Investigating sexuality : a personal review of homosexual behaviour, identities and subcultures in social research

Author:
Prestage, Garrett

Publication Date:
2002

DOI:
https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/21280

INVESTIGATING SEXUALITY:

A Personal Review of Homosexual Behaviour, Identities and Subcultures in Social Research

Garrett Prestage

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,

University of New South Wales, June 2002

CONTENTS

TABLES

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis has been a long time coming for me. Along the way I have had many encouragements, and several setbacks. To begin with, I thank my supervisor, Frances Lovejoy, for her persistence in encouraging me to do this work. Without her I probably would have avoided the task interminably. Thanks also to my friend Craig Johnston for diligently proofreading the drafts and making sure my grammar, punctuation and formatting were sensible.

My partner, my love and my friend, Trevor Dougherty, has supported me throughout and, when I needed to avoid distractions, he has willingly created the quiet space I needed.

I especially want to thank Sue Kippax for reviewing some early drafts and providing valuable suggestions about the direction to take this thesis. Sue encouraged me to make my own position explicit and this led me on a trajectory that ultimately helped me to clarify the very core of my thesis. Furthermore, Sue kindly suggested and gave permission for me to utilise data from the various studies for which I have had some responsibility during my long association with the National Centre in HIV Social Research and the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research.

And, finally, I want to express my gratitude to all the men, gay and otherwise, who have willingly donated their time to provide their stories, usually through survey questionnaires, throughout the years I have been doing this research.

Garrett Prestage

June 2002.

ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the relationship between identity, behaviour and desire to examine the nature of research among homosexually active men. The hypothesis is that samples of such men necessarily reflect the definitions of sexuality and homosexuality, and their interpretation, by both the researchers themselves and their research subjects, meaning that the research process itself is marked by the subjectivity of the field of sexuality. The relationship between the observer and the observed is intrinsic to research into homosexual subjectivity and the samples obtained, therefore, represent particular kinds of sexual subjects in a particular social and sexual cultural milieu. Research in this field has given pre-eminence to behaviour over identity and desire, and, as such, has usually failed to account for these differences in sexual subjectivities.

To investigate this problem, I have reviewed the relevant literature both on subjectivity and on methodological approaches to research among homosexual men, and I have appraised my own ideological and personal relationships with the subject matter. I have examined the nature of the samples of homosexual men I have obtained during my work as a researcher within the Sydney gay community and reanalysed these with regard to the particular problematic I have identified.

These investigations and analyses have shown that there are numerous differences within and between the various samples of homosexual men obtained, indicating that methodological frameworks can determine the nature of the samples obtained. These differences in samples also appear to reflect differences in the ways of enacting homosexual desire among the men in the studies. However, they also parallel differences in the definitions and understandings of the target population by the researchers themselves.

These differences reflect differences in definition and understanding both of homosexuality and of the population of gay men, but they also represent differing patterns in the ways of being and living 'gay', differences in sexual subjectivity. 'Gayness' and homosexuality, as concepts in research, are both the subjective basis on which the research endeavour itself is based, as well as its representational outcome.

Certificate of Originality

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and to the best of my knowledge it contains no materials previously published or written by another person, nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at UNSW or any other educational institution, except where due acknowledgement is made in the thesis. Any contribution made to the research by others, with whom I have worked at UNSW or elsewhere, is explicitly acknowledged in the thesis.

I also declare that the intellectual content of this thesis is the product of my own work, except to the extent that assistance from others in the project's design and conception or in style, presentation and linguistic expression is acknowledged.

SIGNATURE:

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Sexual behaviour has often been assumed to be the effect of a pre-given, innate, psychobiological function, even within the modern gay political movement, which has linked that assumption to a belief that sexual behaviour, desire and identity can be conflated together.

It is the contention of this thesis that these are distinct and separate, though related, aspects of the social organisation of sexuality. In particular, this thesis is concerned with how (male) homosexuality has been researched and represented at the interface between sociology and psychology. It contends that research among homosexually active men relies on various definitional assumptions about homosexuality and that, without considering the relationship between identity, desire and behaviour, this research fails to adequately represent these men's sexualities, and often actively misrepresents them.

Individual sexual behaviour, like other individual characteristics, is based in social definitions – of sexuality – at both a societal level and at the immediate level of the individual's own cultural and subcultural contexts, and it is given meaning, within these contexts, through individual interpretation. The argument is, therefore, that research into sexuality can only address its social bases when it considers sexuality in its particular social and cultural contexts. Within such a perspective, the social environment of sexuality – from the macro level of society to the micro level of individuals and their personal relations and beliefs – needs to be considered when conducting research into and seeking to understand individual expressions of sexuality.

Since the advent of the AIDS epidemic there has been an explosion of research among homosexually active men in Western countries because, in those countries, this is the population in which AIDS was first recognised, and it still remains the epicentre of the HIV epidemic in many of those countries. This research has had two primary purposes: to monitor the epidemic and gay men's behavioural responses to it; and to identify risk factors for HIV infection among that population. The primary focus of the research, then, has been homosexually active men's sexual behaviour. Indeed, the very term 'homosexually active men' has been formulated to encompass all men who engage in homosexual sex practices, regardless of their sexual identity or preference. The term is itself instructive as it gives pre-eminence to these men's sexual behaviour over all other aspects of their lives, and, indeed, over all other aspects of their sexualities.

The thesis

In this thesis, I address the problematic, and interactive, relationship between identity, community and practice, and how important these are to understanding research among homosexual men. What theoretical assumptions have been at play in the construction of this research and what can we take from this research to shed light on these issues? To address this issue I have drawn on a number of research studies with which I have been formally associated, and I have reanalysed certain aspects of the data for this purpose.

I believe that my position as both researcher of gay men's lives, and as an active participant in the gay community life that I have been investigating, requires that I interrogate and clearly articulate my own position and perspective on these. I will discuss the place of the researcher in relation to the research subject, as well as

provide a biographical account of how I came to do the work I do. This touches on the nature of objectivity and subjectivity in social research and places the researcher at the centre of the research process, as a subjective observer and a key informant. I will discuss why I matter within the research process itself.

I will outline the data with which I have been working. To begin with, I provide a general overview of data from the various studies with which I have been involved. While these have been used to describe a broad profile of homosexual men in Sydney, my intention is to present a general summary of the nature of the samples used in this thesis. The question I pose at this point is: who are gay men, according to these studies?

Having established what sort of men emerge from these studies, in general terms, I then begin a critical review of the data with respect to three key issues: sexual identity, community enculturation, and sampling methods. The questions addressed are: how might we problematise the relationship between identity, community and practice, and how much does sampling affect what research tells us about gay men?

Having reviewed this problematic, and interactive, relationship between identity, community and practice, and their importance to understanding the data and the necessary analytical considerations with respect to this sort of research, I turn my attention to the particular role of gay sexual subcultures. I review the data to examine whether they can reveal different types of sexual subcultures among homosexually active men, both within and outside the gay community.

So, does this research tell us anything about gay culture, gay men or homosexuality? This is my final question, and in posing that question, I need to

consider my own position once again, with respect to what I have uncovered through these studies.

Datasets

The datasets drawn on directly in this thesis have been established through Australian studies of homosexually active men for which I was either a principal investigator or the person primarily responsible for the study's implementation, or, as in the case of Male Call, responsible for the development of the methodology and involved in its implementation. These studies are:

Study 1. Western Sydney Beats Study (Bennett et al., 1989a; Prestage, 1992). This was a two stage cross-sectional study of homosexually active men in the western suburban areas of Sydney. The first stage (in 1988) involved face-to-face interviews with any homosexually active men at known gay social venues in the area and at 'beats'. The sample included 129 men. The second stage (in 1989) involved interviews only with men who had little or no contact with gay community activities or institutions. The sample consisted of 171 men recruited at beats and through personal advertisements in local newspapers. In both stages a structured interviewer-administered questionnaire was used. Only data from the second stage have been used here. I was a principal investigator and directly responsible for the data collection.

