A QUALITATIVE STUDY EXPLORING HOW GAY MEN

MANAGE GROWING OLDER

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D. Clin. Psy. 2000

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABSTRACT

This study explored how gay men have psychologically managed the process of growing older successfully. Eighteen gay men, aged between 60 and 77, who identified themselves as ageing successfully, were interviewed individually. The interviews were semi-structured and addressed how they had psychologically managed the ageing process. In addition, five heterosexual men were interviewed in order to offer a comparison with the material collected from the homosexual group. All interviews were conducted and analysed using a grounded theory approach.

Analysis identified three core categories reflecting the psychological ageing process of gay men: 'enemy alien identity'; 'swimming/coping strategies'; and 'belongings and exclusions'. The findings are then discussed in relation to research on: ageing and identity; theories of normal and successful ageing; and gay ageing. Finally, implications are considered for older gay men in elderly care services, and for psychological services for this, and future, generations of gay men.

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INTRODUCTION

<u>Overview</u>

"...will children be taught they should hate us,
will the prejudice ever end,
will there be peace at the end of the day,
when we are old and gay"
(Wesley-Smith & Wesley-Smith,1997).

The 20th century has been a time of enormous social and cultural change for all those born and brought up in the United Kingdom. However, for gay men, some of these changes have brought them from the darkest corners of society. From being labelled mentally ill deviants and criminals, many can, today, be openly gay. The country has self proclaimed gay cabinet ministers. To some individuals, gay people now have a relatively enviable and affluent lifestyle. Whilst, today's generally more positive images of homosexuality may be the beginning of a more tolerant attitude towards all sexualities, these representations commonly focus upon a younger generation. In contrast, older gay men must live with, and manage, the dual images of old and gay, and the potentially potent negative stereotypes such representations create:

> *"To many, including the homosexual colony, the ageing homosexual is an object of scorn and derision. Though his loneliness is often abject, he seldom arouses sympathy or interest, unless he has money or influence"*
> (Weinberg & Williams, 1974, p. 216).

Until now, no study has directly asked gay men in the UK how they psychologically manage growing older. Whilst past researchers have proposed mechanisms which might aid gay men's attitude to ageing, many of the findings can only be considered speculative in nature, due to a number of methodological concerns. These problems include: conclusions drawn from interviews with a small sample of men, with no clear methodological explanation as to how any results were established, for example Kimmel (1978) used a sample of 14 men over the age of 55; large age ranges, for example Berger (1982) interviewed men aged between 41 and 77; questionable representativeness of samples, as populations generally consisted of white middle and upper class men who were active in gay organisations; and finally, cultural and time specificity, as virtually all research was conducted prior to the emergence of HIV in North America during the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The current study's aim was to qualitatively examine gay mens' experiences of growing older and how they believe they have managed this process.

The first chapter gives some background to the study. It will review the current literature on ageing and consider the psychological challenges a growing ageing population faces. It will then move on to consider the components of, and research which supports, the concepts of usual and successful ageing, and how such ideas relate to research into ageing and identity. Research into gay ageing will then be critically discussed. Finally, the aims and rationale of the present study will be presented.

Background

> "I always maintained that I would never see my 40th birthday, and hopefully, if things go according to plan I won't. I then won't become a twisted old cantankerous sod that is prowling around the bars looking a right state. I don't want to be like that. I'd far rather go out younger, having had a good time"
> (Kocsis and George, 1995).

This statement by a 28-year-old HIV positive man, elicited during previous research conducted by the author examining gay mens' adjustment to HIV, was the genesis of this study. Sitting listening to a man in his 20's 'gratefully' forecasting a death that would prevent him becoming old was a troubling experience. What made a man in his 20's wish that his life would be over by the time he was 40 years of age? What internal and external forces were at work to generate such a loathing of growing old? Of course, such comments could have been seen as a defensive strategy to ward off anxiety related to an almost, at that

time, inevitable early death. However, they seemed to match too closely stereotypical constructions of ageing, and gay ageing in particular, to be dismissed so readily.

While recent years have seen an increased interest in understanding the lives of those who are ageing, few of these studies have explicitly taken into account the sexuality of the older people they are studying (Cruickshank, 1991). For the most part, negative stereotypes, representations and discourses regarding ageing, and in particular gay ageing, as a time of being 'sad and alone' still abound. However, research conducted to investigate the legitimacy of such images has generally found that, while elderly gay and lesbian people may stereotype themselves in line with these discourses (Simon et al., 1991), they appear to adjust no better or worse to the ageing process than their heterosexual counterparts (Berger, 1996; Dorfman, 1995). Results indicate no difference in the levels of adjustment in the two populations on measures of depression or social isolation (Dorfman, 1995). Yet virtually nothing is known about how homosexuals manage their ageing process. Importantly, for clinical psychologists working with older people, the applicability of generic ageing theories to the needs of gay people requires clarification. As Kitzinger and Coyle et al., (1999) suggested during a recent debate regarding the setting up of a gay and lesbian section within the British Psychological Society, "the development of a more inclusive psychology of humankind requires a focus on the particular

issues confronting a traditionally under-represented group within psychology and on the integration of research endeavours currently scattered across the disciplines" (p. 531).

This greater attempt to understand the needs of homosexuals could be viewed as part of a wider movement within psychology to comprehend what Ramirez (1994, p. ix) calls "the different - those who, in some way, do not fit the preferred or idealized images of society". Typically, research into such groups and individuals has centred upon those from different ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds.

However, more recent research such as that undertaken by MIND which examined the uptake of mental health services by homosexuals (Golding, 1997), and an investigation by Age Concern into the needs of older gays and lesbians (Langley, 1997), have begun to address the needs of more 'invisible' populations, such as homosexuals. This research demonstrated that, while homosexuality was declassified as a mental illness in the UK over thirty years ago, a person's homosexuality was still commonly used by mental health professionals to explain their mental health problems (Golding, 1997). Consequently, gay men and lesbians were seen to be reluctant to disclose their sexuality for fear that this would be deemed an illness.

Such negative attitudes towards homosexuals have given rise to gay affirmative

therapy.   This attempts to address the heterosexist assumptions, and often

homophobic attitudes, of many psychological theories (Davies and Neal, 1996).

Whilst such a therapeutic approach may have been developing for some years in

the US, Davies and Neal (1996) believe that they are the first authors to bring

together the therapeutic issues confronting gay people in a British context.

Regrettably, as the authors are only too aware, there is a paucity of research to

guide such an approach.   Hence, Davies and Neal (1996) call for considerably

more research, discussion and literature into all areas covered by their book,

including the need to work with older gay men, in order to "guarantee equality

of psychological care for all" (Davies and Neal, 1996, p. 5).

As already noted, HIV, and its repercussions, was the starting point for this

research. This health crisis, which has infected and affected so many in the gay

community, has led to unprecedented research into all aspects of the lives of gay

men, as researchers have sought to understand and control the spread of the

virus.   Sullivan (1998) believes that a corollary of this external investigation has

been an internal examination by the gay community, and a reassessment of what

it might mean to be a gay man in the late 20th century.   The current research

could be viewed as part of this introspective process.   It may be, as Sullivan

(1998, p. 66) observed, "plagues and wars do this to peoples. They force them to ask more fundamental questions of who they are and what they want".

Ageing

People are living longer than ever before. In 1996 there were 9.25 million people over the age of 65 living in the United Kingdom. By 2021 this will have increased to nearly 12 million, rising still further to reach 14.6 million by 2061. This means that the average UK age will increase from 38.4 in 1996 to 41.9 by 2021, with projected life expectancy increasing from 74.3 years in 1996 to 77.9 years by 2021 for men and from 79.5 years in 1996 to 82.6 years by 2021 for women. By the middle of the 21st century the number of people aged over 75 will have doubled, while the number aged 90 will have more than tripled. (Source: Office of National Statistics 1999).

This being so, the challenge facing health and social care systems, and society as a whole, is to ensure that a longer life means a longer healthy life, both physically and psychologically. Whilst many medical advances have been made over recent years regarding physical health, psychological well-being has been less well investigated. Indeed, while research indicates prevalence rates of psychological disorders in the elderly to be similar, or higher than in younger groups, older people appear to be less likely to receive psychological treatment (Woods and

Roth, 1996). Thus, as a recent document produced by Age Concern, linked to their 'Debate of the Age' tour, stated, "if we are to view the changing demographic balance as an opportunity rather than a problem and if we are to create a genuinely inclusive society, attitudes will have to adapt and change to meet this new situation" (Age Concern, 1999).

The challenges of growing older

> "*Growing* old...what is the opposite of "growing"? I ask myself. Withering perhaps? It is, I assume, quite easy to wither into old age, and hard to grow into it" (May Sarton, 1977, p. 27).

As the aged population grows, so more people are faced with adapting to the physical, social and emotional challenges of late life. Stage theorists, for instance Erikson (1963) and Levinson (1979), have highlighted that the challenges faced at these later periods of life are different to those in the earlier and mid sections. For example, Erikson believes that in mid-life, people are faced with the challenge of fulfilling a need for 'generativity', which he describes as "primarily the interest in establishing and guiding the next generation" (Erickson, 1980, p. 103), as opposed to 'stagnation'. Whereas, in later life, the challenge becomes one of 'integrity' versus 'despair', where 'integrity' is seen as a sense of satisfaction for a life productively led, as opposed to experiencing 'despair' prompted by a sense that life has had little purpose or meaning. Each of

Erickson's so called 'crises' build upon one another, meaning that if eventual 'integrity' is to be achieved, then earlier stages of the model also have to have been negotiated, to some extent, successfully. As Baltes and Baltes (1990, p. 4) point out, seen through such a lens "ageing and success seem to represent a contradiction".

Psychosocial adjustment, as termed by Erikson, might be viewed as a life time's achievement, with 'success' being signified by an integrity or 'wisdom' (Sugarman, 1986) when dealing with older life's adaptational challenges. Menninger (1988) characterizes such adaptational challenges as:

1. accepting a new, less potent sense of self prompted by physical changes resulting from the ageing process;

2. accepting the loss of one's peers and partner through death;

3. losing one's independence, often with a role reversal with one's children; and

4. losing the sense of one's identity and changes in self identity through retirement and the loss of one's occupation, and becoming orientated to the past as a means of rationalizing one's existence.

Usual and successful ageing

As well as summarizing the challenges faced by people as they grow older, researchers have begun to identify the enormous range of strategies older people

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utilize to tackle such losses. However, as Rowe and Khan (1987) point out, one of the main problems with such research has been the treatment of the aged as a homogenous group, with age related losses - cognitive and physiological - being seen as singly age-determined. This emphasis on average age related changes has, they believe, chiefly neglected the substantial heterogeneity: "among older people in the non-diseased group with respect to many physiologic and cognitive characteristics, a heterogeneity that is important both within cultures and between cultures" (Rowe and Khan, 1987, p. 143). They believe that this prejudice may have led to an exaggeration of the effects of ageing and an underestimation of the modifying effect of extrinsic variables, with the resultant risk that what is seen as 'normal' ageing, becomes natural and beyond purposeful modification. As Rowe and Khan (1987, p. 143) conclude, "in short, the emphasis on 'normal' ageing focuses attention on learning what most older people do or do not do, what physiologic and psychologic states are typical. It tends to create a gerontology of the usual".

Rowe and Khan (1987) go on to propose a distinction within the category of normal ageing between 'usual' ageing, where extrinsic factors heighten the effects of ageing, and 'successful' ageing, where extrinsic factors play a neutral or positive role. For example, while physiologic changes, such as rising blood pressure and weight, may be associated with normal ageing in western populations, studies of other cultures illustrate that such changes are not

necessarily linked to age per se, but rather to the extrinsic factors of nutrition and exercise. Rowe and Khan (1987), suggest that the interpretation of such physiologic changes as normal ageing ignores the possible influence of external moderating variables on the ageing process.

Elements of successful ageing

Menninger (1999) draws on this distinction between usual and successful ageing to review recent research into ageing and consider which factors might facilitate successful ageing. These predictions draw heavily on the work of two longitudinal American studies set up to examine ageing - the Grant Study and the MacArthur Foundation Study of Ageing.

The Grant study was established by George Vaillant and investigated a cohort of 204 Harvard University undergraduate men at regular time intervals from the early 1940s. From the outset, this population was considered atypical. The men were selected on the basis of their good physical health and high academic achievement. The men were interviewed at ages 25, 30, 47, 57 and 65. Outcome measures were organized around two overarching categories: 'physical health', containing two dimensions - length of life and biological health; and 'psychosocial adjustment', containing three dimensions - positive evidence of mental health, life satisfaction, and personal control (Vaillant, 1980).

Reviewing the study, Menninger (1999) reports four variables which are seen to be important with regard to overall psychological adjustment in later life:

1. sustained family relationships;

2. no alcoholism;

3. no depressive disorders; and

4. mature defenses

Considering these factors together, Menninnger (1999) concludes that,

> "well-being at age 65 is thus related to the ability to handle life's vicissitudes and conflicts with the mature ego defences of sublimation, anticipation, suppression, altruism and humor, as opposed to the immature defence mechanisms (projection, passive - aggressive behaviour, hypochondriasis, and acting out) or the 'neurotic mechanisms (intellectualization, repression, reaction formation, displacement, and dissociation)" (Menninnger, 1999, p. A8).

In comparison, the MacArthur Foundation research network on Successful Ageing has examined an extremely large population of relatively healthy, well functioning community dwelling older Americans. Findings from this study demonstrated that overall there were three key components to successful ageing:

avoiding disease and disability; maintaining high mental and physical functioning; and continuing to engage actively in life, through productivity and strong interpersonal relationships (Menninger, 1999).

Whilst avoiding disease and disability, and maintaining high physical functioning, were related to exercise and dietary regimes, maintaining high mental functioning and continuing to engage actively with life appeared to depend upon a range of interrelated factors. For example, while keeping 'mentally fit' was related to mental exercises, such as games, it was also part of being involved with others, e.g. via conversations.

This 'engagement with others' was seen to bestow a number of virtues. As well as contributing, along with 'performing productive activities', towards the category of 'engagement with life', it also performed the function of producing social support. A corollary of this social support was seen to be a buffering effect in reducing some of the health related effects of ageing. However, the study also identified that 'just' being around other people did not constitute social support. Instead, relationships required a number of qualities in order to qualify as social support, examples being: that the relationship be confiding and reassuring, and that respect and/or affection be expressed. Moreover, it was discovered that in order to offer any benefits, these relationships needed to be reciprocal, as opposed to being a one-way process. Thus, the strongest

predictors of well-being in old age were frequency and nature of visits with friends and of attendance at meetings of organizations.

This attendance at organizations may well have fulfilled some of the function identified as constituting the other component of 'engaging with life', namely, 'performing productive activities'. Glass et al. (1995), examined changes in the productive activity of different cohorts of the MacArthur population. In the research, productivity was construed as including a wide range of activities. Thus, child care, voluntary work, outdoor activities and housework measured by hours engaged in the work were all included. He found that, along with age and functional disability, marriage, and increased mastery were protective factors against declines in productivity.

Rowe and Khan (1998), in turn, suggest that older people's sex lives have a bearing on their well-being in old age. In contrast to the stereotypic view that older people are asexual, and old age to be a time devoid of sexual pleasure (Kennedy et al., 1997), a large body of research indicates that sex plays an important part in the lives of both men and women well into old age (Praseedom et al., 1999). While older people consistently report a loss in ability, rather than desire, for sex, all studies show that they are more than capable of having active and rewarding sex lives well into old age (Wiley et al., 1996). In fact, for some, there was an increase in pleasure. Bright (1997, cited in Menninger, 1999, p. A10)

goes as far as to suggest that "probably the most important factor in both individual and shared contentment in later life is that we see ourselves as sexual beings".

As well as these relatively proximal factors related to individuals' management of ageing, researchers, utilizing the MacArthur population, have identified the impact of more distal extrinsic factors on the ageing process. Berkman et al. (1993) investigated the psychosocial characteristics of different sub-groups within the overall population. She found that the higher functioning individuals, measured on a number of physical and psychological indices, had significantly higher incomes, and had completed high school, in comparison to the lower functioning groups. Further, these superior functioning elders were more likely to score higher on scales of self-efficacy, mastery and to report fewer psychiatric symptoms. Berkman et al. (1993), referring to the impact of socioeconomic conditions on successful ageing concluded that, "by far the most consistent finding to date, and one of our major findings is the association of poverty and lower levels of education with poor functioning" (p. 1138).

The model of selective optimization and compensation

In all of the above research older people in general, and successful elders in particular, are seen to develop strategies which, in some way, compensate for

their changing abilities and what society dictates to be the 'roles' of the elderly. Thus, while a person may no longer be as productive as a paid worker, they can find voluntary activity equally stimulating and rewarding. Baltes and Baltes (1990) have proposed that this compensation is a central tenet to building a theory of successful ageing.

As already noted, there have been, and still are, debates about how 'success' should be operationalized. Thus, someone who has aged successfully may be thought of as: living a long life (length of life); being physically healthy (biological health); having no psychiatric illness (mental health); as demonstrating no organic brain disease (cognitive efficacy); as having a social network and being engaged with the community (social competence and productivity); as feeling in control of their life (personal control/mastery); and as believing that the life that they have led, and are leading is good (life satisfaction).

Baltes and Baltes (1990) believe that, when thinking about successful ageing, a balance needs to be struck between this range of subjective and objective indicators. However, they believe that much of the research so far performed has relied too heavily on subjective indicators. They believe that while important, there are a number of difficulties associated with such measures and their interpretation. In particular, they point to the ability of people to transform

reality, and in the extreme even to ignore it, and the effects that this ability might have on findings.

Thus, Baltes and Baltes (1990) propose a model that accounts for the gains and losses seen in old age and the dynamic processes which interplay between them. In their view the key to adaptation is 'selective optimization with compensation'. Baltes & Baltes (1990) believe that, while we may all engage in such a process during life, it is in old age that this takes on a new significance. In addition, they believe that while the essentials of the process are seen as universal, its phenotypic manifestation varies widely between individuals.

In their model (see figure 1) there are three interacting elements and processes:

1. selection: where a person concentrates their energy on those areas which have a high priority to them, bringing together their environmental needs with their individual motivations and skills;

2. optimization: the person engages in behaviours which facilitate their reserves and optimizes their lives; and

3. compensation: the person utilizes psychological and physical aids to make up for losses, e.g. the use of mnemonics as a memory aid, and the use of hearing aids.

Figure 1: Baltes and Baltes model of selective optimization and compensation

(Baltes and Baltes, 1990, p. 22):

Antecedent Conditions   Process   Outcome

| • Life development as specialized and age graded adaptation

• Reduction in general reserve capacity

• Losses in specified functions | • Selection

• Optimization

• Compensation | • Reduced and transformed but effective life |
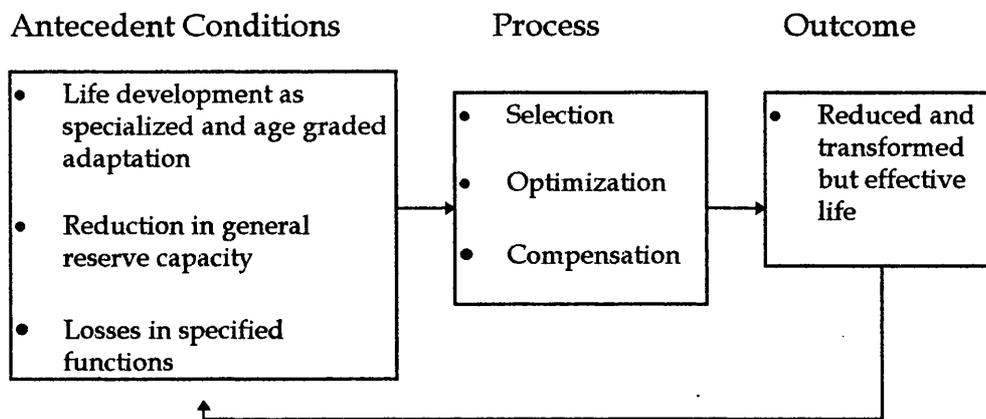
Identity and Ageing

How, in the face of both external and internal challenges, does an individual carry on growing into old age? In answering this question, the research reviewed above has focused on the contribution of personal factors to the ageing process. Particular strategies already identified as helping in this process include maintaining a social network, and being productive. However, research has also focused on the dynamic and central role a person's identity may play in the process of ageing.

In reviewing this recent work into identity in later life, Coleman (1996), sets out some of the major theoretical and methodological advances currently being

considered by researchers in the field of gerontology. Correspondingly, this section will follow this general stance, examining first, how identity might be considered in the context of ageing, secondly, the resilience of self to the ageing process, and thirdly, how the self might be managed.

Identity as social construction

Before proceeding to examine the research into identity and ageing, it may be fruitful to consider what is meant by the term 'identity', and how it might be understood in the context of ageing. As Breakwell (1986) points out,

> "the term (identity) is highly problematic. Theorizing about identity is like traversing a battlefield. Though strewn only with the debris of unconsolidated thought rather than unexploded shells, it is no less deadly. The concept of identity is protean" (p.15).

Part of the problem with 'identity' has been its interchangability with a range of other terms, which are seen to differentiate one person's social, behavioural and psychological characteristics from another's. For example, while one theorist may talk about the 'self', another may equally use the term 'personality'. Breakwell (1986) proposes that the use of these different terms is usually bound to the philosophical and methodological foundations a particular theorist employs. Thus, the behaviourist who employs factor analytic methods on

questionnaire material from large-scale surveys may talk about personality; the psychoanalyst using a single case study may refer to ego; while the symbolic interactionist might talk of self concept.

Coleman (1996) believes that many recent research advances into identity and ageing have been made within this latter social constructionist framework. This stance involves three basic premises. Firstly, humans respond to their environment on the basis of the meanings that elements of the environment have for them as individuals. Secondly, such meanings are products of social interaction, and thirdly these societal/cultural meanings are modified through individual interpretation within the ambit of this shared interaction (Burns, 1981). Thus, social constructionism recognizes that human identities are constructed in a certain cultural environment at a particular historical time. Further, that these time specific cultures provide us with the language which is used to create a 'narrative', through which we construct our self stories, and through such stories, develop a sense of identity (Lax, 1992). Importantly, the creation of this narrative is something that we do in conjunction with others. An example of an important shared western cultural narrative in the late 20th century is that of the individuated self. Coleman (1996, p. 96) proposes that this conception of self as story has provided a "rich basis for reformulating questions about continuity and change with age in self conception".

Such a subjective individual stance is not without its dissenters, however. For example, Gutmann (1994) describes it as a 'whatever works' or 'whatever feels good approach', and, as we have already seen, Baltes and Baltes (1990) have shown concern over an individual's ability to distort reality. Nonetheless, as Coleman (1996) points out, it is individual subjective indicators that have gained prominence in the study of ageing. This prominence, he believes, is based upon the "consistent body of evidence, including longitudinal research findings, which show that elders' perception and evaluations of situations are more relevant for determining behaviour and feelings, such as well-being and satisfaction, than the objective situations"(p. 96).

Two central themes have emerged from research into identity and ageing employing such an epistemological stance over recent years. Firstly, that self conception remains continuous and stable with age (e.g. Baltes & Baltes, 1990). Secondly, that the self is no longer represented as passive, but rather, is seen to be active in maintaining and developing self-image. Thus recent studies, including this one, have moved away from using the term 'adjustment', to using the more active concept of 'management'.

Continuity of self

As already noted, Baltes and Baltes (1990) suggest that one of the central characteristics of ageing is that the self remains resilient. Whilst past research has highlighted the stability of individual traits over the life span (McCrae & Costa, 1988), it is aspects of the related, but functionally different, 'self concept', which have drawn attention of late (Ryff, 1991). This refocusing has been brought about by a notion that aspects of the self concept, such as beliefs and coping styles, are more responsive to change, and are thus accountable for the achievement of continuity (Ryff, 1991).

Atchley (1989) has proposed a theory to explain how continuity is achieved during ageing. Whilst he concedes that there is a static meaning to the conception of continuity, "to remain the same, to be uniform, homogenous, unchanging, even humdrum" (p. 183), he believes that this view does not represent the continuity seen in ageing. Rather, he believes that continuity, when applied to ageing, relates to a more dynamic process. Within this more dynamic process, there is provision for changes to occur within the context of a basic structure.

Thus, Atchley (1989) proposes that a central premise of 'Continuity Theory' is that,

> "in making adaptive choices, middle aged and older adults attempt to preserve and maintain existing internal and external structures and they prefer to accomplish this objective by using continuity (i.e. applying familiar strategies in familiar arenas of life)" (p.183).

Internal continuity refers to remembered inner structures, such as temperament, affect, experiences, and preferences, while external continuity might refer to structures such as role relationships and activities.

In order to maintain continuity, the individual uses strategies that are supported by both individual preference and social sanctions. To the extent that continuity is viewed as a dynamic process, continuity theory assumes evolution, not homeostasis, to be the aim of the system. This means that an individual will be expected to integrate change into prior history, whilst maintaining a balance. Internal continuity would therefore be viewed as being a healthy capacity to see inner changes as connected to the individual's past and this individual's past to be sustaining and supporting of the new self.

