is simply another discourse, one which cannot be measured against other discourses such as religion, to 'prove' its superiority (Kendall & Wickham 1999).

Quantitative research attempts to remove all variables from the data by randomisation to increase theoretical rigour. This risks removing valuable contextual information (Guba & Lincoln 1994), and, in this attempt, positivist research fails to explain the social world in four important ways:

- Firstly, no two people share the same life experiences. Therefore any attempt to strip all extraneous variables in order to render participants as *tabula rasa* upon which the dependent variable can be enacted fails to take into account their myriad different experiences, beliefs and motivations. It is the dynamic quality of humans and their awareness of their own historical and social positions that makes us different from other studiable phenomena (Neuman 2000). While few social scientists believe that all participants will behave in the same manner to identical stimuli, the claims of positivism to being objective, value-free science fail to fully incorporate human variability into its methodologies;
- Secondly, positivist research is based on pre-existing concepts which did not arise in an epistemological vacuum; thus no theoretical positions are value-free (Layder 1998);
- Thirdly, the very act of being part of research will subject participants to the Hawthorne Effect where their responses are to some extent influenced by partaking in the experiment itself (Sarantakos 1993). This becomes another variable which is difficult to remove from the analysis;
- Finally, the social world is malleable and re-created in response to the daily history that it passes through: the way we would examine a concept such as the former easy ubiquity of air travel is vastly different now from how we may

have considered it on September 10, 2001. Thus, meaning is continually being re-drawn by the social context (Layder 1994) and recreated by subjects in their daily lives. This renders the idea of stable, grand narratives to explain human behaviour as hollow.

As grand narratives were increasingly seen as failing to explain social life, qualitative research provided an alternative method of examining human interaction (Guba & Lincoln 1994). Rather than being objects to be randomly assigned to experimental or control groups, and responses counted and statistically analysed, research on humans requires a nuanced approach where motivations and results are deciphered, for 'in the social sciences there is only interpretation' (Denzin 1994: 500). Early qualitative research generally suffered from a lack of accepted, rigorous methodologies (Glaser & Strauss 1967), although, since then, grounded theory had attempted to incorporate the rigor of positivist research to qualitative research's ability to encompass individual experience (Denzin 1994).

Proponents of quantitative research hold that hypothesis testing is the only 'fully' scientific approach, and that 'hard data' is required to make deductions; proponents of qualitative research claim that 'hard data' exists in the interviews, transcripts and documents that the researcher collects (Neuman 2000). Quantitative research methodologies require that once data collection commences, the research tool cannot be changed as this would compromise internal validity. If new findings uncovered in research lead to a change in direction, then previous data would have to be discarded. Qualitative research has the flexibility to adapt its direction of inquiry in line with what the data tells the researcher *during* the research (Singleton & Straits 1999). The flexibility of the methodology allows the research design to be modified as the project develops in line with the incoming data. Locking in to one position, either theoretically or methodologically, can blind the researcher to new information that does not immediately 'fit' that position. Theory itself then has the ability to become a blinker which narrows the vision of the researcher (Glaser & Strauss 1967). The idea that we need large numbers of research subjects comes from the dominance of quantitative research (Hollway & Jefferson 2000), but grounded theory's use of saturation aims to provide generalisability by collecting data until no new ideas emerge: if the research has been rigorously planned and executed, and theory emerges

from the data, then it should be generalisable to similar populations without the 'proof' of statistical significance.

Nevertheless, there is no hard division between the two approaches. Each technique is earnestly interested in examining the world in which we live, each uses empirical data and applies methodological paradigms that have been tested and validated. Within the interpretivist paradigm, there exist methods such as grounded theory, which aims to attain scientific reliability through techniques such as constant comparison of data, multiple perspectives and theoretical questioning (Strauss & Corbin 1994), and although Strauss and Glaser originally rejected the need for hypothesis testing, constant comparison itself becomes a form of hypothesis testing in grounded theory's modified forms (Rennie 1998). Both the purely positivistic and the totally interpretivist views forget that the social world is both subjective and objective.

It is within this location, acknowledging the validity of each approach, that the individual researcher decides which methodology is most appropriate to investigate the matter under discussion. Is this a topic that requires questions like 'When did this happen? How many times?' (quantifiable data), or would it be better investigated by asking 'Why did that happen? What did that mean to you?' (qualitative data). Areas new to investigation may be better suited to what Weber (1981, in Neuman 2000: 70) called *verstehen*, or understanding, and qualitative methods allow the subject's voices to convey this meaning (Sarantakos 1993; Strauss & Corbin 1990). An understanding of the motivations and dynamics of power in a topic can be uncovered through qualitative research: if quantifiable results are needed to measure the extent of a phenomenon in a particular population, quantitative research can then continue from the base that qualitative research has provided.

Grounded theory

Glaser and Strauss created grounded theory as a reaction against postivist enquiries which they did not see as subtle enough for the social sciences. The intent was to create a research style, with roots in symbolic interactionism's emphasis on meaning and identity but with a clear methodology of how to construct theory from data (Ezzy

2002). They also felt that the existing positivist paradigms risked forcing data into unnatural representations to satisfy a chosen theoretical position. To Glaser and Strauss, data itself should have the ability to generate theory (Ezzy 2002; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Layder 1998).

The elevated position which grounded theory gives to data commences at the beginning of the research. It is considered presumptive to think you know the research categories prior to data collection (Glaser & Strauss 1967), and that consideration of pre-existing theories may blind the researcher to the theory that may emerge from the data (Jones 2002; Strauss & Glaser 1967). The flexibility of this methodology allows the researcher to respond to changing influences and conditions (Strauss & Corbin 1994), although there may be problems when in the extreme enactment of this, pre-existing theory is rejected completely. To attempt to start from a position of 'no theory' means reinventing the wheel on your topic of research every time, and rejecting existing theoretical positions 'represents a waste of good theory!' (Layder 1998: 47).

The term 'grounded theory' may incorrectly indicate that there is one way of enacting this methodology. However, as the split between Glaser and Strauss indicates, there are alternate interpretations about what makes a successful grounded theory methodology. Strauss and Corbin (1994) suggest the use of a 'conditional matrix' which locates the influences on participants from macro structures (organisational, national, international) to micro structures (sub-institutional, family, work, individual). They stress that all conditions that may shape the participant have relevance, and it is the task of the researcher to map out their relative influences at all levels. Glaser feels that this risks an *a priori* forcing of concepts onto the data, rather than allowing to data to speak and show the concepts that they hold within (Glaser 1992; Rennie 1998). For Glaser, grounded theory is about generating theory, not proving it, and to do so one must start with the subject conceived only in a 'general disciplinary perspective' (Dey 1999: 3). Despite these differences of opinion, the basis of grounded theory remains the same: find theory within the stories of participants. In the absence of a definitive method, the individual researcher finds his or her own path based on the emerging data. This could potentially lead to two criticisms of the methodology: that in the absence of a codified methodology, it

represents lax science; and that the researcher may try and fit a method onto research results *a posteriori*. However, techniques such as triangulation of data can compensate this potential, by having categories examined from a variety of sources, and cross-checked by co-researchers to eliminate personal bias.

Grounded theory can be seen to bridge the divide between qualitative and quantitative research. It combines the canons of positivistic science, such as generalisability, significance, reproducibility, precision, consistency and verification with qualitative flexibility and the use of naturalistic settings. This assists in providing a relaxed atmosphere in which the participant is able to open up (Denzin 1994). Once rapport with the participant is gained, the researcher enquires of their current life, and also examines their personal histories, and their position within a broader historical context. This is because Foucault (1980: 82) states, ‘only the historical contents allows us to rediscover the ruptural effects of conflict and struggle that the systemising of thought is designed to mask.’ Foucault is expressing his fear that theory has the ability to mask reality, that we must be open to see personal experience behind theory’s totalising ability and that we must ask who benefits from such occlusion. Examining the participant’s story within the broader social and historical realms allows us to look for periods of rupture in which transformation – or oppression – occurs.

Grounded theory in the current research

Within the available options under the rubric of ‘grounded theory’, I selected some of the data collection and analysis ideas of Glaser and Strauss, some of Strauss and Corbin, and some of Glaser to create a methodology which I felt reflected the needs of this study. From the original grounded theory of Glaser and Strauss (1967), I utilised the basic idea that theory can emerge from data, and that a researcher should not presume to know all the categories that they will encounter at the beginning of the research. However, I rejected the position of an a-theoretical basis to research, as much valid work has been published in the fields of gender and sexuality although perhaps not with a focus specifically on homophobia and masculinity. Similarly, I did not believe it would be possible to work without being influenced by formal and

informal theories of gender, having been born into the sexual revolution, the world of third wave feminism and the emancipation of homosexuality.

From Strauss and Corbin (1994), I chose both the conditional matrix as a tool for investigating power in a range of social positions that men find themselves in, and the acknowledgment that the researcher could be, as in this piece of research, an integral part of the process. This became apparent as data collection commenced. As a gay man interviewing (largely heterosexual) men about homophobia, decisions were made as to whether or not to 'out' myself before, during or after the interviews. While there was no overt aggression directed towards me during the data collection, there was the potential for it and some participants did express hostile sentiments. Decisions about clothing chosen for the interviews and the mode of transport used were also influenced by the need to present neutrally, so as not to set up defences between myself and the participants, if they realised that I was not heterosexual.

I sided with Glaser's (1992) position that grounded theory should not hypothesis-test. Glaser and Strauss (1967) designed grounded theory to generate theory, although it may not be possible for every area of research to produce a fully-fledged theory in its own right. At the very least, the research should indicate if this is an area of research that holds the potential for generating theory with further investigation, and as Kimmel (1994) sees homophobia as integral in constructing western masculinity, I felt that this research had the ability to add an Australian perspective to this idea. As the dynamic nature of human interaction has been already noted, to generate a theory 'proving' how men are would be to lock a theory into one position, despite the continually changing enactments of manhood. Thus, any theory proposed should be acknowledged as temporal and liable to change as the social dynamic changes around it.

In terms of Glaser and Strauss's (1967) position that existing theory may blind the researcher to the social world they are examining, all of the ideas contained in the methodology and methods sections of this thesis were continually reflected upon: during the literature review, planning and collection of data collection, the data analysis and the writing of the results. This was accomplished through triangulation, wherein ideas from academic literature, discussions and correspondence with

supervisors, conversations with friends and colleagues and exposure to daily media were continually compared and checked against each other to ensure that no one position took dominance and reduced my ability to consider other perspectives. For example, my assumption that country men were more conservative than urban men was challenged by participants in both locations, and was then discussed with people who grew up in rural areas; the emerging data on the importance of jokes in controlling behaviour led to a new literature review.

Grounded theory is an inductive process that moves from a research question to sampling to data collection to data analysis to theory generation. It is not a linear process, with subsequent steps causing the re-evaluation of previous steps. Thus the initial research question was refined as data was collected; the sample became more targeted as it was informed by the emerging categories and the categories were developed in response to all of the above as predicted by Willig (2001).

Ethical requirements

This project conformed to the standards required by The University of New England's Human Research Ethics Committee, approval number HEO2/162. As areas of questioning probed into personal aspects of men's lives (bullying, violence, sexual assault) care was taken during the interview to monitor the responses and non-verbal cues given out by the men. All participants were given the option of passing on questions, and on the occasions that men indicated that areas were too sensitive to discuss, they were not pressured to do so. Some men disclosed histories of abuse, depression and suicidality; some became upset during the interviews, and the interviews were paused until they felt comfortable to proceed. These men were given the chance to de-brief after the interview; they were seen to be left in the company of a family member, and were telephoned within 24 hours to ensure that they were no longer distressed.

In-depth interviewing

Semi-structured interviews in a qualitative approach allow researchers to explore unknown social phenomena with a great deal of flexibility. An open-ended interview schedule allowed participants to discuss the topic in their own words, and to explore factors that they personally considered to be relevant without being forced into specific responses by pre-formatted, closed questions (Foddy 1993). While data analysis is more time-consuming, it is a useful for examining areas with little previous sociological research by allowing the participants' opinions and recollections to be expressed (Sarantakos 1993), not simply the researcher's preconceptions. In line with the principles of grounded theory, whereby theory should emerge from the data, in-depth interviewing was chosen as a technique to best facilitate this procedure. Morse (1994) and Plummer (1999) both note the suitability of in-depth interviewing as a technique for grounded theory research.

A consideration in planning the interviews for this research was the potential for aggression in interviews on sensitive topics, such as same-sex contact, or violence towards other men. Fontana and Frey (1994) write that the interviewer must be directive, thus skewing power in their favour during the exchange. However, this situation risked reversal in these interviews if a homophobic participant perceived the interviewer as gay. Thus the importance of presentation during the interview is vital in creating the correct dynamic from the outset, to shape how the participant reacts to the researcher, and how power dynamics in the interview are managed over the course of the interview.

Allen and Oleson (1999) write that homophobic attitudes become part of the individual's self-representation: it is 'the main organizing principle of our cultural definition of manhood' according to Kimmel (1994: 131). The challenge in the interviewing phase of this research is two-fold: to maintain control of the interview so that we discuss the areas of research that other interviews will cover; and to allow the participant sufficient space for his personality to openly express his feelings – homophobic warts-and-all. It may well be that the participant's true motivations may only be made clear if he feels comfortable enough to express his 'less-acceptable'

thoughts. Attitudes may not be made explicit by the interview subjects, and may not even be clear to them. Rather, the participant's attitudes may 'operate beneath his awareness' (Minichiello et al 2000: 37). What is meant may not be openly stated, but may have to be pieced together by the interviewer to ascertain the internal worldview of the participant.

In a sense, this potential problem in conducting the interviews illustrates the main dynamic under investigation: how Australian male identity is measured by how far it is from all things gay. The idea of the interviewer having to avoid being perceived as gay (and thus insufficiently masculine) shows the depths to which homophobia infiltrates Australian culture, for the participant may feel quite within his rights to withhold his full participation, or present a hostile face.

This power dynamic of homophobia also has an inverse which applies to gays and lesbians (Garber 1993): just as straight men measure their identity and masculinity through homophobia and their distance from the 'otherness' from gay men, gay men may construct a self identity by a sense of difference from straight men. In holding the heterosexual as the 'other', homosexuals risk creating heterophobia, or at least 'hetero-nervousness' designed to compensate for the homophobia encountered in daily interactions. To re-phrase Kimmel, perhaps heterophobia is one of the organizing principles in the cultural definition of gayness.

Discussion of problems (such as the sexuality of the interviewer) in the interview may not simply make them disappear though. Despite Fontana's position that the relationship between the researcher and participant should do away with hierarchical structures, the structures under discussion here form the main architecture upon which gender in the West has been built (Kimmel 1994). Stepping outside of hierarchical structures becomes more than a linguistic device when it contains unpalatable options such as the participant withholding information, withdrawing completely from the interview, or aggressing.

Creating the interview schedule

Initially, totally unstructured interviews were proposed, which would allow concepts to arise directly from the interviews: a trial unstructured interview was piloted on the husband of a colleague, using his life-story to chronologically examine his developing sense of manhood. This was transcribed and analysed by myself and a supervisor. The unstructured and ultimately meandering nature of the interview, while illustrating some interesting areas for potential discussion, showed the need to focus the investigation more specifically. This also illustrated Layder's (1998) view that rejecting existing theoretical positions meant wasting the work that had previously been thought through by other researchers. Another problem with this interview became apparent *during* the interview: although I had never met the participant, he was suggested to me by his wife with whom I study. As such I felt reluctant to ask questions about sexual behaviour which I felt may compromise my working relationship with her. From this experience, I realised the need for a total professional detachment between the participant and researcher.

A semi-structured interview was then created with a supervisor, looking at areas of discussion which may illustrate a 'policed' masculinity. The topics for discussion originated both in the background literature which had commenced much earlier (in the research proposal required before the commencement of the research); from Plummer's (1999; 2001) writings on masculinity and homophobia; and from supervision discussions about the pilot interview. The interview schedule included ideas of physicality, friendship, sport, school, friendship across various ages, sex and relationships. Once this was completed, recruitment commenced. Information on sampling techniques follows in the section *Sampling in the current research*, but before that I will write on how the interview schedule was adapted following the first round of data collection.

Developing the interview schedule

At the suggestion of a supervisor, I transcribed the first six interviews. My misgivings about this plan (my typing is slow; money was available for a professional transcriber; I thought my time would be better spent elsewhere) disappeared by the

time the third interview was transcribed. Seemingly random comments in different interviews began to emerge as related concepts that threw ideas about acceptable masculinity into relief. Once transcribed, the supervisor and I did separate readings, highlighting what appeared to be items of significance and comparing our impressions. From these discussions, the research instrument was adjusted into its final form (although its use in each interview was tailored to what I felt were suitable questions for each participant). Areas of discussion that did not provide fruitful data (questions about grooming) were eliminated, and areas such as the roles of popularity and bullying in school were given greater weight.

Once the initial data coding was completed, the second round of interviews commenced, and included theoretical sampling to broaden the research focus. Concepts that were identified through interviews directed the research to specific subgroups to further develop these emerging ideas: the initial sample yielded a high percentage of men with liberal attitudes to gender and sexuality (although as will be discussed in the results chapters, even the most open-minded men still had their behaviour controlled by homophobia). To counter this bias, I began sampling in areas where I felt I might find more traditional attitudes to gender, and found them in a younger sample, and in men in the building industry.

There was also a degree of self-reflexivity in the theoretical sampling and the process of data collection. Homosexuality was mentioned in almost every interview by the participants themselves, and sexuality emerged as a major theme through which men conceptualised their sense of masculine identity. As a result, it became apparent that personal questions would need to be put to heterosexual men about knowledge and experience of same-sex sex. Despite having conducted over 400 quantitative interviews about sexual behaviour with gay and bisexual men, the current research created new challenges: in quantitative research, it is easy to work from 'behind the interview schedule'. The researcher simply reads pre-formatted questions written by someone else, and so there is a comfortable sense of distance when asking intrusive questions: the author of the survey takes responsibility, albeit in absence. In the current research, the interview proceeded like a conversation, and to ask a stranger about his sexual experience felt far more intrusive: it was almost like questioning his masculinity to ask him if he had ever had sexual contact with another man.

To counter my reticence, I organised a meeting with Dr Chris Bourne, a sexual health physician at Sydney Hospital. Although the dynamics of our interviewing situations would be different (people expect a sexual health physician to ask about their sexual behaviour; a doctor has more authority than a post-graduate researcher), Dr Bourne provided some clear, practical directions for negotiating such interviews. Some of these directions had already been encountered in the literature, such as starting with general questions and moving to more personal topics once rapport is established (Minichiello et al 2000). Dr Bourne also suggested useful ideas for approaching questions about sexual behaviour. These included: setting out guidelines for confidentiality at the *beginning* of the interview; monitoring the participant's body language for signs of anxiety and not proceeding if I felt the situation may deteriorate; *re-stating* the confidentiality with which I handle the data immediately prior to talking about sex; and projecting the same, matter-of-fact, unembarrassed presentation for discussions about same-sex sex as for opposite-sex sex. These factors were combined with two suggestions from a supervisor, who bridges the disciplines of sexual health practitioner and sociologist: grounding the discussion on sexual behaviour in the literature, and depersonalising the initial questions.

Questions about same-sex sex were prefaced thus: 'A lot of the reading we have done on this project shows that some boys play sexual games together. Did you ever hear of anything like that at your school?' This simultaneously situated a controversial topic in the realm of 'normal' behaviour, and also removed the individual from the statement by asking about people he observed. If there was an affirmative answer and the participant did not appear uncomfortable with the subject, then the question was then developed to incorporate his thoughts and experiences ('What did you think of that?' 'Did you ever join in with them?'). The potential tension, the need to proceed cautiously while monitoring participants' body language and possibility of violence in this context, are all indicative of homophobic controls circulating in the interview. The same degree of caution was not needed when asking about heterosexual teenage sex: rather than being a topic of tension, it was more likely to present as a moment of status, as ritual progression to 'proper' manhood. While there was no overt aggression, there were moments of discomfort in some interviews, some hostile opinions given, and some instances where I 'read' the participant's reactions to the

increasingly personal nature of the questions, and did not proceed to ask about same-sex sexual behaviour.