Study 2. Bisexual Activity/Non-Gay Community Attachment Research (BANGAR) Study (Hood et al., 1994). This was a cross-sectional study of homosexually active men who were not associated with, and did not identify with, gay community life. The men were recruited through a variety of sources, using a range of strategies, and were interviewed anonymously, mainly by telephone, using

a semi-structured questionnaire. This sample included 698 men. I was a principal investigator.

Study 3. Sydney Men and Sexual Health (SMASH) Study (Prestage et al., 1995a). This was a longitudinal cohort study of homosexually active men associated with the Sydney gay community. The men were interviewed annually between 1993 and 1998, using a highly detailed, structured interviewer-administered questionnaire. The 1143 men in this sample were recruited through a broad range of gay community sources. I was a principal investigator and directly responsible for the data collection.

Study 4. Gay Community Periodic Surveys (Prestage et al., 1996a). This is a recurrent cross-sectional survey of homosexually active men recruited through a range of sites associated with the gay community (commencing in February 1996 in Sydney). A self-complete survey instrument is utilised. Each February, the Sydney sample includes over 1000 homosexually active men recruited at Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day, and every February and August the sample includes a further 600-1000 men recruited through other gay community sites. I was a principal investigator and directly responsible for the data collection.

Study 5. Project Male Call (Kippax et al., 1994). This was a cross-sectional study of homosexually active men across Australia in 1992, using a broad range of recruitment strategies, as devised by this author. Interviews were conducted by telephone using a structured questionnaire. This sample included 2583 men. A second wave of this study, called Male Call II (Crawford et al., 1998) was conducted in 1996. This sample included 3019 men. I was responsible for the methodological development and training for this study.

Detailed descriptions of the methodologies used in each of these studies can be found in the reports prepared for those studies (and referred to above). In this thesis I have reanalysed aspects of the data from each study. This reanalysis has involved a reconsideration of the findings, and of the data themselves, with regard to the broader theoretical challenges I have raised in this thesis. Some statistical reanalysis was conducted using SPSS. These analyses were largely descriptive, usually involving some reformulation of the samples and comparisons of the subsequently newly-defined sub-samples. My intent has been to describe certain differences between and within each of the samples from these studies to support the theoretical argument. To detect such differences, chi-square tests were used for categorical variables and t-tests for independent samples were used for continuous variables, assuming unequal variance when Levene's test for equality of variance was significant at $p<.05$. In most cases these analyses are limited in several respects. In some, the numbers are small, while in others the categories used have been constructed from variables not originally intended for these purposes. While the differences between and within the samples are important, these only bear on my argument at a general level and need to be considered within the broader theoretical concerns outlined below.

Theoretical concerns

Before attempting to research sexuality in any group or individual, it is important to recognise both the individual and social bases of sexuality. Any research concerning sexuality must always consider these broader issues:

- What is sexuality and how does it relate to sexual identity?
- How does sexuality develop and change for the individual?

- What effect does the immediate social and personal environment have on individual sexual expression and attitudes?

While these issues are beyond the scope of this thesis, their theoretical consideration provides a necessary framework in which to situate it. Sexuality is not simply a personal or individual phenomenon; nor is it purely the product of social conditioning. It varies between individuals and between social groups. To research sexuality it is therefore necessary to consider which particular groups of individuals are being targeted and what sexuality means to them: how have they developed and maintained their particular forms of sexuality and how is that expressed?

A social interactionist perspective suggests there is no clear or automatic correspondence between social forces and personal behaviour: although personal behaviour might well be regulated and given meaning only through its social context, it remains highly individualised. It is a product of particular social and personal influences rather than general social forces, and the interaction between the personal and the social are very complex, particularly as individuals express it.

In attempting to understand these issues, we need to examine the different experiences and situations of individuals, and then to locate them within their social context. We then need to examine the differences of interpretation of sexual behaviour, both between and within groups whose behaviour is superficially similar, to obtain some indication of how social forces interact with individual, and, indeed, subcultural, circumstances. This thesis seeks to explore this nexus between behaviour, identity and desire among homosexually active men. To achieve this, there will be reference to both quantitative and qualitative interviews with such men, some of whom are socially attached to an organised gay community and some

of whom have no association at all with such communities or, in some cases, even with other homosexually active men (except sexually). The qualitative data include men who were interviewed not for their representativeness but for their uniqueness: men whose experiences are interesting in themselves and whose insights help to convey an understanding of the social forces that interact in the development of sexual identities and the interpretations of sexual behaviours by individuals. The quantitative data draw on several studies with which I have been associated. I use these data to examine the interplay between identity, behaviour and desire in some detail. Such an analysis has implications for both the methodological and theoretical bases of research into sexuality, in general and with particular reference to this population. I identify those implications in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 2. OBSERVER AND OBSERVED

This thesis draws on research with which I have been personally involved over many years, and in many ways this is a critical appraisal of aspects of this research. My own position is, of course, central: while I have been closely involved in the research, I have also been closely involved with aspects of gay community life. My involvement with both, and my perspectives on these, affect the way I understand and interpret the data. It is appropriate, therefore, to first position myself, both historically and philosophically.

Biographical comments

My relationship to the gay community and my subsequent involvement in researching gay community life mirror the development of the gay community itself in Sydney. While I was developing an understanding of the concept of gay community, it was recognising and articulating its own existence. As I increasingly saw myself as rightfully located within that community, I also applied my particular skills on behalf of that community, thereby defining my own role and enhancing my sense of place and belonging.

Pre-gay community

I began my own involvement with the gay community before it was even constituted as a community, or at least, before it was aware of itself as a community. In the mid-1970s, I was a young Marxist and university activist, and only just beginning to understand my own sexuality. In many ways I

confined my gay activism to academia in that I tended to focus on sexuality, and homosexuality in particular, as an object of my studies.

At this time, the long-running campus gay group at Sydney University – Sydney University Gay Liberation – had virtually ceased to function. I decided to establish a new campus group, in association with several others. That group was called Active Defence of Homosexuals on Campus (ADHOC). It quickly became one of the most active gay organisations in Sydney, both politically and socially. In 1977 that group became one of the groups involved in organising the Fourth National Homosexual Conference and I became one of the Co-Convenors. This conference was planned for August 1978, which made the Conference Collective one of the largest and more broad-based gay organisations in Sydney during the events of the first Gay Mardi Gras in 1978. When the call went out from the USA to organise activities in solidarity with their struggle against the Anita Bryant crusade, I also contributed my time and energy to those activities.

Oddly, it was this move to a more stridently political approach for my involvement in the gay movement that brought me in contact with the commercial gay scene. Up to this time I had largely dismissed the gay bar scene as being purely commercial and exploitative, though I had had no direct experience of that scene myself. In helping to organise the first Mardi Gras, however, I had to work with other gay men and lesbians from outside the university networks, and we sought to attract people from the commercial scene to demonstrate the breadth of gay and lesbian lives.

As a result of this activity, I struggled with the apparent contradictions between my previously-held ideological convictions and the real circumstances of most gay people's lives. And I also found my home. I realised it was not possible to expect most gay men and lesbians to live their lives according to a strict set of ideological principles, because they had to also find a place in the world, which often meant compromising and concealing their sexuality. I also discovered that the commercial gay scene offered me the opportunity to explore and express my sexuality in a variety of ways which meant I did not have to explain myself to others. Within the gay commercial scene I was free to explore my sexuality in a relatively safe space, and I could find my own particular sexual niche.