Atchley proposes that the pressures that drive individuals towards internal continuity include: continuity providing a basis for effective day to day decision making linked to a person's need for mastery and ultimately the predictability of

the world; continuity providing a sense of continuous personal history which results in a perception that a person's life had, what Erikson et al. (1986) described as ego integrity; meeting the need for self esteem; and meeting a need for social interaction, in as far as predictable people are more attractive. External continuity, however, is seen as driven by: an expectation by others that a person will carry on acting in a familiar manner, predictability to social support, with this social support affirming an individual's identity and providing a sense of belonging, and feedback from others that will allow for affirmation of a person's own view of themself.

The continuity flowing though a person's life will accumulate themes or beliefs. These themes, Kaufmann (1987) contends, will be reformulated into the building blocks of identity, with people managing feedback actively in order to support their identity. Indeed, Kaufmann (1987,) concluded from his own interview based study of aged Californians that,

> "identity is not frozen in a static moment of the past. Old people formulate and reformulate personal and cultural symbols of their past to create a meaningful, coherent sense of self, and in the process they create a viable present. In this way, the ageless self emerges: its definition is ongoing, continuous, and creative" (p. 14).

Coleman (cited, Gumaste, 2000), reports that coherence in such identity themes is maintained, primarily, through family relationships. Such a stance can be seen to correspond with the narrative account of ageing already discussed.

Atchley (1989) believes that the process of continuity is a prerequisite for mental health. However, it is also important that continuity is not carried on in the face of 'reality', by denying the need to change and the reorganization of identity e.g. retirement and/or widowhood. Interestingly, however, it would appear that external change has only limited impact on a person's self concept. Thus, for a person to feel that their life is discontinuous may mean that their mental health suffers, as their life begins to feel unpredictable and chaotic.

Management of self

Researchers have proposed a number of management strategies which may be employed in order to achieve the continuity seen to permeate identity in old age. Heidrich and Ryff (1993) employed social integration, social comparison, and self discrepancy theories, in order to examine one of the central paradoxes of ageing, and one already highlighted by Baltes and Baltes (1990), i.e. that people are able to sustain high levels of life satisfaction, morale, subjective health and well-being despite changes or declines in physical health and functioning, interpersonal relationships, and social roles and responsibilities.

Social integration theory (Kuypers and Bengston, 1973) suggests that maintaining normative guidelines, meaningful roles, and reference groups in old age, protects the elderly from perceiving the self as incompetent and ensures psychological adaptation. The theory also posits that an individual's sense of social competence is related to their perceived integration in the social structure. Thus, Heidrich and Ryff (1993) believe that an

> "elderly person who perceives a high degree of normative guidance in their social world, who engages in roles they value, or who has positive perceptions of their membership as elderly persons in different social groups would be expected to have higher levels of psychological well being. A hypothesis derived from this perspective is that the physical health losses of later life are mitigated by the sense of competence derived from social integration"(p. 327).

Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) points to the role of others in evaluation, maintenance and enhancement of the self. This enhancement can take place as a result of upward or downward comparisons. Downward comparisons occur in situations where there is a threat to self and act as self enhancement or self protection, while upward comparisons occur where there is a need for upward affiliation.

Self discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) provides a model of the relationship between different, and potentially conflicting, aspects of self and the affective outcomes of that conflict. For example, when there is a discrepancy between ideal and actual self domains, there is a reduction in self esteem. Research suggests that the magnitude of self discrepancy is positively related to the magnitude of emotional distress. It has been argued that successful adaptation in later life is related to increasing congruence between the actual and ideal self.

Heidrich and Ryff (1993) found that a person's perception of their social integration mediates the effects of physical health on mental health outcomes. Therefore, lower psychological distress, as well as increased life satisfaction, personal growth, positive relationships, and autonomy, were related to self appraisal of fulfilling valuable roles and to reference group and normative behaviours. Social comparison was also shown to be an effective mechanism by which a person may favorably assess the self. However, self discrepancy seemed to have little impact. It was hypothesized that this lack of influence was the result of actual discrepancies being firmly established by old age.

Dittmann-Kohli (1990) expands on some of the ways older adults may 'continue' and adapt to life. In a comparison study of how young and old adults organized self descriptive meanings, Dittmann-Kohli found that, in comparison to young

adults, older adults completed problem and future orientated sentence stems significantly more often by referring to negative aspects of their own ageing process. Examples of topics highlighted included: aspects of health, biological or functional deterioration and the potential threat to independence.

However, older people's answers demonstrated that they used significantly more positive and fewer negative or ambivalent statements about self and life compared to younger people. These results, Dittmann-Kohli (1990) suggest, indicate that within the constraints of old age, older adults create, via cognitive and affective strategies, positive meanings. For example, instead of maintaining high expectations for life realization and self development, the elderly change their standards, becoming more self accepting and valuing more highly what is already given and still available. This 'reorganization' of meaning is not seen as a denial of the finality of life, or of potential infirmity, but rather, as a way of rendering adversity less oppressive. Dittmann-Kohli (1990, p. 291) concluded that, "a wise decrease of former aspirations and unavailable goals and ideals will provide a peace of mind that allows for subjective well-being in old age (and often before that time). This may lead to what Erikson (1968) has called ego integrity".

Gay Ageing

"Growing old is a gay man's nightmare" (Pela, 1996, p. 51).

As discussed earlier, the conceptual distinction between 'usual' and 'successful' ageing has resulted from theorists' dissatisfaction with the treatment of older people as a homogenous group. This amalgamation was believed to conceal the substantial heterogeneity, both within and between cultures, as to how ageing may be managed. It is only in the last few years that the challenge of understanding how different people age has begun to be explored. In particular, studies have begun to examine the needs of black elders (Patel, 1990), and the position of older women. However, few of these studies have explicitly taken into account the sexuality of the older people they are studying (Cruickshank, 1991; Reid, 1995).

Briefly considering the research already discussed, and in particular that pertaining to the role of social comparison and social integration in the ageing process, it might be considered more difficult for gay men to grow old with any degree of success. However, results from the few studies which have examined gay ageing have demonstrated that gay people appear to adjust no better or

worse to the ageing process than their heterosexual counterparts (Berger, 1996;

Dorfman, 1995).

In fact, it has been suggested that gay people may be better placed to deal with

the possible challenges of ageing as a result of their previous management of

identity transformation - 'coming out' as gay - and of their confrontation of

associated negative societal images. This assumption of 'crisis competence'

(Kimmel, 1978), as it has come to be known, has formed the basis of much of the

limited theorizing about the ability of elderly gay people to grow old

'successfully'.

Crisis competence

Friend (1990) uses the idea of crisis competence as the basis of his theory of

successful gay ageing. He constructed a theoretical continuum along which

elderly gay peoples' identities may be located. At one end of the continuum lay

'stereotypic older lesbian and gay people'. These individuals conform to the

popular negative images of homosexuals' as a result of internalized homophobic

societal discourses, and will, Friend believes, live their lives in "corrosive shame

and self loathing" (Dawson, 1982, cited in Friend, 1990, p. 105). This group is

isolated and will rarely, if ever, associate with openly gay people, and will

therefore have no opportunity to challenge its members' negative belief systems.

At the centre of the continuum lie a group known as 'passing older lesbian and gay people'. These individuals are characterized as believing the societal stereotypes of gay people whilst marginally accepting their own homosexuality. Behaviourally they may have married and have used such arrangements as a cover for their sexual encounters with people of the same sex. However, Friend (1990) believes that such arrangements will consume a large amount of energy, and, as a result of their double lives, such individuals will be left "with a gnawing feeling as to whether they are really valued for what others expect them to be rather than for who they really are" (p. 107).

At the other end of the continuum is a group referred to as 'affirmative older lesbian and gay people'. Friend (1990) believes that this is the largest group. This group, instead of taking on board negative societal messages of what it means to be gay, attempt to control and reconstruct such images into more positive self representations. Some individuals in this group may be considered socio-sexual activists, while others may be people who are happy to live lives which reflect who they are without attempting to change the dominant socio-political ideology.

Friend (1990) goes on to propose that as a result of the affirmative group's ability to manage what it means to be gay, and their experiences of 'coming out' in a

heterosexist society, they will be able to transfer and utilize such identity management skills when adjusting to the ageing process - the so called 'crisis competence'.

Friend also proposes a number of corollaries resulting from this 'crisis competence' which aid an individual in the ageing process. These include a greater ability to deal with loss (as gay people may have had to deal with the possibility of being disowned by their family) and an ability to challenge social stereotypes. In addition, the confrontation of rigid gender roles in gay relationships is seen to facilitate the development of a range of living skills which may be of use in later life and unavailable, say, to heterosexual men.

Adelman (1990) offers a more developmental perspective on this affirmative group's ability to successfully adjust. She found a statistically significant relationship between adjustment in later life and both the sequences of early gay developmental events and a high satisfaction with being gay. Developmentally, it seemed that those gay people who had experimented with gay lifestyles, and who had then gone on to gradually redefine themselves as gay, had significantly higher levels of life satisfaction, lower self criticism and fewer psychosomatic complaints, when compared to people who went about gay definition in the reverse order. These findings are in keeping with life span theorists, such as

Erikson (1982), who have suggested that adjustment patterns in later life are shaped by early developmental and social factors.

The notion of crisis competence, and its relationship to different 'styles' of homosexuality, has not gone unchallenged however. Lee (1987), in a unique longitudinal study in this field, poses the question: what can homosexual ageing studies contribute to theories of ageing? In order to address this question he studied 47 homosexual men over 50 years of age for a 4-year-period. In particular he sought to explore the question of whether the coming out crisis provided homosexual men with stamina unavailable to ageing heterosexuals. Lee went on to record the number a life crises reported by the men and compared this number to their scores on the life satisfaction scale. Results indicated that the number and intensity of life crises reported showed that the happier men reported the fewest major crises - both general life crises and specifically homosexual related crises. These results seemed the opposite to those predicted by crisis competence, and from them Lee concluded that, "happiness in homosexual old age is more likely when a man sees himself as fortunate or skilled enough, or both, to have avoided stressful events rather than to have mastered them" (Lee, 1987, p. 57). Overall, it seemed that gay men and their heterosexual counterparts had similar concerns on entering old age, namely, health, wealth and loneliness and that the largest hurdle to their adjustment lay in generational class conflict.

Involvement in the gay community

Whilst finding no relationship between the number and intensity of crises, and a homosexual's ability to manage ageing, Lee (1987) did observe that those gay men most actively involved in the gay community were the happiest. This finding is consistent with Berger's (1982) finding that men integrated into the gay community, compared to those who were not, reported higher life satisfaction. In addition, Quam & Whitford (1992), in a questionnaire study of gay and lesbian people over the age of 50, concluded that those older gay people who had the support of others in a similar situation had less fear of ageing.

Adelman's (1990) developmental research offers a more generational approach to these findings. She notes that in all of the above studies the samples were generally drawn from those 50 years of age or above. In her own research, she noted that whilst middle aged adults found high disclosure of their homosexuality and involvement with the gay community helpful, older gays appeared to adjust better with lower involvement. Grube (1990) believes that this lack of involvement is based on an identification with a traditional gay culture that tried to accommodate to the prevailing heterosexual world. Adelman (1990) suggests that this trend should make us consider socio-historical factors when examining the adjustment of older gay people. It may be that

generationally, those who were born and socialized before the sexual liberation

of the late 1960s may find a closeted existence comforting, as this has provided a

positive self image and safety from a hostile world for a number of years.

Accelerated ageing

Interestingly, in a further twist to the debate regarding the role of the gay

community to ageing, researchers have begun to speculate as to whether or not

the 'phenomenon' known as 'accelerated ageing' is connected to a person's

involvement with gay life. Frost (1997) suggests that one of the myths regarding

gay men's difficulty with ageing centres on their experience of feeling that they

were growing older faster. While general western culture may be seen to be

youth orientated, this 'worshipping of youth' is seen to be amplified in gay

circles (Reid, 1995). For instance, Bennett and Thompson (1991), in researching

whether accelerated ageing existed, found that gay men perceived themselves as

becoming middle and old aged at similar times to other population samples (41

years and 63 years respectively). However, these same men believed that other

gay men perceived middle age as beginning at 39 years, and old age as beginning

at 54 years. Bennett and Thompson (1991) suggest that these contradictory

results are the product of gay men's dual lives, in which reference is made to

both general societal norms and the perceived norms of the gay community. It

may be that the more a gay man perceives himself to be part of the gay

community, the more he will identify with the norms operating within this sub-culture.

Frost (1997), in an article summarizing the clinical themes noted whilst conducting group psychotherapy with older gay men, examines accelerated ageing from a more psychodynamic perspective. He notes that in previous work on accelerated ageing in gay men, Friend (1987), had speculated that the phenomena was due to a small group of men experiencing a 'narcissistic crisis' (a crisis of self esteem). Whilst recognising that there are a myriad of definitions to such a construct (see Hinshelwood, 1991), Friend defined narcissism as an over concern with physical attractiveness, and self centeredness. Friend believed that such concern with physical 'charm' left a group of gay men vulnerable to low self esteem as they aged, as a result of the value placed on youth and beauty by the gay community. This focus on youth and beauty was seen as the result of a social construction which assumed a future of singlehood for gay men, necessitating the maintenance and retention of one's physical attractiveness. Similarly, Harry (1982) believes that this narcissistic crisis is the product of object choice, writing, "men who define success in the gay sexual market place in terms of attracting significantly younger men may experience an early crisis of ageing early if they are unsuccessful" (p.319).

Criticisms of previous research into gay ageing

Several commentators (Ehrenberg, 1996; Harry 1986; and Dorfman et al., 1995) have remarked on the inadequacies of the above research into gay ageing, with several factors seeming to mitigate the reliability and validity of the findings. One of the central criticisms focuses on the early age, typically 50 years old, this research has chosen to represent the beginning of older age. As well as concerns over the applicability of such results to older people in general, such findings may offer little help to clinicians in older adult services, who typically only see people over retirement age. As already discussed, when people were born and the historical times they live through would seem to be important determinants of their adjustment process.

Secondly, all of the above research into gay ageing has been conducted in the United States and generally in large metropolitan areas such as San Francisco. It has already been noted that socio-historical factors would seem to have an important impact on the adjustment of gay people to the ageing process. Although there is some overlap between UK and US cultures, for example, the importance of homosexuality being declassified as a mental illness, legislatively, socially and politically, the UK is quite distinct from the US. In particular, in the England and Wales consenting sex between two men in private over the age of 21 was not partially decriminalized until 1967, following the recommendations

Wolfenden (1963) report. Moreover, homosexual acts in Scotland and Northern Ireland were not decriminalized until 1980, and 1981, respectively.

Thirdly, as indicated by a number of writers, such as Weeks (1986) and Garfield, (1994), the discourses and histories of gay people and HIV have been inextricably linked since the disease emerged in the early 1980s. This coupling, and its impact on the ageing process of gay people, has been almost completely ignored by previous researchers. Once again, questions are raised as to the relationship between specific cultural discourses and representations of HIV, as the crisis has progressed, and their impact on the ageing processes of gay people.

Fourthly, conducting research with a stigmatized minority, such as gay people, presents the researcher with some serious methodological difficulties. Generally, research has relied on people who are active in the gay community. This has led to a biased and possibly unrepresentative sampling in which isolated, working class and minority gay elders have been underrepresented (Ehrenberg, 1996). In addition, as already noted, most of the research has been conducted on urban gay people living in large cities, leaving questions as to how older gay people living in suburban and rural areas age successfully.

Finally, it may be claimed that existing theories and research on gay ageing have been conducted within psychological and social theoretical frameworks

dominated by heterosexist attitudes. Thus, rather than theories working from a homosexual base, ideas of how gay people age have been added on to, and compared with, those theories concerned with heterosexual ageing. This constant comparison of gay, or what has become known as 'the other' (DeBeauvoir, 1953), against an intrinsically more acceptable normal population, has led D'Augelli (1994) to call for the evolution of gay and lesbian developmental theories which "transcend past approaches and simultaneously enrich future conceptual and empirical investigations"(p. 120).

The social construction of sexuality and ageing

Social constructionism offers an alternative to the essentialist psychology paradigm. As has already been noted in the discussion on identity, social constructionism is concerned with the historical and cultural specificity of knowledge; how people are constituted by their social environment; and the world of language and symbols that people acquire in a culture. It is also concerned with the way people construct their sense of themselves through the discourses available to them (Gergen, 1985).

In so doing, this perspective calls into question a number of the 'givens' of the scientific paradigm to which psychology is often seen as aspiring to. Thus, social constructionism questions the validity of concepts such as realism, essentialism,

objectivity, and the search for validatable truths, contending that our knowledge

is not a direct perception of reality (Burr, 1995). Further, it rejects the notion of

given, determined natures of people or objects, and of inner truths that

determine what people or things are. Thus, Featherman et al. (1990) consider

that from a social constructionist perspective,

> "successful ageing is a social psychological, processual construct that
>
> reflects the always emerging, socially esteemed ways of adapting to and
>
> reshaping the prevailing, culturally recognised conditions of mind, body,
>
> and community for the elderly society" (p. 52).

Within this social constructionist paradigm, sexuality and ageing become

actively constructed 'realities'.

Sexuality is seen to have no intrinsic or essential meaning of its own, but is given

meaning by the ideological systems developed for its explanation. Foucault

(1978) and Weeks (1981) argue that our current understanding of what it means

to be homosexual is in fact a socially shared 'reality' formed from a number of

inter-related discourses, examples being religion and medicine. Thus, notions of

what homosexuality and homosexual identity mean can be seen to have

fluctuated throughout history.

Ageing can, in the same way as sexuality, be seen to be a shared representation

whose construction has vacillated over time. While no one can avoid the

biological processes of ageing and eventual death, the social meanings we give to the process and the assumptions and generalisations we make about people when they are physically older, represent the values and beliefs of a particular culture at a particular point in history. Today, in the United Kingdom, chronological age dominates any discourse on ageing. For example, Wells and Freer (1988) class those aged sixty-five to seventy-five as the 'young elderly' and those over this age band as the 'old elderly'.

There have been changes in our understanding of when old age begins, and fluctuations in what it means to be old. For example, Kaufman (1987) believes that in the United States, the negative stereotypes associated with decline, loss, and disease emerged after the introduction of social security legislation in the 1930s. Whilst such negative attitudes to old age are found in many societies, Arber and Ginn (1991) suggest that the more traditional the culture is, generally the more positive the images which abound. However, in western culture it would seem that although we can find a number of positive references to old age in literature and fiction, "the overwhelming message is that old age is a horrible spectre, and we show our fear of it by mocking at it, and those who are perceived as old" (Gibson, 1992, p. 65). Given this, discourses surrounding the combined constructions of old and gay can result in a heavily stigmatized stereotype. Such narratives, Ehrenberg (1996, p. 191) suggests, mean that older

gay men are frequently viewed as "depressed, lonely, rejected by family, spurned by younger men, oversexed, and thereby, also disgusting".

Background to the methodology

The movement of research on ageing to a more social constructionist understanding (Coleman, 1996) is relevant to the present research and to the methodological approach selected. This is a relatively new area of research, with only limited or unsatisfactory past investigation being applicable. Elliott et al. (1999) suggest that such a research area should be investigated using a 'discovery orientated' qualitative approach which, "lends itself to understanding participants' perspectives, to defining phenomena in terms of experienced meanings and observed variations, and developing theory from field work" (p.216). This is in contrast to quantitative approaches, which are more appropriately used to test "hypothesized relationships or causal explanations, evaluating reliability, validity and underlying factor structure of psychological measures, and measuring degree of generalizability across samples" (Elliott et al., 1999, p. 216).

Whilst there are numerous qualitative methods (see Richardson, 1996), Benton (1992) suggests that the grounded theory method is ideally suited to the

investigation of those topics about which there is little prior knowledge. Grounded theory has been described as "a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data" (Strauss and Corbin, 1998a, p. 158).

Grounded theory was developed during the 1960s by Glaser and Strauss (1967) in order to, as Charmaz (1995) puts it, "enable psychologists to study the development, maintenance and change of individual and interpersonal processes" (p.30). Whilst the actual procedures of the methodology will be laid out in the next chapter, the theoretical roots of such an approach are located within phenomenology (Pidgeon, 1996). Thus, grounded theorists are concerned with understanding participants' worlds and meanings. This understanding is achieved through detailed examination of participants' accounts of their experiences, within a specific problem domain, and a concern for the contextual specificity of meanings. Grounded theory, therefore, aims to generate a meaningful account that brings together the complexity and variations of participants' worlds. Thus, grounded theory would appear to be an appropriate methodology to investigate ageing in gay men, as a result of its ability to explore and generate theory from unstructured data (Pidgeon, 1996).

Aims and rationale of the present study

The present study aims to describe the processes by which gay men manage growing older. For a number of reasons, this would appear to be an area where research is needed. Firstly, the gradual recognition within the psychology profession that theoretical perspectives, which guide practice, need to take into account all communities. Secondly, as the population of older people grows so, hypothetically, does the number of people who might consider themselves to be old and gay. At the present time, many gay people would appear to be reluctant to acknowledge their sexuality to mental health professionals for fear of discrimination. However it could be hypothesized that, as a result of ongoing changes in British culture, a growing body of emancipated gay men will emerge. Unlike today's older gay men, those so emancipated will be less circumspect about their homosexuality.

At the present time, clinicians working with gay men are guided in their interventions by historically and culturally inappropriate literature. Furthermore, this literature is limited in amount. There is a large body of research into the processes of ageing. This being said, little of this research explicitly addresses the diversity of the populations that it purports to represent. It is therefore unclear the extent to which this research is applicable to gay

people. For example, the literature review has pointed to particular types of

social relationships, and to qualities thereof, which facilitate successful ageing

(Coleman, cited Gumaste, 2000; Menninger, 1999). However the research

outlined in the literature review does not address what it means for a gay man to

hide his sexuality, and thus be less than confiding, or be open about his sexuality

and encounter discrimination and disrespect. Further, it does not address what

it means to a gay man to have a major part of his life unacknowledged by his

family. Indeed, the theories identified as helping the management of identity -

social comparison and social integration - would appear to offer little comfort to

gay men, as the men's integration and ability to positively compare would seem

limited.

Thus this literature, and the few published studies examining gay ageing,

demonstrate a substantial gap in our understanding of what it might mean to be

a gay man growing old in the United Kingdom in the late 20th century. While

previous research has begun to recognize that lesbian and gay identity intersects

with other important aspects of identity (e.g. Coyle & Rafalin, 1999), none, to

date, has considered how gay men might negotiate the ageing process. The

present study therefore aims to draw together these topics into an understanding

of how gay men manage growing older.

Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. How do gay men negotiate and manage the ageing process?

2. What strategies do they adopt to help them cope with growing older?

CHAPTER TWO

METHOD

Overview

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eighteen gay men and five

heterosexual men regarding their experiences of growing older. A grounded

theory approach was used to guide the collection and analysis of the data. In

addition, four sub-scales of a psychological well-being questionnaire were

administered.

Ethical approval

Ethical approval was obtained from the joint University College London and

University College London Hospitals (UCL/UCLH) committees on the ethics of

human research (see Appendix A).

Recruitment procedure

Participants in the study were recruited via two methods. Firstly, through an advertisement (see Appendix B) placed in a book shop in central London dedicated to gay literature. Secondly, through the snowball sampling procedure (Patton, 1990). This involved interviewing participants who had come forward from the advertisement and asking them to nominate one or two other people whom they thought would be interested in taking part and who fitted the inclusion criteria.

Five homosexual men were recruited directly through the advertisement, while a further thirteen gay men and five heterosexual men entered the study via the snowballing procedure. Five of the gay men recruited via snowballing attended a lesbian and gay older persons' forum organized by Age Concern. This forum was established following the publication of research commissioned by Age Concern, Brighton (Langley, 1997), to investigate how it could contribute to meeting the needs of older lesbians and gay men.

The criteria for inclusion of gay men in the study were that they be 60 years of age or over, that they identified themselves as gay, and that they believed that they had aged successfully - whatever successful meant to them. The heterosexual men had the same inclusion criteria, except for identifying

themselves as heterosexual. All of the men who offered to take part in the study met the inclusion criteria for the study. All participants were from a non-clinical population, as the study's focus was on how gay men successfully manage growing older.

All of the men in the study made initial contact with me. This contact took the form of either: telephoning me to discuss the research after seeing the advertisement in the London bookstore, or responding to the snowballing technique by returning an interest slip attached to an information sheet given to them by one of the original participants (see Appendix C). In this way, entry into the study was controlled entirely by the participants. At all stages participants were encouraged to ask questions about the research and could decline to continue. Participants who agreed to take part were given the option of being interviewed in their own homes or at University College London (UCL).

Participants

Homosexual participants

The mean age of gay participants in the study was 67 years (range: 60 to 77). Ten of the men were from England, one was Irish, two were Scottish, one was from the US, one was Australian, two were German, and one was South African. All

participants were white. Two participants still lived in their native countries and were interviewed while visiting the UK. All of the other participants had lived in England, and specifically in London or Brighton, for the majority of their lives.

All of the homosexual participants were retired. Three of the gay men had been employed in professional careers (e.g. psychiatrist), eleven in semi-professional (e.g. nursing, social work), one in semi-skilled (hotelier), and three in manual (e.g. butler). Participants' attainment of formal qualifications reflected this diverse career profile, with six achieving degree level education or above, eight the equivalent of 'A' level/diploma, one attaining the equivalent of 'O' levels, and three having no formal qualifications.