Benny and Hughes (in Fontana & Frey 1994: 361) describe how people in interviews act as if there is an equal power balance '*whether or not this is actually so*' (original emphasis). The latter point indicates that equal status may not always occur, and in my prior experience of interviewing, there is an unbalanced power dynamic present. By being the instigator, and representing a symbol of authority such as a university, I had a power advantage over the participant. By controlling as much of the environment as possible, I managed the atmosphere of the interview to elicit data professionally, non-emotively and effectively. This generally proved to be the case. However, to investigate an area of sensitive information such as homophobia, it was necessary to maintain the control that could otherwise be compromised if the participant felt threatened by personal questions, or queried my sexuality.

To control for this possibility, I prepared for the interviews in terms of presentation. I had my hair crew cut, chose plain jeans, t-shirts and a sweatshirt with the university logo on it. I also rode to all of the interviews on a new Suzuki SV1000. The size and power of the motorcycle were commented on by several of the participants with a combination of admiration and envy. Cars and motorbikes came up as points of discussion in many of the interviews and although by no means all men agreed, the consensus, especially for men who held traditional ideas about gender, was that vehicles are able to convey important markers of masculinity. There are the 'right' kinds of cars or motorcycles for the 'real' men, whereas others were seen as having less status. The use of the motorcycle assisted in situating me as 'one of the boys' on more than one occasion, and assisting in creating rapport.

As the interviews progressed, I felt more comfortable with them, and was more secure in theoretically sampling from potentially homophobic environments, such as rural areas. However, despite having thought that I was approaching the topic with an open mind, the first rural interview challenged my preconceptions of rural men. While expecting a man with conservative ideas about sexuality and gender, I was caught off-guard by his responses, and had to quickly re-evaluate my beliefs about non-urban men. This checking of positionality allowed me to approach the remaining rural

interviews without the blinkers of my inner-city mindset which so often equates 'rural' with 'conservative'. As the subsequent research showed, there are many contradictions in gender, and both town and country areas provided a mix of attitudes. Even within individual interviews, men expressed contradictory ideas of gender and sexuality with a variety of demarcations of acceptable behaviours being contingent upon individual or temporal situations. Interviews ranged from 56 minutes to four hours and twenty minutes.

Sampling

The sampling considerations of qualitative research differ from that of positivist research which requires the ability to prove theories and generalise findings to similar populations. As grounded theory *generates* rather than proves theory (Denzin 1994; Glaser & Strauss 1967; Rennie 1998), it does not require random-sampling techniques. This serves to negate criticisms that the sampling methods do not allow for ensuring validity (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Grounded theory utilises theoretical sampling, where initial contacts are selected through their relevance to the topic. Through the technique of constant comparison, where incoming data is referred back to the literature review and the previously analysed data, the researcher is able to ensure that a detailed picture of the area under investigation is canvassed. Areas within the sample which are shown to be weakly represented may then be more fully investigated. A well-targeted sample directly locates sub-populations who can provide information on specific aspects of the research question, and as grounded theory aims to generate, not verify, theory, the need for large numbers of participants is negated. Rather than relying on arbitrary numerical cut-offs, grounded theory utilises the concept of saturation, wherein research continues until no new accounts on a specific topic occur (Glaser 1992; Glaser and Strauss 1967; Morse 1994).

Participants are sought who are perceived as significant and relevant (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Through this process, 'concepts are formulated and analytically developed, conceptual relationships are posited' (Strauss & Corbin 1994: 280). Diverse groups are similarly targeted: this is not simply for the comparison of evidence, but also because they may explicate the properties of these groups. It is the similarities and differences between categories from which the theory emerges

(Glaser & Strauss 1967). Comparison of data is enhanced by sampling from a diverse range of sites, and thus avoiding biasing the sample around the demographics of that particular geographical location (Morse 1994).

The reflexive process of conducting grounded theory is present in the sampling techniques. Sampling is not simply planned and executed at the start of the project, but continues through the data collection phase, controlled by the theory that emerges as existing data is analysed. Theoretical sampling aims to capture a broad range of the influences that impact on an area of research (Minichiello et al 2000), and responds to the directions in the data and the gaps in information which are observed, with the researcher continually thinking where to look next (Glaser & Strauss 1967). The final size of the sample cannot be known in advance, as it is dictated by how many participants are required to reach saturation. The quality of the sampling becomes evident in the final theory produced: inadequate theoretical sampling leads to thin, improperly integrated theory, and the study will be judged by the 'range, density, linkages between, and systematic relatedness of its theoretical concepts, as well as by the theory's specificity and generality' (Denzin 1994: 508).

Sampling in the current research

Participants were sourced through theoretical sampling, using a combination of convenience and snowball techniques. I obtained my first four interview contacts using convenience sampling, through colleagues who had friends who they felt might give interesting insights for various reasons: three straight men who had a mix of gay and straight friends, and a retired minister. These men provided some valuable insights, but none of them exhibited any current homophobic attitudes. Some did talk about holding homophobic attitudes in their adolescence but these had changed over time – although what instigated attitudinal changes, and residual effects will be discussed in Chapter 7, *Changing opinions*. This led to theoretical sampling to find a more diverse range of groups with different attitudes to sexuality and gender.

The research proposal stated that this research would access men from a variety of geographical areas. Being a city-based researcher, making contacts in regional and country areas presented a barrier. However, this was circumvented by a series of

interviews on ABC radio. As well as extra urban contacts, this brought in most of my out-of-Sydney participants. Men who volunteered after hearing the radio interviews were asked some brief questions to try and create a mix of regions, working class and middle class men, and reasons for wanting to participate in the research. No in-depth questions about sexuality or gender were raised at this point, as I got enough information from these brief questions to get an impression of their worldview. Thirty-two men, and the son of a woman who 'volunteered' him, were selected for interviews. Two of these men provided an extra nine snowballed participants from their places of work to make up two focus groups. Two men's groups were approached to find members for another two focus groups (a total of nine men). This made a total of 45 individual interviews, which were augmented by a further 18 men in four focus groups: a final total of 63 participants. Nine other men made contact, but were not interviewed either because of time or geographical constraints, or because they were in a previously-saturated category.

The current sample

Thirty-four men came from either Sydney, Canberra or Newcastle. Twenty-nine men came from regional centres, small towns and rural areas. Demographic details were collected on all men for age and country of birth and religion: ages ranged from 19 to 100 with an average age of 47.8 years. Fifty-four men were born in Australia, one in New Zealand, five in the United Kingdom, one in Canada, one in Melanesia and one in Egypt. Three men were Aboriginal, one was a Pacific Islander, one was Middle Eastern and the remainder identified as Caucasian: mostly Anglo-Celtic and one Dutch man. (Two Asian men made contact, but were unable to be interviewed due to clashes between their schedules and the time available for interviews.) More detailed demographics on religion, relationship status and parental status were obtained only for individual interview participants and are shown on Table 1. One man was Jewish, 42 were brought up as Christian (38 Protestant; four Catholic). Two men reported no religious upbringing. The Jewish man is still practising, as are 14 of the Protestants and two of the Catholics. Twenty-five no longer practise in the religion of their birth, and three men described themselves as 'spiritual'. Eleven men had been in the armed services or police forces, and three had been in prison. Seven interview participants had been sexually assaulted as children and two focus group members (one by a female and eight by males). This ranged from unwanted advances but no actual sex,

to pack rape. Five men had had consensual sex with other males (a total of twelve reported same-sex sex; the child-sex and consenting adult-sex categories are not mutually exclusive). Sixty identified as heterosexual, one as bisexual and two as gay: the bisexual man is currently married and both gay men had married but subsequently divorced.

The majority of the men were parents, including both gay men and the bisexual man. Four men had step-children as well as their own offspring; one man had an adopted son as well as two daughters; both of one man's daughters were step daughters. All of these men spoke of the blended families being 'their' children. Three men were estranged from their children following divorces. One man had lost a son within hours of the birth. The codes listed on the following table are as follows:

Mar = married; Div = divorced; Sep = separated; Wid = widowed; Def = De facto live-in partner; Gf/Bf = girlfriend or boyfriend who is not a de facto partner, Sing = single. First major relationship is listed first; subsequent relationships are separated by a forward-slash.

'a' indicates an adopted child, 'd' indicates a deceased child and 's' indicates step children; sons and daughters are listed as 'S' or 'D'. When listed before a forward slash (i.e. DD/) this indicates children are from the first relationship; any from a subsequent relationship is after the forward slash. If subsequent relationship did not produce any children, this is marked as a hyphen.

I have listed my subjective impressions of how homophobic men were. I did not wish to directly ask men this question as I felt it would have been too directional, and may 'colour' the rest of the interview. Participants are listed as Hi, Mod, Lo or No (highly, moderately, not very or not at all homophobic) in adolescence and as adults, separated by a forward-slash. 'Lo' in adulthood includes men who saw themselves as open-minded, yet still had reservations, such as considering homosexuality a less valid lifestyle.

Table 1: Profile of the Informants

Name	Age	Religion of birth	Current religion	R'ship	Children	Sexual abuse	Same-sex sex	Homophobic
Alan	55	Protestant	None	Div Bf	DD/-	None	Yes	No/No
Alex	59	Protestant	Spiritual	Div Wid Gf	SS/Ss DsDs/-	None	None	Mod/Lo
Arthur	37	Catholic	Catholic	Mar	SD	None	None	Mod/Lo
Barney	50	Protestant	None	Sep	SSS	None	None	Mod/Lo
Bert	53	Protestant	None	Div Def	DD/-	None	None	Lo/No
Brett	50	Protestant	None	Mar	DD Ss	Yes	None	Hi/Lo
Brian	53	Protestant	None	Mar	DDDS	None	None	Lo/No
Bryce	34	Catholic	Catholic	Mar	-	None	None	Mod/Lo
Craig	41	Protestant	None	Div	D	None	None	Hi/Mod
Damien	37	Protestant	None	Sing	-	None	Yes	Hi/No
Dennis	49	Protestant	None	Mar	DD	None	None	Hi/No
Duncan	45	Protestant	Protestant	Mar	DS	Yes	None	Mod/Lo
Eddie	49	Protestant	None	Div Def	SS/-	None	None	Lo/No
Evan	34	Protestant	None	Mar	DS	None	None	No/No
Frank	39	Protestant	Protestant	Mar	SSS	None	None	Mod/Lo
Greg	63	Protestant	Protestant	Div	D	Yes	Yes	No/No
Harry	74	Jewish	Jewish	Wid	SD	None	None	Hi/Hi
Howard	44	Protestant	Protestant	Mar	SS	None	None	Mod/No
Ian	25	Protestant	None	Sing	-	None	None	Mod/Lo
Ivor	26	Protestant	Protestant	Sing	-	None	None*	Mod/No
Jordan	42	Protestant	Spiritual	Div Mar	SD/SSSS	Yes	None	Lo/No
Joseph	62	Protestant	None	Div	DD	None	None	Mod/Lo
Justin	77	Protestant	Protestant	Mar	S	None	None	Hi/Lo
Leo	62	Protestant	Protestant	Mar	DDS	None	None	Lo/No
Lloyd	37	None	None	Def	Sd SS	None	None	No/No
Luke	26	Protestant	None	Def	-	None	None	Lo/No
Mike	41	Protestant	Protestant	Div	S	None	None	Hi/No
Neil	53	Protestant	None	Mar	DD	None	None	Hi/Lo
Pat	59	Protestant	Protestant	Mar	DD Sa	Yes	None	Lo/No
Ray	56	Protestant	None	Div Mar	Ds Ds	None	None	Mod/Lo
Rhys	21	None	None	Def	-	None	None	Mod/Lo
Richard	53	Protestant	Protestant	Div Gf	DD/-	None	None	Mod/No
Rick	24	None	None	Sing	-	None	None	Mod/No
Robert	28	Protestant	Protestant	Gf	-	None	None	Hi/Hi
Rowan	28	Protestant	None	Def	Ds Ds	None	None	No/No
Ryan	53	Catholic	None	Mar	D	None	Yes	Lo/No
Sam	72	Protestant	Spiritual	Div	DSD	None	None	Hi/Lo
Shane	32	Protestant	None	Mar	S	None	None	Mod/No
Theo	40	Protestant	Protestant	Mar	SDS	Yes	None	Mod/Lo
Timothy	58	Protestant	Protestant	Mar	SSD	None	None	Lo/No
Tom	39	Protestant	None	Div	SS	None	None	Mod/No
Trevor	55	Protestant	None	Mar	D	None	Yes	No/No
Walter	37	Protestant	None	Def	D	None	None	Lo/No
Warren	23	Protestant	Protestant	Div Gf	D/-	None	None	Lo/No
William	72	Protestant	None	Mar	SSD	None	None	Hi/Hi

*Although Ivor said he had not had sex with another man, he described incidents of male-male contact during group sex; however as the primary erotic focus was women, he did not consider these to be anything else than a variation of heterosexual experience.

Bracketing

The experimental method requires the removal of extraneous variables to allow an experiment to be undertaken objectively, without those variables influencing the result. However total objectivity is neither attainable nor desirable in interaction-based qualitative research which requires connections and communications. Ahern (1999) notes that while bracketing allows preconceptions to be set aside, preconceptions and reflexivity sensitise a researcher to vital issues within the research. Ahern suggests the keeping of a research journal, which I did in the form of field notes after interviews. These were compiled in conjunction with self-reflection on my own experiences in the change from boyhood to manhood. An example is shown here, written immediately following the third interview. The field note includes reflective comments on how the interview was conducted, identification of issues arising in the interview and potential directions for subsequent interviews.

Field notes: interview 3: Walter, 22.06.04

I felt much more relaxed just letting this interview unfold without feeling a need to rush.

I asked if he ever got called poofter at school, and he said no, but then went on to say that he got called that a lot in his 20s's and gave me a description of how that occurred. Talked about how being small and playing soccer 'was considered suspect' and his mates made light-hearted jokes about him being a poofter. Eventually thought 'Maybe they're not joking'.

I did manage to ask him some really personal stuff which I was more cautious about in the first two interviews, like had he ever had sex with another guy or had he thought about it, and we had a good discussion about that (even though he had not, he had insights into feeling desire but not acting on it).

In this and the interview with Evan on Saturday, 3/4 of the way through, as we appear to run out of steam, I explained to them what I was investigating, and that then (especially tonight) allowed us to continue the conversation for another 20 minutes. I think this can be a good technique to continue to use, but possibly only with insightful men who will not be threatened either by the questioning, or by my presence as a gay man asking about this.

The question that I felt constrained to ask Evan, I was able to ask Walter – what level of physical contact are you happy with from another man. He is very comfortable kissing or hugging gay or straight friends, but he does talk about making assessments before doing that on every occasion – what level is this friendship at, where am I etc. He would kiss a gay friend in Darlinghurst but not at a bar in the city. And interestingly, he has some corporate gay friends, who if

they are in their business suit would not want him to kiss them in town near work. So his behaviour is policed by their actions. Another line of questioning that I could follow up here would be how these negotiations occur – is anything ever said, or what is the body language that mediates the knowledge that kissing is ok here, but not there, or with this man but not the other.

An interesting man in that despite being about my size, he fitted into the hegemony in a lot of fields. Hung out with the rough boys, excelled at sport, backchatted the teachers, and yet was academically successful, rejected his father's status-through-work-and-materialism attitudes and held himself above the bullying that occurred around him.

Sees a clear relationship between homophobia, sexism and racism. The gang he hung out with in his early 20s were all racist, sexist and homophobic once they had a couple of drinks and there were no women around. He saw alcohol as disinhibiting the social controls that normally kept these opinions in check, and that the social controls have a function to which they all acquiesce to. Good quote: homophobia arose 'in the presence of football and the absence of women'.

Questions arising from this interview: said he didn't really have many female friends until about 16. Homosocial network until then. How does this compare to other interviews? Is this a question I need to pursue?

Asking about playing with other kids: rather than asking about sexual behaviour, how about asking about play: 'Did you ever play doctors and nurses with any of the other boys or girls?' Mention both genders to keep it sounding normal for either girls or boys to be legitimate playmates, but not in the context of sex. Still, it feels voyeuristic to be asking this. Debrief with Plummer on this.

Talked about a pecking order, and elevating your position on it by appearing tough. This sounds interesting. Follow up in subsequent interviews.

Don't use the term 'hazing'. It is not well enough known in Australia.

'Running with the herd': good image. Also shows how some really nice guys are involved in this sort of stuff, but are not actually malicious.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity allows the researcher to ascertain power systems in interviews and areas in which the researcher's own history may provide blockages. To contextualise my role on the research, I present a short biography of myself, and how my own history influenced the research process. The risk of such a presentation is that it can appear self-indulgent (one colleague cautioned me 'Don't get caught up in navel-gazing, darl') but the researcher cannot be removed from the project, and so my role as data collector and analyser must be addressed.

The section following my biography, which consists of my recollections of the participants, is presented to give an impression of the men and groups who I encountered while completing this research: these descriptions feature some demographic details about the men, but are also opinions – including assessments of which interviews I felt to be the most productive, and why I found some interviews uncomfortable. I am presenting subjective recollections to add colour to the empirical data which will follow.

Pol Dominic McCann

I am a 42-year old New Zealand-born gay man, born to Irish migrants, and have been resident in Australia since the age of 22. I was generally the smallest child in school, disinterested in sport and generally in first or second in class. I experienced on-going, humiliating homophobic abuse from late primary school to mid-way through high school, and as a result, left high school early. My negative experiences with male peers during school, and subsequent positive experiences with gay male peers led me to sequester myself in a gay enclave, and I generally worked in ‘safe’ industries: hairdressing, the ‘rag trade’, hospitality and gay publishing. A series of gay mentors and two periods of counselling elevated my self-esteem, and I completed highschool at 25. Still, I was angry and frustrated, even in my 30s at a liberal institution like the University of Sydney, witnessing ongoing homophobia and seeing the institution refusing to deal with it.

I would not have been able to complete this sort of research until quite recently, as interacting with some of these men would have caused anxiety to the extent that I would not be able to objectively conduct an interview. This required careful thought and planning in conjunction with supervisors as to how to deal prepare for this. There were interviews where I was able to listen impassively, as men spoke about homophobic violence with no concern for their target. There were also stories where I witnessed other men’s histories of abuse but had to hold my own history aside. These interviews gave me much insight into the prevalence of homophobia and its role on men of any sexuality. Importantly, some men who spoke of homophobic teasing, but were adamant that they felt no real hostility towards the boys they abused: they did so for fear that they might be singled out for name-calling and violence if they. This made me question the motives and understanding of the boys who I went

to school with and whether or not they understood of the psychic damage they were inflicting. Some of the men who spoke of emotionally tormenting children when they were children were conflicted about their roles, and had turned into warm, considerate adults, and indeed one of my primary school bullies became my best friend in my senior year – although we never discussed what had gone on before.

While research may aim to be objective, the subjective nature of human experience means that it is unlikely that social research is ever totally devoid of influence of the researcher's own experience, and more so when an underlying motivation behind the research is the researcher's personal experience with the topic. This does not necessarily detract from the research as long as the researcher is aware of the lens through which they interpret the data and attempts to bracket their own experiences. This can allow, as I feel it did in the case of the current study, a greater understanding of the impact homophobia on a range of men. During the interviews and their analysis, as well as finding out about the participants' experiences and their attitudes to sexuality, I learnt a great deal about how much I have held heterosexual men at a distance and how divorced I have become from aspects of male culture. Knowing what decent men some of the boys who exhibited less-than-honourable behaviour in their youth had become was a valuable development which allowed me to set aside my own history, and conduct research openly and aware of the pressures which impacted on all men.