From 1978 onward I involved myself primarily within the 'gay scene'. I socialised in gay commercial venues and mainly with gay men who also participated in that scene. I also reassessed my political commitments to the more ideologically leftist aspects of the gay movement. It seemed to me that the gay left, which dominated the gay movement of the late 1970s and into the 1980s, failed to develop a relationship with the very people who should have been its constituents: gay men and lesbians. Most gay men and lesbians at that time appeared to me to live fairly closeted lives. They carefully chose the circumstances in which they permitted their homosexuality to be acknowledged, and most of their socialising with other gay men and lesbians was done in relatively hidden social settings. In particular, the commercial subculture was almost invisible. There were only a few venues, most of which were fairly difficult to find, and businesses almost never publicised themselves

as being gay or lesbian. The apparent reluctance of the gay left to acknowledge and accommodate the difficult circumstances that most gay men and lesbians faced was unacceptable to me.

Advent of the gay community

At the same time as I rejected the gay left, major shifts occurred in the development of the gay community in Sydney, in particular the development of the very concept of 'gay community'. Within the commercial subculture, this concept was used to distinguish the growing number of self-identified gay and lesbian businesses from the older venues that had been controlled by criminal interests. Within the gay movement, a coalition of gay organisations whose raison d'être was often social, rather than political, developed in opposition to gay political organisations. They viewed these as being controlled by ideologues who were unwilling to accommodate those who disagreed with their perspective. In both the political and the commercial arenas, these new voices were being raised in opposition to what was felt to be a lack of primary allegiance to gay and lesbian interests. Commercially, the 'mafia' control of gay venues was tied to a criminal underworld whose interests were clearly elsewhere. Indeed, on the very basic issues of homosexual law reform, many gay men at the time felt that the illegality of homosexuality was actually beneficial to these commercial interests because they were so closely linked to corrupt elements in the police force. Politically, many gay men complained about leftist control of the gay movement, in that it excluded aspects of their lives, with sections of the left scornfully labelling these aspects as 'lifestyle politics'. Many gay men expressed the belief that the

primary obligation of the gay left was to a set of beliefs regardless of their relevance or appropriateness to their own lives.

Between 1979 and 1983 the gay commercial scene and the gay movement were deeply divided on ideological lines, and primarily around the concept of 'gay community'. The debate was between those, particularly on the left of the gay movement, who argued against the existence of a gay community, claiming instead that there was only a gay movement, united only by politico-ideological objectives, and those who argued for the existence of a gay community based on a broader gay culture. I came down firmly on the side of the latter group, though I did not view the gay community as the homogeneous entity often portrayed by its proponents.

Few would disagree that this debate was eventually settled in favour of the community, though the debate has continued on in various ways throughout the entire history of the post-Gay Liberation gay community. From the end of the 1970s and through the early 1980s, the gay commercial scene expanded dramatically, gay media became well-established, and a great variety of gay community organisations and services began to develop.

At the same time, gay and lesbian issues became more politically prominent than ever before. With the growing size and self-confidence of the gay community, came also more broad-based gay political organisations, and a greater willingness on the part of gay men and lesbians to demand their rights.

During this period I was working within the NSW Department of Youth and Community Services, primarily as a youth worker, and writing occasional articles for the gay press. During 1981 and 1982 youth

homelessness, drug abuse and juvenile prostitution became a politically important issue, with a particular focus on young gay men. Sydney City Council responded by establishing a new youth worker position to deal with this issue. I was offered the job.

During the next two years I devoted much of my time and energy to gay youth issues. It was my belief that the primary need was for a specifically dedicated gay youth service, funded to assist young gay men and young lesbians, and which was primarily responsible to the gay community. I established Twenty-Ten as a voluntary organisation. It was clear, however, that funding would be necessary to enable the organisation to survive. Funding for community organisations could only be achieved by demonstrating a need, so I used the research skills I had developed to this end. In the meantime I became a regular contributor to the gay press, writing about the issues relevant to young gay men and young lesbians.

Researching the gay community

Based on the growing political prominence of the issue of young gay men, I sought funding from the Drug and Alcohol Authority of the NSW Department of Health, to research drug and alcohol use and abuse among young gay men and young lesbians. This was the first public funding provided by the NSW State Government to any gay or lesbian community organisation. My purpose in this was entirely political: there was a need for services to young gay men and young lesbians, and research was the means to obtain such funding through the judicious use of the findings. Drug and alcohol issues were a convenient tool because it was obvious – at least it was to me – that use

of drugs was very high; and money was available to research that particular issue.

During 1983, I, and the other people who had volunteered for Twenty-Ten, devoted most of our time to this research task. As was expected, the findings were easily used to lobby for funding for a dedicated gay youth service. I held a press conference and we managed to have a brief media blitz, including an editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* decrying the situations to which gay youth were being subjected. Funding followed shortly thereafter.

I also took the opportunity of this research to explore the issue of prostitution. Responding to a political imperative, the NSW Parliament had established an Inquiry into Prostitution. I teamed with local prostitute activist, Roberta Perkins, to prepare a comprehensive submission. Roberta had conducted her own survey of the women doing sex work in inner Sydney as a way of presenting her submission, and we combined this with the findings from the Twenty-Ten survey. We decided we needed to supplement these data with some more qualitative interview material. This material was fascinating to us. Roberta, like myself, was interested in the more general academic issues concerning sexuality, and this interview material, coupled with the data we had already obtained, highlighted aspects of sexuality rarely discussed. We wrote up this material in 1984 and it was published as a book the following year (Perkins and Bennett, 1985).

The advent of AIDS

By this time, AIDS had emerged as the pre-eminent issue for the gay community. The research material I had worked on concerning gay youth had pre-dated the AIDS issue by only a few months. In 1984, at the height of the first AIDS panic, I left Australia to live in San Francisco for six months. This was fairly common among gay men in Sydney at that time, but I was going at a time when AIDS was the all-pervasive issue within the gay community, and nowhere was this more the case than in San Francisco. My prime purpose for being in San Francisco was to attend classes at the Institute for the Advanced Study of Human Sexuality, but I also spent a lot of time becoming aware of the gay community's response to HIV. And I continued writing for the Sydney gay press.

On my return to Sydney I was concerned that there was little evidence of any organised response to the AIDS issue within the gay community, except with regard to the provision of assistance to people who were sick. In San Francisco I had witnessed the gay community being attacked politically, and gay men allowing their sexuality to be restricted by public health authorities. In Sydney, those attacks were also beginning.

Until this time, I was probably the only person from within the gay community who had undertaken public health research among gay men in Sydney. I was also continuing to write about these sorts of issues within the gay press, including a regular column, called 'Beat It'. This column was explicitly sexual but also incorporated messages about a sex-positive response to the AIDS crisis. The column was widely read and somewhat controversial,

which was my main objective. I wanted an open discussion within the gay community about gay men's sexuality so that the community could respond to this crisis in ways that protected gay men's right to express their sexuality.

I was asked by the NSW Department of Health to prepare a gay men's needs assessment. This was yet another example to me of the political nature of research, particularly public health research. The gay community was in the grip of a major public health crisis and gay men's needs at that time were almost self-evident: they were dedicated care and support services for gay men, and educational material targeting gay men to inform them about how to avoid becoming infected. However, public funds were not available without the imprimatur of research findings.

My response was two-fold: to prepare a report based on consultations with key informants from within the community, highlighting what was already well-known; and to work with the newly-formed AIDS Council of NSW and the Bobby Goldsmith Foundation to produce the very first organised safe-sex education campaign, called 'Rubba Me'.[1] Like my columns in the press, this campaign was sexually explicit and gay sex-positive. It also was somewhat controversial, forcing even more community discussion of the issues. Every safe sex education campaign since then has taken as a given that gay men's sexuality will be presented in a positive manner, and that the images and language used will reflect those of the gay community itself.

[1] Individual gay men had previously circulated, at their own expense, a pamphlet about AIDS, using material from a San Francisco pamphlet (Sister Mary Third Secret of Fatima, 1993), but this was before the development of any concept of 'safe sex' as proposed by the early AIDS activist Michael Callen (1983).

While this may be taken for granted now, in 1984 and 1985 this was highly contentious.