At the time of interview, twelve of the men were single, five were with a partner, and one was widowed. Fifteen had never married and three had been in marriages previously. Eleven considered themselves to have physical illnesses (predominantly high blood pressure) and were taking medication. None reported any mental health problems or that they were taking any psychotropic medication.

Heterosexual participants

The mean age of heterosexual participants was 66 years (range: 62 to 69). Four of the men were from England and one was from Scotland. All participants were white. All of the heterosexual participants had lived in the south east of England for a number of years.

All of the heterosexual participants were retired. Two of them had worked in a semi-professional capacity, while the remaining three had been employed in manual jobs. The two semi-professional men had attained diploma level qualifications, while the three participants who had been manually employed had no formal qualifications. All of the men were married at the time of interview.

All five of the heterosexual men had some type of cardiovascular physical health problem e.g. high blood pressure, angina. Once again, none reported any mental health problems or taking any psychotropic medication.

<u>Procedure</u>

Each participant was given a background information sheet at the beginning of their interview. This briefly described the project, how the study was to be

administered, issues of confidentiality, ethical approval, and explained that the

participant could withdraw from the study at any time (see Appendix D).

Participants were encouraged to ask any questions, or voice any concerns that

they may have had, before the interview began. Participants were then given a

consent form to sign (see Appendix E).

Participants were then interviewed. Following this interview, the men were

asked to complete a background information form (see Appendix F) and a

psychological well-being questionnaire (see Appendix G). Once the

questionnaires had been completed the men were given time to discuss the

research before the interview finished.

Measures

Interviews

Participants were interviewed using a semi-structured interview format (e.g.

Barker, Pistrang and Elliott, 1994). All interviews with heterosexual participants

were carried out in their own homes, while half of the homosexual group were

seen at UCL and half at home. Each participant was interviewed on one

occasion, with interviews lasting between sixty to ninety minutes. The

interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts and

recordings were identified via code numbers given to each participant in order to preserve confidentiality and anonymity.

The areas covered in each interview included (see Appendix H for a complete interview protocol):

- adjustment/management of ageing;

- identity;

- involvement with the gay community; and

- relationships.

A more detailed discussion regarding the interviews can be found in the data collection section.

Questionnaires

The men were asked to complete a background information form (i.e. ethnicity, date of birth, - see appendix F). In addition, four sub-scales from the short-form of the psychological well-being questionnaire (Ryff and Keyes, 1995) , comprising a total of 56 questions, were administered at the end of each interview.

The psychological well-being questionnaire (Ryff and Keyes, 1995)

The psychological well-being questionnaire was administered in order to provide a standardised measure of the participants' well-being. It is a self-report questionnaire which offered an opportunity to measure the men's own appraisal of well-being.

In total, the short-form psychological well-being scale is made up of six sub-scales. These sub-scales represent six dimensions of well-being: self-acceptance (positive evaluation of one's past and present life); positive relations with others (having quality relationships with others); autonomy (having a sense of self determination); environmental mastery (having the capacity to effectively manage one's own life and the surrounding environment); purpose in life (belief that life is meaningful); and personal growth (belief that one will continue to grow and develop).

Each short-form sub-scale consists of fourteen questions, with each scale including both positively and negatively phrased items. Questions from the separate sub-scales were mixed into one continuous self-report instrument.

The short-form scales correlate from .98 to .99 with their 20-item parent scales.

Internal consistency coefficients for each of the short-form sub-scales range from

.83 for the autonomy sub-scale, to .91 for the self acceptance sub-scale. In

addition, the sub-scales of the psychological well-being questionnaire have a

significant level of correlation with other frequently used measures of well-being

- positive and negative affect, life satisfaction (Ryff, 1989). For example, the self

acceptance sub-scale correlates .73 with the Life Satisfaction Index (Neugarten,

Havighurst, and Tobin, 1961), and -.59 with the Zung Depression Scale (Zung,

1965).

The response scale consisted of a six point continuum, ranging from completely

disagree to completely agree. A participant, therefore, can score a total of 84

points on any one sub-scale, with higher scores indicating a greater degree of

wellness than lower scores. For example, Ryff and Keyes (1995, p. 727) believe

that a high score on the 'self acceptance' scale indicates that a person has "a

positive attitude toward the self; acknowledges and accepts multiple aspects of

the self, including good and bad qualities; feels positive about past life". In

contrast, a low score would indicate that a person "feels dissatisfied with self; is

disappointed with what has occurred in past life; is troubled about certain

personal qualities; wishes to be different to what one is" (Ryff and Keyes, 1995, p.

727).

The decision to exclude the purpose in life and environmental mastery sub-scales was taken for both practical and theoretical reasons. Practically, participants had usually already spent two hours with the interviewer by the time the questionnaire was administered. Therefore, in order to minimize demands on the participants, further tasks were kept to a minimum. Theoretically, it was decided not to administer the purpose in life sub-scale because of its relatively high correlation with the personal growth sub-scale (0.64) and its decremental age profile, i.e. the scores of older participants are significantly lower than younger age groups (Ryff and Keyes, 1995). The decision not to administer the environmental mastery sub-scale was taken because of its high correlation with the self acceptance sub-scale (0.85), and, once again, its decremental age profile (Ryff and Keyes, 1995).

In addition, the sub-scales of the short-form psychological well-being questionnaire reflected a number of the attributes considered earlier, in the introduction, as facilitating successful ageing. For example, the sub-scale 'positive relations with others', may be seen to reflect aspects of the social relationships shown to be so important to successful ageing (Minninger, 1999). Thus, a combination of these factors led to four sub-scales being administered to participants, namely, self acceptance, positive relations with others, autonomy, and personal growth.

Analysis of qualitative data

Grounded theory

The interview transcripts were analyzed using grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998b) in order to generate a theory of how gay men manage growing older. Grounded theory sets out a clear procedure designed to guide a study from beginning to end. Pidgeon and Henwood (1996, p.88) graphically summarize this movement, describing how the researcher moves from unstructured material, through coding procedures, to more conceptual understandings, and, finally, onto a theoretical interpretation (see figure 2).

Figure 2: The grounded theory approach (Pidgeon and Henwood, 1996, p.88)
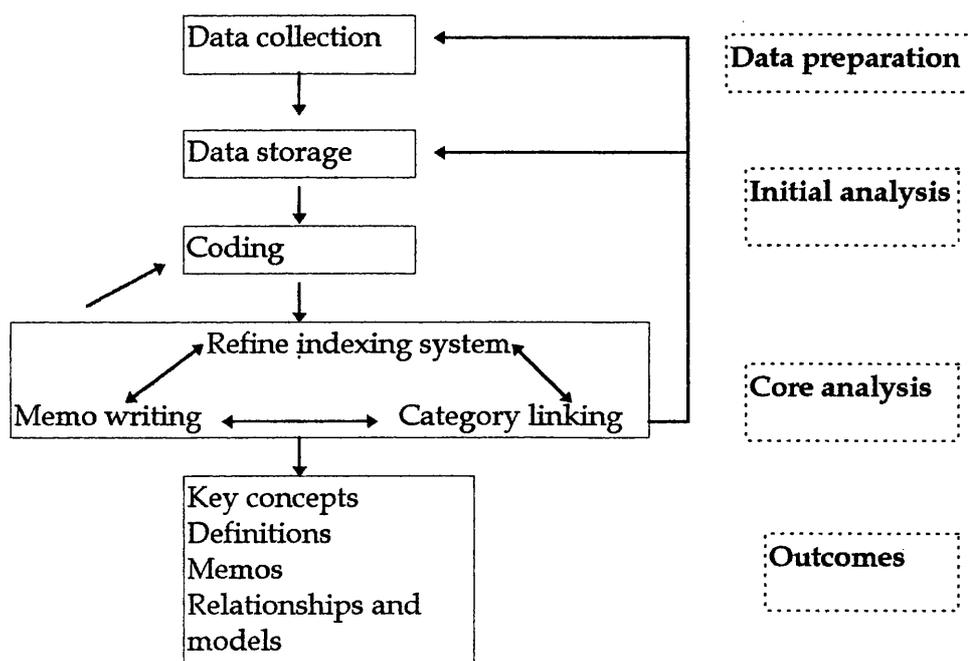
This section will use this general framework to illustrate how this study operationalised each of the procedures. Firstly, it will describe how data were collected and prepared for analysis. Secondly, it will describe how the data were then analysed, via coding techniques, and how these individual codes were incorporated into a coherent grounded theory. In so doing, it will explicate some of the techniques suggested by grounded theorists to explore the meaning of data and generate theory.

While this structure may give the impression that the researcher moves through these stages in a linear fashion, in reality, as Pidgeon and Henwood (1996) point out, the iterative nature of grounded theory means that the researcher is more likely to move between, and/or join together, these different phases. In fact, to Glaser and Strauss (1967), this reciprocal movement between data collection and data analysis is fundamental to the grounded theory account, allowing the researcher to theoretically sample, revisit, and/or, check out new leads and investigations as the study develops.

Data Collection

The reciprocal nature of a grounded theory methodology is highlighted in how initial data collection is approached. For example, Pidgeon and Henwood (1996) suggest that the selection of early data should be guided by its ability to generate

'rich' material. Furthermore, Charmaz (1995) suggests that data should be analyzed as quickly as possible after its collection, in order to prevent the amassing of volumes of unfocused data, and to guide the subsequent collection of data around emerging themes and questions.

These two considerations were reflected in the initial data collection for this study. Hence, early attempts at recruiting participants were aimed at gaining access to, and interviewing, as 'rich' a variety of gay men as was possible. In particular, at this early stage I was interested in interviewing men who had differing levels of involvement in, and associations with, the gay community. In addition, the interviews were conducted using open-ended questions, and followed a semi-structured format, in order to gain as broad a range of initial data as possible.

While the questions and probes used during the semi-structured interviews were designed to reflect the literature already discussed regarding ageing, they were also aimed at opening up new avenues of investigation and insight. Indeed, Strauss and Corbin (1998b) lay particular emphasis on this balancing act, believing that literature can be used to sensitize the researchers to important issues to look out for in the data, while cautioning against it blinding them to new discoveries.

Hence, the interviews were designed to allow for, and facilitate, the researcher's ability to follow particular lines of investigation not necessarily planned for at the beginning of the interview. For instance, while one of the interview questions centred upon relationships, it did not necessarily address relationships with participants' children. However, during the course of one interview, it became clear that for one of the homosexual participants disclosure of his sexuality to his children had contributed significantly to his ageing successfully. Without this ability to spontaneously follow such a new line of questioning, an important aspect of growing older for this gay man could have been missed.

Further, as suggested by Charmaz (1995), grounded theory anticipates and encourages the development of interview protocols throughout the research project. This evolution, it is hoped, will reflect and hone the researcher's engagement with both the theoretical literature and the emerging constructs 'discovered' in the data already collected. In this case, five semi-structured interview protocols were developed over the course of the entire study. This evolution involved adding additional questions (e.g. a question regarding national service was added when virtually all of the men spoke about its major impact on their development) and the refocusing of later protocols towards the men's experiences of being old, as opposed to ageing in general.

Data preparation

Each of the audio-taped interviews was transcribed verbatim. Individual transcripts were numbered according to participant. Line numbers were added to each transcript to facilitate later analysis.

A software package developed specifically for the support and management of grounded theory projects, namely, NUD:IST (Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theorising) (Gahan and Hannibal, 1998) was used to analysis the data.

Labelling

Analysis of data began as soon as the first interview had been conducted and transcribed. This initial analysis, or what Strauss and Corbin have called 'open coding' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) and 'microanalysis' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998b), involves the minute line-by-line labeling of sections of text.

Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest some strategies to guide this labeling procedure. For example, when deciding on a label, or labels, to give the sentence:

"I was reading this case and I could not believe it, because I had thought for all of these years that I had been the only homosexual in the world" - participant 4,

they suggest that asking questions such as 'What is this'? 'What does it represent'? may lead to the production of a suitable label. In this case an initial label of: 'thinking that you are the only gay person in the world' was produced.

However, in examining the quote further, a time dimension becomes evident - 'for all those years'. This, what is known as 'flip-flop' (Strauss and Corbin, 1998b), moving between the data and more elaborate conceptualizations, is used to improve the fit of labels, and to begin the process of generating properties and dimensions associated to the emerging concepts. This process led to the final decision to label this piece of text as 'childhood conceptions of self as gay and alone'. Within the NUD:IST software, each of these labels is assigned a 'node' to which the sentence is attached.

Memo writing

A researcher may have many unanswered questions, ideas, hunches and possible modifications regarding such a label. The researcher is, therefore, encouraged to write these down, in the form of memos, in order to aid theory development

(Strauss and Corbin, 1998b). Memos contain any ideas the researcher has about a

label and may be assigned to the label's node within NUD:IST. For example, a

memo attached to the node 'thinking that you are the only gay person in the

world' read:

> 'Participant 4 thought at some point in his life that he was the only gay
> person in the world. I can't imagine that happening today. I wonder if it
> is culturally specific? or maybe it is historically located? What enlightened
> him to the fact that he wasn't alone? What was the impact of this
> information on him? How old was he when he found out that he wasn't
> alone? Is this 'aloneness' a feature of other men's experiences of being
> gay?'

The memo therefore acts as a point of reference, when collecting and analyzing

further transcripts, for themes and issues which need to be addressed by the

researcher.

Constant Comparison

Searching for similarities and differences between individuals' experiences is

central to the grounded theory approach and is known as 'constant comparison'.

A specific example of how this worked in practice was the introduction of the

heterosexual comparison group into the study. All of the initial five homosexual

interviewees queried how gay ageing might be the same, and/or different, to

that of heterosexual men. For instance, participant 1 stated that, "someone of my

age, who is heterosexual, is much more relaxed, they are the majority". The analysis and 'memoing' of these comments led directly to a heterosexual group of men being recruited and interviewed, in order to ascertain how their experiences of growing older were the same or different to homosexual men.

Categorization

It can be envisaged that as the analysis of transcripts proceeds, so the number of labels generated will rise exponentially. In order to both manage this growing number of labels, and to begin thinking about them in a more abstract fashion, groups of labels which appear to pertain to the same phenomena, may be categorized together.

In contrast to the labeling process, where a label's name directly reflects its contents, it is suggested that the name of a category should be more abstract in nature, while still reflecting the concepts beneath it (Strauss and Corbin,1990). Thus, where participant 4's sentence may have been labelled in a very descriptive way, it was eventually grouped, with other related concepts, under the more abstract category heading of 'development of enemy alien identity'.

The other concepts grouped alongside the initial label represented the beginning of properties and dimensions to be thought about regarding this higher order

category. Thus, under the same category was the label, 'early knowledge that there were other gay people', representing the polar opposite of a dimension related to the label under discussion. As more data are analyzed, so fewer new dimensions and properties of a category will be discovered; when this occurs a category is said to be 'saturated'.

Axial coding

Axial coding is described by Strauss and Corbin (1998b, p.124) as "the act of relating categories to sub-categories along the lines of their properties and dimensions". In practice, this means taking a category, such as 'development of enemy alien identity', and asking how its different manifestations, for example, level of disclosure, might be contextulized and understood in relation to its sub-categories, such as religious upbringing and home environment.

For example, by relating the category 'development of enemy alien identity' back to its sub-categories, it became clear that while all of the men had a common 'enemy alien identity', how they regulated this identity was via an attitude continuum. The emergent 'black marketeer-crusader attitude continuum', described how different developmental experiences led to the formation of distinct enemy alien attitudes. In addition, by relating sub-categories it was

possible to identify the processes of change which led to movement along this attitude continuum.

Strauss and Corbin (1998b, p. 89) go on to suggest that axial coding, by answering such questions as, "who, when, what, how, and with what consequences", enables the analyst to relate structure (why things happen) to process (how they happen and change over time). As an additional aid to this descriptive process, theorists are encouraged to utilize diagrammatic representations, such as flow charts, to aid their category integration.

Final conceptualization

This final stage in the theory building process involves linking together categories so that a core category, or categories, evolve. Benton (1992) believes that such core categories should be capable of explaining much of the variation discovered in the behaviour. Strauss (1987) identifies a number of criteria by which to determine whether or not a category can be truly judged to be core to the theory.

1. The category is central to the theory.

2. The category is capable of accounting for a large percentage of variation in the pattern of behaviour.

3. The category appears frequently in the data.

4. The category is clearly related to the majority of other categories.

5. The core category has clear implication for more general theories.

Thus, it is only in this final stage, where labels have been raised to conceptual categories, the properties and dimensions of these categories have been linked together into a meaningful framework, and a core category has emerged, can a grounded theory be said to have been discovered.

Credibility checks

There is an ongoing debate about what constitutes 'good' qualitative research. Elliott et al., (1999) have suggested a number of guidelines which offer reviewers a number of ways to judge the credibility of qualitative research.

One such approach to checking the credibility of qualitative research is for the researcher to take their emerging themes and categories back to the original informants for 'checking' (Elliott et al., 1999). In the present study gay participants were asked at interview if they would be prepared to receive a half-way report detailing emerging themes and categories (see Appendix I). Included with the halfway report was an evaluation form and a stamped addressed envelope. This form allowed the participants to comment on the applicability of

the emerging themes and categories and return their comments to the researcher.

All of the gay men interviewed agreed to take part in this process, with 16 out of

the 18 (89%) returning completed evaluation forms.

Half way results were also verbally presented at the Lesbian and Gay Older

People's Forum, from which a number of the participants had originated. This

presentation, and subsequent discussion, was organized using focus group

methodology (Kitzinger, 1995). Interestingly, as well as the men who had taken

part in the study being present, a number of additional people attended,

including a number of women who were lesbian. The subsequent group

discussion was important, as it began to highlight some of the similarities and

differences these two groups experienced in growing older.

A further credibility check, suggested by Elliott et al. (1999), is the review of the

analytic process by outside auditors. In this study the two supervisors of the

research were involved in auditing the ongoing processes of collecting and

analyzing data. Both supervisors contributed to a series of ongoing reviews

which examined the collection of data, for example: the interview format, the

utility of specific questions, the phrasing of specific questions, any different areas

that needed to be covered in the interviews, and the interpersonal processes

operating during the interviews. Further, both supervisors contributed to

checking the coding of transcripts at different stages of the analytic process.

Thus, both supervisors checked the coding of the initial three transcripts, while

one independently labelled one of the latter interviews. This indicated a high

level of agreement between coders, with the only inconsistency being related to

the level of conceptualization applied to the transcripts, as opposed to any actual

differences in the categories agreed upon.

CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

Overview

This study aimed to examine how gay men manage the process of growing older.

The main part of this chapter presents the qualitative results obtained through a

grounded analysis of interviews conducted with eighteen gay men and five

heterosexual men. In order to set the qualitative data in context, participants'

scores on the psychological well-being questionnaire (Ryff and Keyes, 1995) are

first presented.

Psychological well-being

Table 1 shows the mean scores on the four sub-scales of the psychological well-

being questionnaire (Ryff and Keyes, 1995) for the homosexual men who

participated in this study. Their scores are compared to a sample of older men

resident in the US (Ryff, 1989). The comparison sample was comprised of 32

older men (mean age = 75, SD = 7.11) who were in good physical health and

considered themselves to be financially secure. An independent t-test

demonstrated no significant difference between the homosexual men and the

comparison group on any of the sub-scales of the well-being questionnaire

administered. Thus, the homosexual population reported relatively high levels

of well-being. These levels were similar to those of the heterosexual sample.

Hence, it might be surmised that both groups of men consider themselves to be:

positive and self accepting, relatively independent and self determining,

continuing to develop and open to new experiences and, finally, in warm and

satisfying relationships with others.

Table 1: Psychological well-being scores for homosexual participants and comparison sample

Sub-scale	Homosexual sample		Comparison sample [a]		t (48)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Self acceptance	66.72	11.73	65.62	9.63	-.33
Autonomy	65.25	10.25	59.58	7.91	2.03
Personal growth	71.22	10.89	67.05	7.84	-1.42
Positive relations with others	66.56	11.96	66.07	9.67	.01

N = 18 for the homosexual sample and 32 for the comparison sample.

[a] Data from Ryff (1989). Means and standard deviations were derived from the 20 item parent scales of the well-being questionnaire and have been pro-rated to allow comparison with the homosexual sample who completed the 14-item short form of the scales.

Note. Possible scores for each sub-scale range from 14 to 84.

Table 2 presents the psychological well-being scores for the sample of

heterosexual men who participated in the study. Because of the small sample

size, statistical tests could not be used to compare this group with the

homosexual group. The mean scores of the two groups appeared relatively similar, with the possible exception of the 'positive relations with others' sub-scale, on which the heterosexual population appeared to score slightly higher.

Table 2: Psychological well-being scores for heterosexual participants

Sub-scale	Heterosexual sample Mean	SD
Self acceptance	65.60	8.01
Autonomy	67.60	10.76
Personal growth	74.40	7.82
Positive relations with others	73.20	6.18

N = 5

Note. Possible scores for each sub-scale range from 14 to 84.

The grounded theory analysis

The qualitative analysis led to the development of three core categories and a number of constituent sub-categories. All related to growing older as a gay man. The three core categories were as follows:

1. An enemy alien identity - which incorporated a black marketeer-crusader attitude continuum;

2. belongings and exclusions;

3. swimming strategies.

These core categories, and their constituent sub-categories and themes will be presented, defined and elaborated in turn. Examples are drawn from the data to illustrate each category, and any linkages to other categories highlighted. Direct quotes from specific participants are referred to by identification codes (e.g. P 3 for participant 3). Results from heterosexual participants are included in each section as appropriate.

CORE CATEGORY ONE:

Enemy Alien Identity including the Black Marketeer-Crusader Attitude Continuum

The core category of enemy alien identity described the sense of alienation and difference that all of the homosexual participants had felt throughout their lives. The title of this category was derived from a comment made by P 10, relating to his experience of growing older as a gay man:

> "age weakened this feeling of being an enemy alien. An enemy alien was the title given to Germans living in Britain during, and sometime after, the second world war. Being a foreigner and all that went with it. The ageing process helped me come to terms with my feelings" - P 10.

In this sense, the name enemy alien seemed to capture the essence of what it had meant for all of these men to be 'the same but different' from those around them.

Thus, centrally, for homosexual participants growing older as gay men meant continuing to manage their perceived difference.

The black marketeer-crusader continuum described a range of attitudes, related to homosexual participants' sense of enemy alien identity, which all such participants referred to. A continuum of attitudes related to enemy alien identity was identified. Toward one end of this continuum was a group of men who were more circumspect about their homosexuality. This group were categorized as 'black marketeers', following a comment by P 11 that:

> "I used to be called a black marketeer. You are gay but you cover it up. I never shouted it. You'd have to be a black marketeer to survive to a ripe old age" - P 11.

Black marketeers can be seen to have, at some level, acknowledged their sexuality. If they had not, they would have been unlikely to volunteer for a study examining the ageing of gay men. This being said, it could be speculated that they do not represent an end point to the attitude continuum. Instead, it may be hypothesized that it continues on to those men who are even more reticent about their sexuality. Such men may have sex with other men, without labelling themselves as gay.

Crusaders, in comparison, represented the opposite end of the continuum. They comprised a group of men who were honest about, and proud of, their gay identity. Importantly, they saw it as their mission to actively let people know about their homosexuality and to potentially change attitudes. The name of the category came from P 7, who, whilst talking about dealing with people who think that he is heterosexual, said:

> "there is just a bit of, 'yes I am gay, want to make something of it?'. I never have had any problems. That is my crusade. Every time that I do that I think that that person will think, 'hey, that guy didn't seem any different'" - P 7.

Whilst black marketeers and crusaders represented different points on the attitude continuum, the majority of the men identified themselves as having elements of each. Thus, developmentally, all had at sometime been black marketeers, with circumstances for some allowing more crusader elements to emerge as time went on. Also, even the most committed crusader recognized when circumstances meant that it would be foolish to shout about their sexuality:

> "I am not stupid, I don't go 'out' at a football club" - P 7.

The core category of enemy alien identity, including the attitude continuum, was divided into four sub-categories, each consisting of a number of themes.

The first of the sub-categories - developmental issues - had three themes, namely: development of enemy alien identity, development of a black marketeer attitude, and development of a crusader attitude. These themes begin to put into context the developmental issues which led to the establishment of an enemy alien identity. In addition, they highlight the issues that led to the evolution of crusader and black marketeer attitudes within this identity.

'Controls on change of attitude' is the next sub-category to be described within this core category. This sub-category delineates the external and internal factors that facilitated movement along the black marketeer-crusader attitude continuum. It incorporates the themes that describe external factors and internal factors influencing this movement.

The third sub-category relates to the 'older self'. Three themes make up this sub-category, namely: ageing and attitude change, sex in later life, and, finally, reflections on life.

The fourth, and final, sub-category is concerned with enemy alien relationships, and with how these relationships have changed over the life span and into old age. It incorporates two themes, namely: 'witnessing' and relationships with younger people.

Thus, the overall structure of this core category, including its sub-categories and themes, may be summarised as follows:

1. Developmental issues sub-category including the three themes of:

- development of enemy alien identity;

- development of black marketeer attitude;

- development of crusader attitude.