Field note reflections of participants

Alan

Alan has had two significant relationships with women, including marriage. He described himself as bisexual in his young adulthood but gay in middle age. Alan told of sex with peers at school, but knew of social consequences if this became common knowledge: however, in contrast to some participants who said there was no same-sex sex occurring he also said, he said that it was widespread. Sex with women began during university, and he found this very enjoyable. Later in the marriage, he had a long-term relationship with a male friend of his wife, and eventually both of these relationships ended. He now has a male partner. Alan was disparaging of the aggressive role which sport had in his childhood and adolescence, and also spoke of

the sidelining of any artistic endeavours by boys. As a teacher, he continues to see replicated in the current classrooms and playgrounds the types of sidelining of those boys and girls who do not conform to hegemonic gender presentations.

Alexander

Alexander is one of the men who re-shaped his life as he has been exposed to various experiences. He reports that after 20 years of marriage and repeated moves by the army, his wife announced that she would not come with him on his next posting: his teenage sons were angry at what they saw as Alexander's failure here, and he has a fractious relationship with them still. Shortly after the separation he began a relationship with a woman who later developed breast cancer. Alexander left the airforce and became her full-time carer until she died. This experience caused him to examine how men are expected to deal with emotions such as grief. He completed a degree in counselling after this, and intends to undertake post-graduate research in the field of male emotions. He is actively involved in a men's mentoring group in his city, working with younger men. Alexander's story is similar to that of men like Sam and Justin, who re-evaluated their ideas about how men are expected to interact, following a life-changing experience. He has been influenced by the directive that it was emasculating for men to show emotions, and his interest in researching this topic appears to be initiated by a desire to assist men to reconnect with their emotions, as his experiences have taught him to do.

Arthur

Arthur was a serious man who smiled infrequently. He recalls that boys and girls were treated differently at school, but also believes, having watched his young son and daughter, that there are inherent differences between genders. He attended university, but disliked the left-wing atmosphere. He joined the army during this period, eventually transferring to the British army, which he described as being like a family. He frequently used words like camaraderie, and said that team-bonding was a vital part of being a man for him. While he believed that each gender is capable of attaining what the other does (and the same for different ethnicities), he was angry at the concept of affirmative action: the individual should be able to advance on their

own merits. As such, he failed to notice structural impediments embedded in sexism or racism. His attitudes towards other sexualities were open, but with reservations.

Bert

Bert was born in Scotland and arrived in Australia as a young child. As a teenager he had been a swimming champion, and much of his childhood had been training in this solitary sport. He married and began working in real estate. He eventually became successful, but was unaware that his wife was unhappy. When she suddenly left, he was devastated, and said he cried for weeks. His brother sent him for counselling which was helpful. The stress of this period nearly caused him to lose his business. During this time, his brother, who is gay, also began to take him out socially: in his 40s, Bert discovered gay nightclubs. He described the joy of music and dancing, and found that he deepened his friendship with his brother and his brother's partner. He is now remarried, and had just finished a successful business transaction when we met. He had bought a caravan and a Range Rover, and was preparing to take an extended holiday with his wife.

Brett

Brett attended a private all-boys school, although his family were not wealthy. He felt socially out of place amongst comfortably middle-class peers. He did an apprenticeship in the building industry, and has been married for 26 years: however, he described his marriage as 'fucking hard' with continual arguments. Despite being a successful tradesman, and building up a million-dollar company, he was cheated out of control of it by his partners. He has built up a new company, but is still struggling to regain his financial security he had previously. He has been involved in emergency rescue squads for several years now, and described numerous occasions where people have died in his arms. Initially, he and the crews he worked with dealt with trauma silently, but as he felt the strain of this, and began discussing it with his colleagues, he realised the importance of not trying to be emotionally stoic. Learning this allowed Brett to deal with the loss of his business and to be more emotionally open in general.

Brian

Brian was my first out-of-Sydney interview, and quickly showed that rural does not mean conservative. Sport played a major part in his life, although in his late teens he began to find it unfulfilling. When he expressed this to his circle of friends, he was ultimately rejected by them. He allowed himself to develop wider interests beyond the narrow confines that his friends authorised. While he is comfortable talking about an ephemeral topic like masculinity, he still acknowledges that most men would not be interested in introspection. His wife's uncle is gay: Brian expressed the range of attitudes that his family has to this, from acceptance to intolerance. When I asked Brian how he would feel if his son was gay, he simply said 'My relationships with my wife is the most important thing in my life. How could I deny my son that based on race or religion or sexuality?' He provided an enlightening, heart-warming version of modern Australian masculinity.

Bryce

Bryce struggled at school, and found that his abilities in sport were a great boost to his self-esteem. He reported being bullied at school, as he would sometimes cry from the frustration of not being able to understand the lessons, and was considered by his peers to be overly-serious. Despite being in classes for boys with learning difficulties, he completed year 12, which he said was one of his best achievements. He then did a carpentry apprenticeship, but following a depressed period after his first major relationship broke up, he became very religious. He enrolled to become a missionary, and completed a degree in theology. However, he did not continue with missionary work, but did a social welfare degree and a post-graduate counselling diploma. He is married and works as a counsellor in the construction industry. He appears to be both bemused and proud that he went from academic under-achiever to post-graduate studies.

Craig

Craig is in the armed services. He fitted the hegemony well, as he had the 'right' sort of body and found that the atmosphere of the services suited him well. However, by becoming an autonomous and emotionally controlled adult led to the dissolution of his marriage, as he was seen as emotionally distant. He is now the primary carer of his 12-year old daughter, and described being exhausted by this dual role. He felt

apprehensive about the challenges of guiding his daughter through adolescence, and yet was determined to manage, as he was clearly a devoted parent. Craig appeared to be quite socially isolated due to his work hours and time spent caring for his daughter. Most of his friends are colleagues, but these friendships appear to be limited to the work sphere and do not seem to cross over into his own time. Craig expressed frustration that his relationships with other men and women are not particularly supportive at this point, but realised that this is in part due to him being anchored closely to the home for the time being.

Damien

Damien was interviewed during weekend release from a 13-year prison term for manslaughter. In his late teens, he had developed a serious substance abuse problem, but had always managed to hold down a job. However, one night, on a combination of alcohol and pills (not his drug of choice) he killed a man during a robbery. While incarcerated, he had same-sex relationships with pre-operative transgender prisoners. He also completed a tertiary diploma in adolescent drug and alcohol counselling, even though with his criminal record he will never be able to work with young people. He did this for personal development. Damien was a gentle, introspective man whose careworn face showed the difficulties of his adult life, both the substance abuse and the years in prison. His conversation was measured and yet open as he described drugs, the killing, and an incarcerated adulthood. This included disarming accounts of how a straight man repositioned his psyche to be able to have same-sex sex while in prison.

Dennis

Dennis's mother left the family when he was seven. He was angry and rebellious until he found structure and support in the police force. He left the police after several years and gained his helicopter pilot's licence. He is the primary care-giver for his children, and this takes up the majority of his time although he still flies. For a man whose attitudes towards sexuality were very conservative through childhood and his police years, his attitudes towards sexuality and masculinity have shifted. He attributes the change in his thinking to moving beyond the confines of the police force, and appears to be happy in his non-traditional role as housedad, although as his

comments about him and his neighbour teasing each other about 'losing their tail feathers' shows that there is still an acknowledgment that some would see their roles as emasculating. Dennis described being uncomfortable about physical intimacy between men (although he also said that he is not very demonstrative with this wife), showing how even though he has shifted his attitudes, there are still aspects of male interactions which he considers off limits.

Duncan

Duncan is from England's north, and worked as a policeman. His wife became strongly Christian following the birth of one of their children and although Duncan was initially dismissive of her religion, he too converted. They migrated to Australia and he now works as a counsellor in the construction industry. He sees many aspects of the male-dominated culture of the police force mirrored in the construction industry. While he does attempt to challenge these attitudes (as well as the related 'othering' techniques of racism, sexism and religious intolerance), he still does so from a conservative Christian standpoint: he believes that homosexuality is wrong, but that it is for God to judge people, not other people. Considering his intolerance for homophobia at work, I was somewhat taken aback by his quote, 'Hate the sin, love the sinner'. However, despite our difference in opinions on this (which I did not acknowledge to him), I was interested in how he managed to combine this belief with a refusal to allow his charges in the construction industry to voice discriminatory attitudes.

Eddie

Eddie's father drank and his mother was emotionally and physically violent. He was a small child with a hole in his heart and was teased for years: his self-esteem was so low that when he developed a crush on a girl at school he was too shy to talk to her. He felt that he literally did not measure up to the other boys, and has spent much of his adult life trying to 'prove' his masculinity. He admits to taking risks in driving powerful cars too fast, and over-ate in order to compensate for being the smallest child: as an adult he has a weight problem, and is now diabetic and sexually dysfunctional. Part of his drive to prove himself was channelled into business, which made him a millionaire. However, he went bankrupt, and his wife then left him. Ironically, while overseas on holiday, he met the woman who he had a crush on as a young teenager, and they now live together. I was invited to have dinner with them, and the affectionate bond between them was clear. Despite the frustration Eddie expressed that they missed their prime years together, particularly in relation to their sex life, there was also a sense of pride that he and his childhood love were now united, and his new business was running well. Another aspect of Eddie's life story

was how he was unaware of different sexualities in his isolated rural childhood, and uncomfortable with the idea of homosexuality when he encountered it in adult life. However, as he resurrected his company he met a business partner who was gay. By evaluating the man as a good person in a business context, Eddie reconsidered his ideas about sexuality: he now considers this man to be his best friend.

Evan

Evan personified many aspects of the hegemony: a well-built, handsome, builder who lived comfortably in a beautiful beachside apartment. Although he works in an industry that many described as homophobic and full of pressure to conform to those attitudes, he said he was able to resist as he was big enough to not feel threatened. His best friend, who has known since school days, is gay although he did not come out until his mid-20s. Evan jokingly said that this made his own teenage years easier. He said could imagine the teasing he would have received, and had his own sexuality/masculinity questioned by being associated with a gay peer. The need for me to control as much of the interview environment as possible became apparent while talking with Evan: his wife was out for the day, and Evan had his two children at home where the interview occurred. His 6-year old daughter, who was watching videos, interrupted the interview during a discussion on penetrative sex for males. This caused a moment of embarrassment, although he managed to return to the topic without prompting. Nevertheless, the thread of the discussion felt somewhat disjointed, as there was in the back of my mind, and perhaps Evan's, the possibility that she would walk in again. The conversation quickly ended up on safer ground: sport.

Frank

Frank is the son of a soldier, now deceased, who he described as 'my hero' but also said that he had been angry with him for many years. Like many participants, he feels that boys are physical and stoic, and girls are internal and emotional. As a boy, he was bullied by other boys who he saw as trying to elevate their social standing through violence. After leaving school, Frank followed his father's path and became a soldier. He now works as a policeman with delinquent boys, and tries to create a balance for them by allowing them to become emotionally expressive (although in

private) and providing physical activities which he sees as lacking in availability for adolescents, and inherent aspects of masculinity. Frank is very suspicious of the impacts of television, junk food and behavioural medication on boys. While he rails against male role models like Bruce Willis, he still teaches his young charges that being male is grounded in physicality.

Greg

Greg had perhaps the broadest Queensland accent I have heard. On the several telephone conversations that we had in order to line up the interview, it was musical and cadenced, and you could almost hear his smile. Indeed when I met him, he smiled broadly through much of the interview, although this belied a difficult history featuring a controlling, manipulative mother, a pack-rape as a teenager and an unsuccessful marriage. Greg is a minister, who is also gay. Early in the interview, he appeared to be hinting at his sexuality but I was not sure if I misheard him: later he made a clearer reference to his sexuality and we discussed at length how this impacted on his life and religion. Greg described a sex life that was unfulfilling and frustrating with his wife and later, an affair with another woman. He was frequently wracked with guilt about the affair, being unable to please his wife, and feeling more attracted to men. His wife eventually left, and in his mid-50s, he had his first adult sexual experience with another man. His sex life is restricted by being closeted, and being the minister to a small community. He quietly referred to his life as being 'excruciatingly lonely', but said he drew satisfactions from his role as minister to his town, and his relationship with his daughter. This was a beautiful, and often painful interview as this generous man opened up about privations and the hope of one day finding a man to love.

Harry

Harry was an Egyptian-born Jew who came to Australia following the Suez crisis and worked as a jeweller until retirement. Harry expressed how he felt continually like an outsider: despite the presence of a close-knit Jewish community in both Egypt and Australia, he felt that his ethnicity and religion held him out of the mainstream in both of these countries. Similarly, his small stature, disinterest in sport and artistic career gave him a sense of difference from the dominant forms of masculinity in Australia.

In the Middle East, Harry said that emotions were not necessarily something to be hidden, and yet he was also reticent about some emotional displays such as crying. His wife had recently died, and this loss weighed heavily. As a result the interview was stopped briefly for him to collect himself. He did say that crying was unavoidable during bereavement and he felt less constrained now than previously. I would have liked to have explored the reasons behind the change in his beliefs, but as it was so intimately woven into the death of his wife, and was clearly distressing, I did not pursue this line of questioning. Now in his mid-70s, and with adult children who were well integrated into Australian society, Harry was feeling increasingly isolated as he lived alone in the family home.

Howard

Howard provided a fascinating interview, in part because I had pigeon-holed him as somewhat dry, being an accountant and scout-master in Sydney's very white, Christian, middle class southern shire. Indeed, he described himself as strongly Christian, and as so often happened in the interviews, he challenged my views, showing how many shades of belief there are about all aspects of life in a Christian's view. Despite living in such a homogenous environment, Howard has also worked in developing countries, and said this travel experience was vital in giving him a broad perspective on the world: he intends to take his two sons overseas to ensure that they too see beyond the safety of suburban Australia. Howard clearly enunciated the power that was attached to physical presence and sporting ability at school, and the potential negative consequences for boys whose abilities were academically inclined. Howard was one of the boys who was gifted at both, and he said that this allowed him to bridge the extremes of the school social system – although he was one of the men who admitted to trying not to let his intellect show in class as he knew that this would lead to teasing.

Ivor

Ivor attended a private boarding school. While there, he was extensively bullied, and by his own admission, has exhibited some of those aggressive tendencies at times in his life. He joined the army, which included commencing tertiary study but dropped out before completing his degree. In circumstances that he does not wish divulged, he

was charged with manslaughter, and spent time in prison. When interviewed, he was living in an open prison which allowed him to attend university again. Although he was not involved in any sex in prison, he explained different status levels available to men who did, based on their role as penetrator or penetrated, and for the latter, depending on whether they were penetrated against their will, for favour (such as protection or in exchange for drugs or tobacco), or did so voluntarily. Like many of the participants, Ivor was full of the contradictions of masculinity: he has the physical capacity to inflict serious harm – and has done so – yet was aware of the pressures that push men to violence, articulating these ideas with great insight. In one of his most informative recollections, he told of a homophobic assault at school. He described how it started, escalated and pulled all boys in – for fear of being thought gay if they did not, and looked back with a palpable sense of discomfort at his role.

Jordan

From the age of four, Jordan was sexually abused by a group of men, including penetration and continued until his early teens. He dealt with the abuse with drug and alcohol use. He was caught in possession of cannabis, receiving a six year sentence. He ‘went in damaged and came out fucked’, including a serious drug habit. His adult life was a cycle of ‘proving’ his masculinity through physical work, fighting, drugs, alcohol and prison. Despite his size, he still feared being raped again in prison. ‘I didn’t rape anyone, I certainly held them down’ for fear that if he did not help, he would be next. He gave a concise summary of the differences between homosexuality and paedophilia, consensual sex, coercive sex and assault. Jordan embodies the physical aspects of hegemonic masculinity, but reports that his use of the body and taking on emotional restraint as authorised by the hegemony brought him into a series of increasingly dangerous situations. When forced to confront how unsuccessful this approach had been, he began reassessing his ideas of masculinity. He now says that he is more comfortable with his life and role, taking obvious joy from being caring with his children and other people in his community.

Joseph

Joseph is a talented, well represented artist. Nevertheless, he lives frugally outside of a regional centre. Work is sporadic, and he feels isolated both from mainstream

Australia, the Australian art scene and notions of Australian manhood. He spent several years travelling in Europe, and found the response of Europeans to art refreshing, especially when compared to Australia's fascination with sport, which he described as 'a cancer on the nation'. He appears frustrated with many aspects of male culture in Australia, and thinks that men will not allow themselves to be expressive for fear of being seen as 'poofers'. And yet like so many men with liberal attitudes, there were slippages in Joseph's world-view. When describing Matisse, he felt the need to defend his masculinity: 'Was he a poofter? No way! He was a real man.' Although he rejects much of the hegemony, the hegemony still polices his impressions of masculinity. Although he is largely non-homophobic, such language still permeates and moderates his ideas of what 'true' masculinity entails.

Justin

Justin was terminally ill when I interviewed him. There was a 14 year age difference between him and his older siblings, so he felt almost like an only child: his descriptions of his older brothers were of disinterested teenagers who treated him with disdain rather than affection. His early life was lower-middle class, although his parents sent him to a private school. He felt out of his league with wealthier boys, and struggled academically. He joined the navy during WWII, but again spoke of feeling isolated and misunderstood. He partially completed a science degree (failing several subjects) before transferring to theology. Again at theological college, he felt academically and socially lost. He described a restrictive atmosphere where learning was tightly restricted to the college-approved authors. However when he graduated and was sent to rural areas, he found more open-minded people. Justin's sense of inadequacy and isolation appeared to dissipate as he grew older. He is now well-read and has divested himself of the strictures of the fundamentalist Christianity. The negative attitudes towards homosexuality which were instilled in the navy and by the Church were shed after being posted to an AIDS ward in the 1980s: in this period he came to see people as individuals, not sinners. Although there was a sadness which permeated this interview as he spoke of his impending death, there was also an acknowledgment that Justin had, by his own volition, developed a powerful intellect on his own, with little encouragement from an expensive private school, tertiary

education or his church. This allowed him to create his own personal relationship with God, beyond the narrow confines that he had been indoctrinated into.

Leo

Leo described himself as a Charismatic Christian, and as such I was very interested in hearing his opinions. He described his earlier years as fuelled by binge-drinking, chain smoking and promiscuity, but when he became religious, he found an internal peace. He engages his spiritual beliefs very actively: although he is in the conservative charismatic movement, he is very open minded about sexuality. He puts this down to meeting many gay men when he worked in publishing through the 1970s, and also the amount of reading he was able to do as part of his work. He is very unhappy with the role of rightwing churches in American politics and their increasing role in Australia, and refers to mega-churches such as Hillsong as 'entertainment evangelism'. He spoke despairing at how some people slavishly accept religious dictums (or any orthodoxy) without trying to find meaning in it for themselves. While strong in his beliefs, Leo finds religion to be a guide to his life, not a textbook.

Lloyd

Lloyd is incredibly smart, thwarted and frustrated. His military father moved the family every two years, and so he has always found it difficult to feel established or develop stable friendships. He is quite small and was told by his father that he needed to toughen up to be a man: his desire to be musician was ridiculed by his father. Lloyd is angry that men are not allowed to feel emotions in the way that women are. His first son died within hours of birth, and although Lloyd does not resent the attention paid to his wife, he wonders why being a grieving mother is allowable, whereas he had to return to work the following week. Adding to the pain of that situation was the fact that he worked for the coroner, and knew that one of his colleagues was preparing the report on his dead son. Lloyd's frustration has been channelled into drug and alcohol problems in the past, and although he said he 'has failed everything since high school', there was a cheerfulness alongside his anger. He is one of the men in the study who has the major parenting role of his children, and appears to enjoy living outside of the hegemony and proving more options to his sons.