Shortly thereafter, a medical student asked me to supervise his community medicine placement. He wanted to conduct a survey of gay men using sex venues about their responses to AIDS and what they were doing to protect themselves. This seemed a worthwhile project at the time, and one that would be very helpful to the new AIDS Council's emerging educational work. However, it was also a project fraught with problems politically. Whereas most of the research I had been involved with previously was intended to be used to secure support from government, and the wider public, this research could not be used in that way at all. Indeed it was precisely the opposite, given the public calls to close down gay sex venues as a public health response to AIDS. This was what had happened in San Francisco, and many gay men in that city had been complicit in that decision. Very few gay men in Sydney had supported such an approach, and I was one of those who actively encouraged the use of sex venues as a resource for safe sex education. This was why I had chosen to have the 'Rubba Me' campaign launched at a sex venue. However, in the political climate of the time, research findings describing the sexual behaviour of gay men in a sex venue could have been used by opponents of the gay community to close down those venues. We wanted to use the findings to ascertain whether gay men in those venues were aware of the issues and how they were responding, so that the AIDS Council could respond appropriately.

In the end, we conducted the survey and produced a 'Confidential Report', which was made available only to officers of the relevant gay community organisations. We successfully interviewed 50 men and the findings formed the basis of some early educational initiatives aimed primarily at the sex venues. These included having safe sex educational material located on the premises, and having condoms and lubricant readily available.

Developing HIV social research

Between 1986 and 1989 I lived in two cities, some of the time in Sydney and some of the time in San Francisco. In both cities I involved myself in local HIV and safe sex education activities, and I continued to write for the Australian gay press. In 1988, while I was in Sydney for some months, I was contracted by the Department of Community Medicine at Westmead Hospital to conduct some research among homosexually active men in Western Sydney. The purpose of the research was to determine these men's knowledge about HIV and safe sex, and how they were behaving sexually as a result.

The major problem with this research was how to locate the men. I fully expected that the population of homosexually active men living in Western Sydney would be quite different to a population of gay men living within the inner-city gay subculture. Indeed I expected that a very large proportion would not be gay at all. Gay men were generally attracted to the inner-city gay subculture and would be disproportionately represented within the inner-city areas, while they would be a relatively smaller proportion of the population in Western Sydney. On the other hand, there were other types of homosexually active men: bisexual men, married men living a closeted

lifestyle, young homosexual men in the process of coming out, and other men who simply enjoyed or desired sex with another man on occasion. There were, however, very few venues in Western Sydney where homosexually active men could meet and socialise, and those few were unlikely to attract many other than the local gay men. I drew on my own experiences and those of other gay men, to consider the ways in which homosexually active men meet each other in the absence of an organised commercial subculture. Apart from private networks and individual encounters, neither of which provide a reasonable basis for recruitment into a research project, there were two possible methods though which they were likely to be able to be contacted.

The first method was through beats (public places, usually toilets or parks, where men could have sex with each other, usually anonymously). This had not been attempted before as a research strategy, and it would naturally pose many difficulties, but it seemed to me that it was not that different to conducting interviews in gay commercial venues, sex venues, or with street prostitutes, all of which I had previously done successfully. Moreover, I was fairly certain that there would be sufficiently many beats in the area, with a large enough number of men using them, to be assured that I would be able to find a reasonable sample, even if many of the men refused or could not be approached for whatever reason.

The second method was through personal advertisements. With the advent of gay publications, gay men tended to place such advertisements in them, but the publications were generally aimed at the inner-city gay subculture and were an unlikely means of contacting homosexually active men

living in outer suburban areas. However, there were other publications which homosexually active men used to place personal advertisements. There were various erotic and pornographic magazines, most of which were ostensibly targeting a heterosexual audience but which included a large male homosexual section in their classified advertising. However, these magazines were generally published nationally, or at least for the entire city, and so were not likely to be a particularly effective way of contacting men in Western Sydney. The other sort of publication was local newspapers, many of which carried personal advertising in their classified sections. Although they rarely carried any advertisements of a homosexual nature, they carried many which were sexual. It was my belief that many homosexually active men would routinely read through these advertisements in the hope of finding something of interest to them. The classified sections of these local newspapers simply provide a readily available source of sexual titillation, as well as an erotic potentiality. Whether it was a likely vehicle for sexual contact or not, it was available and they were therefore likely to use it. I offered a phone number for them to ring, allowing them to complete an interview anonymously.

Using these two methods, plus interviews with the men who patronised the gay venues in the area, we managed to successfully interview 176 homosexually active men: 55 men were interviewed at beats and a further 19 men were recruited at a beat but chose to ring a confidential telephone number to complete the survey; 17 men rang this number as a result of a personal advertisement; 85 men were recruited through either the sole gay social venue or a local sex shop. This project was viewed as being particularly successful

for a number of reasons. I had identified several different methods of reaching homosexually active men, and these methods were valuable for both research and educational purposes. I had also managed to contact and obtain information about a group of men who had proven to be particularly difficult to reach in the past: homosexually active men who did not identify as gay and had little or no contact with the gay community.

As a direct result of this study, the NSW Health Department provided funding to the AIDS Council to establish the very first Beats Project. This was a project whereby sexual health educators were employed to visit beats in the area and to discuss HIV and other sexual health issues with the men in those venues, and to leave appropriate educational material where possible. This project has since been emulated around the country and internationally.

On completion of this project I returned to San Francisco again, but returned in 1989 and was again contracted by the Department of Community Medicine at Westmead Hospital. This time I was asked to follow up my initial research with a more detailed survey of the men who were homosexually active but who did not identify as gay and had little contact with the gay community. On this occasion I decided to only use the two methods I had previously identified as being especially successful at reaching these men: beats and personal advertisements. On this occasion a total of 129 homosexually active men were interviewed, 58 at beats and 71 in response to a personal advertisement. Unlike all previous samples of homosexually active men, only a minority of these men actually preferred sex with men – about a third of the men recruited through personal advertisements – and only a

quarter – one in seven of the men recruited through personal advertisements – identified themselves as homosexual.

This was a very unusual sample. This methodology was also adopted by HIV educators as a method of reaching men not associated with the gay community.

I again returned to live in San Francisco and did not return to Sydney until 1991. During my time in San Francisco I continued my involvement in HIV education activities through various local organisations. When I returned to Sydney in 1991 I worked for a while on the AIDS Council's Beats Project which I had helped to establish, and also began working for the National Centre in HIV Social Research. In early 1992 Roberta Perkins and I were contracted by the NSW Health Department to research the knowledge of HIV among male and female sex workers, and their risk behaviours. Again our research findings led us to work on publishing a book together, this time an edited collection of papers describing the nature of sex work in Australia.

At the same time I also sought, with others, a Commonwealth AIDS Research Grant for a research project to investigate the circumstances and means of contacting non-gay-identifying homosexually active men. I wanted this to be a more comprehensive study than was possible in the earlier projects. We received funding for this project, and, building on my earlier work, we managed to interview 698 of these men, mainly through the method of using personal advertisements coupled with an anonymous telephone line. The study was called the 'Bisexual Activity/Non Gay Community Attachment Research Project', or BANGAR.

At the same time, I was asked by the National Centre in HIV Social Research to prepare a paper describing the various recruitment methodologies that might be used in a national survey of homosexually active men. The Commonwealth Department of Health was interested in funding such a study in order to assess the current situation nationally, but they were particularly interested in reaching beyond the gay community. I described many options, recommending a combination of the personal advertisements and anonymous telephone line. It was my belief that this was the most cost-effective method of obtaining a large sample from across the nation, which could also include men in remote locations and who were not associated with the gay community. I also knew that this same methodology could easily be adapted to reach gay men at the heart of the gay community. This method was adopted for what was called Project 'Male Call'. It successfully interviewed 2583 men, of whom about a third did not identify as homosexual. This sort of sample was unprecedented, both in size (at least for Australia) and in scope. Since then the methodology has been adapted for use in New Zealand, Canada and Great Britain. It was also used again in the follow-up Male Call '96 project, in 1996, when 3039 men were interviewed. For both Male Call projects, 1992 and 1996, I was asked to assist with the training of the interviewers to ensure they understood both what to expect and how to engage the men who rang the project.