2. Controls on attitude change sub-category including the four themes of:

- external change mechanisms from black marketeer to crusader attitude;

- external change mechanisms from crusader to black marketeer attitude;

- internal mechanisms influencing change for black marketeers;

- internal mechanisms influencing change for crusaders.

3. Older self sub-category including the three themes:

- ageing and attitude change;

- sex in later life;

- reflections on life.

4. Relationships sub-category including the themes:

- witnessing;

- relationships with younger people.

Developmental issues

'Developmental issues' is the first sub-category of the enemy alien identity core category to be described. It incorporates three themes related to the men's descriptions of developmental issues that were concerned with the formation of their common enemy alien identity. It also describes how black markeeter and crusader attitudes were formed.

Development of enemy alien identity

Definition: Development of enemy alien identity describes the common experiences of all of the men in developing what was perceived, by them, as a different identity to others, namely an enemy alien identity. It illustrates the dynamic interplay between predominantly external forces on the one hand, and an emerging internal sense that they were different on the other.

Elaboration: Common to all of the men was an early recognition that they were different, along with an appreciation that their behaviour had begun to single them out in the eyes of those around them:

"I knew that I had feelings that were different to those around me. It was never spoken about" - P 10.

"I think from the outset there was a difference and the family recognized it, I recognized it. I didn't go the way of other people... my father use to call me a girlish boy" - P 8.

"I was always conscious of being different. I can even remember my father saying 'I don't understand him'. He would say 'stop acting like a big silly girl' and he would shake me. As I grew older I was conscious that, in comparison to my older brother and friends, that although nothing was said, there was that look. I began to feel that there was something, somewhere but I didn't know what it was" - P 12.

The men went on to describe how their difference isolated them. They spoke of being unable to find reference points in society to explain what their emergent feelings meant. They were left believing that they were the only ones who felt the way that they did. Indeed, their difference left the men confused, as they had no label to attach to their desire for people of the same sex:

"Until I came out, I thought that I was the only one in the world" - P 14.

"Gay as a word didn't exist. I was always conscious of being different" - P 12.

"... yet I knew that I was not allowed to talk about my fantasies. I just knew that it was forbidden. I have often spoke to other gay people and you realize that you shouldn't talk about it. The love that dare not speak its name" - P 4.

"There was no role model, there was just the image of old men in dirty raincoats" - P 8.

As a result of the silence surrounding homosexuality, the men described how

they began to become aware of the only images accessible to them that appeared

to relate to how they felt. These images were either evil or criminal in structure.

All of the men reacted to such knowledge with a period of conformity. In some

cases this meant courting women, while in others the men denied their sexuality

completely. However, for all participants their homosexual desires eventually

emerged and this emergence marked the beginning of a period of secrets and

lies. The men reported that over this period a duality in their identity was

created, in which they compartmentalized their gayness to the extent that it

came to be related only to sex:

> "In those days they would read out a list of the people who had been
> hung that day, along with a list of people who had been sent to prison for
> immoral practices at a railway station. Growing up was, from an
> emotional and sexual point of view, quite difficult. Also, being forced into
> religion every Sunday, I use to believe that being gay was wicked" - P 4.

> "I had to have a girlfriend, everyone had one and so I had to have one.
> They were disasters of course. I was kept in the dark. Nobody told me
> about anything" - P 15.

> "As a young man and a boy I had homosexual experiences. I didn't share
> those with anybody" - P 8.

> "There has been a duality as a younger man. Understanding myself, but
> not being allowed to be public about it" - P 8.

This compartmentalization can still be hypothesised as existing today, through

the process observed during the interviews. Hence, when asked the first

question 'how do you feel you have managed growing older as a gay man?' the

vast majority of the men answered by using sex as the primary vehicle for their

identity.

Development of black marketeer attitude

Definition: The experiences reported so far were common to all of the men and

can be seen to have formed the basis for the creation of their enemy alien

identity. In contrast, the second theme describes the separate process that led to

the development of a black marketeer attitude. In a sense, this process can be

seen to mirror an intensification of the processes already described as occurring

for all of the men.

Elaboration: Participants' black marketeer attitudes were characterised by a more

intense negativity towards homosexuality. In particular, by an initial belief that

it was just a phase and that they would become 'normal' as they grew older.

This negativity was compounded by their continued sense of social isolation and

by a more active filtering of negative societal messages about homosexuality.

Thus, these men reported a growing duality, with their sexuality being

increasingly hidden. In extreme cases their fears were realized, as they

witnessed first hand discrimination because of their homosexuality:

"I thought that I could change. I wanted a family. I was a devout Catholic. I use to pray to our Lady of Lourdes - to make me not gay. I used to pray and pray, but nothing happened. I ended up discarding the statue" - P 11.

"I grew up in a small town on the west coast of Scotland, where all of the young men, by the time that they were twenty five, were all married and had at least one child. I had three brothers ahead of me. They all married in their early twenties. That was normal. I knew that as I reached my twenties, as I came out of national service, I knew deep down inside myself that I was living a farcical life. Going out with girls. When I think back on it now it was so silly. So stupid. It was a farce" - P 1.

"I can understand these films about spies, Blunt etc. You can understand why the KGB etc. have used gay people, because gay people have been used to living double lives ever since they realized that being gay wasn't quite the right thing to do. I first knew when I was 10. We have been spies, we have been using double lives ever since we could think logically. So that is why we make good spies" - P 6.

"I can remember homosexual escapades in the army, not myself, and the horrific punishments. And I have no memory of any desire for a man while I was in the army, most probably because of my fear of punishment. I have aged successfully, but I have also paid the price. I can remember times in the army when people were punished for being gay. People would have to serve three and a half years for being gay. The same with the prison service, I can remember gay people in prison. People were punished. These were learning experiences" - P 5.

Development of crusader attitude

Definition: This third theme represents, in some respects, the polar opposite of the developmental experiences of those participants who had held a predominantly black marketeer attitude. Men with a black marketeer attitude had, in a sense, carried on with the negativity and repression encountered by all

of the men, which had led to the establishment of a common enemy alien

identity. In contrast, participants with a crusader attitude began to form a more

positive view of their homosexuality.

Elaboration: Men who could be defined as 'crusaders' reported a number of more

supportive early experiences. These appear to have led to their holding a more

positive outlook on their sexuality. Their earlier experiences included having

open and responsive family and friends around them, having early relationships

with a gay partner, experiencing a positive 'coming out', enjoying a successful

first sexual experience, an early exposure to gay life, and the ability to travel to

other cultures. These allowed such participants to dispel their own negative

images of homosexuality. These experiences had the ultimate impact of the men

valuing their difference, as opposed to wanting to keep it hidden. However, it

was also recognized that keeping a positive outlook required a constant battle

against the ongoing societal prejudice they encountered. Interestingly, while

these men were still aware of discrimination they did not seek to use it to limit

their lives:

> "Although the gay community is important I do have very good support
> from my family " - P 8.

> "There was always a gay scene, there were gay saunas even back in the
> 50's. It seemed pretty straightforward. I had gay friends" - P 7.

"I don't want it to be seen as sordid, secretive, dirty or anything like that. It is like seeing a magnificent flower opening out. There is a constant battle for me to reinforce the goodness that is around. I have had to work at thinking of myself as an attractive man, an open man, a good man. Beside that is my sexuality. I have had to peel off the layers that society has constantly put on me. You are constantly reminded that you are a bit of a misfit. You are not going to do much about it, unless you are challenged. It is respecting the difference" - P 8.

"Not having a complex about it (homosexuality), I would say that I had an easy ride" - P 2.

"The other thing is that I worked for three years in Vienna. As you may know, the attitude to sexuality on the continent is a little more practical. There it was different. It was tolerated." - P 10.

"But you were aware that it was prohibited, discriminated against and disapproved of, but somehow we made our lives and it didn't affect us" - P 7.

Controls on change of attitude

Whilst the previous sub-category described the evolution of a common enemy alien identity, and subsequent crusader or black marketeer attitudes, this second sub-category describes the internal and external factors that controlled movement along the attitude continuum. In a sense, it reflects a closer examination and extension of the developmental issues already detailed.

External change mechanisms influencing movement from black marketeer to crusader attitude

Definition: This first theme details the external factors which some of the men appraised as influencing their movement along the attitude continuum from black marketeer to crusader. In addition, a number of these factors have close links to the sub-categories of 'older self' and 'relationships', also to the larger core category of 'belongings and exclusions'.

Elaboration: All of the men reported a number of factors that had influenced their movement along the attitude continuum towards crusader. As with 'development of crusader attitude', an openness in relationships that allowed the person to be seen more completely, was seen to facilitate change. Relationships where change occurred were generally with close intimates, or with people whose acceptance meant a great deal to the participant. Alternatively, change was brought about through the death of someone whose lack of acceptance had resulted in the participants feeling unable to express themselves completely. For the men who had been married, divorce, the death of their wife, or the growing up of their children, had facilitated change:

> "I wrote to my mother. My father had died by that point, I don't know whether he could have coped with it. I wrote to my mother, that is the way we always communicated. I got a very nice letter back saying that her only concern was that I would be hurt. I went to see her soon after and she told me that my aunt use to love women the way that women love men. I thought that was a very gentle way of telling me and a very generous gift... I told my sister and she just said, 'well you're L, and that is who you are'" - P 8.

"Also, my parents died. I came out after that. My mother was never open about it. That was another factor" - P 17.

"I dithered for quite a while to tell them about this. I decided that, when my wife and I sold the house down in Kent, that if I did find a boyfriend, some relationship, it wouldn't be fair to leave them in the dark - especially as it might reflect on their lives in some way. The two boys run their own business. I made a point of telling them. I was prepared for a disagreeable conversation. But no. They all took it. The youngest boy said, 'we are the next generation, what are you making a fuss about?'" - P 10.

Movement along the continuum was also facilitated by a geographical move to a more tolerant environment. Hence, in order to express themselves fully, virtually all of the men in this category had moved to large metropolitan areas, or to towns, which had reputedly more tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality:

"People in Berlin, like in Brighton, everybody lives with it, they are surrounded by it, without getting disturbed by it, distracted by it, involved in it. The smaller the community becomes the more you have to pretend" - P 15.

More generally, movement along the continuum was seen by these participants as being facilitated by an appraisal that society was becoming more tolerant. Society's increased openness was attributed both to changes in legislation, such as the partial legalization of gay acts, and its relatively compassionate response to the emergence of HIV. In addition, the support of the gay community was seen as helping movement along the continuum:

"I was of an age where I was acutely aware of the law before the famous act. When it was totally illegal. It has become much easier and safer, I am not going to get into any trouble" - P 14

"I think that AIDS has a large effect on people. It has engendered a lot of sympathy for the gay community. I think that they can see that the gay community has acted responsibly when they saw what the risks were. The way that AIDS has forced being gay onto the mainstream agenda is the biggest change. There are other things, for example, the red ribbons, they said in a roundabout way that you supported gay people. It says that you are sensitive to AIDS, that you are probably gay friendly. I think that AIDS has made a major impact on my ageing as a gay man" - P 17.

Interestingly for clinical psychology, a number of the men cited their experiences of therapy as important in their adjustment to their homosexuality and in their movement towards a crusader attitude. Their therapy had the impact of allowing the men to become more at ease with their sexuality, whilst also beginning the process of integrating their sexuality into their whole sense of self. This was in contrast to the compartmentalization, or duality, that the men described as a central feature of their enemy alien identity:

"In the 1960's one of my very close friend committed suicide because of depression surrounding his gay relationships. I became depressed because I was very fond of him. I went to see a psychiatrist who was lovely, he listened to me. I realised that I wasn't depressed because I had lost a friend, I was unhappy because I was gay. Everything seemed to come back to my being gay. I thought that gay was where I slept, not where I lived" - P 16.

"I decided to go into counselling, in personal growth. I had begun to open up by that time, but it just happened all the more. I became more at ease with myself" - P 8.

External change mechanisms influencing change from crusader to black marketeer attitude

Definition: This theme details the external influences that halted movement towards a crusader attitude, or reversed movement along the continuum back towards a black marketeer attitude.

Elaboration: It can be seen to reflect the opposite attributes of the previous theme. Movement or cessation on the continuum was related to negative family reactions to homosexuality, to a lack of understanding of the concept of homosexuality, intolerant geographical location, enmeshing in heterosexual life, negative changes in legislation, and experiences of actual discrimination:

"I notice that today it seems that a lot of young people 'come out', this means telling your family. This would never have happened. A friend told his family, but they were in the theatre. All of these trendy, publishing theatrical types. There is an acceptance there. All of the famous actors. It is out of the question that I would have done it. My mother wouldn't have known what it was" - P 1.

"I was brought up in South Africa. Until the age of 28 I was asexual. I thought that if I did anything I would go to prison" - P 16.

"I am getting older, I can afford to look around a little bit. I started to look around to try and find men who felt the way that I did. It was quite extraordinarily difficult, because I was enmeshed in a straight life. I didn't know where to begin" - P 10.

"Section 28 didn't help" - P 14.

"I was sent to prison. That was it, 16 years in the forces gone. That six weeks in prison destroyed me" - P 12.

Internal mechanisms influencing change for black marketeers

Definition: This third theme focused on those attitudes and beliefs that were used to sustain a black marketeer attitude. These permitted bounded movement along the continuum towards a crusader attitude.

Elaboration: The participants, who were at the black marketeer end of the continuum, held a much more negative attitude towards their homosexuality, than those at the crusader end. Their attitudes ranged from mild embarrassment, to a much more fundamental sense of guilt. Pervading these men's stories were constant references to a number of fears - fear of violence, fear of betrayal, fear of discrimination, and fear of what would happen to them if they were to ever go into residential care. Unfortunately, the health system and the professionals working within it, including psychologists, were implicated in this set of attitudes. However, central to these fears was a fear of rejection, that those that they cared for would ultimately reject them if they discovered their true natures:

"If I face up to the truth, I am embarrassed that I am gay" - P 12.

"I would never have asked to be homosexual. Nobody in their right mind would have chosen to be homosexual" - P 1.

"The punishment of being found out is not a light one. For me there was never a difficulty between the idea of suicide, rather than going to court. The loss, I know that it has been decriminalized, I am talking about loss of status, perception of others" - P 5.

"I thought that I would be less respected as a boss if I was openly gay" - P 17.

"I think that an older gay person would have an even more isolated existence in a residential setting than at home" - P 6.

"I think that gay people might be inhibited in seeking out social services, health services, or psychology. They are afraid of rejection. Homophobia is a very real phenomena" - P 16.

"I didn't want to be rejected" - P 17.

This fearful attitude formed the basis of the black marketeer attitude towards sexuality, with the corollary that these participants believed that it was in their best interest to conform to the heterosexual majority. In this sense, the men felt that if they desexed, or devalued their sexuality, they would be more acceptable to those around them. In addition, they had an active disdain for any person, activity, or organisation, which might 'rock the boat'. This concluded with their belief that violence towards gay people was their own fault for flaunting their sexuality:

"Someone of my age, who is heterosexual, is much more relaxed as a person, they are the majority. We must always remember that we are the minority. Any different group of people is a minority and minorities have problems" - P 1.

"...sex was not the priority. Therefore, I didn't challenge their sexuality" - P 6.

"It (homosexuality) is a compartment. There are so many more important parts to life" - P 13.

"I don't like the outrageous gay lobby that criticize everything. It doesn't help assimilate gay people into the wider community" - P 14.

"I think that those that have experienced it (homophobia) have brought it a little bit on themselves. By being out and screaming queens, behaving ridiculously. Society does not accept it" - P 15.

"I still keep all of my gay friends in one address book and all of my non gay friends in another address book. Nowadays, that would be common sense, in old days it was vital. Especially before the sexual offences act. Blackmail was available" - P 6.

Ultimately, these strategies led such participants to positively value a 'diplomatic' approach to their enemy alien identity. The word diplomat was chosen specifically, as a result of its ability to capture the manner in which the black marketeer's control mechanisms led him to cope with his enemy alien identity. Hence, black marketeers did not believe in 'shouting their sexuality from the roof tops', but preferred to blend in and pass as heterosexual in most situations. Black marketeers, however, might positively construe their diplomatic approach to homosexuality as tactful, wise, courteous, seemly and judicious:

"I don't have to shout it from the roof tops" - P 5.

"One of the things about Presbyterianism, its failures, is of course, the idea that its main god is respectability" - P 5.

"I don't rub it in people's faces" - P 2.

"It was all done much more subtly in my time. I don't think that it does any good in saying that people have to come out. There seems to be a thing about letting people know. But on the whole people don't want to know. People will make their own assumptions" - P 13.

"I can fit into heterosexual society. I am not a screaming queen or a raging poofter" - P 15.

"I never admit it. I keep up the standards" - P 6.

Internal mechanisms influencing change for crusaders

Definition: The fourth theme focused on those attitudes and beliefs that were used by crusaders to maintain and control their attitude. These prevented too much movement towards the black marketeer end of the continuum.

Elaboration: Black marketeers spoke predominantly about fear, and about subsequent beliefs surrounding conformity. Crusaders, by comparison, detailed their sense of anger and outrage at being discriminated against. It seemed, ultimately, that while black marketeers were fearful and, to some extent, guilty about whom they were, crusaders, in contrast, would be angry and ashamed of themselves if they were not open and honest about their sexuality:

"I had a chip on my shoulder and I was pissed off about society. I wasn't going to be oppressed because I was gay. I have never forgiven straight society for the way they have treated gay people and I don't want to lose it" - P 9.

"I can remember at eighteen, leaving a party and getting on my bike and breaking down in great distress because I knew that I wasn't happy because I was different. At another time, I stopped myself and said, 'I will not allow this', 'I will not be treated like this'. There is a need, from my father, to fulfill an agenda, to conform, to succeed. I knew the difference, and wanting to be different and not accepting what was given to me" - P 8.

"I know that the bottom line for me is shame. If I say no to a question about my relationship status, the anger that I would feel at them knowing that I am lying. The fantasy that they know I am lying. The fact that this guy is so ashamed of being gay, he is trying to pull one over on me, I couldn't tolerate that. It is a greater risk for me to lie, than to tell the truth. It doesn't feel like a risk. Anyone that would condemn me, fuck them. I have no respect for them, that doesn't feel shaming. If I told someone that I was gay and they turned around and walked away, I wouldn't feel shamed, I would feel furious. I would feel shamed if I lied and was found out" - P 7.

This anger led crusaders to value their gayness and to take pride in that part of their identity. Indeed, instead of attempting to hide their sexuality, crusaders, at times, would actively revel in their difference, taking part in gay pride marches and being part of overtly gay organisations. Further, they were angry at those gay people who were discrete about their sexuality:

"I think that, deep down, I had a lot of anger. I thought that I didn't want to turn it on myself so I put it out. I come as a package deal" - P 16.

"I used to go on pride marches because I think that the word said, 'I am here, we are proud of ourselves, and we are not going to hide'" - P 8.

"I got angry. I thought that this is silly, you can't be angry and the only other way is to be out, so here I am, I'm gay. If it puts people off, well tough tits. It started of with anger and resentment, that life was so unfair. The only way to change it is to start with oneself. I then became part of the Campaign for Homosexual Equality...people like that (discrete homosexuals) make me angry" - P 16.

This angry attitude led to a situation where crusaders believed that their life should contain no 'secrets and lies', but should display harmony between their internal and external worlds. Also, they saw their gayness as facilitating other positive aspects of their lives. These themes came together to form the 'crusader attitude'. This attitude meant that crusaders held their heads up and appraised their difference as positive, as opposed to something to be discreetly hidden away:

"Basically, I think that being identified as a gay man I am in harmony with my own spirit and my own energy. Being able to address that with my friends and family in an open fashion, so that there is no angst around that" - P 8.

"I think for me being gay has helped me accept the position I am in with B. I think that I am better able to deal with any shit that is thrown at me. That is me coping successfully with getting older. I can turn most experiences into a positive. I would always try to make the best of a situation" - P 14.

"When I was in my 30's I felt that it was an advantage to be gay. I always use my brother as a comparison. He married my sister in law. She has just got fatter and fatter and fatter. She couldn't get out of the pool. I thought that maybe if I was straight I would be stuck with that...if you hold your head up, and you are clearly not ashamed of being gay and your relationship, they do end up respecting you" - P 7.

Older self

This third sub-category focuses on the relationship between growing older and having an enemy alien identity. All participants spoke about issues related to ageing in general, for example, concern over physical health and finances. However, issues highlighted in this section relate only to those that appeared to be specifically connected to their enemy alien identity. This set of themes are closely linked to the 'belongings and exclusions' core category.

Ageing and attitude change

Definition: The first theme describes the age related attitude changes that the men noticed had impacted on their status as enemy aliens.

Elaboration: Growing older for homosexual participants had advantages and disadvantages for their status as enemy aliens. Positively, ageing brought about a change of attitude towards a more, 'I've got nothing to lose' assessment of life. This change in attitude gave the men a new sense of freedom and increased confidence to express who they were without fear of disapproval, with retirement playing an important role for several of the men. Ultimately, old age, for several of the men, brought about a resolution with their enemy alien identity:

"You reach a certain age and you have nothing to lose" - P 11.

"I then thought, what the heck! I don't care! A thing that I wouldn't have done, wouldn't have put it on the line like that. What does it matter? I have become more open as I have got older, but not in your face" - P 13.

"Also retirement was a very big thing tied to coming out, I thought that I don't need this crap anymore. I don't need to hide" - P 17.

"Perhaps, in a sense, for me, this is an arrival. It is like I have arrived somewhere that I have wanted to be for a long time" - P 10.

Sex in later life

Definition: This second theme describes the impact of growing older on the men's need for, and ability to get, sex. It also gives an account of the difficulties the men felt in initiating and establishing an intimate relationship in later life.

Elaboration: As already highlighted, sexual activity was the primary vehicle for many of the men's sense of enemy alien identity. While all of the men recognized a loss of ability to perform sexually, they nevertheless still had a desire for sex. Hence, one of the major negative aspects of growing older for participants was an increased difficulty in finding sexual partners:

"It (sex) is a core. As I get older I don't have the same drives or energy, but I still have the same needs. I still have the same joy" - P 8.

"I suppose if having sex has been important to you all of your life, when you can't do it, or get people to do it with you anymore, then that is a pretty dramatic sign that you are getting old. I have some fears that I am approaching the time when that is going to have to stop. It is getting more difficult to find people" - P 7.

The main difficulty in obtaining sex was a perception that the gay scene was youth orientated, seeing only the young as sexually desirable. This led to a position where the men saw themselves as 'dead meat', or desexed, as a result of their age. Indeed, many felt that if they were to show their desires they would be considered a 'monster' or 'pervert':

"Of course, with age, the other thing is, that the gay scene is a meat market. By the time I was sixty I thought that maybe I wasn't interesting to anybody, because I wasn't twenty. It isn't easy, with fear of rejection" - P 10.

"If you dare to show how much sexuality is left you can turn into a monster. People are not interested in you, but in your bank balance, or you are a dirty old man and thought of as a sexual monster. I think that is a real difficulty" - P 15.

"Well, I think that what I am grateful for is that while sex is important, it is not something that has been, I haven't had sex for years. It has not been a priority thing. I don't think that is a bad thing. There is nothing worse than being labeled a dirty old man. That is not something that I could take" - P 12.

As well as having difficulties in meeting sexual partners, several of the men commented on how ageing was related to an increased difficulty in beginning a long term relationship - a corollary of this isolation being loneliness. Indeed, the

majority felt they faced increased difficulties with ageing. This resulted from

their perception of the gay scene as hostile to older men. Also, from their not

having a partner and children:

> "Being gay makes it a little bit more difficult, far more difficult to start a
> relationship. More difficult than for a straight man. If I was to start a
> relationship I am either a sugar daddy or a dirty old man" - P 15.

> "I am old. I am 67. Even if I did go there (the gay scene) no one would
> talk to me" - P 1.

> "The one thing that I think about. I have a friend. She has been ill lately,
> she is 60, and she has two sons. In the last 10 years of my mother's life, my
> brother and I, she had two people who cared for her and looked after her,
> as a man without children I don't have that. That is a regret and a fear.
> There are no children to look after us" - P 7.

Reflections on life

Definition: This third theme illustrates the men's appraisal of their lives from the

position of older enemy aliens.

Elaboration: Whilst some of the men had regrets about not having children, or

about not having 'come out' earlier, all felt, on reflection, that their lives had

been worthwhile and that they were relatively content and happy. Indeed, for

some being gay was seen as a positive attribute in enabling them to cope with

old age:

"I do sometimes think, why wasn't I out much earlier?" P 17.

"When I look back on it now I think that it was a valuable experience. I think even drastic happenings in your life, once you get over them, are of some value, because you know what that is like" - P 1.

"I realise the importance of remaining in life. I feel that it is necessary to change and adapt. All of the experiences I have had in the past have been useful" - P 13.

"I think that I have had a charmed life" - P 16.

Relationships

The fourth sub-category, of the enemy alien core category, details specific relationships that were important to all of the gay men as they aged. Specifically, it is concerned with what the men got from those relationships.

Witnessing

Definition: The first theme details what was the central relationship for all of the participants, namely, some kind of contact with another gay person.