Luke

Luke's parents divorced when he was young and he lived initially with his mother until he was eight, and then with his father until he joined the army at 17. Luke was able to enunciate how status levels were related to correct presentation of gender, describing institutional structures aimed to elevate the most hegemonic men. However, as he spoke of 'the rules' he also spoke of men in the army managing to find ways of quietly subverting them – either the rules of the army or the peer-established rules of masculinity. Now that he works in the corporate sector, he continues to find small ways to express his difference, and not yield to the pressures of corporate conformity. He was measured but articulate in his responses, taking time to answer the questions, but also laughing freely. His living room was an interesting combination of audio equipment and a large collection of books. He described himself as more of an internal person than physically oriented or social, and noted that this sets him somewhat aside from dominant ideals of masculinity. He was made to play AFL as a child which he did not enjoy – but loves watching rugby. His friendships beyond his relationship were largely with other men, including one who he knows from his army years.

Mike

Mike attended an expensive private boarding school, which he hated. For a man who is not particularly tall, he has a strong physical presence. During the interviews, his body and its use became clearly linked to his sense of masculinity and ability to dominate. Mike was engaging and friendly, although very conservative in his attitudes about gender (ironically, most of his time is spent parenting), and vitriolically homophobic. When I asked how he would feel if his son was gay, he could not believe that this could happen, as he was planning on teaching him how to play rugby and cricket, and that this would stop him from being gay. Despite Mike's knockabout cheerfulness, his attitudes were alarming and this was one of the interviews where I ensured that he ascertained nothing about me. I felt that at the very least, he would terminate the interview if he knew I was gay, if not outrightly aggress. His openness and guiltlessness in expressing his beliefs was incredibly informative. However, this was one of the few interviews where I was relieved to leave his home.

Neil

Neil's interview was peppered with nervous laughter and a sense of un-ease. Afterwards I wondered why he had volunteered to take part in the project, as he seemed to be reticent about opening up a great deal. He did, however, talk about feeling pressured by his parents to pursue professional tertiary study when what he wanted was to play music. He failed several units in a very competitive stream and eventually dropped out. His father's displeasure still appears to overshadow Neil, and he seemed to feel personally thwarted. He does some farm work and also gets some limited work in the music industry, but most of his energy was devoted to caring for his wife who has limited mobility.

Pat

I interviewed Pat at his home in the hinterlands of a large city. He had offered to cook me dinner, so the interview was fitted between cooking, eating dinner and drinking wine. He was an excellent cook, and this added to my impressions of a centred gentleness about him. His parents divorced when he was five, and as this was an uncommon event during the 1950s, this caused him great distress through much of his childhood. Pat was a natural athlete, and described the confidence this gave him following the divorce. He offered insightful memories of how boys were singled out for abuse if they were different, both at school and in the navy and expressed remorse at acquiescing to peer pressure in becoming involved in these events. His attitudes to sexuality and gender are very open and appear to be informed by an inquiring mind, combined with travel. As an adult, he joined men's groups where he has learned to fully connect with male peers, emotionally and physically. After adopting a Korean child and witnessing the racism his son has received, Pat has become further sensitised to difficulties people have with difference. Now retired from the navy, Pat lives in a semi-rural idyll, where he works part-time restoring furniture. It seemed to some how suit his gentle, considerate personality to work in an old-fashioned and creative endeavour.

Ray

As a child, Ray was severely asthmatic, and said that this held him outside of a lot of male culture, especially as a teenager. This sense of failure was also reinforced by the teachers who felt that a lot of school pride was dependent upon sporting success. As he felt physically inferior, he obsessed about the idea of sex, as he 'felt he had a lot of catching up to do.' This led to a deterioration in his school performance and suspension. He also described some sadistic activities of the Christian Brothers at the school where he boarded, some of which were clearly abusive and with sexual overtone (boys being made to stand naked by their beds in the dark for hours at a time). Ray became a policeman, and told of how, when women began to join the force there was a strong separation between the genders and how many women were forced out. Over the years, he has seen this changing to the extent where gay and lesbian officers are integrating into police culture: he attributes this to a developing acceptance initiated by exposure to diversity in the force.

Rhys

At 21, Rhys was the youngest of the interview participants and so was one of the few to have reached majority immersed in the media- and computer-dominated world of the late 20th century. He described a disjointed childhood where his mother was using heroin and cannabis regularly and beat him frequently. Despite this potentially detrimental impact this could have had on his education, he was recognised by teachers as well above average. Rhys speaks with affection about his mother, seeing her violent behaviour compartmentalised into the period of her heroin use, and his relationship with her subsequent to this as completely different. He was also a natural at sport and described how this ensured his popularity, over-riding the damaging potential of being academically gifted. He described periods where he had a volatile temper, and also of his capacity to bully other boys at school, which he described with some degree of embarrassment.

Richard

Richard drives a school bus, and works seasonally in the farming sector. He lives in the country, but I interviewed him at his parent's house in a nearby regional centre the interview. Before the interview, I had lunch with him, his parents and his girlfriend. His parents were warmly welcoming, and yet did not ask any questions about why I was there after I said that I was conducting an interview. Richard described a difficult divorce, and as the friendships which had at the time tended to be based around activities like going to the pub or talking about sport, he did not feel that he was able to talk about this event to the extent that he would have liked to. His girlfriend was warm and engaging, and yet in the interview, Richard described holding her at arm's length, as he is cautious about more emotional pain. His girlfriend is pressuring him to move in, and this may be developing into a contentious aspect of the relationship. Richard was a very quietly spoken man, difficult to hear and quite terse in his answers. I was left wondering why he had volunteered to take part in the research: he was simultaneously expressing a desire for closer connections to his friends, and yet resistant to his girlfriend and frequently abrupt with questions about emotions.

Rick

Rick lives at home with his parents while studying journalism. As a child he spent two years living in Canada. His childhood and adolescent attitudes around homosexuality were fairly typical: he kept his distance from any boys who were known to be gay, and utilised homophobic humour to position himself within the peer groups. His behaviour and attitudes seem to fall clearly in the category of men who felt that no harm was done by this behaviour. He reports no same-sex experience or attraction. His adult attitudes are very liberal, and he works part-time in an adult bookstore where most of his clients are gay. When I asked him how he responds if his customers flirt (as he is quite handsome), he said he hopes that he is 'putting out a straight vibe' to avoid this occurrence, but that when it does happen, he simply tells them that he is straight. Working in this environment has taught him 'a lot of things that most straight guys should know.'

Robert

Robert was expensively dressed and exuded confidence. He had studied sociology at university, but decried it as ‘airy-fairy and full of motherhood statements’, and I wondered if, as a sociologist, I was being judged unfavourably. It was difficult for me to remain impassive as he spoke of private school, servants, old money and referring to his parents as ‘mother’ and ‘father’ – which in the Australian vernacular sounded pretentious. His comments about inhabitants of outlying suburbs were condescending, verging on racist. I found this to be the most uncomfortable interview. He was a snowball participant through his housemate, who had suggested that he would be interesting – they share an apartment in a gay precinct and Robert often makes comments about ‘fags in the gym’ where he works out. However, apart from some homophobic joking, he kept these opinions to himself in the interview. I asked him how he would feel if he was in a bar, and realised men were cruising him: he said he would be more upset if they were *not* cruising him. He would worry that he was not attractive enough. It was an interesting and unexpected comment. Robert was derisive of men who would allow themselves to be seen to cry, and the assuredness with which he stated this was disarming. It was this self-assuredness that his opinions and political views were the only valid considerations which went to make this interview so challenging. Uncomfortable, but full of insight into the thinking of a young man who was very different from most of the participants.

Rowan

Rowan was born in Canada and has lived between there and Australia for most of his life with three years in Russia. The travelling he has experienced has both given him an outsider status for much of his life, and also sensitised him to the variety of lifestyles available. His recollections of school in Russia where everyone was an ‘outsider’ were particularly illuminating. It was during this part of Rowan’s interview that the idea of exposure to difference becoming a mechanism which allowed men to grow became fully evident. Rowan works in horticulture, and describes the men who work for him as very ‘blokey’, with frequently homophobic attitudes being voiced at work. He will not tolerate this sort of attitude in the same way as he will not tolerate racism being espoused, and as their employer, he is able to use his influence over how

the men use such language. He will initially tell men quietly and beyond the gaze of their peers why he does not approve: they have the option of at least keeping those ideas to themselves, or not being offered more work with his crew.

Ryan

Ryan described himself as bright at school and hated sport, and these factors set him outside from the most popular boys. However, he was not socially ostracised and as an adult he appeared as a gregarious, confident and financially successful man. He has had extensive sex with other men, but considers himself heterosexual. This was one of the many ways in which he expressed how contradictory masculinity in Australia can be. Similarly, he did not like playing team sport at school and yet he loves watching football on television; he had been in the armed services, and collects porcelain as a hobby. He described his father as 'rabidly' homophobic but clearly has not picked up those attitudes as evidenced by his sexual history, and also in the physical affection openly displayed between him and his brothers. He attributes his father's attitudes to lack of education and the confines of the military. Ryan reports that his own attitudes were more informed from his mother who was vocal in her feminism.

Sam

Sam is a former soldier and engineer, who began to explore other aspects of life from spirituality to metaphysics to ideas about the roles of men and women. He is divorced, and lives next door to his ex-wife, who he calls his best friend. His journey of development began when he began to find his interests too restrictive. He began to read widely, and attend personal development courses, and gave a beautiful example of how his attitudes to sexuality changed as he allowed his preconceptions to be challenged. From army engineer to reiki practitioner, Sam has re-evaluated what he finds interesting and important. A man who had attacked a friend who made a drunken pass in his youth could now see beauty and validity in diverse relationships. Once Sam only read war histories; now he writes poetry. His self-transformation is quite remarkable when one considers how many aspects of his up-bringing he shed to become, as his grandchildren call him, 'the world's coolest granddad'. When I asked

Sam if he was, as a divorced man in his 70s, happy, he smiled and said that happy was not the right word, but that he now felt contented.

Shane

Shane was interviewed halfway through the project and the conversation marked a major realisation. Even though I had become aware that homophobia impacts on all men, this was the first graphic account of abuse I had heard, and the impact was doubled when the targeting had nothing to do with sexuality. Shane was bullied for having a different accent, being smaller than his peers and not playing sport. This was the first time I had heard a man describe the profound impact abuse had on his development. This smart, engaging man had been isolated by the humiliation of homophobia, and although as an adult, he was now happy as a professional photographer and art teacher, who loved bringing up his young son while his wife works full-time, the scars of his past were close to the surface. This is not to say he played a victim card (he did not disclose the bullying till half way through the interview), as his demeanour was otherwise cheerful, and many facets of this adult life appear to be satisfying.

Theo

Theo had a similar story to Shane: a heterosexual man who was considered 'different' through having an accent and being a late developer. He, too, was called 'poofter' for most of his adolescence, and again it had a profound impact, marking the end of 'my happy childhood'. The bullying continued until he left school. Overlaying this history was an earlier incident when he was sexually assaulted as a young child living in Melanesia. Recounting this part of this story was clearly difficult, especially later in the interview as he reflected on having young sons of his own. Following school, he attended university, became more devoted to his Christianity and he now ministers in a small rural community. Although open minded, he still has some reservations about different sexualities, seeing that marriage is the preserve of opposite sex couples. However his attitudes to gender roles are very open, and he spoke of encouraging his children to cry if they are upset, as he tells them it is as natural an emotion as happiness.

Timothy

The most prominent memory I have of Timothy was how the smile barely left his face during the interview, and when I point this out, he laughed. He said he was a fairly happy man, content with his life and a good marriage with his brother and children still living quite close by. In the town where he grew up, there was a sense of difference between Catholic families and Protestant families, with each having their own businesses and newspapers which they patronised to the exclusion of the other. He described typical responses of many of the men when emotions were discussed: crying became problematic at some stage for boys, and this had to be suppressed; but also how as an adult he was less concerned about these social pressures. Similarly he described the pressures to create a distance between himself and those boys who were socially isolated for fear of being the next target, again a motivation which he is resistant to now.

Tom

There was an atmosphere of melancholy permeating Tom's interview. Music was important to him, and proved to be a flashpoint between him and his military father: he described being teased by his father with girl's names for having longer hair and playing guitar. Although he did not complete university, he had led a comfortable life as a technician for a Telco until he and his wife separated. When given full-time custody of his two sons, he had to leave full-time work to care for them. He has since subsisted on unfulfilling casual work, on the borderline of poverty. Early on in this period, Tom began smoking cannabis regularly and slipped into depression. He joined a men's group, and he said the relationships he has with these men are his lifeline. He described an incident where his older son was called a 'poofter' at school and was suicidal: having learnt how to be emotionally available through the men's group, he was able to be supportive to his son in this crisis in a way that he never had support from his own father. I had the sense that Tom feels unfulfilled, and as men place so much value in their work, there was a sense of failure that being a good father was not sufficient to erase.

Trevor

As a child, Trevor was more comfortable playing with girls than boys. He was a good swimmer, but hated contact sport which held him outside of many peer-based forms of male socialisation. Like Alan, he said there was a lot of sex going on – with both genders – at school. He was bullied at times at school for being camp and gave one of the most cogent examples of how hierarchies of masculinity are negotiated in childhood: by bullying a boy with less social status than he had, he elevated his own position. He is bisexual, and is now married. He has sex with men, but sees this as acceptable as it fulfils an aspect of his sexual drive that his wife is unable to provide. He would not have sex with a woman who was not his wife as this would be an emotional betrayal. However, he still keeps this aspect of his life compartmentalised away from his daily persona of a heterosexual businessman.

Walter

Walter was an articulate, thoughtful conversationalist. He was the second participant to be interviewed, and the transcript provided an excellent series of discussion points for subsequent interviews. He described how as an adolescent he was ‘running with the pack’ who were ‘in trouble and belligerent’. As an adolescent, he noticed how any difference – ethnicity, sexuality or physical differences – was sufficient for boys to be singled out. It was not until he was in his 20s that he felt the gaze of homophobia turned towards him, when his circle of friends would jokingly call him gay, as he was smaller than them and played soccer. Eventually he left this circle of friends, when he found the constant themes of racism, homophobia and misogyny in their conversation outweighed the pleasure he got from their jovial, jocular interactions. The jokes had worn thin.

Warren

Warren represented contradictions within modern Australian masculinity. He is relatively tall and well built, and on first impressions of his physique, broad accent and ‘knockabout bloke’ attitude, I thought he would have been one of the sporty boys who eschewed studying. However, he loved school and despite having a build which suited sports, he refused to play. Half of his friends at school ‘were the poofs’, and he

got this label for socialising with them, but he described negotiating a social world between dominant and subordinate peers. He spoke of how, in his regional centre, a gay man would have been run out of town previously, now there were gay men in the rugby club and were well-integrated. He spoke of a neighboring town which has a large lesbian population: 'dyke women are always a good laugh,' he said. Although his conversation was peppered with words like 'poof', there was no malice: it was just a descriptive noun which was part of the vernacular, and used to describe men whose sexuality was 'different' to his own.

William

William looked like a clichéd storybook illustration of anyone's farming grandfather: a handsome, grey haired man in his 70s with sparkling eyes, a ready smile and a string of amusing anecdotes. Born in the Depression, his father was an engineer and so they lived comfortably. William worked for a large stock and station agency until he went to the Korean war at 18. He hinted at, but would not be drawn on details about mates being killed there; this was echoed in his comments about men never allowing their feelings to show. The rest of his story was largely happy, and talked of his love of living on the land and raising a family there. His jovial nature resurfaced when talking about homosexuality: he laughed that it was something he never thought about and found it implausible that any of his children could be gay. He cheerfully admitted to being racist. However, as many interviews resisted clear categorisation, it was not any 'other' race which was problematic: he said that Aborigine's love of the land earned his respect, saving his vitriol for Asians who have 'wrecked' Sydney. This was an engaging interview, which also made it at times uncomfortable: William was so likeable that I often felt myself forgetting his casually condescending homophobia and racism.

Focus group one

Focus group one was held in a retirement village in a small town, and consisted of five men aged 86-100 years. Sport was discussed at length as embodying successful masculinity, and also as means of giving these men a sense of shared interests. Some of the most disparaging comments about homosexuality emerged in this group. It was impossible to tell if everyone felt this way, as this part of the conversation was

dominated by two men, with the others sitting quietly. The only comment close to challenging their views was when I asked the rest of the group if they had any opinions: one man responded 'Everybody to their own'. It was not possible to canvass the opinions of the other men in private, and I was unsure if the background silence was embarrassment or acquiescence. After several minutes of hostile discussion, the oldest man who had spent considerable time early in the conversation talking about his sports club but had been silent on this topic, said 'Get back to the football'.

Focus group two

This group was the most enlightening in tracking how men's attitudes change over time. These men, aged 35-43, were part of a support group in a large city, and all seemed to have had difficult lives. One of the men appeared to be slightly homophobic, but appeared to restrain his comments as the other three were incredibly open-minded about sexuality and gender roles – an interesting reversal of male peer-group dynamics. This open-mindedness can perhaps be attributed to their lack of connection with hegemonic masculinity, and their scarring pasts forcing them to confront their emotional states. Two men had violent alcoholic fathers and both were sexually abused – one by his step-father and one by his step-mother. The man who was abused by his step-father said that he was unable to talk about it for years, but found an avenue when he joined the group. Through being given a set of discourses and a forum in which to discuss their histories without being judged, this group had re-evaluated their ideas about masculinity. Terms like 'poof' were used in their earlier years, and they described the need to be integrated into the peer group as young men. But they also described the restraining capacities of peers, and the freedom they had to develop personally as adults once they began to feel less bound by hegemonic strictures.

Focus group three

Focus group three featured five unemployed regional men, aged from 33-64. Terms like 'the rules' were used to discuss what men are allowed to do and what is proscribed, and participants described social isolation for those who transgress the rules. Interestingly, the most extreme opinions came from the two youngest men.

Jeff spoke of his parents having gay friends as he grew up; Kenny made disparaging homophobic jokes throughout. It was fascinating to observe how cheerfully Kenny expressed his beliefs, as if everyone would be in agreement with him – it did not appear to him that there were different opinions, even when Jeff spoke. Gradually, Jeff became quiet. Kenny's banter could be seen to impact on conversations other men had on topics like illness, depression, relationship troubles and sexual dysfunction. Kenny continued to make jokes about topics that some men were trying to discuss honestly, pulling attention back to him. For all his frivolity, there was a brittleness about Kenny. He seemed to gloss over a broken engagement where his fiancée had a termination without asking what Kenny felt. After the group, Jeff approached me to talk about how he felt constrained by Kenny, and how this mirrored how he had been treated as a bright student at school. The silence of the other men in the group appeared to authorise Kenny's opinions, and once again Jeff felt sidelined and held outside of male culture.