During 1992, I was employed by the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research to coordinate a cohort study of gay men in Sydney. This study, called 'Sydney Men and Sexual Health' (or SMASH),

was intended to follow a large cohort of homosexually active men over several years, to monitor changes in sexual and other behaviour, health, and HIV seroincidence. I managed to recruit 1143 men into the study. They were interviewed annually until 1998, although with a constantly declining retention rate (though it never fell below 60%), and I remained coordinator of the study throughout. For much of the study's life, SMASH was considered the pre-eminent study of gay men in Australia.

In 1996 I took on the additional task of coordinating the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey. This was intended to be a broad-based survey of homosexually active men participating in the Sydney gay community. It was a cross-sectional survey, to be repeated every six months as a surveillance strategy to monitor changes in gay men's behaviour. Between 1996 and 2001, the survey has been conducted twelve times, with between 600 and 1000 men recruited from gay venues and clinics, with an additional 1000 to 1500 recruited at the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day each February.

In both the SMASH and Periodic Surveys, as in all the research I have done among gay men, I have sought to retain a strong relationship between the researchers and the participants. I have also tried to bring the perspective of the respondents to the research process, both through my own position as a participant in gay community life, and by my own observation of participants in the studies – how they react to the interview process and the kinds of feedback and comments they offer on the content and structure of the studies. Given my key position in these, and other, research projects, my own perspective is particularly influential, and blurs the boundaries between

researcher and researched. This necessarily raises issues about the nature of 'objectivity' in such research.

Placing the subjective in the objective

Throughout this long history of research work within the gay community, and involvement with the broader social and political life of the gay community, it has been my belief that research should serve two basic functions, if it is to be of any real value: it should be able to bring some objective benefit to those who are the object of that research; and it should be able to add to the totality of knowledge for the wider society. Research for its own sake has little purpose for me. My personal and academic interests have largely revolved around the issues of sexuality, while my political motivation has centred on how the research might actually be of benefit to the gay community or to the situation of gay men and lesbians. This agenda has always been clear in every research project with which I have been involved.

Of course, this necessarily raises issues of objectivity in research. My own position is that of both researcher and a member of the group being investigated. This has its advantages and disadvantages:

> '…the unknown observer who is himself a member is not only in a position to get close to the phenomena he [sic] seeks to study, he [sic] becomes it. Insofar as one seeks to understand the feelings and intentions of those in a setting, this would seem to be a definite advantage. On the other hand, to the extent that one seeks to transcend the data, it is taken as a distinct disadvantage.' (Schwartz and Jacobs, 1979: 54).

One might argue that a dataset is its own objective truth, outweighing any individual perspective. From this perspective, the data are themselves defined as 'real' – objective truths. This is an untenable position: the choice of research subject and methodology are themselves a consequence of individual subjective priorities; analysis necessarily involves the process of bringing to bear one's own perspectives, intuitions and understandings of the possible implications which might explain the data. Research findings are always more than the sum of the data themselves: they also involve the researcher's own subjective assessments. On the one hand, researchers unavoidably bring to the research subject their own life history and deeply held beliefs about the world they occupy; while on the other hand, researchers critically appraise their own perspective with regard to what they understand from the data they collect. This mirrors how scientific 'facts' are constructed in the physical sciences, as outlined by Latour and Woolgar (1986), through the circumstances and interactions of the investigators themselves.

While many might argue that these represent two entirely different models of research, one 'good and the other 'bad', it is my contention that they are both always inherent in the research process, and that 'good' research requires both. What is essential to give the research true social value is to self-consciously recognise this and to make the subjective reality of both the researcher and the object of the research apparent. All research fulfils a social function and has the potential to be a force for social change or of repression. The relationship between researcher and those being researched is a key factor (Connors, 1988). Reason and Bowen (1981: 489) argued that: 'Research is a

mutual activity involving co-ownership and shared power with respect to the process and to the product of research.' Traditional approaches to research enforce an unequal partnership through the role (and status) of researcher and the imposition of the role of research subject. This is neither appropriate to my situation, nor does it fulfil Habermas's (1983) notion of moral and social progress.

As a gay man, actively involved in the gay community with a strong personal commitment to it, I, naturally, have deeply held convictions about the subject matter of the research. My perspective is strongly influenced by my close association with the objects of the research, whether that be gay men themselves, gay subcultures or the gay community in its broadest definition. This close association has a dual function: it provides me with insights and a capacity to make the intuitive leaps which Sartre (1968: 152) describes as essential to understanding the meanings of social behaviour; but it also creates a tension between 'objective' investigation and the philosophical and personal perspectives I bring to analysis.

The relationship between the researcher and the objects of research, and the associated notion of 'objectivity' has been much debated for many centuries. Indeed it goes to the very heart of the concept of scientific reason.

Reflexivity in social research

The recognition of this tension between the rational and the passionate has a long history dating back to Plato. The ideology of scientific rationality became dominant from the eighteenth century CE, the 'Age of Reason', and

has been assumed as the essential pre-requisite of all scientific investigation ever since. The ideology of the objective scientist investigating and revealing scientific truth is the yardstick by which all research, including social inquiry, is measured. Georg Hegel proposed that using reason as the basis of investigation, the object of investigation appears comprehensible; it becomes rational.

Other philosophical approaches to the ideology of scientific reason, however, do not rely on the concept of objectivity for all research. Sartre (1943) argued that our perception of the Other as instrumental-object is only possible through 'a total organisation of the world' (ibid.: 295). For Sartre 'the Other-as-object is nothing but a centre of autonomous and intra-mundane reference in my world.' The Other's objectivity exists entirely within one's own subjective frame of reference. Sartre also argued that the Other as a collective 'Us-object' can only define itself thus and be aware of its own distinctiveness through the existence of an external We-subject (ibid.: 415-423).

Sartre (1968) also argued that behaviour and existence, for humanity, carry with them the signification applied by ourselves as humans, and if we are to understand the implicit meanings, we, as subjects, need to be able to insert ourselves, as objects, into the process itself:

> Man is, for himself and for others, a signifying being… To grasp the meaning of any human conduct, it is necessary to have at our disposal what German psychiatrists and historians have called 'comprehension'. But what is involved here is neither a particular talent nor a special

> faculty of intuition; this knowing is simply the dialectical movement which explains the act by its terminal signification in terms of its starting conditions. (ibid.: 152).

So, for Sartre (ibid.: 156), all that is observed are 'signs', which we interpret through our own particular set of significations:

> Everything at every instant is always signifying, and significations reveal to us men and relations among men across the structures of our society. But these significations appear to us only insofar as we ourselves are signifying. Our comprehension of the Other is never contemplative; it is only a moment of our praxis, a way of living – in struggle or in complicity – the concrete, human relation which unites us to him.

Sartre was arguing that, in order for 'comprehension' to occur we must insinuate ourselves into that which we are observing. Without our own capacity to understand the meanings of situations, events, and even material objects, we can never reveal them in their totality, nor as they actually function in our world. On this basis he rejects 'positivism' in the social sciences:

> The supreme mystification of positivism is that it claims to approach social experience without any a priori whereas it has decided at the start to deny one of its fundamental structures and to replace it by its opposite. It was legitimate for the natural sciences to free themselves from the anthropomorphism which consists in bestowing human properties on inanimate objects. But it is perfectly absurd to assume by analogy the same scorn for anthropomorphism where anthropology is concerned. When one is studying man, what can be more exact or more rigorous than to recognise human properties in him? The simple inspection of the

> social field ought to have led to the discovery that the relation to ends is a permanent structure of human enterprises and that it is on the basis of this relation that real men evaluate actions, institutions, or economic constructions. (ibid.: 156-7).