Elaboration: The central relationship for all of the men was contact with someone else who was gay. This contact could be fleeting, as in a sexual contact, or with a distant friend, or it could be through continued involvement with one or more

gay friends. However the relationship was configured, the important aspect

appears to have been that the person felt 'witnessed'. That is, they felt accepted

and acknowledged completely:

> "I think that in the end that you have to find a personal core and I don't
> think that can be solid unless it is part of something else. I think that there
> is such a thing as witnessing" - P 8.

This witnessing had a number of additional benefits. These included sharing a

shorthand about the world and not having to watch what was being said.

Ultimately, it seemed that the men felt acknowledged, supported and less

isolated following this witnessing. Indeed, witnessing was another reason given

for why gay men needed different services to heterosexuals:

> "I think that you have shared shorthand. I have straight friends, and you
> have to do an education thing. But I don't feel like that sometimes. I want
> to be able to cut to the conversation. It is important to be part of a gay
> community which acknowledges me as the person I am. The community
> out there, though it is opening out, there is still a lot of intolerance. I think
> that you should value your gay friends, because these are the people that
> need mutual support." - P 16.

> "There was also the idea that we would develop a gay befriending service
> for older gay people who were house bound, perhaps had a lover that had
> died etc. Ours is meeting a totally different need. The people visiting are
> gay, and the people being visited are. It is to be with someone of a like
> mind. I think that through the visitor we are re-establishing a life line to
> the gay community of Brighton. It would be symbolic. I can't see a gay
> man talking about his sexual needs to a nice woman. Also, we have
> started to develop a social programme, e.g. the Races, Pavilion. You can
> discuss the things you do from a gay perspective i.e. isn't the ceiling in the
> music room camp? We were at gay pride. I suppose that how gay men

adjust to growing older, it will depend on the extent to which they are able to be themselves, it is all about being yourself" - P 13.

Relationships with younger people

Definition: The second theme describes the importance the participants attached to relationships with younger people.

Elaboration: Relationships with younger people, for those men without children, were appraised as being important for a number of reasons. Firstly, contact with younger people was believed to keep the person up-to-date, with the corollary of keeping them 'young at heart'. Secondly, the men could act as 'wingers', or role models, to the younger men. Thirdly, the men who were more circumspect about their sexuality could live a more open life, vicariously, through their younger acquaintances:

> "They (gay people) look in the direction of young people to keep up with life, rather than older or people of their own age" - P 15.

> "I find them much more open and refreshing in their sexuality and the way that they express it. Their whole being. I really appreciate it. For me, as a man, it is important to be able to share, particularly with young men, the beauty of it (being gay). I certainly connect and align myself with them (young people). I get very irritated with people of my own age who castigate them and say that they have never had it so good. I say brilliant, and why not, and I am a receiver of that in another form" - P 8.

> "'Winger', it was an expression to describe a younger man who had been taken under the wing of an older man" - P 11.

"...certainly many of my clients have said that, 'you and T - that is my partner - were role models for us'. We have been together for 39 years. So it is like, yes, it has been a help. Many gay men grow up without role models. There are very few heroes, there are very few famous gay men" - P 7.

"Probably, one of my god sons is gay. I like young people because they are more honest. They come with their partners. They come from out of town. I listen and I supply wine" - P 5.

Heterosexual identity

Whilst all of the heterosexual participants were aware that they were part of a comparison group to homosexuals, none mentioned feeling, or managing, a sense of difference related to their identity. Instead, for the heterosexual participants, identity issues centred upon changes to their inclusive identities of self as father, grandfather and provider. This contrasted with the alienated identity of homosexuals as different:

"I had a grand daughter a year ago. I think that I am lucky to have seen my first grand child" - P 19 (heterosexual).

"I retired at 55. I have had to come down slowly" - P 22 (heterosexual).

In comparison to the gay men, who spoke about ageing and its negative impact on their ability to find relationships and sex, the heterosexual men seemed unconcerned by their ageing. Indeed, for the heterosexual men growing older

appeared to be having a positive impact on their relationships, as they were able

to spend more time with their wives and enjoy a more fulfilling sex life:

> "I think that it is important to have a relationship now, rather than when
> you are younger. We have time to talk now" - P 21 (heterosexual).

> "We have time now to give each other pleasure" - P 19 (heterosexual).

Moreover, the heterosexual men did not perceive of themselves as old. Instead,

all appraised themselves as feeling much younger than their chronological age:

> "I never feel my age" - P 22 (heterosexual).

> "I find it hard to accept that I am old" - P 23 (heterosexual).

CORE CATEGORY TWO:

Belongings and Exclusions

As the title suggests, this second core category describes the men's sense of

belonging to, or being excluded from, different aspects of relationships and

society, as a result of their status as enemy aliens. Whilst the previous core-

category described the impact of relationships from the participant's standpoint

as an enemy alien, this category, in contrast, is concerned more with the reaction

of those around them to their difference. It consists of four sub-categories,

namely:

1. relationships;

2. geography;

3. gay culture;

4. British culture.

Relationships

Definition: This first sub-category, of the belongings and exclusions core category, examines significant others' reactions to the mens' difference.

Elaboration: Perhaps unsurprisingly, finding or carving out a space in which to feel secure, was reported by most of the men to be an ongoing challenge. Whilst some of the men had found supportive relationships in which they could develop a crusader identity, all of the men recognised that the majority of their relationships with others were, at a minimum, tinged with negativity. Thus, the men detailed how, from the first time that they recognised their difference, they found that the gay part of themselves was almost always excluded, frowned upon, or openly discriminated against by those around them. This exclusion began in the family, and then carried on throughout their lives, for example, at school, with friends, in work, and during national service. Unfortunately, even in their old age the men found themselves excluded from organisations concerned with older people:

"School. I occasionally got called names. One of my jobs was in the building trade. Sometimes people would try and pick on me" - P 4.

"There was a doctor on board who hated me, because I was gay. There were two people on board one of the ships. Their hate was vitriolic. They spread it around that there was a notorious homosexual on board the ship. Life was hell" - P 12.

"It was the first time that I met British troops. Most of the time they would talk about sex, if they talked about homosexuals it was in a very derogatory and insulting manner" - P 10.

"We had some straight friends in those days. They knew that we were gay. But nothing was said. It was never spoken of" - P 2.

"Some of the people are not happy about having gay people in Age Concern. There is a lot of opposition to us" - P 13.

Geographical belongings and exclusions

Definition: This second sub-category of this core category details the manner in which different geographical locations were appraised by the men as more or less tolerant toward homosexuals.

Elaboration: Whilst nowhere was seen as completely welcoming towards homosexuals, there were different geographical locations that were appraised by participants as offering a more tolerant atmosphere. Most obviously, large metropolitan areas such as London, and well known gay areas, such as Brighton, were seen as most tolerant. This tolerance was seen as being the result of the

area concerned offering anonymity, or offering a sizeable and visible gay

community. In addition, the men were often specific about particular areas in

cities which were more tolerant. They saw this as being due to the attitude of the

local police towards homosexuality. In contrast, smaller communities were seen

as more excluding of anyone believed to be different. Unfortunately, even those

areas perceived as tolerant were seen by participants to be so predominantly for

younger homosexuals:

"It (homosexuality) works OK in London, which is anonymous. If I went
to a small village it would be quite different" - P 10.

"I am very lucky that I live in London. Outside, you might think that you
are the only gay person" - P 4.

"Brighton is a gay friendly place" - P 17.

"Gay people in Manchester were terribly repressed, and people use to
travel to Walsall because the Chief Constable was more tolerant" - P 11.

"I am out of contact with gay Soho. Two generations away from it" - P 3.

Gay culture's belongings and exclusions

Definition: This third sub-category catalogues the belongings and exclusions that

participants found in gay culture. Specifically, it describes the extent to which, as

older gay men, the participants felt able to utilize the facilities now offered to

them by a burgeoning gay scene.

Elaboration: Whilst there have always been ways in which gay people could meet in the past, it is only in recent years that a visible gay scene has developed. This increased visibility has arisen during the lifetime of the participants. Prior to the partial legalization of homosexual acts in the UK, codes were developed between gay men to recognize one another, and gay meeting places were hidden. However, today, relatively large areas of specific towns and cities are recognized to be dominated by gay communities: for example, London's Soho and Manchester's gay village. This increased visibility has arguably facilitated the gay community's sense of belonging to society in general. Unfortunately, for the majority of older gay men in this study, it seems that it has had the opposite effect. Indeed, the majority reported that they felt 'frozen out' of a noisy, alcohol based and youth obsessed gay culture:

> "In the 60's it was by word of mouth, that is the way you networked" - P 16.

> "Most probably if you wore suede shoes you were gay" - P 2.

> "It is so noisy, alcohol based. In my day you use to go into a coffee house" - P 4.

> "The gay scene is an irrelevance. It is youth orientated where acceptance of older gay men is going to be less and less tolerated. I think, that in general, young gay men have little time for older gay men" - P 14.

> "In homosexual society you are elderly very early. You are old very young. At 40 you are an old man. At 50 you are over the hill. Homosexuals live a much younger life than their age - not being silly.

But by the age of 30 they are dead meat sexually" - P 15.

Nevertheless, some of the participants have been able to find niches in this youth dominated scene. To these participants, such niches appeared to offer a warmer welcome to older gay men. Interestingly, considering all that has already been reported about sex and identity, these niches were associated with places where older men can meet younger men who find them sexually attractive:

"It depends on the bar and the landlord. The staff at the Aquarium are OK. At the other bars they are not civil because you are older. London has places for people of specialist interest. It has a pub for men who like older men" - P 13.

British culture's belongings and exclusions

Definition: The final sub-category examined the manner in which homosexuality has been embraced, or castigated, by British culture. It is specifically concerned with how changes in wider British culture, over the lifetime of the men, have impacted on their sense of belonging to, or being excluded from, British society.

Elaboration: All of the men were acutely aware of the negative constructions of homosexuality still pervading British society today. They described how derogatory language had been, and still was, the general currency used to describe homosexuals. Moreover, they felt that negative images of

homosexuality were upheld by a generally hostile media and that this reflected

Britain's general reticence at accepting homosexuality. Although positive change

was believed to have occurred, this was often viewed cynically, with participants

believing that, generally, people were still anti-gay:

"They use terrible words like queer and poof...those terrible names. To
hear someone say, 'he is a queer', like some strange object" - P 1.

"Anyway, one day we were sitting at breakfast with a group of people
and he was saying how he didn't like gay people, or poofs. Anyway,
another chap turned round and said, 'don't you know you are sharing
with a queer'. I didn't know where to look, I was crest fallen - P 11.

"Basically, the heterosexual population is intolerant, there are exceptions,
but as a whole. There were all of the derogatory terms you associated
with gay - there still are" - P 13.

"Judging by what sells the tabloids it (homosexuality) is important. I
think that attitudes have not changed" - P 13.

"I think that a lot of the tolerance is skin deep" - P 8.

"You can pass laws till you are blue in the face. Society is still not
reconciled to gay relationships" - P 10.

Whilst such messages were perceived as excluding in nature, some positive

aspects of change were identified by the men. All were clear that some changes

in the law had been inclusive, making participants, at least, less criminal in

nature. These changes were seen as a part of a more generally permissive

attitude, which had the corollary of allowing gay people to act on their

homosexual desires. More recent changes in society were believed to be driven

by financial, as opposed to moral, considerations, with the emergence of the so

called 'pink pound' playing a part in changing behaviour. British culture's

attitude to homosexuality was also believed to have changed as a result of HIV.

Politically, the arrival of a Labour government was seen as a positive step to a

more inclusive culture:

> "Wolfenden has made an improvement in my lifetime that I never expected" - P 4.

> "I was of an age where I was acutely aware of the law before the famous act. When it was totally illegal. It has become much easier and safer, I am not going to get into any trouble" - P 14.

> "The sexual offences act brought change" - P 16.

> "Also, I came across a magazine called Forum. I was astonished when I first read that magazine. It was that magazine and its attitude to sexuality that gave me the permission to do something about it" - P 10.

> "The hypocrisy of people. Money makes them change their tune" - P 4.

> "The way that AIDS has forced being gay onto the mainstream agenda is the biggest change" - P 17.

> "The Labour party have said useful things about the gay community" - P 14.

Heterosexual belongings and exclusions

In comparison to homosexual participants, who perceived that they were

excluded from a range of environments and relationships, the heterosexual

participants did not mention exclusions. Instead, they spoke about their sense of

belonging. In particular, this belonging centred upon their relationships with their families:

> "families are important" - P 22 (heterosexual).

> "I think that it is more important to have a family relationship now" - P 23 (heterosexual).

In addition, the heterosexual participants spoke about their membership of various clubs and organizations to a greater extent than the homosexual participants did. Belonging to such organisations appeared to provide the heterosexual men with a positive sense of identity. At no time did such men mention any fears, related to a disclosure about their identity, which would have resulted in their feeling unwelcome in any of the organisations to which they belonged:

> "I am a member of the local golf club. I guess I spend a lot of time down there since I retired. I see my pals, have a beer and chat" - P 19 (heterosexual).

> "I have more time for my charity work with the Rotary club. I shake a bucket at Christmas time. I think that it is important to be doing something like that" - P 20 (heterosexual).

CORE CATEGORY THREE:

Swimming Strategies

Swimming strategies was the name chosen to describe the various ways in which participants attempted to manage their enemy alien identity. The title came from a comment by P 1 that:

> "we learn to swim in life, psychologically, you learn to cope. I know clearly what I can and can't do. That is swimming".

In this sense, the title appeared to capture the sense of success felt by all of the men, regardless of whether they had a black marketeer or crusader attitude, at the way that they had managed their enemy alien identity.

The core category of swimming strategies was divided into three sub-categories, each consisting of a number of themes. The first sub-category identified those swimming strategies common to all of the men. This sub-category included the four themes of: being independent, contact with other gay people, geographical moves to a more tolerant area, and positive appraisals of being gay. The second sub-category related to the 'swimming strokes' employed by participants who were located within the black marketeer section of the attitude continuum. This sub-category had three related themes, namely: keeping a stiff upper lip, butterfly, and cluedo. The third and final sub-category described qualities and

'battle tactics' utilized by crusaders. This sub-category included three themes: coming out, cultivation of a gay network, and sexual re-identification of self.

Thus, the overall structure of this core category, including its sub-categories and themes, may be summarised as:

1. Common swimming strategies sub-category including the themes of:

• independence;

• contact with other gay people;

• geographical move to a more tolerant area;

• positive appraisal of being gay.

2. Black marketeer swimming strategies sub-category including the themes of:

• keeping a stiff upper lip;

• butterfly;

• cluedo.

3. Crusader swimming strategies sub-category including the themes of:

• coming out;

• cultivation of a gay network;

• sexual re-identification of self.

The swimming strategies core category has strong links to both of the other core categories. However, the coping mechanisms exhibited by black marketeers and crusaders can be seen to be highly influenced by their different developmental pathways and separate control mechanisms.

Common swimming strategies

This first sub-category described a number of common swimming strategies that were identified as being employed by all of the participants.

Being independent

Definition: All of the men identified independence as an important swimming strategy for them. Independence meant being able to cope without the help of friends, and in particular, without the help of family.

Elaboration: It seemed that for all of the men their common development as enemy aliens had led to them perceiving themselves as independent 'copers' and as self contained. This led to a widespread belief amongst them that, as older gay men, they were more able to cope on their own than their heterosexual counterparts, as a result of always having to fulfill dual gender roles:

"I was always my own man" - P 11.

"An older straight guy wouldn't do it. I don't know why. I suppose that we don't have a partner. I mean a woman, a female. We have got to do it. We have had to do it all of our lives" - P 2.

Contact with other gay people

Definition: This second theme described the need expressed by all of the men to have some form of contact with other gay people.

Elaboration: Although believing they were self contained, as we have seen, all participants reported needing some form of witnessing. To this end, all of the men actively sought contact with something representing homosexuality. In latter years, this has meant meeting other gay people - normally of a similar age and background. However, in earlier years, when there was a less accessible gay community, or even today, for the geographically isolated, gay publications have been utilized as a 'token' reference point for someone's homosexuality:

"You can talk to a person (gay) about the past, together, joint experiences. We are isolated in different ways. There is a kinship, although we have very different background....We are aiming at starting a social aspect - where we can feel that we are not competing with a whole other age group, the young . The aim is to bring people together where they can have their gayness in common" - P 13.

"I read about them in Gay News, which kept us in the sticks aware" - P 5.

Geographical move to a more tolerant area

Definition: The third theme detailed the manner in which the majority of the participants had moved to areas that were appraised by them as being more tolerant towards homosexuals.

Elaboration: Isolation and oppression had driven most of the men to move to more tolerant geographical locations in order to manage their enemy alien identity. This movement had generally been to more metropolitan areas. However, in some cases, it had meant moving from one country to another. For those that still lived outside of large cities and towns, geographical management of their enemy alien identity was achieved through visits to those areas considered tolerant towards homosexuals:

> "I moved away, to get away from my family. It was like someone had removed a very heavy coat from my shoulders. By taking off this coat, which had dragged me down" - P 15.

> "I think that coming to Britain was a conscious decision around my sexuality" - P 16.

> "I was a Dubliner, and on my visits to London I would visit gay venues" - P 6.

Positive appraisal of being gay

Definition: The fourth theme identified was the men's use of positive appraisal of being gay. This described how the men positively appraised aspects of their own enemy alien identity by negatively appraising heterosexuals.

Elaboration: A common cognitive strategy employed by the men, to cope with their enemy alien identity, was to positively appraise themselves against the heterosexual majority. This 'Good As You' coping strategy was used by all of the men to positively enhance their sense of their enemy alien identity:

> "I think that as a gay men I have been able to enjoy experiences outside of the remit of a heterosexual man. Gay people are very tasteful and elegant. Gay people are attracted to the nicer things in life. I think that is different to straight life." - P 14.

> "Too many gay people copy the heterosexual. We are not heterosexual, we are homosexual, and it is not necessary to have the mortgage, the cats, the pint down the local pub. You are not heterosexual, do not copy heterosexuality. Find your own thing and do that" - P 2.

Swimming strategies employed by black marketeers

This second sub-category detailed the swimming strategies employed more heavily by those within the black marketeer section of the identity continuum, than those in its crusader section. The swimming strategies of black marketeers

fell into three themes. The names chosen for these themes reflected the

diplomatic nature in which black marketeers approached their enemy alien

identity - already described in the internal mechanisms influencing change sub-

category of the enemy alien identity core category.

Keeping a stiff upper lip

Definition: 'Keeping a stiff upper lip', described the first theme of the second sub-

category of the swimming strategy core category. This swimming strategy was

used by participants who held a black marketeer attitude to maintain a persona

which appeared unperturbed by threats to their enemy alien identity.

Elaboration: Approaches adopted under this theme included more active coping

strategies such as: suppression, compartmentalization, avoidance, displacement,

distancing, passing, defensiveness, and denial. Unfortunately, for some, drugs

were the ultimate coping tool used to maintain their cover:

> "Mark said to me, when you were at college you were like a machine. I
> think that is good image. What I did was I subverted all of my sexual
> energy and my identity into being very productive around other things -
> drama, theatre etc" - P 8.

> "You suppress it. Because it is a luxury you cannot afford" - P 5.

> "I have avoided and suppressed most of my life" - P 10,

"I think that I was very guarded the whole time. I was very defensive man about my personal life and my person. The image that I would use is of myself as a well defended castle, with a draw bridge that I could control and with slits that allowed me to fire the arrows" - P 8.

"Anyway, the reason I ended up taking them (amphetamines) was because I was homosexual" - P 1.

"I think that sexuality is so unimportant" - P 13.

Butterfly

Definition: The second theme of this sub-category was called 'butterfly'. It described two strategies that black marketeers adopted in order to isolate themselves away from others that might confront their enemy alien identity.

Elaboration: This coping strategy had a two-fold meaning. Firstly, it described how, for many of the men, travel became a way of never fully acknowledging their enemy alien identity. Secondly, it described how some of the men had cocooned and isolated themselves away:

> "I have never had a partner. I am like a butterfly. I travelled a lot. You didn't make any long term relationships" - P 12.

> "In the community where I live, although everyone is friendly, there are very few friends. That makes it easier" - P 5.

Cluedo

Definition: The final theme of swimming strategies employed by black marketeers to a greater extent than by crusaders can be termed 'cluedo strategies'. These coping skills centred upon playing games with people, with hints and clues being given and people being left to guess at the gay person's true sexuality.

Elaboration: This strategy depended on both parties entering into the 'game', but never speaking about it. In addition, it moved responsibility for disclosure from the participant to the guesser in the game:

> "I had a policy, if I was entering into a new circle of people I would drop in names of clubs, theatres and people, not so I forced myself on to people. I just gave hints and let people get used to the idea that I was gay or different. It has always worked" - P 15.

> "I have never discussed it with them. They must be stupid if they don't know. I was going to tell her once and she said not to say anything. My brother is my next of kin, he must know that I am gay, we have never discussed it" - P 11.

> "I never told my family because they were sensible enough to make their own assumptions" - P 13.

Swimming strategies employed by crusaders

This third sub-category described the swimming strategies employed by participants who were placed more towards the crusader boundary of the enemy

alien identity continuum than the black marketeer boundary. In contrast to the swimming strategies of the latter, which were based on diplomacy, those of the former were much more about actively embracing and demonstrating one's enemy alien identity.

Coming out

Definition: The first theme of this sub-category described how participants with a crusader attitude used the experience of coming out to manage their enemy alien identity.

Elaboration: Coming out, in which the person's sexuality was openly acknowledged to, and between, friends, family and work colleagues, was the primary swimming strategy used by men with a crusader attitude. This led to a situation where crusaders would have a 'like it or lump it' way of dealing with those around them who would not accept their sexuality:

> "I am out to everybody. That has been an amazement, that people I thought couldn't bear the knowledge has brought me closer to them" - P 17.

> "When I enrolled to do their Masters degree, I remembering announcing to the group on the first day that I was gay. I can remember I didn't have any problems" - P 7.

"I partially came out to a few people at work. As I became more comfortable with Bob. I got to the stage of, this is me, and if they don't like it they can lump it, I'm me and I am what I am. Fortunately, it made no difference to friendships or family" - P 14.

Cultivation of a gay network

Definition: The second theme of this sub-category was the active cultivation of a

gay network of friends as an 'alternative gay family'. This theme described the

active pursuit of gay friendships in order to create a gay network of friends.

Elaboration: Participants with a crusader attitude towards their enemy alien

identity were keen to promote a set of relationships through which their enemy

alien identity gained acknowledgment. In this sense, the creation of a gay

network can be seen to be an active extension of the witnessing already

highlighted as a common swimming strategy for all of the men. This strategy

had the benefit of making the person feel less isolated. These strategies were the

corollary of crusaders' internal control strategies, which demanded an attitude of

honesty and harmony and were described by one participant as 'streamlining':

"It streamlines your life if you don't have secrets... I cultivated friendships. I created a gay family" - P 16.

"The older lesbian and gay group is there to show that there is a variety of people. Gay pride is not typical of the larger population" - P 13.

Sexual re-identification of self

Definition: The final strategy employed by crusaders was a sexual re-identification of self. This final theme described how the older men with a crusader attitude created a new sexual identity for themselves.

Elaboration: As already noted, most of the gay scene was appraised as hostile to older gay men. However a few bars, dedicated to older gay men, have recently emerged. Crusaders, as opposed to black marketeers, appeared to be keen to utilise such establishments. This being said, part of this utilisation was, for some, the emergence and integration of a new sexual identity into the older gay self, that of 'bear' or 'silver fox'. These labels describe a range of relatively new terms, imported from the US, which re-sexualised, as opposed to de-sexulised, older gay men:

> "When I came out in the 1950's, there were young gays and old queens. The idea that someone who was older could be attractive was inconceivable. Youth was it. Now there are 'bears' and 'silver foxes'. I would be a bear. There are magazines devoted to older gay men. There are pubs for older gay men, where young and old can mix. So an older gay man on the scene can be attractive. That absolutely was not the case 40 years ago. That has been a major change. That has been a wonderful change" - P 7.

Heterosexual swimming strategies

Heterosexual participants, when addressing their swimming strategies, spoke

only of those which had helped them to manage their ageing identities. This was

in contrast to homosexual participants, who had also spoken of managing their

enemy alien identity. Common concerns for both sets of men were related to

physical health and to material security in later life. Central to both groups of

men were strategies aimed at keeping busy and at adapting to the diminishing

physical abilities brought about by ageing:

> "I think that I have managed the process by having a very full and busy
> life. So that when I stopped working I worked for the voluntary field" - P
> 19 (heterosexual).

> "I feel that it is necessary to change and adapt. All of the experiences I
> have had in the past have been useful" - P 13.

> "You need good housing" P 21 (heterosexual).

> "I have been successful in being financially secure in old age" - P 16.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

Overview

Eighteen homosexual men were interviewed individually, using semi-structured

interviews, regarding how they felt they had managed growing older.

Interviews with five heterosexual men were also undertaken, in order to offer a

comparative set of data against which to examine the homosexual men's

experiences.