Focus group four

Focus group four was held in a large city, and consisted of four builder's apprentices aged from 19 to 23. The verbal sparring which occurred in the group was a good reflection of the way that men's language was used to mockingly and amusingly shape each other, and will be discussed in detail in the chapter dealing with jokes. Likewise, there were openly homophobic comments made. During one of the individual interviews with a man who works in the construction industry, I mentioned the level of self-awareness that permeated the sample. This man offered to find me a group of apprentices who he assured me would be likely to express such sentiments without self-censoring. This occurred, and in line with the findings of the Jokes chapter, they did so with no detectable malice. The guileless description of the social distances between these men and those who they labelled as 'fags' and 'poofs' really appeared to be devoid of negative emotions like hatred. They appeared to be voicing a simple distain for boys who had been different without any deep-seated hatred, and yet also blithely described physically abusing these boys. This group, to me, encapsulated the knockabout Aussie larrikin, laughing and enjoying each other's company. But below the joviality I sensed the control of each other's behaviour and the restraints on self that have been theorised in the results chapters. While glibly

disdainful of academic boys who they had gone to school with, they also belatedly realised the advantage that education had for the other boys in contrast to them working outdoors in winter. Contradictions abounded in this group, alternately baiting each other, using self-deprecating humour and ‘othering’ anyone different. And as promised, verbalising the homophobic undercurrent which permeates young male cultures.

Triangulation in grounded theory

Early examples of the use of triangulation – the comparison of data from a variety of sources to reinforce the findings – are found in nineteenth century ethnographic work such as that of Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People of London*, which is credited as being the first interview-based social survey. The research was triangulated by using a combination of unstructured interviews and ethnographic observations, wherein Booth lived as a lodger to get into the social group that he was researching (Fontana & Frey 1994). Triangulation is used to gain a deeper understanding of material in qualitative research, by interrogating data against that from other sources (Denzin 1994), and is ‘a strategy that adds rigour, breadth and depth’ to research (Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 2). Triangulation forces the researcher to reflect on results critically, look for weaknesses in both method and findings, and find ways to correct these flaws (Fielding & Fielding 1986).

In the original guide to grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss (1967: 66) recommend that data be collected from a variety of sources, what they term ‘slices of data’. As well as newspapers, diaries, videotapes, letters and biographies which are useful sources for qualitative research (Howarth 2000; Strauss & Corbin 1990; 1994), data can originate in the researcher’s own experiences which can be combined with the ‘lived’ experiences of the participants. The use of material from multiple sources not only adds to the trustworthiness of the final theory, but also assists in the initial interpretation by providing multiple lenses through which to interrogate the data (Denzin 1994). Polkinghorne (2005) writes that *all* comparisons of participant’s stories are in effect a form of on-the-run triangulation. He notes that triangulation does not verify individual cases, but it does allow the researcher to see beyond the worldview of the individual story.

Denzin (1994: 509) states that non-interview texts such as songs, literature, and cinema 'articulate complex arguments about race, class and gender in contemporary life.' The use of sources other than interviews serves two purposes. Firstly, people speak in individual words which string together to make sentences and discourses, which can have multiple meanings requiring interpretation. Data in interviews is not uncoloured, as they are 'a product of the interaction between participant and researcher' (Polkinghorne 2005: 138), so triangulation from other sources assists in clarifying the categories and 'uncolouring' data. Secondly, triangulation with documents also allows the researcher to look 'back in time' by assessing cultural artifacts in the forms of architecture, art and literature (Layder 1994). Earlier forms of hegemony can thus be compared to the current discourses. While Layder notes that Western cultures use written, as opposed to oral, traditions, I argue that aspects of modern Western culture are also contained in oral and non-textual forms: homophobia can be argued to form a larger undercurrent to our culture than the written record shows. It is a pervasive aspect to the culture so normalised that it may even evade the spoken qualities of our culture, as it becomes normalised and subsumed behind the codes of other structures in society such as marriage, sport and 'mateship'. Each of these factors valorise one form of masculinity and sexuality over all others.

Triangulation in the current research

Triangulation for this project featured both formal and informal techniques. Formal triangulation included in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participants sourced from a variety of geographical and socio-economic locales. As interviewing progressed, and I was finding that few men expressed homophobic language to the extent that I have heard it in other contexts (Oxford St, Darlinghurst – the major thoroughfare of Sydney's main gay district – on any Friday night provides a passing parade of verbal abuse hurled from cars by gangs of young men), I used triangulation to look for other evidence of homophobia in Australian society: in Parliament. Informal triangulation can be as simple as discussing your work with friends, fielding their questions and re-evaluating your own beliefs and findings in response to participant's probes. Following a discussion about how few men were expressing hostility or admitting to violence, a former advisor to a government minister

suggested I examine three senate committees that he had worked on. He described some of the more vitriolic presentations to parliament such as the 1999 Inquiry into the Anti-Genocide Bill, the 1996 Inquiry into Sexuality Discrimination, and the 2004 Report into the Effectiveness of Australia's Military Justice System. This is an example of not finding data in the interviews that had been suggested by the literature, but discovering it in a different source. It also presented the unsolicited concerns of a section of the populace without the 'colouring' induced by an interviewer posing a specific question.

Discourse analysis

Foucault's concept of discourse is a means of interpreting the social world by examining how language and practices (the discourses) shape beliefs and behaviours. Discourse analysis is not simply a cataloguing of ideas that surround a social phenomenon, nor does it claim to produce 'truth' about it (Howarth 2000): rather, it assumes that language and practice are the 'readable', surface-level manifestations of hidden motivators. The actual motivations became clouded as they are translated into language or action, and the role of the discourse analyst is to decode the discourses to find a possible basis for the manifestation.

According to Wodak and Reisigl (2001: 383):

'Discourse' can be understood as a complex bundle of simultaneous and sequential interrelated linguistic acts which manifest themselves within and across the social fields of action as thematically interrelated semiotic (oral or written) tokens that belong to specific semiotic types (genres).

The idea of discourses as a means of interpreting the social world was proposed by Foucault. *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* (1990) traced how sexuality has been spoken of, considered, policed, and managed to resist repression in different periods of time in the West, and in *Madness and Civilisation* (1988) Foucault traced the development of the medicalisation of madness in the move to modernity. Within the context of a notion of sexuality, Wood (2000) notes that a 'natural' as opposed to social basis for this aspect of identity is already infused with discourses which enable a category of 'natural' to exist. The concepts of 'natural' or 'essential' are both

discourses in their own right, and in (at least partial) opposition to the social discourses.

Discourses can be codified laws like law and medicine, or undefined ideas about the world like racism or sexism, which have the ability to shape how we consider various populations (Layder 1994). Discourses can be language-based, such as a series of statements which carry a meaning about an idea (Cheek 2004) or non-linguistic such as material bodies upon which the results of the discourses can be seen at work (Kendall & Wickham 1999).

Discourses are not closed, finite systems which are able to explain the world with any finality: they are open to reinvention and remaking in response to the constantly developing world (Foucault 1990; Kendall & Wickham 1999). Thus mental illness existed before it was categorised and controlled by the medical discourse, but it was considered as other than a psychiatric condition. Discourses of religion may have ascribed 'possession' as a cause, and religious ceremonies would have been used in place of the medical or psychological interventions of the modern age. In this example, we can see how 'ownership' of insanity was moved from the priest to the doctor, and how this altered the way in which people reacted to and controlled the mentally ill. In the context of this research, discourses about 'proper' masculinity will be examined to find out where they originate, who benefits from them and how all men, gay, straight and between, are bound by them.

Technologies of control no longer need the repressive use of authority, where punishment was inflicted on the body, as Foucault (1991) described the execution of the regicide, Damiens. Modern power is exercised by 'constructing new identities, knowledge and practices' (Layder 1994: 102). As such, sexual behaviour and identity are shaped by what is considered to be normal, and power is exercised in the creation of categories which are imbued with more status or less status. So discursive power has practical effects, and the discourses are not just in the written texts but also in the practices and systems of organisations and institutions.

Foucault (1990) makes frequent reference to power in his writings on sexuality and discourse. The exercise of power is integral to the functioning of discourses (Willig

2001), a position mirrored by Layder (1994: 97) who writes ‘The self is constituted within the play of language (and discourse more generally) and the field of practices and power relations that define the social locations in which people live out their daily lives’. While Layder refers to the self as being constructed by discourse in the singular, he notes that there are multiple discourses with differing levels of power. Cheek (2004) refines this point further, stating that multiple discourses act on us simultaneously, with some having greater power and are therefore given more status, such as medical discourses dominating those of drug users.

Just as power is an integral part of examining discourse, so too is history. Foucault (1972) asks that we look at the historical location of the phenomenon, and see what is similar, and what changes occur over time. This allows us to read how society changes and the input of various discourses in that process. Reynolds (2002) cites the example of civil libertarian discourses rising in the early 1970s in challenging the role of the legislature in enforcing Judeo-Christian ethics regarding sexuality. To fully understand this statement and the change in weight that each of the various discourses had in the public domain, we need to examine a broader historical viewpoint encompassing the civil rights movement, the sexual revolution, the women’s movement, and the increasing input of media in the late 20th century.

Discourse analysis in the current research

‘It is essential to appreciate that discourse analysis is an approach rather than a fixed method’ writes Cheek (2004: 1145), so, as with grounded theory, there is no one way to operationalise the analysis of discourses. Discourse analysis can source a variety of texts, from cultural artifacts to published texts to conversations. Willig (2001) recommends that keywords be used as no more than a starting point for conducting analysis: from these we look for shared meanings, indicators of power, who benefits and who pays.

Discourses contain more information than the literal meanings of the words used. Information is the imbedded indicator of power that conveys the controlling abilities of discourse. To find the creators of the discourses, those subject to its control, and the enactments of discursive power, requires ‘a close and critical analysis of texts in

an attempt to lay bare their hidden allegiances and affiliations, traditionally concentrating on the binary structures of meaning in Western metaphysics' (Kendall & Wickham 1999: 23). The role of surveillance and self-surveillance is integral in this process. Bentham's panopticon shows how power does not have to be seen to have an effect (Foucault 1991), so this research looked at both the controlling mechanisms of gender discourses, and their ability to induce self-monitoring of behaviour and beliefs when the consequences of not doing so risk social punishment.

To examine discourses, we should look for contingencies, not causes, for the social and historical situations that come together at a particular moment to create the situation (Kendall & Wickham 1999). The example that Kendall and Wickham cite is that of a prison administrator in the 1870s. Once a job that was inherited, it had become a career that was contingent upon the establishment of a bureaucracy, and an education system, printing, taxation and a national government. The authors reinforce that one should not focus on a historical endpoint, but look at the factors that lead up to it. In this research, I asked the participants about their ideas of gender at different times of their lives, where they learnt what was acceptable or desirable, and what happened to those boys whose behaviour was not acceptable. As with grounded theory and its reliance on constant comparison, emergent themes were compared between interviews, and to other discourses of gender such as media. Similarly, as the interview schedule in qualitative research is constantly under development in relation to incoming data, discourse analysis informs the researcher of directions in which the project can unfold by illustrating who and where discourses influence a person's life.

Ten interview transcripts were initially analysed using NVIVO qualitative data analysis software, where I coded anything that seemed to indicate gender enactment. This produced over 300 codes, but many of these only arose once or twice. These specific topics were then collapsed under broader headings and when I analysed another seven transcripts through NVIVO, this reduced the number of codes to 41. Table 2 lists these codes, and the chapters which were most substantially influenced by them. Most codes did resonate with most chapters, but only the most prominent influences are cited. The numbers listed refer to chapter numbers: Chapter 4: *Leaning masculinity by distancing 'difference'*; Chapter 5: *Boys' talk: the roles of language*

and humour in shaping male identity; Chapter 6: *Sport and the creation of Australian masculinity*; Chapter 7: *Changing opinions*

Table 2: Codes of analysis

Academy vs. sport	4,6	Monitoring behaviour	5,6
Being tough	4,6	Pecking order	4,5,6
Bullying	4,6	Peer groups	4,5,6
Careers	4,7	Popularity	5,6
Changing opinions	7	Power	5,6
Comparing to others	4,5,6	Proving masculinity	6
Contagion effect	4,7	Racism and homophobia	5
Difference	4,5,6	Rape	4,6
Difference between genders	7,8	Real men	6
Emotions	4,5,7	Same-sex sex	4,7
Having children	7	Realising homophobia's impact	7
Having gay friends	7	Sex = status	4,6
Homophobia	4,5,6,7	Sport	4,6
Homophobic distance	4,5	Strange ideas about sexuality	4
Hypermasculinity	4,6	Structures	4,6
Jokes	5	Suspicious activities	4
Losing face	4,5,6	The Rules	4,5,6,7
Masculinity kills	4,5,6,7	Toughening up	4,5,6
Magic quotes *	4,5,6,7	Us vs. them	6
Marginalisation	4,5,6,	Vengeance	4
Media	4,5,6		

* The 'Magic quotes' theme does not refer to any particular aspect of masculinity: I used this to gather all the quotes which I felt were particularly insightful in any conversation.

Despite the time spent learning the NVIVO software, I ultimately printed out every transcript and physically 'cut and pasted' all comments pertaining to these codes together. This visual method showed which discourses of gender were prominent, and were cross-referenced to establish patterns of behaviour, development of beliefs, responses to power in a variety of contexts and areas of contradiction. Finally, these ideas were evaluated in terms of the literature review and cultural representations of gender.

The first area to come under scrutiny was the constructedness of gender. While the participants may not have used such terms themselves, they did describe gender in terms of a learnt discourse, one which involved the transformation from baby to child to adult, from boy to man. Through this process, boys learnt that status was attached to being tough and non-emotional, resistant to authority and bonded to peers. This formed the basis for the first results chapter, entitled *Learning masculinity through*

distancing 'difference'. Discourses of hierarchies, 'othering' and peer pressure permeated the participant's recollections of childhood, with a sense that masculinity was to be acted out for peers and superiors in accordance with successfully modelled performances of gender, and men were under pressure to conform to these standards. As gender was described as something to be learnt, it required both role models to emulate, and negative models to measure oneself against. Discourses of 'failed' masculinity taught boys which behaviours and attitudes to fear and avoid. Boys who were seen as effeminate, who did not partake in the authorised activities or who acted against hegemonic peer-grounded activities would be labelled as 'poofters'. The equating of non-hegemonic masculinities with homosexuality occurred prior to understandings of sexuality, but homophobic terms quickly came to be the most feared as they appeared to encapsulate the antithesis of desired masculinity, and became the catch-all for all fears about gender. Fear of being equated with this despised outgroup led some participants to partake in bullying rituals to ensure the gaze of the peer-group was not directed at them.

Probing deeper into how ideas the social world was understood lead to an examination of the role of language, and the power dynamics which underpin boyhood communication. Within the overall discussion of language, jokes emerged as a powerful communicator of ideas about gender. Any performances outside of hegemonic gender presentations was considered acceptable to laugh at and led to the second results chapter *Boys' talk: The roles of language and humour in shaping male identity*. Here, discourses of social power were enunciated, with those embodying 'proper' masculinity having the capacity to emasculate those boys who deviated from the hegemony by laughing at them. These ideas were considered in conjunction with discourses of gender and humour in media, which showed non-hegemonic men as targets for ridicule, and showed gay men as effeminate, silly, emotionally unstable and pathetic.

A second layer to the discourses of humour emerged: that of humiliation. In these situations, laughter occurred, but not in relation to verbal joking. Here, a malicious version of humour was described wherein no verbal jokes would occur: boys who were outside of hegemonic presentations were simply abused. If queried, the abusing boys would frame the activities as just a joke. If the abused boy complained, he

risked being seen as soft, and in need of toughening up – reinforcing the socially-learned basis of gender.

One of the first questions I asked participants was ‘Who was popular at school?’ Answers paralleled each other with striking similarity: athletic boys were popular. Thus a discourse of physically competent, aggressive and competitive masculinity was described, in opposition to academic boys. Indications of social power and prestige arose in these discourses: male status was linked to the body and its use, and the mind was potentially emasculating. Thus, the third results chapter *Sport and the creation of Australian masculinity* developed. Hierarchies of dominance were described, between boys who played sport and those who did not. In the ranks of boys who did play, other hierarchies emerged, with some sports being seen to possess greater social prestige, generally predicated on higher levels of aggression and strength required for the game. Emasculating language and homophobic nominators were frequently cited as being used by peers, coaches and teachers to mark out the boys who did not play, could not play, or were seen as not playing with the desired levels of competitiveness and aggression.

As they passed beyond adolescence, some men continued to find that sport encapsulated their ideals of ‘real’ masculinity. However, sport was seen by many men to be of limited use: a significant minority had no use for it and described being forced to play as humiliating, and stopped playing as soon as they could; other men found that the masculine aura given off by sport was short lived, as younger, stronger males rose through the ranks; others simply found it insufficiently stimulating, and augmented their recreational lives with broader interests. This development of ideas about what embodied successful masculinity underpinned the discourses of constructed gender: masculinity was not stable, and men found new arenas opened up to them over time.

This concept underpinned the final results chapter, *Changing opinions*, as there was a development across men’s lives about what constituted desirable and rewarded masculinity. Men described a loosening of restrictive ideas about how they should behave, and also how shedding these ideas allowed them to grow personally. These concepts were enunciated by men who were either disconnected from hegemonic

masculinity, or who had been exposed to new ideas through encountering *difference*. Men who were deeply integrated into the hegemony, and had not had cause to challenge this worldview were less likely to voice tolerance for variations in gender roles.

Although there was an interview schedule which guided men through a similar terrain of discussion points, I allowed the participants to direct as much of the conversation as possible: in only four interviews did I initiate discussions about sexuality. The rest of the men spontaneously brought this concept into the interviews. Thus, homosexuality quickly established itself as a prominent discourse of 'failed' masculinity in childhood and early adulthood. For men with traditional ideas about gender, this perception persisted; for the rest of the men, the constraints of homophobia lessened as they moved past what were described as the years of competitive displays of hegemonic masculinity, bringing about a discourse of gender as a learned attribute that is open to being influenced and re-formulated at different periods in a man's life.

Conclusion

This study has utilised grounded theory principles to guide a methodology within a discourse analysis framework. It aims to present an understanding of how men develop their concepts of masculinity over the course of their lives, and the changes which occur as they reflect on that experience.

The following results chapters foreground the voices of the participants, as their experiences and understandings of masculinity are vital in allowing an understanding of this personal, ongoing learning process.

Chapter 4: Learning Masculinity by Distancing ‘Difference’

Introduction

As Chapter 2 has argued, there is no uniform way to be a ‘boy’ or a ‘man’. Each person learns what is considered as idealised masculinity in any given society, and males are socialised to fit that mold. As there is no singular masculinity, as it varies *between* cultures, and changes *within* cultures over time, masculinity is therefore an ephemeral state that is full of contradictions. The variance and nuances of masculinity means that attempts to ‘learn’ it or pass it on are always layered with mixed messages.

This chapter looks at some of the standards of desired masculinity in the modern West, and how these are passed on to boys. An overarching theme to this research was the problem of *difference*. The concept of ‘difference’ creates a foundation upon which much of the way we grow and learn is built. This is in accordance with Goffman’s (1959) thesis which looked at the creation of our sense of ‘self’. Goffman proposed that through noting how different we are from what he termed the ‘other’, we come to understand what makes up our own personalities, or those of the peer-group. This concept was further developed in *Stigma: notes on the management of a spoiled identity* (Goffman 1973).

The lack of core characteristics to gender requires that a society’s definitions of masculinity and femininity be learnt in a social milieu. It is through a comparison of the ‘self’ and socially valued examples of masculinity that boys and men can gauge their progress towards embodying, what Connell (1987; 1989; 2005) describes as ‘hegemonic masculinity’. As heterosexuality is deeply entrenched in the authorised masculine scripts, it becomes a prime marker of the hegemony: but it is also difference from *any* of the masculine scripts which is policed. Heterosexuality is continually modeled around us socially until it reaches a level of saturation which appears normative and becomes of system of gender control: correct gender behaviour is deeply entrenched in heterosexual behaviour (Epstein 1997). The related concepts that were discussed in the chapter 2 – ‘othering’, hierarchies, ritual and contagion –

will be shown to be techniques by which idealised gender is learnt and performed around a basis of normalised heterosexuality.