Sartre claimed that the ultimate enterprise of the social sciences is to interrogate this relationship between existence and meaning: 'what is the being of human reality'. But this task is confronted by the fundamental difficulty that there is no 'human essence' that unites all human experience through a common signification (ibid.: 168-70). Sartre described the social sciences as engaging in the 'ideology of existence', by which he meant that, in identifying the objective being, a process of comprehension must be employed. This comprehension is described as 'the result of reflection on existence' and the outcomes are integrated into a concept of objective existence, which is disguised by 'a mechanistic positivism' (ibid.: 171). For Sartre, knowledge is not truly possible without recognising the synthesis of existence and meaning because existence itself is known (given meaning) by both the 'we-subject' and the 'us-object'. The recognition of the limitations of perception and the role of the 'we-subject' (the investigator) in determining both the object and the meaning of the object is an essential pre-requisite.

Theodor Adorno argued that it is impossible to view reality independent from the social and cultural context of the observer. Observation and realisation require thinking and 'thinking is a form of praxis, always historically conditioned; as physical labour transforms and negates the material world under changing historical circumstances, so mental labour,

under changing historical conditions, alters its object world through criticism.' (Held, 1980: 204). For Adorno it is impossible to achieve the Hegelian synthesis between subject and object because 'critique cannot escape the terms of reference of its object' (ibid.). Philosophical 'systems try to interpret the world. They call for an 'orderly organisation and presentation of thoughts'. Most often they claim their concepts to be adequate to their object: they claim to have identified their object fully.' (ibid.: 205). In this they carry within them their own inevitable contradiction as 'the many qualitative dimensions of the object disappear in the system – but only to arise later to contradict it. History defies systems.' (ibid.).

Adorno (1962) wrote:

> In general, the objectivity of empirical social research is one of method, not of subject-matter. Through statistical processing, information on a greater or lesser number of individuals is turned into statements which, following the laws of probability, are generalizable and independent of individual variations. But the resultant mean values, objectively valid though they be, nevertheless remain for the most part objective statements about individual subjects; in fact, about how these subjects see themselves in reality. Society in its objectivity, the aggregate of all the relationships, institutions and forces, within whose context men act, is something which the empirical methods of questionnaire and interview, with all their possible combinations and variations, have ignored or at least regarded as purely accidental. By taking more or less standardised surveys of numbers of individuals and processing the results into statistics, they tend to enshrine already widespread – and as

> such preformed – attitudes as the foundation for their perspective on the subject of their investigations. Objective realities are admittedly reflected in these attitudes, but the reflection is bound to be incomplete and marred by multiple distortions. And in any case, the most cursory glance at the functioning of people at work shows that, compared with these objective realities, the significance of subjective opinions, attitudes and patterns of behaviour is entirely secondary. (Connerton 1976: 240-1).

He argued that sociology requires a theoretical basis from which to interpret data, and that insight comes through a combination of factors and resistance to hegemonic beliefs:

> Thoughts do not arrive out of thin air, but – even when their actual appearance is unexpected – have been crystallizing in long-drawn-out underground processes. The suddenness of what research technicians patronizingly refer to as intuition marks the eruption of living experience through the hardened crust of communis opinio; it is the sustained opposition to the latter – not the privileged moments of inspiration – which permits the unregimented mind that contact with the essence of things which the interposition of an over-inflated apparatus so often relentlessly sabotages. (ibid.: 253).

He pointed out that all empirical social research data are mediated by society, and that what are assumed as 'factual' are in fact conditional (ibid.: 255). For Adorno it is the task of sociology to deduce the 'untruth' in the 'truth', not for the purpose of revealing 'truth', but rather to situate the individual actors and actions in a conceptual framework.

This argument can also be extended to the role of the investigator. The investigator is no more independent of social forces than the data being investigated, and the role of the investigator has to be considered as an equally important aspect in any research. There is no single conceptual framework and investigators bring their own particular perspective, based on their own particular experience of social relations, to the research task. The tension in all social research is ultimately the tension between assumed objectivity and presumed subjectivity, while the actual outcomes are the unforeseen consequences of this tension.

To the critical theorist, claims that it is possible to step outside oneself in order to assess 'truth', are not plausible, and risk being dismissed as 'positivism'. Critical theory requires an acknowledgement of the conceptual framework in which one works and the particular experiences that have guided the development of that framework, in order to permit a more fundamental philosophical debate to emerge.

Habermas (1974: 334-335) suggested that the basis of this tendency toward positivism is the rational-instrumental philosophy immanent to capitalist societies. The confrontation between a strictly 'rational' approach and a more ideologically-driven approach is usually decided in favour of rationalism, even though the subjectivity of the objects is as much a factor in the outcomes as are the objects themselves. This effectively removes ideology (particularly in the form of emotion) from the arena of research, leaving the data and the investigator to be viewed as value-neutral. Such a position succeeds in doing two things: it reinforces the rational-instrumental approach

to research as the only legitimate method, and it permits the particular philosophical perspective of the investigator to go unchallenged. Keller (1978: 190-196) argued a similar proposition in her account of the 'gendering' of science whereby the rational-scientific objectification of Nature has its roots in the development of rigid boundaries between the masculine 'self' and all 'others'. Campbell and Bunting (1991) saw feminist theory and critical theory as parallel in their approach to methodology in their validation of subjectivity as being central to the research paradigm. Fay (1987: 73-74) cogently argued that rationalism is independent of 'truth' because what is rational is entirely dependent on the information available and the degree to which beliefs are not contradictory. It is entirely possible, then, to hold a quite rational belief which is not true, and to hold a belief which is true but is not rational.

Postmodernist accounts of the pursuit of knowledge assert that 'truth' cannot be divorced from interpretation (Deleuze, 1977; Guattari, 1984; Lacan, 1977; Lyotard, 1984). Thus, meaning and language are as important as the data itself. Derrida (1973: 138) argued that social life only has meaning through language, which is, therefore, a creative force in itself. Within this conceptualisation, symbols and norms are not merely indicators of an objective reality, however interpreted, and language does not simply reflect reality. Reality is actually constructed through language; it is given meaning and that meaning becomes its own reality. Knowledge of 'truth' is experienced and understood through our own existence and language renders 'facts' meaningful (Barthes, 1986). In contrast to a positivist assessment that requires an objective, value-neutral analysis in order to derive the 'truth',

postmodernists argue that this is both impossible and counterproductive. It is impossible because meaning cannot be divorced from reality, and it is counterproductive because data requires interpretation to become meaningful.

Some feminist theoreticians (Harding, 1986a; Stanley and Wise, 1990) have described a 'feminist standpoint epistemology'. Research of this type derives theory from experience and is constantly revised as a result of that experience. It is located in and proceeds from '…the grounded analysis of women's material realities' (Stanley and Wise, 1990: 25).

Flax (1983) pursued a feminist standpoint epistemology and pointed out that 'We do not just **experience**…. but need and create concepts to filter and shape experience.' (ibid.: 271). Indeed, a feminist standpoint might also argue that knowledge is greatly enhanced by the active embrace of liberationist ideologies because they disrupt the assumptions inherent in a rational-scientific discourse: 'From the perspective of feminist theory and research, it is **traditional** thought that is subjective in its distortion by androcentrism – a claim that feminists are willing to defend on traditional objectivist grounds.' (Harding, 1986: 138). While the basic critique of traditional approaches to the pursuit of knowledge has considerable merit, this line of argument maintains the notion of an objective truth that stands outside of interpretation and language. It is what Harding (1986) called a 'successor science' because it holds that this sort of research is '…**better** or **truer** because derived from 'outsiders' who can see the relations of domination and suppression for what they truly and objectively are' (Stanley and Wise, 1990: 27). Stanley and Wise described how this feminist standpoint sociology, in its

crudest form, is essentialist insofar as it presupposes a universalistic feminist (women's) perspective and experience, from which the researcher develops a theoretical model. Both Harding and Stanley and Wise argued, instead, for a feminist postmodernism, whereby they problematise the notion of a universalistic 'feminist standpoint'. They pointed to the various kinds of women's experience and the differing feminist responses these engender; hence there are various feminist standpoints, which means a multiplicity of 'contextually grounded truths'. It seems that even a 'feminist postmodernism' is ultimately incapable of deriving an 'objective truth'.