A grounded theory analysis identified three core categories, and a number of

sub-categories, as representing how these gay men had managed the ageing

process, namely: enemy alien identity, belongings and exclusions, and swimming

strategies. These core categories will be discussed in turn, with connections

being made to previous literature and theoretical perspectives. Comparisons

with heterosexual results will be made as appropriate throughout the discussion.

Conclusions from the research will then be presented. Methodological

limitations and suggestions for future research will then be considered. The final

section of the discussion will reflect on both the clinical and professional implications of this research.

Enemy alien identity incorporating the black marketeer-crusader attitude continuum

Discussion of the men's enemy alien identity, and resultant attitude continuum, will begin by addressing the formation and maintenance of this 'different' identity and resultant attitude continuum over the life span. It will then move on to consider the impact of growing older on the men's enemy alien identity. Finally, in this section, discussion will centre on the types of relationships identified as important to older gay men.

The primary core category identified was that of 'enemy alien identity'. This category described the manner in which all of the men, from their very earliest recollections, had sensed that they were different to those around them. However, because of the historical time period in which they grew up, where homosexuality was either never discussed or, if it was, only in terms of criminality or evil, the men kept any 'different' thoughts to themselves for fear of the consequences. This began a process whereby participants reported compartmentalizing that part of themselves which was seen as undesirable - their sexual orientation. The hypothesized end result of this

compartmentalization was a lack of integration between sexuality on the one

hand, and any other aspects of the person's self concept on the other.

This sense of difference resulted in all of the men developing a common enemy

alien identity early in life. However, as they, and the culture in which they

resided developed, so a continuum of attitudes towards this enemy alien identity

emerged. At one end of this continuum was hypothesized to be a group of men

who, while having sex with other men, would resist any identification of

themselves as gay. Further along the continuum were a group of men identified

in the study as black marketeers. These men, while not denying their

homosexuality, preferred to approach it in a diplomatic manner. At the other

end of the continuum was a group of men who were described as crusaders.

These men reported having a number of more positive developmental

experiences related to their sexuality, for example, more open and supportive

friends and/or family. Crusaders' appeared to appraise their enemy alien

identity in a less critical manner than black marketeers, with the result that they

had a more positive attitude towards their sexuality. A corollary of this more

positive outlook was that crusaders appeared to value their difference, as

opposed to denigrating or denying it.

Whilst all of the men spoke of holding a mixture of black marketeer and crusader

attitudes, they did appear to align themselves more or less to one or other of the

attitude positions. Thus, while a crusader may, at times, have been less willing

to disclose his homosexuality, because of adverse social conditions, on the whole

he chose to operate within a specific range of his preferred attitude. The same

was true for black marketeers who, predominantly, chose not to disclose their

homosexuality except in specific social circumstances.

Movement along the black marketeer-crusader attitude continuum was brought

about by a dynamic relationship between external and internal factors. External

influences, which assisted movement along the continuum from black marketeer

to cruasader, included: involvement in relationships in which different

sexualities were respected, the cessation of a relationship with someone who was

negative toward homosexuality, a geographical move to a more tolerant area, a

generally more tolerant society, and some kind of psychotherapeutic input. In

contrast, external influences on movement along the continuum from crusader to

black marketeer were facilitated by: encountering intolerant attitudes, the

passing of laws that discriminated against homosexuality, and an appraisal of

discriminatory experiences.

Internal controls which prevented the participants' movement along the attitude

continuum, from black marketeer towards the crusader pole, centred on a range

of fears and a sense of guilt about their sexuality. These fears and guilt resulted

in black marketeers adopting a conformist approach to the heterosexual

majority, in order to not draw attention to their difference. In contrast, internal controls which restricted movement for crusaders, towards the black marketeer sector of the continuum, centred upon a sense of anger and injustice at the way their sexuality had been discriminated against. This led crusaders to highly value their difference and to have a non-conformist approach that challenged societal norms surrounding homosexuality.

The evolution of this attitude continuum can be hypothesized to reflect the way in which constructions of homosexuality have developed over the lifetime of the participants involved in the study (Weeks, 1981). For all of the participants, their early development coincided with homosexuality predominantly being constructed as criminal, sinful, and/or insane. Changes in society have led to a reappraisal of homosexual acts as partially legal, less sinful - as long as the person does not act upon their homosexual desires - and no longer such a mental health issue. However, all of the men were of the opinion that, changes in the law and classification systems had not radically altered society's attitude toward homosexuality. Whilst society was appraised as generally more tolerant, on going debates regarding the legitimacy of homosexuality coupled with the passing of what they saw as discriminatory laws, for example section 28, were still perceived as tangible signs that, as a whole, British society was still not wholly accepting of homosexuals.

Thus, men with a black marketeer attitude may be construed as embodying a more traditional approach to homosexuality, as evidenced by their diplomatic approach. Men with a crusader attitude, by comparison, can be hypothesized to embody more of the emerging qualities of a 'gay identity', which has developed in British culture since the partial legalization of homosexuality in the late 1960s. Thus, crusaders identify more with a gay sub-culture, which is characterised by a range of cultural beliefs, values, support networks, and institutions. Whereas, black marketeers continue to identify more with the perceived values held by the majority of the population regarding homosexuality.

The enemy alien identity, and associated attitude continuum, can be seen to mirror a number of the elements already proposed by previous research into gay ageing and identity maintenance, for example, Friend's (1990) gay identity continuum. Hence, this discussion will now examine how the identity continuum developed as a result of this study compares and contrasts with previous theories of gay ageing and identity in old age.

The enemy alien continuum has a number of elements which, on the surface, may appear similar to the identity continuum proposed by Friend (1990), in his model of successful gay ageing. Friend's model proposed three identity constellations which lie on an older gay identity continuum, namely: stereotypic

older lesbian and gay people, passing older lesbian and gay people, and affirmative older lesbian and gay people. The enemy alien continuum also appears to have all three identities. For example, the hypothesized end point of the enemy alien continuum is 'men who have sex with men, but who do not consider themselves gay', which has a number of similarities to the 'stereotypic older lesbian and gay people' end point hypothesized by Friend (1990). However, whereas some of the descriptions of both of the continuum may be similar, for example, black marketeers and passing older lesbian and gay people both conforming and capitulating to the heterosexual majority, this research proposes a very different set of processes underlying these identities, from those put forward by Friend (1990).

Friend (1990) proposed that individuals at different points on his continuum have internalized or transformed the heterosexist messages that dominate society in different ways. Thus, at one end of the continuum an individual has internalized the message that homosexuality is sick and/or otherwise negative. Whilst at the other end, a person with a more positive outlook has developed a set of responses that challenge and question the validity of these negative images. Friend goes on to propose a corresponding set of affective responses. Thus at one end of the continuum an individual feels a sense of shame about their homosexuality, which results in a "feeling of self hatred, low self esteem, and a minimal or conditional self acceptance" (Friend, 1990, p. 103). At the other

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end of the continuum, however, a person may feel positive about their

homosexuality, and may correspondingly have feelings of "increased self

acceptance, high self esteem, personal empowerment, and self affirmation"

(Friend, 1990, p. 103).

Friend's proposals, regarding internalization of heterosexist discourses, at an

individual level, would appear to have some validity, when compared to the

data supplied by the men in this study. The men at the black marketeer end of

the continuum did appear to have a more reticent view of their homosexuality

than their crusader counterparts, which resulted in a more diplomatic attitude,

or in Friend's terms, a more passing, approach to their sexuality. However, it is

worth noting that the men's subjective appraisal was of themselves as growing

older successfully, having volunteered for the study on the basis that it was

examining how gay men aged successfully. Thus, none of the men, black

marketeer or crusader, appeared to believe that their approach to homosexuality

or ageing was any worse than other people's.

How might we understand this apparent appraisal of success in the face of, and

an internalization of, a heterosexist ideology?

Cox and Gallois (1996) put forward an argument that recent perspectives on

homosexual identity development have focused too heavily upon psychological

processes of the individual, and that a shift to a more social psychological stance is required. From such a perspective, the effects of the wider society on individual development are explored in terms of social groups and membership within them, as well as on how individuals affect the wider society. They believe that social identity theory (Tajfel, 1982) provides a useful lens through which to examine individuals' behaviour as a function of wider social forces.

Social identity theory is a theoretical perspective which allows an understanding of how complex social influences may affect the development of self concept and the derivation of positive self esteem contingent upon it. It focuses on the social and group based aspects of identity and how these interact with the social structure. Thus, there are two underlying processes to the theory - self categorization and social comparison.

According to social identity theory, group membership leads to a process of 'self stereotyping' or 'categorization'. Here an individual consequently adopts the norms, attributes, characteristics and behaviours associated with a particular group (Turner, 1987).

In addition to the ideas of self categorization, Cox and Gallois (1996) believe that the 'social comparison' strategies adopted by a gay person, in order to raise self esteem, will have an important impact on their eventual identity formation.

Such identity enhancement strategies fall into two main categories: 'social mobility' and 'social change' (Cox & Gallois, 1996).

Social mobility strategies allow an individual from a minority, entrance into a more powerful out group and, as such, access to the raised self esteem associated with membership of that group. An example of a social mobility strategy for a gay person could be marriage.

Social change, on the other hand, allows a person simultaneous membership of a subordinate group, while maintaining a positive identity. Methods associated with this strategy fall into two categories: 'social creativity' and 'social competition'. Social creativity relates to changes of dimensions on which inter-group comparisons may be made. An example of this strategy would include selecting a new dimension on which to compare the in-group to the out-group, such as gay people supposedly being more artistic and creative than heterosexual people. Social competition is the only strategy associated with bringing about 'real' change in the power relationships between groups and is represented by direct challenges to authority.

Cox and Gallois (1996) believe that two variables mediate the choice of these social comparison strategies: social dependence and social solidarity. Social dependence is related to the degree to which a person needs a particular group

membership, compared to other distinct group memberships, for social status. Social solidarity is the degree to which people perceive they gain more benefits, or satisfaction, from one group membership compared to others they are, or have been, in. These two processes can be seen to interact producing a range of inter-group behaviours.

In addition to self esteem and distinctiveness being guiding principles to identity choice, Breakwell (1986) proposes a further end point to identity formation - continuity. She believes that people assimilate, accommodate and evaluate new information about identity depending on whether it promotes distinctiveness, raises self esteem, and permits continuity.

The addition of continuity into the social identity framework draws attention back to research on ageing and identity, and in particular to Atcheley's (1989) theory of continuity. Atchley proposed that continuity, within a basic dynamic framework, was an objective of middle aged and older adults in order to preserve and maintain existing internal and external structures.

Thus, in combining a more social psychological understanding of gay identity development with theories on ageing, it may be possible to gain a more complete understanding of how gay men manage the ageing process.

A result of this more social psychological approach could be a less critical understanding of passing homosexuals or black marketeers. Thus, instead of being viewed in a negative fashion - as men who have internalized societies' homophobic discourses - a more social psychological framework would understand them as using different self categorization and comparison strategies to maintain their sense of distinctiveness, continuity and self esteem needs. Thus, black marketeers might be considered to have self categorized in line with their appraisal of British society's dominant norms, i.e. that it is 'OK to be gay as long as you don't shout about it'. As a result of this categorization, black marketeers are seen to use a range of suitable social mobility strategies, for example, passing, marriage, blending, and capitulation, in order to raise self esteem, maintain continuity and feel a sense of distinctiveness. In addition, they appear to use a small range of social change strategies, such as comparing themselves favorably with heterosexuals, in order to meet the same needs. The use of these strategies can be seen to be the result of their having little social dependence on their gay identity for self esteem, as a result of having no social solidarity with the gay sub-culture. Hence, as Kaufman (1987) hypothesized about information management, although society has become more tolerant, black marketeers are seen to actively manage new information within their attitude towards homosexuality, only moving with the prevailing dominant social norms, rather than those of a more radical gay sub-culture. This is in line

with Atchley's proposal that continuity should not reflect homeostasis, but rather, evolution where new information is integrated into a basic framework whilst maintaining balance.

Crusaders, in comparison, may be hypothesized to self categorize as gay men using the norms of the prevailing gay sub-culture to direct their identity. They rarely have the option of social mobility strategies to maintain their self esteem, as a result of being 'out' in most situations. Therefore, they must rely more heavily on social change strategies to maintain and raise their self esteem. Thus, they perceive their homosexuality as improving their lives, i.e. that it has brought them opportunities that would not have been available if they had been heterosexual. In addition, they use social competition strategies which directly challenge societies' status quo regarding homosexuality, for example by being members of political organizations to promote homosexual rights. The different use of these strategies can be seen to be a result of their higher social dependence on their gay identity for self esteem, distinctiveness and continuity, and their having a higher social solidarity with their gay identity because of the perceived benefits they believe it bestows upon them. Thus, while black marketeers are seen to categorize according to societies' norms, with resultant identity behaviour, crusaders categorize according to the emerging gay sub-cultures norms. Thus, as individuals and the societies in which they reside develop, so the attitude continuum continues to evolve.

Whilst Friend (1990) acknowledges the important role relationships may play in lessening or increasing an individual's positivity or negativity towards themselves, such an individualistic stance gives little indication as to how identities may change. In this research, it is particularly interesting to note how some men have apparently 'switched' identities later in life. Whilst the death of parents or retirement, for example, may have been necessary external factors in allowing change for these men, on their own, they would seem insufficient. Reviewing these participants' narratives, Atchley's (1989) identity continuity framework, in which inner changes are connected to an individual's past and that past is seen as sustaining and supporting of the new self, becomes more visible. Thus, participant 10, who did not have sex with another man until he was 60, had in fact told his wife that he was sexually interested in men forty years earlier. In addition, he had not completely denied this 'thread' of homosexual identity throughout the whole of his life. Thus, at 60, as a result of both internal (continuity) and external factors (his wife died), he was able to re-self categorize himself as a homosexual crusader. To an outsider, this change must have appeared dramatic, having never known about his earlier sense of homosexuality. However, within the context of his internal life narrative, this re-identification with a gay sub-culture, and subsequent crusader identity formation, appears less dramatic and more understandable.

Implications of enemy alien identity for older gay self

Ageing, for all of the men, brought with it a sense of resolution with their enemy alien identity. While all of the men, heterosexual and homosexual, spoke of ageing in terms of physical and financial security, the gay men reflected on how growing older had led to a 'coming to terms' with their homosexuality. This resolution appears to fit with Dittman-Kohli's (1990) findings that older people change their expectations and become more self accepting and value more highly what is already given via cognitive and affective strategies which create positive meanings.

Whilst older homosexual men may have appraised their gay identity more positively, an aspect of growing older which was more difficult to deal with was their loss of sexual identity, or 'de-sexing'. A robust sex life has been asserted to be an important factor contributing to later life satisfaction (Wiley et al., 1996; Bright, 1997). However, for these men sex has, in a sense, been their defining characteristic. Its loss, therefore, seems to have taken on a whole new significance in terms of identity. This significance was evident in examining the process of the interviews, as many of the men used sex as the primary vehicle through which to discuss their identity and growing older. Sullivan (1998), while attempting to understand his own sexual desires after being diagnosed as HIV

positive, perhaps comes closest to capturing why sex may be so important to gay

men:

> "Was sex too central a part of this self? Maybe. All I can say in defense is that those who have never known what it feels like to have their sexual identity smudged out from birth on, to have their inner most hopes reduced for years to the language of depravity, to have their yearnings for love defined as they grow up as unspeakable vice, the need for sexual intimacy and relief in adulthood may seem far less pressing. But for many homosexuals, these wounds are still fresh, and the salve is still needed" (p. 55).

In this sense, the men's preoccupation with sex corresponds with Gonsiorek's

(1995) assertion that gay men view sexual behaviour and sexual fantasy as

central to self-definition. While sex may be important to homosexual self

definition, old age appears to have brought to participants the added

complication of their being de-sexed by society, and specifically by the gay sub-

culture. This de-sexing may, however, have an unexpected benefit in terms of

helping them cope with an enemy alien identity. If, as seems to be the case, all

old people are de-sexed, the valence of sexuality loses some of its currency.

Thus, while it may be more difficult to get sex, a person's different sexuality

becomes an increasing irrelevance, as old people are considered asexual anyway.

Whilst social identity theory's relevance to the men's enemy alien identity has

already been discussed, it may also be of help in understanding the impact of de-

sexing on the men's sense of difference. For the men with a black marketeer

attitude, a de-sexing of identity can be seen to hold the benefits already described. However, for crusaders, such de-sexing would be seen as removing a highly valued component of their self categorization. Thus, crusader's attempts to re-define sexual attractiveness, by creating the new identities of 'bear' and 'silver fox', can be hypothesised to represent a social change strategy aimed at their own in-group, i.e. a change in the gay community's obsession with youth. Thus, older gay men with a crusader attitude can be seen to be using their re-sexualization, in order to remain part of a group through which they have obtained much of their self-esteem and distinctiveness.

Importantly, while sex was referred to a great deal by the participants, safe sex was only spoken about by two. This absence could have several explanations, for example, there was no specific question regarding safe sex. Whatever the reason, the mens' descriptions of a thwarted, but often still active sex life, highlights a group of people who may potentially benefit from health education regarding HIV.

Relationships and enemy alien identity

The final aspect of the enemy alien identity that the participants discussed was the importance of relationships. Two particular aspects of relationships seemed significant - witnessing and being in contact with younger people. Witnessing

centred on the acknowledgment, by an accepting other, of a person's wholeness, including their homosexuality. The person doing the acknowledging was normally gay. It is worth noting at this point that when given the opportunity to ask questions before the interview began, several of the men asked directly whether I was gay. When asked why this might be important, the majority of the men spoke of the elements identified in the research, i.e. that we would have a common understanding of what it meant to be gay.

Whilst all of the research on gay ageing appears to demonstrate the benefits of high involvement in the gay community - higher life satisfaction (Berger, 1982), happiness (Lee, 1987) and a reduced fear of ageing (Quam and Whitford, 1992) - it fails to examine the importance that 'just' being acknowledged can have on an individual. Thus, while high involvement may be important, even the most minimal of contact with the gay community appears to play a pivotal role, at some level, in sustaining these men's identity. In this sense, witnessing by an alternative gay family may be hypothesized to perform the same service to identity, i.e. maintaining themes and coherence, identified by Coleman (cited, Gumaste, 2000), as more commonly provided by 'traditional' family relationships in heterosexuals. It may be, as Sullivan (1998, p. 231) suggests, "what gay culture really is before it is anything else, before it is a culture of desire or a culture of subversion or a culture of pain, is a culture of friendship."

Relationships with younger people were also highlighted as important to the older men in the study. The men felt that these relationships were a two way process, with them acting as role models, or 'wingers', to their younger protégée, while they were in return kept up to date and so kept 'young at heart'. In addition, for some of the men, this contact allowed vicarious entry into a more open world, which they felt was normally denied them. Gonsiorek (1995) understands these relationships from a more structural view point. He contends that homosexuals are the only minority organized horizontally, not vertically. In other words, it is not intergenerational. While ethnic and racial minorities are born into minority families, which are often part of a well organized and supportive community, homosexuals are normally born into heterosexual families and raised with according norms. Therefore, the ameliorating influence that parents and other relatives and peer community can have in training individuals to handle the strains of minority status are not only absent, but frequently replaced by a lack of understanding. Thus, older men may become 'wingers' in order to provide the role models which they identified as absent during their own development.

Heterosexual identity and ageing

It was decided to interview a heterosexual comparison group following comments by a number of the early homosexual participants that they felt that their ageing was no different to that of heterosexuals. Davies and Neal (1996) believe that it is possible to understand the denial of difference between homosexual and heterosexual, which was seen to pervade almost every interview, as a 'symptom' of internalized homophobia. However, in order to clarify whether there were, indeed, any differences, five heterosexual men were recruited to the study. Heterosexual participants were aware of the focus of the study and were questioned using the same protocol as the homosexual men.

Unsurprisingly, perhaps, heterosexual participants in the study did not mention a sense of difference related to their identity. Their dominant constructions of self were instead centred around two themes: 'father/grandfather' and as 'retired but busy'. Although both groups of participants were asked the same questions, it is interesting to note that, unlike the homosexual group, heterosexual participants rarely spoke about their childhood and developmental issues. Instead, they were much more focused on speaking about their 'new' identities as 'retired but busy' and 'grandfather'. Both dominant identities can be seen to fit into theories already discussed as important components to ageing

successfully. Thus, father/grandfather can be seen to form part of the continuation and evolution of identity, suggested by Atchley (1989), as important to ageing. Whilst, 'keeping busy' may be seen as forming part of the productivity highlighted by Glass et al. (1995) as being a helpful coping strategy when growing older.

Belongings and exclusions

The second major core category to be discussed is belongings and exclusions. This category begins to provide an understanding of how difficult it can be, for homosexual men to find a space in which to be completely acknowledged, and to forge meaningful relationships of any kind.

Specific geographical locations were appraised as more or less tolerant of homosexuals. The men had a clear idea that metropolitan areas and specific 'gay friendly' towns offered the most tolerant environments. Unfortunately, while the men in study had witnessed, and in some cases, actively contributed to the growth of a visible gay scene, they now felt, as older gay men, excluded from the very community they had helped to develop. Unlike heterosexual society, where there is a large range of social environments in which different age groups may socialize, gay society was believed to be dominated by younger concerns. While a few bars were seen to offer older gay men the same service as their younger

counterparts, on the whole, the gay scene was believed to belong to younger

homosexuals, with older gay men excluded.

This intolerance was linked by the participants to older gay men being perceived

as less sexually desirable. In fact, for most of the men in the study the ideas put

forward by Bennett and Thompson (1991), regarding accelerated ageing,

appeared to be a reality. This concern with age also appeared to be linked to the

theme identified by Frost (1997) as contributing to accelerated ageing, namely, a

continued singlehood in which attracting relationships becomes increasingly

hard as you grow older.

Whilst the gay scene was appraised as, on the whole, unhelpful to the ageing of

gay men, British culture's shift to a more tolerant position was perceived as

helpful. All of the men believed that the partial legalisation of homosexual acts

had, to a greater or lesser extent, aided their ageing. Indeed, without the

Wolfenden (1963) legislation it is hard to imagine how the crusader identity on

the attitude continuum would have evolved. In addition, HIV was seen to have

helped change British society's perception of homosexuality.

Unfortunately, whilst these more positive inclusions were noted, the majority of

the men spoke predominantly about how they felt excluded by British society.

Even when the men were more integrated, they were wary of people's motives,

believing that, on the whole, people were hypocritical and still did not accept homosexuality. This hypocrisy was no more apparent than in the British media which, while claiming not to be homophobic, would continue to be obsessed with constructing homosexuality using the derogatory language the men had endured since their childhood. This negative construction of homosexuality was believed to be supported by more recent discriminatory legislation, i.e. section 28, and the ongoing debate in British society about equality, i.e. equalisation of the age of consent.

Heterosexual belongings and exclusion

In comparison to homosexual participants, who perceived themselves to be excluded from a range of environments and relationships, older heterosexuals did not mention exclusions, but rather, spoke about belonging. Belonging, for heterosexual men, concerned being part of a family, and how this related to their changing role of father into grandfather. As such, heterosexual participant's reports fitted into Coleman's (cited, Gumaste, 2000) assertions regarding identity themes being maintained, primarily, through family relationships.

Swimming strategies

The previous section's discussion of the enemy identity and attitude continuum, and of gay men's sense of belongings and exclusions, has begun to illuminate some of the ways in which the men might cope with their minority identity. This section will examine how the men in this study reported managing their ageing enemy alien identity. It will begin by discussing the men's common coping strategies, and will then move on to examine the different coping strategies adopted by black marketeers and crusaders respectively.

The men spoke about a range of coping strategies, which were labelled under the core category of 'swimming strategies'. Some of these were used by all of the men, some more by black marketeers, and others predominantly by crusaders. Common to all of the men was a desire to have contact with someone, or something, which represented homosexuality. This witnessing, which has already been discussed, was the most central swimming strategy adopted by all of the men. However, for some of the more geographically isolated men, who lived in more rural areas, witnessing strategies included: receiving gay literature on a regular basis, or visiting gay places when in large metropolitan areas. In order to have easier access to people who would be able to witness them, the majority of the men had moved to a more tolerant geographical location. Thus,

several of the men had consciously moved countries or even continents, in order

to be able to feel less isolated and oppressed.

A universal appraisal was that they could cope alone as a result of always being

independent and having to perform both gender roles throughout their lives.

This would seem to fit into Friend's (1990) assertion that gay men would cope

better with ageing as a result of gender roles being blurred.

Whilst all of the participants in this study remained able to maintain their

independence, it would be interesting to hypothesise as to what the outcome of

increased dependence might be for this population. The individual's use of the

common management strategies already highlighted could be assumed to

become more limited as their dependence increased with their age, or if they

relinquished their independence through, for example, a move into a care

setting. This restriction on their use of the common swimming strategies could be

hypothesised as having serious implications for gay people who become more

dependent as they grow older.

All of the men used the cognitive strategy of downward comparison to appraise

themselves positively against the heterosexual majority. This strategy could be

viewed as part of the social creativity category highlighted by social identity

theory, and as such, to have the overall aim of raising self esteem. In addition,

such a management strategy can be seen to concur with Heidrich and Ryff (1993)

finding that social comparison is an important management strategy for

maintaining identity in later life.