Failure to embody hegemonic masculinity was problematic, and could initiate a series of emasculating insults. Any 'difference' including creativity, emotionality, disinterest in sport, standing out from or being rejected by peers (Kimmel 1996; Martino 2000; Messner 1987; 1992; Messner et al 2000; Plummer 1991; 2001), while not related to sexuality could potentially be policed by homophobia. Hence we see how any difference, not just different sexuality, appears to be challenging to masculinity. The type of words used could align the target with femininity (sissy, girl) or homosexuality (gay, poofter, faggot, homo) and were often used interchangeably.

Frank: [Being creative was] a perceived weakness at some level, or effeminate. Maybe poetry was effeminate and playing music, and singing might have been effeminate. [...] [Crying] was the undoing of the bloke [...]. It really was a key thing. He showed weakness, he showed effeminacy, what's considered an effeminate thing to do. (retired soldier, police officer, 39 y.o., metropolitan centre)

Rowan: Gosh, the amount of friends who, when I went back to Canada who were sort of a bit more fragile like that who had ended up turning into severe drug use and things like that. A couple of kids who I went to primary school with committed suicide. So I saw some pretty heavy results of people who didn't fit in with the crowd. (horticulturist, 33 y.o., regional centre)

PM: OK, you've mentioned four specific words recently: 'swot', 'sissy', 'wuss' and 'poofter'. Were there other words that would be used?

Shane: Those are words that at school they were socially acceptable to use. And they described the fact that you were perhaps someone of an intellectual type, perhaps. I can't remember any other words at all that other people used. I think 'swot' became common. You were called 'teacher's pet' and 'arse licker' and all that kind of stuff.

PM: What was the absolute worst insult?

Shane: Probably being called a 'poofter'. (photographer/art teacher, 32 y.o., regional centre)

These examples are about the monitoring of non-hegemonic activities by peers: in the following example, Alan's headmaster and father utilise homophobic language to curtail his 'wrong' subject choice:

Alan: Because I chose art and French and economics, my parents got called up to the principal's office, and the principal said 'What have you got art down here for? You're not a fairy are you? Fairies do art.' So my father said, 'No, well he's not doing art.' (primary school teacher, 55 y.o., metropolitan area)

Pressure to adhere to peer ideals has a strong socialising capacity, restraining behaviour, particularly in young people (Harris 1998), and so children police a range of differences strictly. As Chapter 7 will show, the pressure to conform can reduce as people grow older, and pressure to conform to gender ideals in particular has less impact once people progress into adulthood. At that point, difference may be embraced, but in childhood there is little latitude. By as early as age six, homophobic terms begin to police any 'different' male behaviour (Plummer 1999). The most frequently cited aspects of presentation likely to instigate homophobia can broadly be divided into two categories, which have significant overlaps:

- How boys socially interacted with each other with emotional displays or rejecting the peer group being problematic (social difference).
- Having the 'wrong' sort of body, or failing to use the body in authorised manners (embodied difference).

These categories communicated what boys and men should aspire to in order to be valued by the community. As the categories represent hierarchies (emotional exuberance to emotional restraint; small or weak bodies to larger or stronger bodies), not all boys and men can be at the apex of the hierarchy. Positioning oneself in the hierarchies became competitive, and forced boys to try and 'fit' themselves into hegemonic masculinity. In the context of emotions, this meant learning that 'boys don't cry'. With regard to physicality, it meant that boys pushed themselves to demonstrate that their bodies were either the biggest and strongest, or if not, that they could 'punch above their weight'.

Plummer's (2006) belief that misogyny is an incomplete explanation for homophobia is borne out in the data: it was not just femininity which is being policed, but rather being a 'lesser' form of male. Homophobic words were cited as most feared by men, and will be seen to initiate restraints on behaviour. Participants described moderating their behaviour for fear of being labeled with homophobic nominators.

The result was that boys and men constrained themselves into a narrow range of behaviours and attitudes, and then broadcast these attitudes back out to society, forming a closed feedback loop of information about how men 'should be'. Any difference – not only sexual difference – was problematised and marked out with homophobic slurs; conformity was valourised. Even hegemonic males could attract such terms to mark out any small or temporary deviations from the hegemonic scripts. Thus, homophobia constrained all males.

Emotions: 'Real men don't cry'

While young children express emotions freely, at some point, some emotions become problematic for boys. This indicates the social construction of masculinity, for 'if it were a fact that masculinity is written genetically into male bodies, it would not, surely, be necessary for parents to tell tearful little boys that "big boys don't cry" ' (Buchbinder 1994: 2). The control of a boy's emotional range is one of the techniques through which they are shaped into lauded stoicism. Crying and emotions were discussed frequently in the interviews, with the majority of statements detailing how negative, emasculating attributes were overlaid onto boys who were seen as too emotional – and therefore called weak, sissies, babies or poofters.

Alexander discussed how crying was considered in childhood.

Alexander: What was wrong with crying? Well when I was growing up – not now, it just doesn't worry me – 'You're a big boy, get up, don't cry'.

PM: Why don't big boys cry?

Alexander: Because it's not accepted. It's not acceptable. (retired soldier, now counsellor, 59 y.o., metropolitan area)

Sam narrows the problem down to the effeminising capacities of the wrong emotions.

PM: If a man did cry, or a boy, what would people say about him?

Sam: He'd be a sissy. Men don't cry. Real men don't cry. (retired engineer; alternative health practitioner, 72, regional area)

As with Alexander, the attitudes that Sam expresses here are not his current views: they are how both of these men saw masculinity considered around them, and how

they felt, earlier in their lives. In Chapter 7, Sam's current views on emotions will be used to illustrate how men's attitudes are able to be re-shaped throughout their lives, highlighting the constructed, mutable nature of gender.

Robert pinpoints when crying becomes particularly problematic for boys, and what that says about a boy.

Robert: Probably as you're nearing the end of your primary schooling years. You're getting to sort of 11, 12. I think that would be the turning point. As you're hitting puberty you're regarded more as a young man. You're developing your own views, you're moving away from your parents. (public servant, 28 y.o., metropolitan centre)

Crying here was seen as weakness and infantile. Growing up meant that you were 'moving away from your parents': developing non-emotional autonomy as puberty transforms the boy's body into that of a man. In childhood, boys were told by adults not to cry, and teased by peers if they did. In adulthood, emotionality could still be seen to carry other messages about a man's personality. Those who were seen as having the wrong emotions were considered less dependable. Theo is a minister, and in the course of his work deals with funerals and the associated grieving. He spoke of how men in rural areas react to their own emotions, and what perceptions of emotionality are.

Theo: Whenever I'm talking with men who've lost their mother or their wife or something, if they start crying they apologise straight away. And I say, 'Don't apologise, let it come.' I think it's a healthy thing.

PM: What does it say about a man who cries?

Theo: Effeminate. Not tough. Not strong. Can't cut it in a man's world. Couldn't cut it if there's competition. So if you show signs of weakness in competition you become a victim rather than an equal. (minister, 40 y.o., rural area)

A display of emotion leads to the entirety of a man's personality being seen as weak, and thus feminised. Alexander continues this theme.

Alexander: It's not only crying. You have to be in control. Men have to be in control where women can be a bit scatty. And it's quite acceptable for a woman to be a bit scatty, but a male, he has to be the pillar. (retired soldier, now counsellor, 59 y.o., metropolitan area)

Alexander clearly states the problem with crying here. However, emotions feature largely in men's lives, and Lloyd expressed the frustration at the differences between how men and women were treated with grieving: his first son died at four hours old, and he was given five days off work. Six weeks later his father died:

Lloyd: It was just an expectation that I just got on with things and supported my wife. [...] I did, after my son died, I did try some group counseling. I'm not being a misogynist, but it was geared towards the woman. There's a perception that because I didn't carry the baby and I didn't go through nine months of that that it was therefore going to be easier for me to get over. And it just wasn't, it isn't. I mean, my wife doesn't remember a great deal about after the birth because she'd had an epidural and it was a very difficult labour, and she was doped up to the eyeballs. But I was stone-cold sober and held my baby while it died. But there was sort of nowhere I could go. No-one I could talk to. (at-home-dad/bartender, 37 y.o., metropolitan area)

It is a manifestation of the loss of control and autonomy that Keogh, Dodds & Henderson (2004), Kimmel (1990; 1996), Levine (2000) and Messner (1992) see as central to the correct presentation of masculinity in the West. Men who feared being seen as weak, or who had been seen to be overly emotional, may resort to covering this fear with hyper-masculine posing and behaviour (Mosher & Tomkins 1988). The reactions of a stoic man towards emotionality were described by Justin, who trained for the ministry in the early 1940s. He had difficulty with the pressures of study and the loneliness of celibate life. When this brought him to tears in his supervisor's office, he was ostracised.

Justin: I would have a talk to him and I certainly broke down a few times in his study and he'd get out, he didn't seem to be able to stand the crying. But generally he would bring a cup of tea eventually and ah...(pause)

PM: How could you tell he didn't like you crying?

Justin: He went out of the room.

PM: He'd be...

Justin: ...Wouldn't sit with me...

PM: ...quite uncomfortable?

Justin: He would be, but he would come back again.

PM: Yeah.

Justin: Just give me time to pull myself together, I suppose, perhaps. (retired minister, 77 y.o., metropolitan area)

Justin's final comment – 'pull myself together' – echoes the importance of autonomy. It also brings to the forefront the concept that learning masculinity is gained through a process of 'toughening up'. This was a statement which reverberated through the interviews in the context of emotional stoicism and physical toughness. It is now to the subject of toughening up bodies, both in terms of strength, and the fearless usage of the body, that we now turn.

Bodies: 'A projection of power'

School and sport practices reinforce the socialising of boys as physical and external in comparison to girls who are encouraged to be emotional, social and internal (Epstein et al 2001). Therefore, boys are expected to have a body at the peak of physical capability. Valourised, strength-based activities such as sport become both a system of broadcasting the ideal, and a training ground in which to hone the body in order to embody that ideal. Ivor cited the importance of physical strength at boarding school where it communicated social power.

Ivor: Popularity, there's a very definite nexus between toughness and physical capability in a fight at that age, because I don't necessarily know if it automatically meant that people liked you but it certainly meant that they respected you. So you wouldn't find at that age, someone who was tough who wasn't well respected. [...] So it's like a projection of power. (student, 26 y.o., metropolitan area)

Ability to withstand pain – and importantly not to show 'weak' emotions – illustrated an adherence to hegemonic male strength.

Alexander: When I was at school it was really macho and you were one of the in-crowd if you got the cuts (Australasian colloquialism for corporal punishment). I went to a school reunion in '99 and one of the biggest topics of discussion was how many times each of us got the cane. It was really tough.

PM: So there was still status about that, years later?

Alexander: Yeah. It was a real status symbol if you, and if you toughed it out and you didn't show any emotion. You'd sit there and grin and bear it. (retired soldier, now counsellor, 59 y.o., metropolitan area)

Alexander described a reunion that was 40 years after his 1960s education. Even after this time, physical stoicism and controlled emotional reaction conveyed status at the reunion. The boys who had 'toughed it out' could still draw on this experience when the peer group, dispersed many years ago, was re-united. Projecting toughness was also required in other all male environments such as apprenticeships where the ability to take pain without complaining was an essential factor in passing through the ritualised tests towards successful adult masculinity (Kenway, Fitzclarence & Hasluck 2000).

To fully project hegemonic masculinity required the correct body, and being able to use it in tough, hegemonically male activities gained a boy status: failing to have the correct body brought homophobically-charged insults.

Howard: There were a couple of other friends of mine that were much softer in character and they suffered a great deal around this age bracket. Once again names, 'pansy' was a common name back in those days. 'Mummy's boy'.

PM: What denoted the boys who would get that kind of label?

Howard: Yes, softer. I'd say thoughtful, appreciative, had a close relationship with their family. Not as big as the other boys, probably not as developed in the muscles. Not as active. Once again, going down the path, maybe were learning music, learning non-sport activities. Basically if it wasn't sport, particularly in the teenage years, you were different. (accountant, 44 y.o., metropolitan centre)

Howard describes the interlinked factors which indicated a failure to broadcast toughness: being a 'mummy's boy' or a 'pansy' (an infantilising and a homophobic term, respectively); being softer and emotionally connected to their family; having creative interests; and being less muscular. Howard specifies how a sense of *difference* was attributed to being smaller, non-sporting boys: not a sexual difference but a failure to embody or enact valorised masculinity, which initiated homophobic names. Sport thus becomes an 'arena of masculinity' (Pronger 1990). Chapter 6 will look at sport in detail to examine how it is used to convey ideas of proper masculinity.

Turner (1999) describes the body as a system of power relations, and how it is used socially has the ability to express the power relations between those with whom it is interacting. Toughness for males was valued, and the stronger the body, the more it could express dominant forms of power. Some boys are not able to embody the sort

of physicality that is required for some masculine tasks. A hierarchy of bodies is created, which denote levels of social status. Non-idealised bodies were described in the interviews, as was the policing of those boys by a variety of bullying techniques. Warren noted that he reached puberty later than his peers did, and this was considered to represent a feminising of his status.

Warren: They'd say, 'There's something wrong with you. [...] You're more like a girl than a bloke.' (farmer, 23 y.o., rural area)

Evan also noted the rate of physical development and contextualised it with other perceived failings.

Evan: Pimpley faces, you know, uncoordinated and probably growing up a little bit slower than everyone else. It's just that classic human nature scenario that the weak ones get left out of the group, someone who looks a bit funny, that horrible attitude kids have if they think they're nerdy. (builder, 34 y.o., metropolitan area)

To Evan, unattractiveness (pimpley faces, 'funny looking' boys), bodily shortcomings (lack of coordination or late development) and being internal or bookish (nerdy) were all 'classic' reasons for social exclusion. The literature on masculinity describes how desired masculinity, especially for boys and young men, was physical, with intellectual abilities being seen as the antithesis (Epstein 2002; Epstein et al 2001; Kimmel 1996; Mac an Ghail 1994; Martino 2000). The interviews also described idealised masculinity as physical, and as intellectual ability was seen as feminising, this presented difficulties for academic boys. Pat described how he reacted to boys' perceptions of his intellect in metropolitan Australia.

PM: Did you ever feel the need to rein in your academic ability to stop yourself standing out?

Pat: Good question. I used to have a good memory for names and numbers [...] but there were times when I was young when they'd ask me a question and I say 'I don't know'. And I knew the answer fully. [...] I can still remember that quite clearly. I did it a few times. (retired naval officer, now furniture restorer, 59 y.o., large city)

Shane described how he saw intellectual boys treated in school in metropolitan England. Note that he remembers how physical presence and social confidence (hegemonic masculine body and aura) could offset potential abuse induced by non-hegemonic attributes such as intelligence.

PM: You said that the girls were more studious and the boys were more boisterous. Were there boys who were more studious?

Shane: Yes, one guy (delete name), very tall, big bloke. No one would pick on him because he was a big lad. You wouldn't mess with him because I think he could look after himself. I think because he had an air of confidence, no one would pick on him either. The blokes would pick on other blokes that were timid and quiet, because they knew that they could perhaps beat them up or bully them.

As with Pat's example of his own behaviour, Shane saw that some intelligent but socially hegemonic boys did not allow themselves to attain their potential, and nominated the threat of homophobic abuse that could follow a display of intellect.

Shane: Some of the kids who were the main troublemakers were really bright. [...] I remember a teacher once saying to them, 'If you put your mind to it boy, you could be quite brilliant,' but they just never bothered to put their minds to stuff.

PM: What would their mates have said if they pushed themselves?

Shane: There would have been a bit of peer pressure, like other guys pushing them out of the circle of friends. So perhaps I reckon there would have been, 'You bloody idiot, you're a sissy,' or something. Just because you want to be an academic you're a poofter or something. (photographer/art teacher, 32 y.o., regional centre)

Rowan described his late adolescence in North America, where a similar dynamic was directed at him.

Rowan: I sort of was [the kind of boy who would] sit down and do the Mensa test and I sort of did have I guess a slightly more advanced learning than a lot of my peers at the time. And I think that they could have felt that threatening.

PM: OK, so what did happen to kids who were smart?

Rowan: Exactly that - bullying

PM: You said there would be name-calling?

Rowan: Mmm hmm.

PM: What were the specific names or labels you got?

Rowan: Well you had all your standard swear words in the book plus there was always the good old homophobic ones, getting called a 'queer' or a 'faggot'. (horticulturist, 33 y.o., regional centre)

Renold (2001) finds similar policing strategies on boys in English schools, with a variety of emasculating names ('geek', 'swot', 'nerd') augmenting homophobic labels directed at academic boys. Contrary to the above positions was Ivor who described himself as academically 'strong'. At school, his intellect was not disadvantageous.

Ivor: In those days, despite what you might hear other people say, I don't ever remember myself or anyone of that ilk being shunned or made fun of for being smart, and when I see representations of that sort of thing, I always think that's a misconception because I never experienced that.

Nevertheless, when as an adult he spent time in maximum-security prison he felt the need to suppress his intellect.

PM: You're obviously, from your conversation, very smart. Did that ever count against you?

Ivor: Yes it did. But from years of [working as a bouncer] in hotels, I can play the knockabout quite well if I have to. So that's what I did. I dumbed myself down.

However, there is a great difference between the two environments that Ivor is describing. How intellect was considered at a wealthy private boarding school was very different from his status as a university-educated middle class man in prison. This placed him in a vastly different peer group, as prison populations are largely drawn from the poorest socio-economic demographic (Denborough 2001), and over 50% of male prisoners in NSW did not complete high school (Butler & Milner 2003). Thus there was a greater social divide and level of social expectations between Ivor and other prisoners than there was between him and school peers.

Ivor also enunciated the interplay of physical and social differences regarding race. At his boarding school, Asian students were:

...mocked constantly. If you were smaller you got teased and mocked. If you were weaker, you were victimised.

While not all Asian students would have been smaller than all Caucasian students, they were, as a group, perceived to be less masculine. I asked Ivor about homophobic language directed at these students. He replied:

...your toiletries at school, because most of the boys are farm boys, would consist of a razor, soap, toothbrush and toothpaste and that's it. Some people would buy shampoo. But the Asian guys used to be teased because they used hand cream, face cream, sort of products that, to us, girls would use.

PM: Is there any language that was used around that aspect? We've got words that have identified them by race, and you say there was some teasing around toiletries?

Ivor: Yes, slurs, because that homophobic feeling was almost bordering on hysteria, if anyone was thought to be gay. So that moisturising was 'poofter behaviour', and because they hung around together, that was another slur that came with it. That they were poofs. (student, 26 y.o., metropolitan area)

Three aspects of the Asian boys' characters, none of which were based on their sexual behaviour, were policed by homophobia here: their 'other' race; the use of feminised grooming products; and their closeness as a group. Asian students were held as the 'other', and the Caucasian students learn of the risks of any sense of difference. Jordan echoed the connection between the 'othering' of boys through race and homophobia.

Jordan: Anyone who's been a victim of racism can relate to someone who's had homophobia thrown at them. The seed of the same tree. (at-home dad/youthworker, 42 y.o., rural area)

In examining masculinity in America, Kimmel (1996) described how Asian men, who were perceived as less virile based on physicality, were emasculated; Irish and Italian migrants were emasculated for being overly emotional; and conversely black men were seen as savage, hypersexual creatures, and therefore not *properly* masculine.

This evidence shows that boys who were considered different were 'othered'. Possessing the wrong body, inability to be socially dominant, having a disability or a different ethnicity – none of which related to sexuality – were all policed by a variety of techniques including social isolation, racism, physical violence and homophobic language. As gender is such a prime marker of the differences between males and females, any difference from the accepted gender norms risks punishment. Although youth is not necessarily a socially powerful age, adolescents wield a disproportionate influence on a society's ideas of gender (Kimmel 1994). Also of note is the observation by Martino (2000) that girls were also implicated in the elevation of

masculinity, by showing favour to those boys who were the most socially dominant and physically strongest.