Generally, theorists are encumbered with an inability to escape the empiricist imperative. They are compelled to seek an objective truth, independent of discourse, but their acceptance of the impossibility of 'unmediated access to the non-discursive' (Patton, 1983: 61) means that in the end they are reduced to a sort of relativism: they must seek the truth by comparing competing discourses relative to one another. Postmodernism can be said to leave us with this sort of relativism, because it makes verifiability impossible. Rather than endeavor to reveal the 'truth', postmodernists seek to understand the meanings that underlie the data. Consequently, for postmodernists, individuals may perceive similar situations in a variety of ways and this assignation of meaning becomes an integral part of the analysis. There can be no ultimate verification of the data, because the data must always refer to those who perceive the data and the meanings assigned through that perception. There are as many possible outcomes as there are individuals involved in the process. Stanley and Wise (1990: 41) described this sort of

relativism as '…an insistence that, although there is "truth", judgements of truth are always and necessarily made relative to the particular framework or context of the knower.' Returning to Fay's (1987) description of rationalism and truth as independent from each other, and Habermas's (1974) description of rational-instrumentalism as immanent to capitalist societies, researchers are often seen as in a position of presumed and assumed objectivity, even when the research outcomes are not true.

Such a perspective calls into question the role of researcher as objective independent observer, yet this is rarely invoked as a factor in the research process. Feminist researchers have, however, raised these issues, arguing that '…researcher's understandings are necessarily temporally, intellectually, politically and emotionally grounded and are thus as contextually specific as those of the "researched"' (Stanley and Wise, 1990: 23).

Mia Campioni and Liz Gross (Campioni and Gross, 1983: 113-36) argued that many theorists reject the concept of an objective reality in their assessment of the objects of research, but fail to apply the same criteria to the subjects in the research process. The subject is conceived as:

> a rational, knowing subject….. a neutral subject, a disinterested knower who may be committed or involved with political struggle, but whose commitment does not interfere with the objectivity of the theoretical work that is engaged in (ibid.: 123).
>
> The politics of knowledge-production and the position and function of those who produce knowledge remains untouched on this conception of

> knowledge. As a neutral subject, the subject of knowledge is not considered to be implicated in the structure or context of knowledge. It is only when the relations of power between the knower and the known are openly discussed that the question of the power of the knowing subject over the object of knowledge can be challenged or overthrown altogether (ibid.: 124).

They argued that it is impossible to defend the notion of subjective neutrality because individuals are not 'disembodied subjects, consciousnesses distinct from bodies' (ibid.: 132), so there are many kinds of subjects with their own particular sets of experiences and perspectives. To ignore this is to conceal the various differentiations in subjectivity which social forces create, and to allow a single, ideologically blinded outlook to dominate. They argued this specifically in relation to the relegation of feminism to a secondary position within a hierarchy of ideologies and the ideological differentiation of the sexed body, but their argument has wider applicability. There is no universal truth which can be identified through a rational deployment of the neutral subject as investigator. There are many truths each of which may be based in particular theoretical perspectives or experiences. A dialectical relationship between these various truths produces a discourse, and a particular form of truth may emerge as dominant in particular circumstances, and some versions of the truth may, in fact, be altered or even discarded through this discourse. But some versions of the truth may escape the critical evaluation of certain discourses when that truth is presented as the product of a rational and subjectively neutral investigation.

It is, however, possible to use the tools provided by postmodernism without necessarily abandoning the capacity to evaluate data. There are inherent biases in the production of knowledge within capitalism. Bourdieu (1973) conceptualised 'cultural capital' as being pivotal to the ways in which knowledge is produced and how that knowledge then reproduces the very social relations that created it. This is central to understanding the specific role of scientific rationalism and the ideologically-driven role of the researcher. For Bourdieu (1975), even the identification of an appropriate field of study, or object of investigation, is implicated in this process.

Others have argued this case more concretely:

> 'The mythology of science asserts that with many different scientists all asking their own questions and evaluating the answers independently, whatever personal bias creeps into their individual answers is cancelled out when the large picture is put together. This might conceivably be so if scientists were women and men from all sorts of different cultural and social backgrounds who came to science with very different ideologies and interests. But since, in fact, they have been predominantly university-trained white males from privileged social backgrounds, the bias has been narrow and the product often reveals more about the investigator than about the subject being researched.' (Hubbard, 1979).

Poulantzas (1978) provided a similar critique of Foucault's non-reductive conceptualisation of power. He argued that the competing discourses which produce power do not compete equally, and that there are structural inequities which these discourses reflect. This can also be applied to the conceptualisation of knowledge. Put simply, although meaning and

interpretation must be considered as critical factors in any analysis, they must also be contextualised by the relative power of competing social forces. It may well be that objectivity is an impossibility, but this does not mean that critical evaluation is also impossible. What is essential is that the subjective position of both the observer and the observed be included in the evaluation. Wickham (1991) similarly argued against a postmodernist sociology and proposed, instead, '…that sociology is best theorised as particular activities with particular institutional limits and conditions of operation.' (ibid.: 353). Indeed, Wickham argued convincingly that postmodernism is inherently contradictory in that while it '…rejects Enlightenment attempts to know "whole societies", … (it) covertly emulates them, under a new name.' (ibid.: 357). Postmodernism provides its own universalistic theory of society in the guise of a theory of pluralism. Wickham claims that postmodernism is therefore ambiguous, and that a more useful theoretical position is that which he terms the 'limited activities' theorisation. This theorisation considers the relevant circumstances and contexts that apply. Using Poulantzas's critique, it is possible to take this further and suggest that those circumstances and contexts necessarily reflect unequal but competing social forces, and so there are structural influences and limitations that also affect discourse.

While they would likely reject any comparison with Poulantzas or other Marxist theorists, Stanley and Wise (1993) arrived at a similar position in their assessment of 'feminist epistemologies' and pointed out that the various postmodernist positions are neither new nor particularly insightful. They reminded the reader that similar philosophical positions have been held

in sociology throughout its history (ibid.: 190). They argued that '…there is no **a priori** right or correct feminist epistemology: each can be seen as plausible and sensible, given the particular political projects and purposes of those who hold it' (ibid.: 191). Yet they also firmly rejected the relativism of postmodernist accounts. While arguing that knowledge needs to be founded in experience, they accepted that there is a complex fabric of interconnected and overlapping viewpoints from which competing discourses arise. But they also place these in their social context:

> One consequence of acknowledging the social location and production of knowledge is that knowledge-claims are thereby positioned as part of a **political process** in which some knowledge-claims are seen and certified as superordinate in relation to others. Power is involved here, and of a very effective kind because apparently rooted in unseamed and incontrovertible kinds of knowledge about the world. 'Knowledge is power' has quite rightly been the watch-word of radical social movements since the eighteenth century, for knowledge-production is a crucial part of any apparatus of power, including within feminism. (ibid.: 192).

This brings them close to Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, and while they firmly rejected Marxism, it is difficult to conceive of a political process, with its necessary relationship to the relations of power, which does not account for the relations of production. Whereas Poulantzas may have given primacy to production, Stanley and Wise simply did not specify where greater or lesser power resides. While this is perhaps more sensible, in that power operates differently in different contexts and within particular

discourses, it does not actually take us much further. This is perhaps why they described their position as materialist but not Marxist.

These perspectives necessarily call into question the division between qualitative and quantitative research. The existence of multiple meanings and of subjective interpretations within particular social contexts and discourses apply to all investigation, whether it is 'measurable' or not. Verifiability is subject to these same influences.