Black marketeers used a specific range of swimming strategies, which reflected

their more diplomatic approach to their enemy alien identity. The first group of

swimming strategies embodied a 'stiff upper lip' approach. These coping

strategies had the effect of mitigating the pain and unhappiness the men might

have felt about their enemy alien identity, and in so doing, allowed them to

present a 'normal' face to the world. Stiff upper lip coping strategies included:

compartmentalization, avoidance, displacement, distancing, passing and denial.

The second set of swimming strategies used by black marketeers were defined as

'butterfly' strategies. These strategies involved either travelling or cocooning.

The end result of both of these strategies could be hypothesized to be the same -

isolation. Isolation could be seen to serve two purposes. Firstly, it allowed the

person to avoid being challenged about their enemy alien identity. Secondly, the

isolated individual did not have to face the possible rejection, aggression or pity

of those who found out about their homosexuality.

The final black marketeer coping strategies were labelled 'cluedo' swimming

strategies. This name was chosen to reflect the manner in which the men who

used these swimming strategies approached coping with their enemy alien identity. Cluedo strategies involved testing people out as to whether they could guess that the participant was gay. This strategy can be seen to place responsibility for correctly guessing the participant's homosexuality with the other person. Cluedo strategies may be seen as part of Lee's (1987) assertion that being able to avoid stressful events may be equally as valuable as being able to master them, via crisis competence.

Crusader coping strategies, in comparison to those of the black marketeers, can be seen to be controlled by their streamlining attitude, which demanded transparency between their internal and external worlds. The crusader's first swimming strategy concerned 'coming out' - where the person was open about their homosexuality with others. The main benefit of this openness was felt to be an ability to lead a much more straightforward life. In addition, people using this strategy were far less bothered by others' negative appraisals of them, forming a 'like it or lump it' attitude.

The second strategy employed by crusaders involved developing an alternative and exclusive gay family or network. This network was seen to provide support and prevent isolation. This strategy would appear to have a number of similarities to the findings reported by Menninger (1999), regarding social support, and how engagement with others in a relationship which is confiding,

respectful and reciprocal may have a beneficial impact on mental health in old

age. Whilst this alternative family could be viewed as fulfilling the same

function as that already discussed under the enemy alien's relationships and

witnessing sub-category, it also seemed that crusaders had expanded the

concept. Thus, whereas black marketeers may have only had one confidant,

crusaders appeared to have a whole network.

The third swimming strategy used by some of the crusaders was a re-

identification of self. This re-identification resulted in the re-sexulisation of the

self in old age. The labels chosen for this re-identification by the men have been

imported from the US, namely, 'bears' and 'silver foxes'. Bears are older men

with beards and silver foxes are older men with grey hair. This swimming tactic

would seem to embody a coping strategy aimed at reducing the impact of old

age de-sexing, whilst also providing a direct challenge to the youth orientated

gay scene, which most of the men felt had rejected them. It may be that these

men, who had been present at the genesis of the modern gay movement, were

unprepared to be castigated from both 'normal' society, and from the

community which they had helped to develop. The fact that this re-

identification, once again, was linked to sex, would seem to be no accident, as

British culture has yet to construct any other way for gay people and their

relationships to be actualized. This finding would appear to concur with

Friend's (1990) assertion that, by coming out, a gay man might have an increased

'crisis competence', with the corollary that they are better able to challenge societal norms.

The theories described in the introduction give some guidance on, and understanding of, elements that might aid gay men in growing older. However, a more complete understanding may be offered by work which, once again, understands coping from a more social psychological perspective. Social identity theory may offer a suitable social psychological framework through which to understand the development of an enemy alien identity and attitude continuum. However, it is Breakwell's (1986) incorporation of elements of social identity theory into a framework explaining how identity might deal with threat, which would appear to offer a particularly useful lens through which to understand the swimming strategies employed by participants as they grow older.

The development of identity structures is, according to Breakwell (1986), a process that occupies a person's entire life span. The structure of identity is conceived as having two planes: the content and value dimensions. The content dimension comprises the defining properties of the individual. Breakwell believes that this means that it includes both characteristics that have, in the past, been considered separate, namely: social identity (roles, group memberships etc.) and that have been regarded part of the personal identity (values, motives, emotions, attitudes etc.). Ignoring the distinction between these two categories is

seen to be the product of the content dimension always being present across time and being cumulative in nature.

The value dimension describes the value attached to each of the elements which make up the content dimension. The values attached to self defining characteristics are in a constant state of flux as a result of the dynamic relationship between an individual and the culture within which he or she lives.

Whilst these dimensions may form the structure of identity, assimilation, accommodation and evaluation are believed to be the components that comprise the processes of identity formation. Assimilation describes the absorption of new information into the identity structure. Accommodation, in turn, refers to the adjustment that occurs in the existing structure so as to find a place into which to fit the new elements. Evaluation entails the allocation of meaning and value to identity content, both old and new. Three prime principles are seen to guide these identity processes, namely: the production of a sense of distinctiveness for the individual, continuity across time and situation, and a feeling of social worth and value.

Threat to identity is seen to occur when the processes of identity - assimilation-accommodation and evaluation - are, for some reason, unable to comply with the principles of continuity, distinctiveness and self esteem, which habitually guide

their operation. Threat can be seen as either internal or external in origin.

Internal threat might occur when a person attempts to change his or her position

in relation to the social matrix, for example, by changing group membership.

External threat can come about through a change in the social context, for

example, changes in law that change the power differential between certain

social groups. Strategies to cope with threat fall into three categories: intra-

psychic, interpersonal, and inter-group.

Intra-psychic strategies would appear to embody a number of the swimming

strategies utilised by black marketeers to manage their enemy alien identities. As

such, the majority of these swimming strategies would be identified as

'deflection' strategies, in that they rely upon the deflection of the perceived

threat while resisting change to the identity structure. Denial would be one

example of a deflection strategy.

In comparison, compartmentalization represents a partial acceptance of a

different identity. However, according to Breakwell (1986) such an acceptance is

minimized by the person only assimilating, and not accommodating threatening

information. Thus, in this way, the person brings about change with the

minimum   amount   of   damage   to   identity   structure.   Hence,

compartmentalization acts by "drawing a strict boundary around the

dissatisfying addition to the identity structure, so that it is not permitted to contaminate the rest of the identity" (Breakwell, 1986, p. 91).

The 'Good As You' strategies, already discussed under social creativity strategies, can be seen to represent a further set of intra-psychic coping strategies. A person may choose to change the evaluation of criteria by which to judge different identity characteristics. Thus, via social comparison techniques, a person is able to elevate their self esteem by favourably comparing their own attributes against a discredited other.

Interpersonal strategies to deal with threat would include the passing strategies employed by black marketeers as part of their diplomatic attempt to keep a stiff upper lip. Passing, in terms of social identity theory and Breakwell's account, is concerned with social mobility and an attempt to gain self esteem through association with a more powerful social group. Thus, black marketeers may be hypothesized to have preferred an association with heterosexual culture, as opposed to a gay sub-culture, which they did not value, in order to increase their self esteem.

According to Breakwell (1986) however, passing strategies involve the misidentification of self and lead to a number of associated problems which, she claims, should not be underestimated. Breakwell (1986) believes that, while a

person may gain self esteem through allegiance to a more powerful group, this is

at the expense of living a lie. Thus, a person may have to become hypercritical of

those seen as representing the out-group. This may help explain the comments

of some black marketeers that homosexuals who were involved in anti-gay

prejudice had, in some way, brought it on themselves. Passing also brings with it

the potentially heightened risk of disclosure. The theory suggests that such

disclosure would bring about what Goffman (1963) described as, a 'spoiled

identity'. Such a spoiling of identity could have a catastrophic impact, as the

stigma associated with the more tarnished identity exposes the lies on which the

previous identity was built. Seen in this way, participant five's comments

regarding exposure as a homosexual have a more stark impact:

> "The punishment of being found out is not a light one. For me
> there was never a difficulty between the idea of suicide, rather than
> going to court. The loss! I know that it has been decriminalized, I
> am talking about loss of status, perception of others" - P 5.

Breakwell warns that such strategies are, at best, a compromise position, and will

eventually result in the person having to assimilate and accommodate to the

threat in a more adaptive capacity. Perhaps Tchaikovsky's comments on his own

passing illuminate the impact of passing, "all that is left is to pretend. But to

pretend to the end of one's life is the highest torment" (Smith, 1999, p. 7).

The strategies constituting the butterfly swimming strategy, namely; travelling and cocooning, can be seen to have the same end result, this being an attempt to cope with being gay through isolation. Breakwell believes that isolation is one of the least helpful ways of interpersonally dealing with threats to identity. Isolation is seen as an attempt to avoid social shaming, or answer personal questions, and as such to evade the social consequences of occupying a threatened position. However, unfortunately, isolationist tactics remove people from the very support that may help them deal with a stressful encounter. Isolation, as a tactic in dealing with threat is, therefore, seen as providing few benefits.

Compliance is also considered by Breakwell (1986) as constituting a further interpersonal coping strategy. Compliance, as a strategy for dealing with threat, entails 'playing the role'. It means accepting the behavioural prescriptions of the dominant group. In this way, compliance to social stereotypes may mean that the threatened person is more easily accepted, because their conformity arouses no disruption to the social power matrix. In this sense, a number of the black marketeers' swimming strategies could be understood as relating to compliance. For example, cluedo strategies could be seen as playing the game, in as far as the enemy alien is discrete about his homosexuality and does not 'shout it from the roof tops'. Compliance has the benefits of bestowing social approval and reducing anxiety. In this sense, compliance may also have the added benefits

highlighted by Heidrich and Ryff (1993), in the management of identity in old age, of increasing a person's sense of social integration as a result of living within a set of perceived 'normative' behaviours.

However, the double bind of compliance, Breakwell (1986) believes, points to the overall inadequacy of interpersonal strategies for coping with threatened identities. All of them require that the game be played, which in turn limits the person's sense of control. In addition, they all entail that the person attempts to cope within the existing social structure.

In comparison to black marketeers, who have to employ a range of swimming strategies in order to cope with threats to their identity, the crusaders openness results in very little threat. Whilst appraising their homosexuality as 'normal', crusaders prevent themselves from using the rubric of coping strategies seen to fall under the social mobility strategies described above by Breakwell (1986).

Creating an alternative gay family may be considered an act of social change, according to social identity theory, whilst Breakwell (1986) might consider it an inter-group coping strategy. The function of this alternative family may be two fold. Firstly, it thwarts isolation. Secondly, it raises awareness among its members of common issues. In addition, gay groups may act to challenge and change the value of group attributes, alter characteristics associated with the

social category, or even change the social order and dominant ideologies. It

could also be the case that, for crusaders, living by the normative guidelines of

an alternative sub-culture, as opposed to the dominant culture, facilitates their

sense of social integration into their chosen community, and so aids their

management of identity (Heidrich and Ryff, 1993).

The coming together of older men in a sexual context could be hypothesized to

fulfill a number of the functions of inter-group coping. In addition, the Brighton

older lesbian and gay forum, from which a number of the participants came,

could also be seen to be performing a number of these roles. For instance, for the

members it was a place to meet and feel less isolated. It allowed members to

share common concerns within a supportive and understanding environment.

Indeed, it was even beginning to challenge the ideologies of Age Concern, while

also attempting to change characteristics associated with the category manifest in

the gay community itself, by making older gay people visible at gay pride events.

Indeed, the forum could be seen to embody a number of the characteristics

shown to be so important to social exchanges and related to successful ageing

already described.

Thus, considering Rowe and Khan's (1987) earlier definition of successful and

usual ageing, crusaders might be considered to have aged successfully as gay

men, in that extrinsic factors have played a neutral or positive role in their

ageing. In contrast black marketeers could be seen as representing usual gay

ageing, where extrinsic factors have heightened the ageing process.

Heterosexual coping

Heterosexual participants only spoke about swimming strategies related to

managing their ageing identities. Thus, while both sets of men were concerned

with issues already highlighted as important to successful ageing, i.e. keeping

busy (Glass et al., 1995), financial security (Berkman et al., 1993), and using a

range of compensatory skills in order to off set the losses of old age (Baltes and

Baltes, 1990), it was only the gay men who spoke about managing their different

identity.

Conclusion

This research set out to discover how gay men manage growing older. The

findings highlight the centrality of three aspects to this process, namely: enemy

alien identity, belongings and exclusions, and swimming strategies.

Enemy alien identity was the label chosen to signify the alienation the men felt,

having appraised themselves as being the same but also different to those

around them. Whilst all of the men had a common sense of enemy alien identity,

their attitude towards their difference varied greatly, with these attitudes constituting a continuum, with men settling at different positions along it. Whilst the men demonstrated a range of attitudes towards their homosexuality, two identifiable positions on the continuum emerged. The men at these different positions came to be labelled as black marketeers and crusaders. Black marketeers were men with a more negative attitude towards their homosexuality. Crusaders, in comparison, demonstrated a more positive attitude towards their homosexuality. Attitude change, and thus movement in either direction along the continuum, was seen to be dependent upon a dynamic interaction between internal and external variables.

The extent to which others accepted or rejected them, based on their homosexuality, constituted a second core category. Thus, the extent to which the men appraised themselves as belonging to, or being excluded from, different relationships, geographical locations, the developing gay and British cultures, on the basis of their ageing gay status, had implications for the way they managed their growing older.

How the men managed their enemy alien identity, in the face of changing perceptions of homosexuality, was determined by their attitude towards it. Coping strategies, or swimming strategies, as they were referred to in this study, fell into different categories. Black marketeers used coping strategies that

centred upon the concealment of their difference, as a result of their having a

fearful and hostile attitude towards their homosexuality. In contrast, the

crusaders' more positive attitude towards homosexuality meant that their coping

strategies centred upon being open and honest.

Whilst the men had been engaged in managing their enemy alien identity since

they first sensed that they were different, growing older added a further

dimension to this process. In some ways, ageing itself was seen to make this

management easier. For instance, just being older meant that the men felt less

need to conform to societal norms. Furthermore financial security, and being

less reliant on an employer, meant that the men were freer to 'be themselves'. In

addition, the de-sexing of older people was seen to help black marketeers, whose

sexuality had been a cause of guilt or embarrassment to them. In contrast,

crusaders, whose enemy alien identity was closely linked to sexual activity,

appraised their increased difficulty in attracting other men negatively. However,

crusaders, who had often been part of the original gay movement, were seen to

create a new sexual identity which positively construed being old and gay.

These results were in contrast to the descriptions of ageing given by the

heterosexual men who participated in this study. They spoke about their ageing

predominantly in terms of changing family roles. However, common to both

sets of men were concerns regarding physical health and financial security in old

age, with a common coping strategy being that of keeping busy.

Whilst previous theories of, and research into, gay ageing may have highlighted

some of the themes identified in this research, the majority placed these in an

individual psychological framework. In contrast, this research proposes a model

of gay ageing that utilises the social psychological theories of Cox and Gallois

(1996) and Breakwell (1986). These appear to offer a more complete framework

through which we may understand the experience of growing older as gay men.

In addition, this social psychological framework moves away from the pejorative

stance taken by many of the previous researchers in the field of gay ageing.

Their stance displayed a negative attitude towards those gay men who are not

'out'. This negativity does not seem to be based on impartial factors, such as an

appraisal that these black marketeer's coping strategies place them at greater

psychological risk. Instead, this negativity seems to emanate from a more radical

political position, which construes a black marketeer's assimilatory stance

towards their homosexuality as unacceptable. This reverse homophobia appears

to ignore the sacrifices many of these men have made in order to provide the

relatively open environment, which allows such a condemnatory attitude to

flourish.

Research into HIV was the genesis for this study. Whilst the disease may have killed many thousands of people in Britain, it has also created bonds and allegiances never experienced by gay people. For the first time, perhaps, gay people were seen as whole people, not stereotypes. This research was driven, at least in part, by this recent move to acknowledge and understand the lives of gay men. As Sullivan, (1998, p. 68) wrote, "so as the world was forced to acknowledge the reality of our deaths, we dared to dream that it could acknowledge the reality of our lives."

Methodological limitations of the study and suggestions for future research

In recent years, researchers have shown an increased interest in undertaking qualitative research. Concurrently, there has been a debate about the criteria for evaluating such research (e.g. Elliott et al., 1999; Stiles, 1993). This literature provides a framework through which the reliability, validity, and generalisability of a qualitative research may be judged.

Whilst traditional ways of evaluating quantitative research, and issues of reliability and validity, are not easily transferable to qualitative investigations, researchers such as Henwood and Pigeon (1992) and Stiles (1993) have attempted to do just this. Indeed, Strauss and Corbin (1998) believe that the normal

methods used to judge quantitative research have some value when considering qualitative research. However, they also caution that these methods need to be redefined in order to fit the realties of qualitative research. This has led to the evolution of a number of credibility checks, which specifically address the quality of qualitative research (Elliott et al., 1999; Turpin et al., 1997).

Strauss and Corbin (1998) caution against a belief that a qualitative study can 'control' social variables in the same way as a laboratory study. They do believe, however, that by providing as much information as possible about the system under study, other researchers should be able to produce similar results. In a similar vein, Mays and Pope (1995) believe that in order to increase the reliability of a project, a researcher should provide a clear description of how the data were collected and analysed. Moreover, Mays and Pope go on to suggest that, in order to enhance the reliability and validity of any analysis, researchers may use external auditors to independently code transcripts. Thus, coding between auditors can be compared and disparities investigated. Such a stance is similar to Elliott et al's. (1999, p. 222) suggestion, that outside auditors should review the data for "discrepancies, overstatements or errors in coding". This procedure was employed in the present study, with both supervisors being involved in checking a number of the transcripts at different stages of the analytical process. In addition, a clear explanation of the methodology employed has been provided.

Barker, Pistrang and Elliott (1994) consider that the issue of external validity plays a central role when considering applied research. It has been suggested that one way of evaluating the external validity of a project, is for researchers to take their results back to the original informants for checking (Elliott et al., 1999; Mays and Pope, 1995). In this study, the views of participants were sought as to whether preliminary analysis and interpretation of data fitted with their experience of growing older as gay men.

Mays and Pope (1995) suggest that a project's generalisability will be dependent upon the sampling method that was used in the study. In grounded theory, generalisability is established through an approach known as theoretical sampling (Barker et al., 1994). Theoretical sampling involves the analyst making an initial selection of informants, collecting data, and producing a preliminary theoretical explanation, before deciding which further data to collect and from whom. Further data collection feeds into this process. In addition, the researcher may want to collect data from a set of people who are considered completely different, in order to establish the limits of any results. Strauss and Corbin (1998) believe that the aim of grounded theory is not so much to produce a generalisable theory, but rather, to build a theory with 'explanatory power'. Thus, the more widespread and systematic the sampling, the more conditions and variations will be discovered and built into the theory and, therefore, the

greater its explanatory power. In this study, a snowballing methodology was used to theoretically sample as wide a population of older gay men as possible. This allowed a wide variety of men, with a range of ages, and ethnic, cultural and social backgrounds to be accessed. In addition, a group of heterosexual men were sampled, in order to establish the limits of the theory. Whilst snowballing still results in a self-selection process, in this case men who were interested in taking part in the study, it did permit a large range of men to be accessed. In particular, it allowed access to a number of men who were on the fringes of the gay community. In this respect, this study's sampling procedure went some way to countering the criticisms levelled at previous research. Namely, that limited sampling, using middle class, politically active gay men, resulted in studies with poor generalisability. Unfortunately, in this study, it was not possible to recruit any black older gay men.

Hammersley (1996) considers that care needs to be taken when generalising the results of any research, be it qualitative or quantitative. The extent, to which results may be reasonably generalised, from a sample population to a target population, needs to take into account not only the sampling method, but a number of other factors, for example, the setting (Barker, Pistrang and Elliott, 1994). Thus, the results of this study need to be viewed within the context of the lives of the men who participated in the study. For example, the study should be considered historically and culturally specific. Thus this research, at this point,

could not be considered generalisable to the ageing of gay men younger than 60 years of age, to gay men over the age of 75 years, to black gay men, to gay men growing older in other cultures, or to lesbian women.

Whilst no study has universal generalisability, it would seem reasonable to believe that the credibility checks utilised in this study allow the resulting model of gay male ageing to provide a first tentative explanation of how gay men manage growing older. The resulting model can thus be seen as being applicable to the sample and to the target population of British older gay men aged 60 to 75 years inclusive. However, the research is only a beginning, with many questions still left unanswered. In order to offer a more inclusive model of gay ageing, future research could profitably sample and compare different older populations, for example, lesbian women, and black gay people. In addition, research across different ages, either in the form of cross sectional or longitudinal studies, could provide a greater understanding of gay life span development. Moreover, any resultant model will need continual updating to take into account social changes and to prevent the model becoming redundant.

Clinical and professional implications

This research has important clinical and professional implications for those working with older people. As we have seen, many gay people are often reluctant to reveal their homosexuality to care professionals, for fear of negative reactions (Golding, 1997). A key concept that emerged from the current study, which may help with this dilemma, is the gay men's desire to be 'witnessed' - or acknowledged by other gay people. Such acknowledgment and acceptance would seem a basic prerequisite of all therapeutic orientations. Whilst it is not being suggested that therapists should disclose their sexual orientation, in order to forge an alliance with homosexual clients, it may be efficacious if they at least made some active commitment to equal opportunities, in order to allay potential client's fears. This may seem like an obvious statement. However, as the recent debate regarding the establishment of a gay and lesbian section within the British Psychological Society (see Kitzinger and Coyle et al., 1999) demonstrated, many people aligned to the psychology profession still hold views that would not fit with such an undertaking.

Whilst sex was discussed a great deal by all of the men in the study, safe sex practices were hardly ever mentioned. HIV health education programmes have been widespread since the disease emerged in the early 1980s. Rarely, however, have these been specifically directed at older people. It might be hypothesised

that this apparent lack of interest in older gay men's safe sex practices is, in part, the product of the desexing of older people. However, it would seem that while older gay men continue to have sexual relations, their health education needs continue to be ignored. Thus, clinicians working with older clients need to raise safe sex awareness issues.

At present, the needs of older homosexuals are rarely identified or addressed by clinicians, researchers, or the psychology profession. One impetus behind this research was the belief that, as the number of emancipated gay people grows and ages, so services for older people will have to deal increasingly with the needs of this group. However, as a result of the potentially negative reactions of staff to this group of people, and the identified different needs of this client group, it may be necessary to develop services specifically for older gay people. An example of this different type of service is that provided by Age Concern in Brighton. Specialist services may be an economic way of providing support to older gay people living in areas with large enough gay populations to warrant such services. However, in order to ensure that those gay people living in less metropolitan areas receive equal treatment, information regarding the different needs of older gay people needs to be disseminated. This wider knowledge base could be achieved via dissemination of research, publications, and training programmes, all aimed at raising awareness of gay issues.

Ultimately, it is hoped that the need for research into the lives of gay people will become redundant, as society develops and laws are introduced which equalise homosexuals' lives with that of heterosexuals. Such changes might not relinquish a person's sense of difference, but might mean that it was no longer appraised by the person concerned as a source of shame. Such changes will take a long time to filter through society but the shoots of change can already be seen in the shift of attitudes towards homosexuality evidenced in recent years. Continued changes would hopefully make the lives of gay people easier, across the whole life span. It could be, as Sullivan (1995, p. 187) writes, "our lives have begun in simplicity, but they have not ended there. Our dream, perhaps, is that they might".

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Appendix A

UCL

HOSPITALS

The University College London Hospitals

The Joint UCL/UCLH Committees on the Ethics of Human Research

Committee Alpha Chairman: Professor André McLean

Please address all correspondence to:
Mrs Iwona Nowicka
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Tel. 0171- 380 9579   Fax 0171-380 9937
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Dr N Pistrang
Senior Lecturer in Psychology
Sub-Department of Clinical Health Psychology
UCL
Gower Street

March 2, 1999

Dear Dr Pistrang

Study No: 99/0053 *(Please quote in all correspondence)*
Title: **How do gay men manage growing older?**

Thank you for letting us see the above proposal which has been agreed by Chairman's Action, subject to ratification by the full Committee.

You may go ahead with your study.

Please note that it is important that you notify the Committee of any adverse events or changes (name of investigator etc) relating to this project. You should also notify the Committee on completion of the project, or indeed if the project is abandoned. **Please remember to quote the above number in any correspondence.**

Yours sincerely

Professor André McLean, BM BCL PhD FRC Path
Chairman

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ARE YOU A GAY MAN OVER 65?

At University College London we are looking for gay men who would be happy to talk about how they believe they have aged successfully. If you would like to find out more about this study then contact Nigel George on 01273 727440.

How do Gay Men Manage growing Older?

We are conducting a research project investigating how gay men manage growing older.

The study will examine the factors which older gay men believe have contributed to their ageing successfully. We hope that the information obtained will enable us to plan and offer appropriate services to older gay people.

The project would involve either coming to University College London, or one of the researchers coming to your house (whichever is easier for you) for about two hours. During this time, you will be interviewed about your experiences of growing older. In addition, you will be asked to complete some short questionnaires.

If you think that you might be interested in participating and would like to find out more about the project, please complete the tear-off slip below and return it in the enclosed stamped, addressed envelope. We will then telephone you to give you more details and answer and questions that you might have.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel George   **Nancy Pistrang**
Clinical Psychologist in Training   **Psychologist/Lecturer**

....