Greg gave one of the most distressing accounts of how difference was policed by adolescent boys. Inept at sport and smaller than the rest of the class, he found himself excluded from a great deal of male culture as a boy. This commenced in primary school.

Greg: A lot of them were into the more physical, body [contact] sports that I wasn't. So I used to get a bit of ridicule from some of them because I was into music and those sort of things.

The primary school social exclusion was social. At high school, it became physical.

Greg: I remember getting gang-banged one afternoon by ... I can't remember whether it was four or five of them.

PM: Are we talking group sex or an assault?

Greg: That was, no, that was an assault.

[...]

PM: Why do you think you were the target?

Greg: I was the smallest in the class. Whether that was one of [the reasons for the assault]. There were a couple of the boys who were pretty dominant. Yeah, it was probably based on size and domination, and all the rest of it. Power. All of those sort of factors.

PM: Oral penetration? Anal penetration?

Greg: Anal.

PM: Forcibly?

Greg: Oh yeah. (minister, 63 y.o, rural area)

Although Greg was having sex with other boys at the time, he believes the rapists were unaware of this, and that the rapists themselves grew up to be heterosexual. Since then, Greg has had relationships with men and women. He married and had children, and later divorced and 'came out'. However, at the time, it was his physical stature, rejection of male activities and inability to project power through physical

interaction which marked him out as different – and thus a target for rape. This is in alignment with Plummer's (1999) view that rape can be used as a punishment for transgressing gender norms. Thus the homophobia normally monitoring same-sex sex can be suspended, allowing it to be used by heterosexually-identified boys as a tool to punish transgression from masculine scripts.

Plummer's theory allows us to view the rape of Greg without oversimplification and victim blaming. Male socialisation is about interactions, and not all of those are erotically-based. Although Sedgwick (1990: 186) describes masculinity as a 'double bind' with men caught between the erotic desire for other males and the fear of such attraction, this reduces interactions to a genitally-focused simplicity. While Freud's (1970) idea of inherent bisexuality which is then channeled into acceptable object choice does resonate with Sedgwick, this places undue emphasis on sex at the expense of any other influences in socialisation. It is not only the fear of sexual attraction which drives homophobia: it is also the fear of being seen as weak, as having the wrong attributes – including 'dangerous' closeness to other males. Homophobia polices the boundaries of *homosocial* interaction to ensure that it does not segue into *homosexual*, but it is not just the eroticism of the male that other men fear. Homophobia also monitors the emotional spaces between men, as those who are seen as too close will be suspected of homosexuality. The second weakness in Sedgwick's argument is that it is men's suppressed homosexuality which is responsible for homophobia – therefore homophobia is the fault of homosexuals. Taken to its logical conclusion, those who fear their own homosexuality the most are the most likely to engage in the most violent homophobia, either to deflect attention from themselves, or psychically destroy that aspect of themselves. This position ignores the other factors underpinning homophobia, and places the blame for the violence and 'othering' back to ego-dystonic homosexuals, and allows heterosexual men to now divest themselves of any role in this situation. This also ignores the broader sociological underpinnings of homophobia, which is authorised by a heterosexist society as one of the techniques for elevating hegemonic masculinity (Herek 1990). If we return to the idea that it is *gender* not *sexuality* under investigation, this position becomes even clearer.

Learning what sex was acceptable: ‘One brought you stigma, and the other brought status’

Some men were unaware of sex between males occurring during their early lives; some men participated. Of those who did participate, some psychically repositioned it to allow them to hold the masculine status that accompanies heterosexuality, while having sexual contact with other males. Ryan described mutual masturbation in adolescence, but noted how he and his mates considered it as something different from homosexual sex.

Ryan: None of us had girlfriends so there would be all this hypothesising about what sex would be like... it was definitely what most kids would tag as homosexual behaviour, although it was always about masturbation, not about anything else. I don't ever remember any reference to homosexual words being used about it because we all fantasised about having female partners.

Sexual fantasies about women while masturbating together created a psychic distance between the boys and the taint of homophobia according to Ryan, despite the activity being:

...mostly jerking someone else off. We used to call it ‘circle jerks’, you would literally sit in a circle of four and wank the guy next to you. (former air-force officer, IT professional, 53, metropolitan area)

The ‘circle’ that the boys formed simultaneously democratises a taboo event by making all parties equally responsible, and ensures that all of the boys are now equally obliged to be discrete— if anyone gossips about the activity they immediately ‘out’ themselves. Thus, they can take part in a homoerotic activity and be constrained by homophobia in the same moment.

Trevor described sex with boys and girls at high school. I asked him how widespread he thought sex between male peers was.

Trevor: Judging by the number I did it with, probably fairly wide.

PM: Was this ever discussed?

Trevor: Oh no. No, it was never discussed. It would just happen and that would be it and you wouldn't mention it again. It would happen sometimes more than once with the same person.

I asked Trevor whether the sex he had with girls was discussed with his peers. He concurred.

Trevor: Well one brought you stigma, and the other brought status. (salesman, 55, metropolitan area)

Early in his interview, Ivor said that he had not been involved in any same-sex sexual activities, in boarding school, the army or prison. However, later he described two incidents from his army days, both with homoerotic overtones, and the latter example featuring contact.

Ivor: You might be fucking the same girl together or maybe two guys fucking two girls in the same room or you would get guys if they thought someone else was a show, coming back on a Saturday night dragging a girl from one of the nightclubs and bringing her back, you might grab a six pack and sit on the ledge of their window, which was a not-uncommon event, you would sit there and check out what was going on inside.

[...]

One time when I was down in Tasmania I was in an absolute frenzy with two or three girls and three or four guys and after about five minutes of getting a headjob, I realised that one of the guys was sucking me off. The play of the situation prevented me from coming in his mouth just because it was like a scrum. But honestly it wouldn't have bothered me in the slightest. (student, 26 y.o., metropolitan area)

In the first quote, two men having sex with the same woman was purely heterosexual, as was watching a mate having sex from outside of the room. In the second quote, despite receiving oral sex from a man and being prepared to ejaculate in his mouth except for being in such 'a scrum' this was still heterosexual sex. Using Klein's (1993) sexual orientation grid Ivor's self concept is still heterosexual: women are the erotic focus of the activity, he considers himself to be 'straight', and although he had not objections to receiving oral sex from another man, the activity originated without him realising the gender of the fellator.

Ian gave another interesting opinion on the meanings of group sex. Although he has never been in such a situation, he has seen his friends having sex with the same woman, and the idea is frequently discussed.

Ian: A friend of mine and I always talk about, 'Mate, we'll give her a spit roast'. We want to get a spit roast away at some point. Just to say that we've done it.

We always joke about doing a high five, when you're going at it. But it's something I haven't really had the proper opportunity to do so far yet.

PM: What do you see the cross-over point between gay and straight is in something like that? Because it's heterosexual sex on one hand and yet it's two guys in some way having sex.

Ian: I wouldn't say it's a homosexual crossover. I think it's still pretty much heterosexual. But it's more of a team-bonding sort of exercise. [...] The whole idea with the pig on the spit, that's the one everyone always talks about, the famous pig on the spit. That's like one guy is having sex from behind like the other guy is getting a blowjob. The high five sort of game. That's the only touch I would do [to the other male]. And I would say, 'Come on, give me a high-five.' So it's kind of like, 'Look at the team. Look at the teamwork. They're smashing her, look at this'. So there would probably be a fair bit of dominance in it. 'Great stuff boys,' you know. (student, 25 y.o., metropolitan area)

This disturbing vignette, wherein the woman is a passive recipient of a team-bonding exercise is a described fantasy, of what Ian and his mates talk about doing with a woman. Ian had previously described witnessing two of his mates having sex with a drunk, unconscious woman on a cruise ship. In this incident, Ian was disturbed by what he saw, and yet did nothing to stop it. Both what he witnessed and what he fantasises about have homoerotic overtones which are negated as the primary focus is again the woman. These situations go beyond sex, and beyond homoeroticism, wherein a degrading sexual encounter bonds like with like: dominant, unfeeling, physically-oriented males acting out their difference from women and 'other men'.

One did not have to have sex with another male to know that it was a taboo activity. Justin learned in the navy during World War II that contact with males was to be feared, and that a sad end could befall homosexuals.

Justin: I never met any homosexuals in the navy, although it was about the very first day we were there in the navy, the chaplains came and gave us a talk, and they said 'Beware... beware'. And he described how there was a man had been murdered on the [deleted ship] because of a relationship. (retired minister, 77 y.o., metropolitan area)

Similarly, any same-sex sex in the army during the 1950s was quickly excised.

PM: Was there any of that in the army?

William: Oh yeah. Anybody in the army who was in that direction, they were run out pretty quick smart. (farmer, 72 y.o., rural area)

Men's experiences of same-sex sex ranged from rape as described by Greg, to the consensual experiences of Ryan and Trevor. Some men were unaware of it occurring; some expressed nonchalance and others disdain. There was great variance between those who experienced same-sex sex at school and said it was widespread, and those who said that it was not happening. This dichotomy of experiences is similarly recalled in Hickson's (1996) interviews with men who attended English boarding schools: these accounts ranged from men who described ordained, orchestrated and ritualised sex and bullying between boys of different grades (fagging), and those who appeared incensed at the suggestion that their *alma mater* had been sullied by such activities. Other same-sex environments had varying levels of sexual activity. Limited occurrences of same-sex sex were cited in the armed forces and sports teams, although there were incidents of group sex with several males and a female or several females, but these were described as heterosexual encounters. All three of the men who had been incarcerated described sex in prison in matter-of-fact terms. Ivor described attitudes to penetration that he saw enacted around him.

Ivor: Being penetrated is what people associate with the female, so it's being the do-ee, rather than the do-er so I think there's the psychological aspect of it. You are the subject of the power, rather than the wielder of it and I think that obviously there is a physical aspect of it, you are also physically the subject of the power meaning you are the one who is going to get fucked. [...] I think that is just a physical manifestation of those power relations. [...] When you are asking from a traditional male standpoint, then it's that idea that you are being the receptor of power that the wielder of it. It's the un-tough thing to do, and for me to lie on a bed, to lie on my stomach and take it like a bitch. It plays against my need to be manly, about my need to hold the power. (student, 26 y.o., metropolitan area)

Ivor equates power with penetration, and the risk of being penetrated emasculates a man. The inverse to adolescent silence surrounding homosexual sex was heterosexual sex, the love that loudly spoke its name. Masculine status was directly invoked by having a girlfriend.

Evan: Well there was a lot of pressure, it was just sort of pressure amongst immediate peers for sexual conquests. (builder, 34 y.o., metropolitan area)

Status which had previously been related to sporting or intellectual capacity yielded to having a girlfriend, and was ranked according to her beauty.

Walter: Previously it was probably about sporting achievement and academic results purely but once people started having girlfriends, yeah definitely some status attached to that. Especially if they were pretty. (accountant, 38 y.o., metropolitan area)

Status was also expressed through sexual prowess. Eddie had been a small child with a hole in his heart. He was not allowed to play sport and, as a result, felt excluded from male culture, and felt that his masculinity was constantly considered inferior. He readily acknowledges that his adult life has been a series of attempts at compensating for this loss, many of which have been detrimental to his health. His love of powerful cars and a need to 'prove' his status through bravery has led to seven serious accidents; his eating habits, designed to build up his weight, have led to him developing, in middle age, a weight problem, diabetes and sexual dysfunction. He described using sex in his adolescence as a means of creating his own masculine status.

Eddie: I ended up just going out to prove myself, basically. That I wasn't just some weakling, or whatever. So I had a lot of partners. [...] I went out to prove that I'm better than anyone else, that I'm not the geeky kid, that I can go out and do the same as anybody else (businessman, 49 y.o., metropolitan area)

An interesting aspect to Eddie's account is that, as a boy growing up in a very isolated location in New Zealand in the 1950s, he never heard words like 'poofter': the emasculating names he heard related to his lack of physical stature. The controls on Eddie were based on failed physical masculinity which held him outside male culture and his adult life was a dangerous and ultimately damaging attempt to over-compensate. This indicates how:

- Ideas of gender and sexuality are culturally contingent: without a discourse of homophobic terms in his isolated childhood, failed physical masculinity was policed in terms of failed physicality. He was referred to by names which referenced his 'puniness' and 'skinniness'.
- In cultures where homophobic language is part of the discourses, homosexuality becomes conflated with 'failed' masculinity regardless of the sexuality of the man: homosexuality becomes the 'catch-all' for what men are taught to avoid. As sexuality has been shown to be – at least in part – socially constructed and learnt, this shows the potential for the sexual behaviour of

males to be restrained. The role of homophobia in policing behaviour becomes a closed feedback loop. Lesser forms of masculinity come to be equated with homosexuality; boys actively present themselves as aggressive, dominant, physical, and heterosexual with any deviations from this script risking homophobic abuse. This has the effect of forcing all boys who are already hegemonic to remain so; those who approximate the hegemony attempt to shape their behaviour or their bodies to represent the hegemony; and those boys who refuse to or are unable to embody hegemonic masculinity continue to be sidelined through homophobia.

To Eddie, masculine status was desired and sought through promiscuous sex, but another aspect to male socialisation is hidden in his final statement, 'that I can go out and do the same as anybody else'. Much as sex brings status, a major aspect of masculinity is adhering to the peer group. It means not standing out from the crowd. It means being the same as everybody else, and it is this factor that we now examine.

Don't stand out: '...an over-riding theme of conformity'

There are contexts in which being seen as an individual has value and difference is celebrated. Boys and men received mixed messages about the utility of being 'one of the boys': standing out academically was almost always socially disadvantageous before late high school; but sport provides one of the means for boys to excel. Sport is a cogent example of contradictions existing within one discourse of masculinity. Men are simultaneously expected to put the team needs above their own, to work for the glory of the team, and yet battle each other for positions of power within the team such as captain.

Popularity was equated to fitting in with peers in youth, a finding also noted in a study of Western Australian schoolboys (Martino 2000), and yet, in another illustration of the mutability of idealised masculinity, Howard describes how this changes over the years as men begin to want to be seen as individuals. Until that point though, a variety of ostracisation techniques are enforced.

Howard: In your earlier life you want to be popular; you want to be one of the crowd, you don't want to stand out. And yet later in life you eventually want to

stand out, you want to be different, and you want to have that difference reflected in your lifestyle.

PM: What would happen to a boy who stands out?

Howard: In schooldays?

PM: Yeah.

Howard: Cut down very swiftly through the various mechanisms of being ostracised, verbal abuse, and so on and so forth. (accountant, 44 y.o., metropolitan centre)

Gavin similarly described the need for conformity. He said the pressure was most intense when he was a:

... late-teenager, adolescent. It's sort of almost a sense of survival, it's like, you either fit in or you're ostracised. Well I mean that's hard when you're in your late teens. You don't choose to be a one-out person. Now [as adults] we might settle for it a bit [of individuality]. (focus group 2)

As with Howard's observation, pressure to fit in was strong when men are young, but as they grow, there is an increasing sense that being 'running with the pack' is not necessary for happiness.

Conformity was enforced between peers, and also from social structures. When Alexander joined the army, jewellery was not allowed, ostensibly for reasons of safety, but Alexander ascribed this to:

...an over-riding theme of conformity. You weren't allowed to stand out. You had to be the same as everyone else and everyone had to have the same length of haircut, the same uniform and all the rest. (retired soldier, now counsellor, 59 y.o., metropolitan area)

Even the most liberal men in the study found the need to conform to standards of male behaviour in some contexts. Walter recently became a father, but prior to this, a lot of his leisure time was spent clubbing with a mix of gay and straight friends. He described himself as being tactile and comfortable expressing friendship with other men physically. However, when talking about how men greet in a social setting, and when kissing is permitted, Walter said that it...

...varies very much from individual to individual and individual bar to individual bar. It's one of those transactions that's difficult to determine until it

happens but yeah, I guess your surroundings do play a part and where the relationship's at. It's all computed in a millisecond but it does happen.

Walter described a strategic positioning in how men could interact physically. Some straight friends sometimes eschewed physical contact when greeting. This was in contrast to his gay friends.

Walter: Gay friends, without a doubt, it's a kiss but then that's also because usually I see my gay friends in an environment where there are other gay people. And it will definitely be a kiss on the cheek and a hug.

A key to this statement is that he generally meets gay friends in gay-friendly areas. He contrasted this to how his gay friends greet him if he meets them in the city. The gay friends would forego physical contact now. Walter ascribed this to a need to 'protect' their professional image by presenting as hegemonically masculine, or '*faux-straight*', to protect their work identity.

Walter: And even with my gay friends, if they're in their suit, then there will be no discussion of physical contact if we're at that end of the town ... and they're pretending to be nice straight boys (laughs). (accountant, 37 y.o., metropolitan area)

This example illustrates the policing ability of homophobia on all men, where gay men who are otherwise 'out' will monitor their behaviour from one context to another to avoid standing out.

How boys and men acquiesced to or rejected conformity influenced their social standing. One's position in social hierarchies was monitored by peers who could elevate or devalue where you stood, utilising language, social inclusion, social isolation or violence. Some of the positioning on the hierarchy was related to sexuality, some was related to gender presentation. Homophobic or emasculating nominators could broadcast one's status to the peers. Boys could lose status for making the wrong decisions about a range of activities from the choice of clothing to the way they spoke. They could move up the hierarchies by either embodying the hegemony, or by denigrating someone on a lower position. This itself is a performance of the hegemony – that males will be competitive. The next section looks at how the hierarchies influenced social interactions.

Negotiating the masculine hierarchies: ‘...you’ve got to find your place’

The creation of a masculine identity was a continual performance to ensure that your masculine status was always broadcast.

Damien: It’s that pack mentality and I think everyone wants a hierarchy position within the pack. So the more you can impress the rest of the peers, the more you think they’ll look up to you. (incarcerated mechanic, 37 y.o., metropolitan area)

Impressing peers, as Damien notes, is part of the performance of gender. An audience was required, and those who held the most hegemonic embodiment of masculinity could set and change the parameters of accepted behaviour, the dividend accorded to this socially powerful position. Social acceptance or rejection could be socially, temporally and spatially contingent upon who else was present during interactions between boys who embodied hegemonic masculinity and those who were subordinated. Boys who would be violent bullies in a social environment were described as more tolerant in one-on-one encounters, as the following two incidents indicate.

Frank: And then there was another chap who was a bit of a clown as well. He was funny when he wasn’t smacking me on the head. (retired soldier, police officer, 39 y.o., metropolitan centre)

PM: Were there any boys who would bully you when they were in a group but treat you differently if they encountered you by yourself?

Theo: Yes, there was one bloke who I used to play squash with. He was different there than he was at school. [...] In a group he was part of that group but he was different at the squash courts. (minister, 40 y.o., rural area)

‘In a group he was part of that group.’ This important statement indicates how behaviour is modified based on the audience. It also shows how masculinity is nothing *but* performance which must be displayed to the audience of peers. The performance’s potential to reposition a boy on the pecking order is highlighted by Trevor. He was slim, academic, slightly camp, non-athletic, and bullied as a child. I asked him if there were any boys who were very effeminate.

Trevor: (replies quickly) Yes [deleted name]. He used to get more stick than me.

PM: How did that play out?

Trevor: I used to bash him.

PM: *You* used to?

Trevor: He was, in the pecking order he was below us.

Trevor describes how his status moved from being one who was bullied with homophobic language and violence, to acceptance after pushing the boy out of a tree.

Trevor: He didn't think I did and I never told him I did, but they [the rest of the class] knew that I did because they didn't want to get into serious trouble. He nearly broke his arm.

PM: You said that that's when it all changed.

Trevor: Yeah, the bully kids didn't pick on me as much then because I showed some guts, I suppose. (salesman, 55, metropolitan area)

By adopting the techniques of the bullies and embracing hegemonic behaviour, albeit guiltily, Trevor elevated his social position on the pecking order and reduced the negative attention he received from the bullies. Being able to enact violence was a key technique to displaying adherence to the hegemony.

Sam said that during his childhood, most boys received some bullying at times, including himself. He also described how, by displaying violence, it ceased.

Sam: We went out of school and there was a gang of kids who were pretty well-known in the school. They not actually set upon the old guy but surrounded him. Something snapped and I set into the lot of them, thrashed the lot of them. I suppose in the eyes of the different people in the class, things changed as regards me. There was no more bullying, certainly. (retired engineer; alternative health practitioner, 72, regional area)

Mike was a strong, aggressive boy. When he moved to a new school, his physical presence and his preparedness to fight an older boy gave him status.

Mike: And then he introduced me to this other fifth former and he said, 'Would you fight him?' and I said, 'Yeah, let's go. We'll go up there and I'll punch on with you'. I was in third class and he was in fifth form. I didn't have any fear and I would never let fear stand in my way. I never fought him, by the way, but I had a lot of respect from him. [...] As I said, there's a chain of command, and you've got to find your place. Once they worked out where your place was there weren't too many hassles. (solo father, part-time plumber, 41 y.o., metropolitan area)

From the inverse perspective, Pat describes how, without having to interact with an aggressive, dominant male, he was equally controlled.

Pat: One particular bloke who seemed to be the school bully, I never had to confront him. But I observed him, I suppose, terror of the school. (retired naval officer, now furniture restorer, 59 y.o., large city)

Mike claims that once the positions on the hierarchy were sorted out, hassles stopped. As he pointed out, he did not have to fight to gain what he considered respect; as Pat described he did not have to fight the bully to be in fear.

As secondary school progressed, there was an attrition of the most aggressive boys who were the least interested in schooling. Gradually, less status came to be attached to physical capacities, and intellectual excellence began to develop its own cachet.

Ivor: And the other thing was the way that physical and intellectual qualities are rated as you get older changes as well. (student, 26 y.o., metropolitan area)

Brian: We're talking about the late 1960s, anyone going into a trade would either leave in Year 9 or they might stay for the School Certificate in Year 10. The only reason you stayed in school after that point was to get a tertiary education. But what that meant is that those at the top of the pecking order invariably left at the end of Year 9 or Year 10. The reason they were at the top of the pecking order is because they were the most outgoing, loudest, biggest, toughest, bullyest. After Year 10, they'd all gone. What we were left with were those like myself that aspired to go to university. [...] So there was a different pecking order in the Years 11 and 12. (business manager, 53 y.o., rural area)

The atmosphere of violence, both physical and social, began to dissipate once those who embodied the most aggressive, narrow forms of masculinity left school. However, it did not completely disappear, and was also found in aggressive, hierarchical organisations like the army, construction industry, sports teams and other all-male interactions.

Luke: [In the army, the least masculine men] would have got the crappiest jobs that could be given to them. They could be charged for anything, they can lock you up for getting sunburnt, you know 'cause it's deliberate bodily harm or something like that. You can be locked up for insubordination which, if you break 'the rules'. (former soldier, IT technician, 26 y.o., metropolitan area)

Male-dominated organisations like the army and some employment areas strictly patrolled gender norms. Aspects of masculinity which were valued, such as bravery, were highly regarded. Bravery combines both emotional stoicism and physical

fortitude. It represents a social performance of the ‘toughening up’ that participants frequently cited as vital to progressing to manhood and being seen to be brave could elevate one’s position on the hierarchy of masculinity. Frank described the status that was gained from being sent to the most dangerous area in the war zone that he was posted to.

Frank: And it was one of the more dangerous areas. And that was a good thing apparently. So you’d go ‘Oh yeah, it is, isn’t it?’

PM: So it was a good thing to go to a dangerous area?

Frank: Yes, because if you’re a hard man then you can go to a dangerous area. (retired soldier, police officer, 39 y.o., metropolitan centre)

Apprenticeships train unskilled young workers to be competent tradesmen and women. They also cover a period when one moves from the childhood world of education, to the adult sphere of work. As such, apprenticeships are rites of passage into adulthood, and in male-dominated workplaces also a rite of passage into manhood. How a young man reacted to the testing capacities of being at the bottom of the workplace hierarchy determined if and when he would be accepted as a peer – not just in terms of his work skills, but as a man. In recalling his experiences as an apprentice mechanic, Damien told of how he was socially held at a distance and initially got the ‘shit jobs’ until he proved that he knew his subservient position.

Damien: I suppose looking back, they just watched me for 12 month to see what kind of kid I was. Was I acceptable for their little social network and was I going to be someone they were going to be able to work with. And I guess I passed that sort of stuff. (incarcerated mechanic, 37 y.o., metropolitan centre)

One of the most extreme versions of a male-dominated environment is a prison. Like the asylums of which Goffman (1961) wrote, they represent a ‘total institution’. The rules of the outside world are suspended and a new set of rules are overlaid onto inmates’ existences. Jordan spent several years in prison on drug possession charges. He described the new rules and strictly-enforced hierarchies in which he lived. Toughness was a prime predictor of the status-level that a man would exist at, and the level of violence associated with your crime gave you a literally higher position in the recreation areas.

Jordan: In the yard there was a very, very strict code. Lifers and armed robbers sat up on the top tier with the best view. You had your next tier then there were

blokes like me who were dope dealers. Then you had your rapists and scum down the bottom. They weren't allowed to sit on the tiers.

[...]

Back then it was pretty good cred, being able to say that you'd done hard time. You'd been in maximum security. It gave you a lot of cachet. Blokes wouldn't mess with you. They'd back off.

The risks for a man who lost his status by being perceived as no longer being able to fight to maintain his position in the hierarchy were severe, as other men jostled for supremacy. He would be held to ridicule, subjected to violence and risked rape.

Jordan: And I've seen that happen where a man starts to slip in jail. Next thing you know he's getting it from everyone. Getting bashed, getting stood over. Being made to bend over. Bum for the boys. Degraded, humiliated and belittled.

PM: What sort of language was used around men in that sort of situation?

Jordan: A lot of swearing. It was all violent talk. 'Fuck you, you cunt', 'Hey, you fucking arsehole, you soft cock', 'Fucking pillow biter'. (at-home dad/youthworker, 42 y.o., rural area)

Harris's (1995; 1998) theory of childhood social development, where the impact of peers are considered to have prime influence, is apparent in examples of schoolyard masculinity wherein standards of gender are modeled and policed by the most dominant boys. These dynamics are also found beyond the schoolyard in male-dominated situations such as the experiences of men in the armed forces; traditional male areas of employment (such as Damien's apprenticeship); and from the stories of men who were also in prison. Dominant males set the gender agenda, creating a culture where hegemonic masculinity was enforced. Their ideas were communicated by positioning variations from their narrow range of acceptable masculinity as feminised, homosexualised and emasculated. Male-dominated structures such as schools, sports teams, the military, employment and prison valorise the shaping of men into narrow gender performances, and frequently utilise homophobic controls to do so. Specific instances of these control mechanisms in these environments will be cited through the next two chapters, as various sections address what Harris (1995) refers to as a 'group socialisation' process.

Jordan cited language directed at emasculated males in prison: 'cunt' is an almost generic insult, and its origins in misogyny are clear. Similarly 'soft cock' indicates a failure to perform as a penetrating male; and 'pillow biter' refers to a man lying face down, being penetrated. Threats of violence and sexual assault permeated an atmosphere where actual violence and sexual assault were used to create a hierarchy of dominance. We now look at the use of language in communicating ideas of desired masculinity.

Language: '...the worst insult'

The sort of language which Jordan described in the above quote shows the usage of emasculating, penetration-imagery-laden terms which are used to control men. Challenges to sexuality became the most feared insult for boys in late childhood and adolescence, and almost identical answers were given to the question: 'What's the absolutely worst insult of childhood?'

Frank: 'You're a poof'. (retired soldier, police officer, 39 y.o., metropolitan area)

Brian: Clearly anyone who was on the outer or a bit effeminate would have been called and were called 'poofers'. (business manager, 53 y.o., rural area)

Rick: It would have been 'gay' but it would have been something more derogatory like 'pillow biter' or something like that. (student, 27 y.o., metropolitan area)

Karl: I guess the big words were 'gay', 'fag', 'poof', 'homo', 'arse fucker'. (focus group 2)

Anton: 'Arse fucker' was a big one. Predominantly the insults were all about homosexual type things. (focus group 2)

Russ: Probably 'fag' 'queer' 'poof'. [...] My nephews will sometimes call each other a 'gay lord'. (focus group 3)

Terry: The worst name they got? I don't know. 'Queer cunt. 'Queer'. (focus group 4)

Rhys noted that it was a lack of confidence in adolescent sexuality which elicited such comments.

Rhys: I used to use ones, such as 'sissy'. It's calling what they're not really, but that's what they're afraid of. But I think a lot of males, as far as sexuality goes,

they're scared because they don't know what their sexuality is, because it hasn't grabbed them yet. Especially when you're younger. I mean I suppose you don't definitely know. Especially because whether you're straight, or you're gay, or you're bi- or whatever, you don't know when you're younger. (telecommunications technician, 21 y.o., metropolitan centre)

When Rhys uses the term 'what they're not really, but that's what they're afraid of', he is acknowledging the lack of essentialism underpinning male sexuality. Epstein (1997) observed similar fears of a lack of groundedness of any sexuality, which she saw as a major motivation for homophobia. Boys are still trying to ascertain where on a continuum their sexuality lies, although they have been taught that sexuality is a binary and that they should be on the correct, heterosexual side. Personal uncertainty in the face of publicly stated surety left boys vulnerable to taunts as Rhys shows. The absence of an unchanging, trans-historical core to both gender and sexuality arose in a focus group. Terry recalled being asked by a teacher why he has been bullying a boy who was considered to be gay.

Terry: They'd say, 'Why did you pick on him?' I'd say, 'He was a little faggot or something,' you know. I'd just say, 'Look at him'. I don't know really. It makes you feel like a mixed up man. Yeah, it really does, doesn't it. (focus group 4)

Non-hegemonic boys presented a challenge to Terry's ideas of masculinity, leaving him 'mixed up'. He needed to create a social distance between himself and this category of boy to affirm his masculinity both to himself and to broadcast hegemonic adherence to his peers.

Contagion: '...it would have been a mistake not to participate'

The following scenario was presented in another focus group. It illustrates the interplay between not standing out, homophobic abuse for those who did, and the contagion fear that held their friends at a distance until the danger passed.

Gavin: If you went to school in something that wasn't a dark colour, you were out. If you had a bright coloured shirt on, mate you were as good as dead. It was like, why bother even turning up?

PM: OK and you're dead. So tell me what that means. What would that involve?

Gavin: Well probably before any of the first classes the shirt would be ripped off you. Or you had a fight to keep it on.

PM: Do you remember any of the words that were being thrown around?

Gavin: 'Gay'. 'Faggot'. 'Poo-pusher'. Your mates would run. Your mates would see you and they'd run. They were like 'Gavin who? We don't know him'.

In Goffman's (1973) stigma model, proximity to a stigmatised person could bring that stigma to bear on the 'normal'. Timothy described violence enacted on boys at school in the 1950s. He did not think that the boys who were abused were gay: they were simply perceived as different.

Timothy: They weren't called 'poofs' or anything else. But they were knocked about and pushed, pushed down steps and things like that. For some reason the other boys felt they were different. I didn't pick up their cases or anything. Or helped them – I know that.

PM: What would have happened if you had?

Timothy: I think I would have got pushed down the steps too. (small business owner, 58 y.o., regional center)

Jordan described how widespread homophobic violence was in Australia during the 1970s.

Jordan: It seemed to me that the national sport was poofteer-bashing. Everyone did it, and if you didn't do it, you were a poofteer and you got bashed. (at-home dad/youthworker, 42 y.o., rural area)

While the above incidents of violence are within peer-groups, Ivor's recollection of the following incident shows how structures such as his boarding school authorise a violent patrolling of masculinity's borders. On a Sunday afternoon, two boys were caught having sex in the darkroom. What van der Meer (2003: 155) calls a 'vortex of hate' built up over the next few hours.

Ivor: We had Sunday night videos in a big room. One of them walked in and stood at the back of the room to watch the video. Well as soon as he was seen, they turned on the lights, pressed pause on the video and everyone just turned around and abused this guy solidly until he walked out of the room, and then start the video again, turn the lights back off. This happened two or three times until he stopped coming in. [...] The dorms were eight or 10 beds on either side of a big cupboard system. They moved all the beds from one side onto the other, so his was the only bed left there. This was all in the space of a couple of hours. We used to have a Sunday night assembly, just a brief church service and announcements and things. Well no-one sat anywhere near them, so they're sitting in their own rows in a full room. It was just complete marginalisation.

And then about eight o'clock at night, about 8.30 at night after this had happened, it just, it just went to a whole new level, and guys just walked up and starting bashing them badly, so they were taken up to sickbay and gone by the next morning. Their parents just came and got them and they were gone. And the feeling was so strong that it would have been a mistake to be seen *not* to participate in that victimisation. I mean you would not of, I mean I remember, there was no question for me to be a part of that, so as to protect any suggestion that I was sympathetic towards them and I'm sure that's how everyone felt.

PM: So did you partake in that?

Ivor: Oh yeah, absolutely, yep.

[...]

PM: Prior to the physical assault were the teachers aware of the moving of the beds or the incident in the video lounge, and did they do anything...

Ivor: (interjects) No they did nothing. Nothing about that.

PM: Were they aware of it?

Ivor: I'm sure that they would have been. There were masters living in the house. (student, 26 y.o., metropolitan area)

This story shows several factors that underpin homophobia: although Ivor said he had no strong feelings one way or the other about either of the boys or their activity, the contagion fear meant that he had no hesitation in joining in. Not only did the school fail to act as the violence escalated, and hence authorised it, but they also enforced their own enactment of contagion fear by expelling the victims and doing nothing to the boys who bashed them. Hinson (1996: 84), in her submission to a senate inquiry into sexuality discrimination cited a principal whom she interviewed following a homophobic assault: the incident was dismissed as 'just a bit of fun that went too far', and that such behaviour had a role to 'toughen up [boys] for their own good.' Hinson said that schools frequently resisted any attempts to reduce homophobia due to acceptance of the prejudice, which results in a lack of policies to deal with it. The lack of policy regarding this behaviour is also cited by Kenway, Fitzclarence & Hasluck (2000) for allowing an ongoing culture of violence in the workplace, especially male dominated ones, under the guise of harmless initiation practises.

The contradictions and tensions which abound in how men relate to each other and to women, in social, emotional and sexual senses were described by Warren. Although he was the biggest boy in his class, he was not sports-oriented and preferred to focus on studies. He described a social demarcation between popular, sporty boys, and the 'poofy' boys who would get picked on.

Warren: I was good friends with most of them [the 'poofy' boys].

The football teams would bait these boys with homophobic slurs, some of which rubbed off on Warren.

PM: If you were mates with these sort of poofy kids in the class, did you ever get targeted with any of that language from like the footy boys?

Warren: Occasionally. But [the footy boys] also knew that there'd be a group of us that were a lot more easy-going. We'd accept them and listen to their bullshit and we'd also be mates with the so-called poofers.

However, the tensions about same-sex sex still arose in how he would react if a friend made a pass at him.

Warren: I'm just trying to wonder if that's happened or not. It's the kind of thing you'd blank out. I guess depending on the, if it did happen, I'd probably say no thanks. Or be quite annoyed and probably bash him, just for the reason like, if you've got a mate you've got trust. And if he then makes a move on you, all that trust and all those years of just being mates has sort of gone.

PM: Would you feel your sense of manhood had been compromised?

Warren: I wouldn't say so.

Although Warren attributes his annoyance at a breach of trust, he still feels that he would need to 'blank out' the event. When I asked what would happen if a female friend made a pass, his response was different.

Warren: That has happened a few times. And if she's a good sort, it's probably what you've been dreaming about for many months. And then it finally happens and you sort of think, 'No, I don't really want this. This is going to wreck our friendship'. But also maybe, 'Oh well, it's just a bit of sexual tension, we'll just get it out of the way'. [...] Shag and get that over and done with and then it's just back to normal. (farmer, 23 y.o., rural area)

Another version of this homophobic distance shows how friends limit their degree of interactions with each other in non-sexual ways.

Tom: My friend who is overseas at the moment, he was the first man that I could actually walk up to, haven't seen him in a while, and go up and give him a big hug, you know. That's going back to the early '80s I suppose, that we would openly sort of do that each time that we met, you know.

PM: So prior to that there hadn't been a lot of physical contact with mates?

Tom: No, no. There was that real divide you know, sort of I suppose a bit of a hangover of that thing from school about being labeled a poofter, in a sense. (cleaner, 36 y.o., rural area)

In his scenario, Tom illustrates the ways in which men behave, not related to sexuality, which are policed by homophobia. To embrace a man has a double threat: emotional connectivity is seen as indicating that men can experience love, even if it is fraternal love; and to physically hold a man risks being misinterpreted as a sexual situation.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at how boys and men learn their ideas of what socially-valued masculinity is. In the absence of a stable core to gender, masculinity has been shown to be an aspect of men's lives that must be learnt. However, as ideas of masculinity vary depending on the stage of a man's life, and as society's values change in accordance to political, historical and technological developments, masculinity is amorphous. Boys and men needed to be constantly vigilant to observe what represents culturally valued gender, and strong social sanctions were described for those seen to transgress the authorised standards of masculinity. Participants described how they restrained their emotional range to avoid expression such as crying, which was perceived to indicate a lack of control in a broad range of areas of their lives and which could bring on homophobic bullying.

The male body was described as being shaped physically and socially into an acceptable form, although not all males were able to embody the ideal. Those who could not had derogatory language or violence, similar to that directed at emotional men, directed at them. The effects of this on boys who approximated the hegemony was to force them into aggressive, competitive activities which were seen to represent physical masculinity. Those who could not embody this form of masculinity, or who

could but rejected it, found themselves socially isolated, and risked being considered gay. Adherence to hegemonic physicality was not simply enforced by homophobia: many men discussed how easily they fitted the hegemonic mold, and how much they enjoyed the 'right' sort of activities: the role of sport in masculinity will be expanded on in Chapter 6.

Masculinity became a restricted range of authorised attitudes and behaviours in opposition to derided forms which generally had no basis to sexuality, but had, as exemplars of 'failed' masculinity, been conflated with homosexuality. Homophobia became one of the major techniques by which masculinity was shaped. It was not the only technique, and the related field of misogyny also had powerful effects, but it was homophobia which was repeatedly cited by participants as the label that they, as boys, did their utmost to avoid.

Thus any enactments of *difference* could attract labels like 'poofter', which became the 'catch-all' for everything that men strived *not* to be. Although researchers from Freud to Kinsey to Weeks have described sexuality as a construction and a continuum, the variety inherent in human sexuality is still frequently reduced to an essentialist binary: what we want to be and what we despise, with heterosexuality in opposition to the 'failed' masculinity of homosexuality.

Violence was directed towards boys and men who transgressed gender ideals. Participants did not need to experience this themselves for it to impact on their behaviour: seeing or hearing violence directed at the 'wrong' males acted as what Scambler (1989) called 'felt' stigma, as opposed to 'enacted' stigma experienced by those who were direct targets. However, almost every participant stated that he had been the target of homophobic language. When cited, it was always in the context of acting beyond the boundaries of acceptable gender presentation. It is to the use of language that I now turn, specifically to how the use of humour and humiliation are used to shape masculinity into a range of acceptable gender performances.