I may be interested in participating in this project and would like to find out more about it.

Name:...

Telephone number:...

The most convenient time for me to be contacted is:................................

Appendix D: Background Information

RESEARCH PROJECT: HOW DO GAY MEN MANAGE GROWING OLDER?

Nigel George, BA (Hons.), RGN, RMN.
Nancy Pistrang, Ph.D.
Sub-Department of Clinical Health Psychology
University College London
Gower Street
London WC1E 6BT (0171) 380 7896/7

INFORMATION FOR PARTICIPANTS

You are invited to take part in this study which will examine how gay men manage growing older. Stereotypes portray ageing, and in particular gay ageing, in a negative fashion. However, contrary to such images, it would seem that most gay men manage growing older successfully. This study aims to discover what factors may contribute to this successful ageing. We hope that the information obtained will enable us to offer appropriate services to older gay people.

PROCEDURE

The study will take place at University College London or in your home, whichever you prefer, and takes approximately two hours. You will be asked about your experiences of growing older. This interview will be partly structured in that I have some questions to guide our discussion. The discussion will be tape recorded. In addition, you will be asked to complete some short questionnaires.

CONFIDENTIALITY

All material will be held in confidence and will only be used for research purposes. All conversations will be anonymous, and information given will be treated confidentially.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

All proposals for research with people are reviewed by an ethics committee before they can proceed. This proposal was reviewed by the joint UCL/UCLH Committee.

TAKING PART IN THE STUDY

You do not have to take part in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to take part you may withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

FURTHER INFORMATION

If you would like to contact the researchers for any reason, they can be reached at the address and phone number above.

Research Project: How do gay men manage growing older?

Nigel George, BA (Hons), RGN, RMN.
Nancy Pistrang, Ph.D.
Sub-Department of Clinical Health Psychology
University College London
Gower Street
London WC1E 6BT
(0171) 380 7896/7

Consent Form for Participants

Confidential

Delete as necessary

Have you read the information sheet about this study?	YES/NO
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study?	YES/NO
Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?	YES/NO
Have you received enough information about this study?	YES/NO

Which researcher have you spoken to about this research? ....

Do you understand that you are free to withdraw from this study

*at any time
*without giving a reason for withdrawing   YES/NO

Do you agree to take part in this study?   YES/NO

Signed... Date....................

Name in Block Letters..

Researcher's signature..

Appendix F: Demographic Form

Background Information

Confidential

1. Date of birth   ...../...../19.....

2. Please state ethnic origin ....

3. Educational level

Years in full-time education since age 5......................................

4. Former occupation...

5. Have you ever served in the armed forces?   yes/no

If yes, in what capacity and for how many years?...........................

6. Are you taking any prescribed medicine?   yes/no

If yes, please specify:

....

....

Appendix G: Well-Being Questionnaire

MANAGING GROWING OLDER

Below are a number of questions regarding how you feel about yourself and how you have managed various aspects of growing older.

Please consider each statement and circle the number which best indicates how the statement applies to you at this time in your life:

	Strongly disagree					Strongly agree
1. When I look at the story of my life, I am pleased with how things have turned out.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. In general, I feel confident and positive about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I feel like many of the people I know have gotten more out of life than I have.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. Given the opportunity, there are many things about myself that I would change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I like most aspects of my personality.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I made some mistakes in the past, but I feel that all in all everything has worked out for the best.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. In many ways, I feel disappointed about my achievements in life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. For the most part, I am proud of the person I am and the life that I lead.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. I envy many people for the lives that they lead.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. My attitude about myself is probably not as positive as most people feel about themselves.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Many days I wake up feeling discouraged about how I have lived my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. The past had it's ups and downs, but in general, I wouldn't want to change it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. When I compare myself to friends and	1	2	3	4	5	6

acquaintances, it makes me feel good about who I am.

14.Everyone has their weaknesses, but I seem to have more than my share.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15.Sometimes I change the way I act or think to be more like those around me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16.I am not afraid to voice my opinions, even when they are in opposition to the opinions of most people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17.My decisions are not usually influenced by what everyone else is doing.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18.I tend to worry about what others may think of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19.Being happy with myself is more important to me than having others approve of me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20.I tend to be influenced by people with strong opinions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21.People rarely talk me into doing things I don't want to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22.It is more important to me to 'fit in' with others than to stand alone on my principles.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23.I have confidence in my own opinions, even if they are contrary to the general consensus.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24.It is difficult for me to voice my own opinions on controversial matters.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25.I often change my mind about decisions if my friends or family disagree.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26.I am not the kind of person who gives in to social pressures to think or act in certain ways.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27.I am concerned about how other people evaluate the choices I have made in my life.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28.I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important.	1	2	3	4	5	6

29. I am not interested in activities that will expand my horizons. 1 2 3 4 5 6

30. In general, I feel that I continue to learn more about myself as time goes by. 1 2 3 4 5 6

31. I am the kind of person who likes to give new things a try. 1 2 3 4 5 6

32. I don't want to try new ways of doing things - my life is fine the way that it is. 1 2 3 4 5 6

33. I think that it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world. 1 2 3 4 5 6

34. When I think about it, I haven't really improved much as a person over the years. 1 2 3 4 5 6

35. In my view, people of every age are able to continue growing and developing. 1 2 3 4 5 6

36. With time, I have gained a lot of insight about life that has made me a stronger, more capable person. 1 2 3 4 5 6

37. I have the sense that I have developed a lot as a person over time. 1 2 3 4 5 6

38. I do not enjoy being in new situations that require me to change my old familiar ways of doing things. 1 2 3 4 5 6

39. For me, life has been a continuous process of learning, changing, and growth. 1 2 3 4 5 6

40. I enjoy seeing how my views have changed and matured over time. 1 2 3 4 5 6

41. I gave up trying to make big improvements or changes in my life a long time ago. 1 2 3 4 5 6

42. There is truth to the saying that you can't teach an old dog new tricks. 1 2 3 4 5 6

43. Most people see me as loving and affectionate. 1 2 3 4 5 6

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44. Maintaining close relationships has been difficult and frustrating for me.   1   2   3   4   5   6

45. I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns.   1   2   3   4   5   6

46. I enjoy personal and mutual conversations with family members or friends.   1   2   3   4   5   6

47. It is important to me to be a good listener when close friends talk to me about their problems.   1   2   3   4   5   6

48. I don't have many people who want to listen when I need to talk.   1   2   3   4   5   6

49. I feel like I get a lot out of my friendships.   1   2   3   4   5   6

50. It seems to me that most other people have more friends than I do.   1   2   3   4   5   6

51. People would describe me as a giving person, willing to share my time with others.   1   2   3   4   5   6

52. I have not experienced many warm and trusting relationships with others.   1   2   3   4   5   6

53. I often feel like I'm on the outside looking in when it comes to friendship.   1   2   3   4   5   6

54. I know that I can trust my friends, and they know they can trust me.   1   2   3   4   5   6

55. I find it difficult to really open up when I talk to others.   1   2   3   4   5   6

56. My friends and I sympathize with each others' problems.   1   2   3   4   5   6

Qualitative Protocol

Protocol for Interview

Main areas of interest and possible probe questions:

1. General beginning

What does it mean to you to be a gay man in 1999?

2. Gay Identity

How would you label yourself, what components are the most and least
important, have these changed over time?

How would you say your identity is now, compared to as a child, adolescent,
adult?

What does your 'coming out' mean to you and how has it been/still is
negotiated?

Has coming out affected the way you have coped in other situations?

How many people are you 'out' to - family/friends/work colleagues?

How do you think that growing up gay in Britain in the 1940/50s would have
compared to growing up in another country e.g. US?

How would these differences have affected you?

Do you think that growing up gay in the 1990's would have changed who you
are - in what ways?

What part has your upbringing had in shaping your identity?

3. Gay Community

Are you involved in any political/social institutions?

How often do you use gay institutions?

Which do you use?

Have you ever experienced discrimination - age/sexuality?

How do you view younger gay people and how do you think that they view you?

How integrated into 'any' community do you feel?

4. Present relationships

What kinds of relationships have you been in - heterosexual/gay?

How has your sexual life altered over your life?

Where do you gain support from - family/friends?

What is your relationship with your family like and has it changed over time?

How many of your friends are gay/straight?

Has this number/ratio changed over time?

5. Experiences of growing older

How satisfied are you with your life and has this altered over time?

How do you feel you've adjusted to growing older?

What has been helpful and what have been hindrances to this adjustment?

Life review - what have been your major accomplishments?

How content are you with who you are today?

Do you think that growing old as a gay man is same/different to that of a straight person?

6. Anything else that you would like to tell me?

+ question on being in the services
+ question on being evacuated

Appendix I: Preliminary Findings and Evaluation Form

October, 99

Dear

Thank you very much for participating in the research we are conducting at University College London into how gay men manage growing older.

Please find enclosed the preliminary results of the study. As we discussed at the interview, this type of research involves taking the preliminary findings back to those who have taken part in the study. This 'checking out' allows us to make sure that we are on the right track with our interpretations of what people told us, and helps us to reconsider any areas people might disagree with us on.

Please find enclosed a sheet and a stamped, addressed envelope, on which to record and return your thoughts to us. We actively welcome responses to the enclosed results which confirm that we are on the right track and, equally, those which would challenge our preliminary findings. It is only through feedback from those that have taken part so far, that we can begin to have some confidence that we have begun the process of understanding how gay men successfully manage growing older.

Thank you once again for your continued interest.

Yours sincerely,

Nigel George   Nancy Pistrang
Clinical Psychologist in Training   Psychologist/Lecturer

Preliminary findings of research into how gay men manage growing older.

The question that this research is attempting to address is 'how do gay men manage growing older'? As many of you have commented, there are a number of similarities between how heterosexual men and gay men manage the ageing process. For example, virtually everyone interviewed - homosexual and heterosexual - noted that growing older successfully meant keeping healthy, active and financially secure. Research already published, on growing older successfully, highlights these areas as concerns for all people when ageing, rather than for any particular group of the population. However, in this research we are interested in finding out if there are any differences in the challenges gay men face when growing older and, if there are, how these challenges might be overcome.

Thus, the findings of the study presented here do not address these 'common challenges' of ageing, but rather, highlight what we believe to be differences between gay and heterosexual ageing so far discovered in the interviews.

As already noted, we are interested in your feedback which either supports these initial findings or which challenge their validity. We very much look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

1. **Management of Difference.** Perhaps not surprisingly, each of the gay men interviewed spoke about how they have learnt to manage their 'gay identity' over their life span. This 'management of difference' appears to have taken many forms and is still going on today. The different strategies adopted appear to be the result of a number of individual, sociological, cultural and historical factors. Each person interviewed spoke about how, in the first instance, they denied their first thoughts that they may be different, or hoped

that their difference was 'a phase'. However, as they came to recognize their difference as part of them, they found their own ways of managing it. Some of the gay men interviewed found ways of making their gay self 'invisible' to others by appearing heterosexual, or by actively behaving in a conforming way, for example by marrying. For others, isolating themselves has been the best strategy. Still others appear to have found that they are happier being out to virtually everybody they know and in all situations. Interestingly, it would appear that everyone interviewed has 'drifted' into making contact with others who are tolerant of their difference. This drift has resulted in their social, work, geographical location and/or relationship situations displaying some element of tolerance. This drift can be seen to lie on a continuum, with one extreme being where a person requires only the minimum degree of contact with tolerance, while at the other extreme a person may need to immerse their whole being in their gayness in order to manage their difference.

2. **Internal and External Controls on Management of Difference.** Decisions as to how and when a person might manage their gay identity in any of these different ways appears to be an interactive process, being influenced by internal and external forces. Internally, the person's need for self esteem and for avoidance of shame (either at being found out as gay or at not being open about who they are) appears to control which management strategy is used in different situations. Externally, the individual's relationships with family and friends, where they live geographically, their work, specific cultural changes (e.g. changes in the law regarding homosexuality), religion, gay representations in the media, and their relationship with the gay scene, would all be examples of major influences on the development of individual management strategies.

3. **Friendships with Younger Gay Men.** All of the men interviewed discussed having a varied friendship network. These networks contained straight and

gay people. However, invariably, they also included a number of younger gay men. The main reasons given for this contact with younger gay men appeared twofold: firstly, that the older men could offer some kind of advice/support to the younger men. Secondly, that the younger men, by virtue of being more in contact with the 'gay scene', allowed the older men to 'experience' this environment without actually venturing into it - virtually everybody believed that, on the whole, the gay scene was youth orientated and unhelpful to growing older. A corollary of this vicarious contact with the gay scene, via younger friends, was that participants gained a 'young at heart' attitude to life.

4. **Sexual Desirability.** One of the topics discussed extensively was sex. While people discussed the physical aspects of their sex lives, e.g. could they still perform, they also talked about their ability to get sex. This perception of their desirability appeared to hold particular significance. It could be that for a great deal of the men interviewed, sex had been, and still was, their only expression of being gay, as in virtually every other area of their lives they managed their gayness via invisibility. Alternatively, or perhaps in addition, sexual activity could be seen as a way of people defending themselves against feeling older.

Feedback Sheet

Please write your comments, either of agreement or disagreement, regarding each of the points discussed, on the feedback sheet below, then return the form in the stamped, addressed envelope enclosed.

1. Management of Difference

*Why do you agree or disagree?

2. Internal and External Controls on Management of Difference

*Why do you agree or disagree?

3. Friendships with Younger Gay Men

*Why do you agree or disagree?

4. Sexual Desirability

*Why do you agree or disagree?

Any further comments?

Thank you very much for your help.

Appendix J: An example of a transcribed interview

We are interested in how gay men manage the process of growing older. I wonder if you can tell me what are the important factors for you in that process?

Basically I think that being identified as a gay man so that I am in harmony with my own spirit and my own energy. Being able to address that with my friends and family in an open fashion, so that there is no angst around that. The other thing that is important to me is to be part of my community, by that I mean the gay community. I am a member of that as a volunteer and I organise gay men's weeks throughout the year. It is about trying to provide a stability within myself, but also acknowledging that that has to be within the community within which I live. I live in the wider community, but it is also important that I have a solid base within my own community.

Has that always been the way. Has being gay always been so important to you?

No. As a younger man. A. The law was against me and that freedom has only been achieved in the latter years. So, no it hasn't. There has been a duality as a younger man. Understanding myself, but not being allowed to be public about

it. The laws though are still not in place to enhance my life. I think that since my 40th. I am thinking of turning points in my life. I used to lecture in arts and drama, in secondary education and I met a lot of undercurrents of homophobia there. I don't know why, but I decided to tackle it straight on. I would address it with pupils and staff. I don't know whether it is age.

You mention this duality. I wonder if you could say more about how that emerged and how it has changed as time has gone on to the present time?

My sense of my personal expression, especially of my sexuality was very covert. I think that people had an understanding of that. I wasn't comfortable enough or able enough to open that out in a direct way. I suppose, I went to college when I was a mature student. Mark said to me, when you were at college you were like a machine. I think that is a image. What I did was I subverted all of my sexual energy and my identity into being very productive around other things - drama, theatre etc. So, I suppose that that was my release. I think that I was very guarded the whole time. I was very defensive man about my personal life and my person. The image that I would use is of myself as a well defended castle, with a draw bridge that I could control and with slits that allowed me to fire the arrows.

Were you out in any sphere of your life?

No, not really. One person. A straight guy at college. He was very helpful. I was not at ease with myself and he said, A. I thnk that you are worrying unnecessarily, because I don't think that anyone would define you in any particular category and the fact that you are you is the most important fact. I didn't get any comments about my self or sexuality, but looking back I was pretty defined and aggressive.

What were the turning points?

That change didn't come until my mid 50's. By this time I was reflecting on my career in education. I had always been interested in working with people - as in drama. I thought how could I engage in something I enjoyed. I decided to go into counselling in personal growth, I had begun to open up by that time, but it just happened all the more, I became more at ease with myself.

That was in your 50's, how about between 30's and 50's?

I went to college in my mid 30's. I had my first sexual experience in my mid 30's as a gay man and that was acknowledging myself, but that was still very enclosed. I don't think that I was at ease with it. That grew throughout that

period of time - my 30's. In my 40's I established a relationship - not a live in relationship. But at least I allowed myself and someone else to inhabit my culture. As a consequence I made wider contact with friends.

Was that the when you decided about who you might be? Did you ever think about marriage, for example?

No. As a young man I was in a youth organisation. There were a couple of periods in my life when I went out with women. But looking back I can think that I knew that that wasn't me. I was a dancer. I had a partner and I went out with her for a short while. I remember the relief when I found out that she was engaged. I think that I was 21 and that moment in time I thought, 'I can let that go'. From that moment on I seem to focus on that is not my route and then alternative things took over. In my early 30's, a bevy of women, cousins, kept asking me when I was going to get married. I had a brother who was very popular, very handsome, and there was a constant, 'when is it your turn'. My mother, who was very supportive, said, 'I think that you should leave him alone. I think that he has decided what he wants to do'. I think that was a very gentle understanding of the position. I don't think she thought that I was gay.

Was it unspoken about within the family?

I am one of 5. I did not have a relationship with my father. I think from the outset there was a difference and the family recognised it, I recognised it. I didn't go the way of other people.

Are you out to anybody in your family?

Oh yes. When I had this relationship for 8 years. I wrote to my mother. My father had died by that point, I don't know whether he could have coped with it. I wrote to my mother, that is the way we always communicated. I got a very nice letter back saying that her only concern was that I would be hurt. I went to see her soon after and she told me that my aunt use to love women the way that women love men. I thought that was a very gentle way of telling me and a very generous gift. I know that she had traumas about it. She had a lot of guilt and blame. I told my sister and she just said, 'well your L, and that is who you are'. I think that my brother in laws make snide remarks which I choose to ignore, it is an ignorance on their part. I don't spend my life trying to sew seeds on stony ground.

I wonder if you could say a bit more about the factors that prevented you from coming out earlier on?

There was no role model, there was just the image of old men in dirty raincoats. There was nobody who gave me any inkling about me being any different. My family would have been a stereotype of 'you get married, you have children', there was no other path. I can't even think of a single person in the family who was different. I was brought up in central London. I can't think of a glimmer that told me about what I wanted. I think that instinctively I knew what I wanted. The pleasures of childhood are of time with men. As a young man and a boy I had homosexual experiences. I didn't share those with anybody. When I was in the army, as a conscript, on two occasions, if I had been less well defended of I could have had experiences, but I was too frightened. I must have known. I wasn't able to act. I lived in Australia for 2 years. I stayed in a hotel and a man made advances. I accepted them and then fear stepped in and I just couldn't. That duality of mine.

There seem to have been a number of internal and external factors which have allowed an opening up. I am trying to get a feel for what came first.

I think that it is more myself. I have to make the step. They have been quite frightening. I use to be a Morris dancing. I went home with a guy once. I allowed myself to be there. It wasn't easy for me. However, it allowed me to start peeling off the layers and maintaining contact.

We have said quite a lot about the early part of your life and wonder what has been important about the last few years?

I think that for me it is coming to recognise the kind of person I am. I am very individual and that is recognising that as a child I was thought of as an isolat, I don't mean isolated, or lonely, I was very much in myself, and I recognise that still as a large part of myself. But at the same time I do value, I still have a wide circle of friends without being enmeshed. I wouldn't want to be without that engagement and support. I think that growing old as a gay man, as the man, I have to recognise my blessing of good health, although I work at that. Although the gay community is important I do have very good support form my family. I don't feel like the outsider. I am very different. I think that those are important factors. I think that from a sexuality point of view, for me, it is still important. Caring and intimate is equally important.

How do you find an expression for that in your life?

There are 2-3 people who I can be intimate or sexual and that is a close understanding. We respect each others lives. I do occasionally go out and meet people and that is pleasant. I went on a gay men's week in April and I met a younger man, I think that most of the people I associate with are younger than

me, and I felt a very close connection with him. It could have been sexual, but it wasn't, and that wasn't important. I work within the Edward Carpenter community, and there isn't anything about age. There are a lot of older men there who are not discriminated against. For me, the community is about embracing all of the age groups, not being parked off in some corner.

What do you value about your relationship with younger men?

I love the energy. The openness. The creativity. In particular, gay men, when I grew up there was much more division of role - active passive - the joy of young people is that they are just people, they have multifaceted relationships, it doesn't categorize them. I find them much more open and refreshing in their sexuality and the way that they express it. There whole being. I really appreciate it.

Do you think that they reflect more who the person you are now?

I certainly connect and align myself with them. I get very irritated with people of my own age who castigate them and say that they have never had it so good. I say brilliant and why not, and I am a receiver of that in another form. I certainly feel at ease with young men. I meet people of my own age, who are

creative and as energetic as they want to be, within the community as it exists now.

I seems that a lot of your identity is represented in an involvement with the gay community?

I think that it is very important to me, and a very strong focus. I do a lot of travelling. That isn't around gay connections. It is important to be part of a community which acknowledges me as the person I am. The community out there, though it is opening out, there is still a lot of intolerance. I think that a lot of the tolerance is skin deep.

How have the evolution of the self and the gay community matched one another?

There are sections of the gay community which is very exploitative. There are parts that are very caring. The pubs and the clubs, I have never been a strong part of that. I think that my development has been enhanced by being in connection with the gay community which does understand and care. I think that I still want to be part of the community but not in such a string way. I think that in the end you have to find a personal core and I don't think that that can be

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solid unless it is part of something else. I think that there is such a thing as witnessing. If I can't put it out there.

What do you think of the more commercial side, gay pride?

I use to go on pride because I thought the word said, I am here, we are proud of ourselves and we are not going to hide. It has turned into a festival, it doesn't have the same political and social focus, I feel sad about that. Things move on. I always go on the march. I am not that kind of person to go to the festival. I think that it is important to remain open to the public and that we do not allow ourselves to be pushed back. Pride is important, but things move on.

Do you have any spiritual beliefs?

I recognise a spirituality which is being part of something much wider and greater than myself. Something about recognising that within the immensity, and although I am small, I am significant. I don't believe in god, but I am part of something.

How would you describe this castle today?

I think that it still exists. I don't think that it will ever be demolished. I am aware that I am still in control of the drawbridge, but it comes down with more ease. However, I now recognise that the draw bridge is there for communication and not defence. Instead of from looking from the ramparts and seeing the need to defend, it is looking and seeing what is out there and the beauty - what is welcoming. It is interesting that the castle is still there but I can now go out or can welcome people into the castle.

A lot has happened between these two images. How have you got between these two images?

I don't want it to be seen as sordid, secretive, dirty or anything like that. It is like seeing a magnificent flower opening out. For me, as a man, it is important to be able to share, particularly with young men, the beauty of it. I got that slowly through my connection with other people, and I allowed myself to be what I wanted to be. There is a constant battle for me to reinforce the goodness that is around. I have had to work at thinking of myself as an attractive man, an open man, a good man. Beside that is my sexuality. I have had to peel of the layers that society has constantly put on me. If you are constantly reminded that you are a bit of a misfit, you are not going to do much about it, unless you are challenged. It is respecting the difference. I enjoy sex, I am not going to deny it. It is not that I don't have anything else in my life. It is a core. As I get older I

don't have the same drives or energy, but I still have the same needs. I still have

the same joy. I understand why people get trapped in a societal framework and I

am not prepared to be there. I occasionally joke about it with my family. I can

allow the flowers in the castle to bloom and I know that they will bloom because

I have given them the environment to bloom.

The way in which I have grown is by allowing myself to be supported by other

people. Allowing a part of myself to grow with the support of others. It is a

gradual process.

What is the difference between you and more circumscribed people?

That is easy. I am a risk taker. People tell me that at my age I should take less

risks. I have always been a risk taker. My father use to call me a girlish boy. He

didn't know how to take me. But my mother said that I use to be able to stand it.

I would just stand there. There is something in the child.

How important has therapy been for you getting to where you are today?

It has been at the core. The group work has been essential.

What work did you do?

I was going to be a tailor, then I became a butcher, then accountancy, I wasn't cut out to be an accountant. I always wanted to teach.

I wonder if we could just go back a little bit. I am particularly interested in what you feel may have aided your 'growth'?

I want to acknowledge the role of my mother. At no time was I tied to her apron strings. When I wanted to do anything she supported me. The stability of that relationship was very important. I knew that I didn't want to be like my parents. I knew that there was something different for me. There was always this drive and going forward. It is an awareness in the child that they are different, and that by being different they must do something about it. I think that underneath it all my emotional being was not being met, or growing. I can remember at 18 leaving a party and getting on my bike and braking down and having great distress because I knew that I wasn't happy because I was different. At another time I stopped myself and said, 'I will not allow this', 'I will not be treated like this'. There is a need, from my father, to fulfill an agenda, to conform, to succeed. I knew the difference, and wanting to be different and not accepting what was given to me. It is a sense of journey. It won't stop when I die. I think that there is more to discover. It has been the drive. It is a sense of knowing

some of the things about myself. The useful things. The enjoyable things. Age has never been significant to me. I am aware of being an older man. But I don't consider it. I have never really retired. I do have more of a sense of just being now. I am doing less and I am spending more time on my own and that is what I plan to do.

Perhaps that would be a good place to end. Thank you.