Critical implications

Given these philosophical and subjective constraints, throughout this treatise I will endeavour to present a particular perspective on a set of databases, how they developed, their context, and the perceived implications of their findings. This perspective is necessarily driven by my own peculiar location, as an active participant at both ends of the research enterprise: as researcher, initiating and developing much of the empirical research myself or in association with others; and as a gay man, intimately immersed in the community which is the object of that very research. This perspective brings particular sets of meanings and values to the data. Rather than seek objectivity or even distance, I have opted to make explicit my own proximity to these data, and to use this position as a basis for critical reflection. As an active participant in gay community life, my role as researcher cannot be disentangled from my role as advocate on behalf of that community.

> The attempt to produce value-neutral social science is increasingly being abandoned as at best unrealisable, and at worst self-deceptive, and is

being replaced by social sciences based on explicit ideologies. (Hesse, 1980: 247).

For the most part, the data presented here are of a quantitative rather than qualitative nature. Yet, my own position in relation to these data necessarily suggests a qualitative approach. Among other things, Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 5-8) described qualitative methodology as emphasising the contexts in which people's lives are experienced and as attempting to understand their frame of reference. These can equally be applied to quantitative research: any data need to be understood in context, and the meanings attached to those data, from the standpoint of both the researcher and the research participants, need to be made explicit. It is the concept of the 'insider' that is at issue when a researcher is also a member of the group being investigated. Schwartz and Jacobs (1979) describe qualitative research as attempting to investigate its subjects from the 'inside'; they suggest that the various methods of qualitative research attempt to allow the research subjects to give voice to their own perspectives. In this regard, the true objects of qualitative research are '…the theories and stories such groups have about their society and their own lives… The social scientist must become an insider or speak on behalf of insider, and, additionally, he must be in a position to be doing science as well. But how can this be?' (ibid.: 126). They answer this dilemma by accepting it. Rather than a claim to analytic truth, they suggest that qualitative research should be a rational investigation from the inside, with the goal of making the insider perspective explicit. I am an insider with regard to my own research, and this necessarily marks my approach to the

subject matter. That most of this research is best described as quantitative rather than qualitative changes little.

Garfinkel (1967) described how, even in apparently quantitative research, subjective interpretation is always present. Indeed, he argues that the 'ad hoc' decisions that are made throughout the research process are necessary to make the data meaningful: '**Ad hocing** is required if the researcher is to grasp the relevance of the instructions to the particular and actual situation they are intended to analyze.' (ibid.: 22). Similarly, Denise Farran (1990) described in detail how her purportedly quantitative research required contextual information at every stage, to elicit the sort of information she sought and to make sense of that information. Sue Kippax (1998) has argued similarly about her relationship with gay men as the objects of her research and her need for gay men's insight to inform the research process. At every point of the research process, the standpoint of both the researcher and the research participants, relative to competing and unequal power relations, and how this is understood and communicated, is an integral, though often unrecognised aspect. My task here is to outline how social research can be used to describe the community of which I am a part, while simultaneously revealing how this description reflects the particular situation of those involved in the research process itself, including myself.

In this regard I am perhaps embarking on a project that applies similar methodological approaches as those described by some feminist researchers, in that I start from a particular liberationist-ideological standpoint and employ the tools of research within that perspective. Such an approach is rooted in the

presumed standpoint of the research subjects, and that standpoint is given voice as a consequence of the research methods. For Kathleen McPherson (1983), adopting a feminist approach to research is no different to what occurs in other research except that the standpoint of the researcher is made explicit. However, she argues for a feminist standpoint in qualitative research, believing that quantitative research actively conceals the experiences of the research subjects and that only qualitative research can reveal what is hidden in quantitative data (ibid.: 21). While I agree that qualitative research has the capacity to achieve this, it also has the capacity to do the reverse if the standpoint of the researcher is antithetical to those of the research subjects. Moreover, there is no reason to presume that bringing an explicitly subject-oriented eye to quantitative data cannot permit the subjective meanings contained within those data to emerge.

Taking this as a starting point, my position provides me with at least one useful tool. Adorno's point about the process of scientific advancement was that it proceeds not by some orderly and rational process with measured and even steps, but by sudden leaps in knowledge based on what are '…patronisingly described as intuition [but really] marks the eruption of living experience through the hardened crust of communis opinio' (Connerton 1976: 253). Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue similarly that the insights of the researcher underlie all social research and they are invaluable tools in analysis:

> …the researcher can get – and cultivate – crucial insights….. form his own personal experiences….. *[and]* should deliberately cultivate such reflections on personal experiences. Generally we suppress them, or give

> them the status of mere opinions…, rather than looking at them as springboards to systematic theorizing. (ibid.: 252).

They state further that it is the task of the sociologist to …transform insights into relevant categories, properties, and hypotheses (ibid.: 254). The implication is that all theorising about the subject matter is necessarily based on insights. In this regard, then, the sociologist should include discussion about the subject matter as relevant data as well. The analysis should include these if the researcher is to transcend the limits of perception that are defined by the current state of discourse. Personal insight plays a key role in contesting existing theory.

> This …may mean initially pitting one's own insight against a well-respected theory…. A too-frequent practice in sociology, however, is to accept the existing theory and simply elaborate on it, thus suppressing or ignoring much rich data as well as potentially rich insights that could **transcend** the theory. (ibid.: 255).

Researcher insight, however, is as dynamic as any other aspect of the research process. And, as Stanley and Wise (1993: 114-117) point out, there is an interaction between the researcher and research subjects (though they prefer the term 'members') that affects the perceptions and behaviours of both. This is unavoidable and one of the consequences is that reality '…is daily constructed by us in routine and mundane ways…' and so there are innumerable realities. Stanley and Wise reject the notion of evaluating these differing realities in order to arrive at a 'true' reality. Instead they propose that the researcher should explore '…in great detail why and how people construct

realities in the way that they do.' Differing realities cannot simply be dismissed as 'false consciousness'. These 'reality disjunctures' they see as being central to the process of social research; they are the means through which discourse is expressed, and allow us all a window into other people's world views (ibid.: 140-144). And, because the researcher is as immersed in this process as are the research subjects, the presence of the researcher's perceptions and beliefs is unavoidable. Rather than conceal this within a positivist misrepresentation of the research process, Stanley and Wise seek to incorporate the researcher into the research process as an overt presence (ibid.: 150-163).

Eric Rofes has applied this sort of perspective to much of his work among gay men, and has met with considerable hostility, often based on a sort of sexual puritanism that decries any personal representations of sexual behaviour and desire in the context of research. He asks:

> … if social scientists immersed in critical pedagogy and feminist analysis share their experiences with death and dying, marital infidelity, and cultural prejudices because they inform and contextualise their research findings, why do so few gay male scholars situate themselves in relation to their sexual cultures? (Rofes, 2001).

My task here is not simply to describe a number of datasets and what they tell us about the population of homosexually active men. I also intend to review the nature of the samples themselves and to assess their capacity to describe that population, but, in so doing, I intend to also consider the limitations and peculiarities of those samples, and the implications these have

for the study of male homosexuality in modern industrialised societies. This might be described as a 'deconstructionist' task, insofar as I am seeking to examine the particular nature of the samples and how these affect the particular understandings of homosexuality that emerge from the data as a whole, and to situate this into a more general analysis of the ways in which male homosexuality is represented both individually and socially. But what is also required of this task is that I make explicit my own experience and perspectives, and the ways these have informed my analysis.

Theoretical concerns about the nature of sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular, and about the interaction between personal, individual, experience and social, cultural, discourse concerning sexuality, are central. During the two decades I have conducted research with the gay community, there has been an ongoing, and sometimes vociferous, debate about the nature of homosexuality and its implications for personal identity. Specifically, there has been an argument on one side that homosexuality is experienced by some as more than just a set of sexual behaviours, involving individuals in a process that sometimes engages with other social forces, some of which are hostile to their behaviour, and that individuals develop a gay identity in response to this, within the context of a gay subculture, usually represented as 'the gay community'. This position holds that 'gayness' has a particular resonance with many, if not most, of those who experience strong homosexual desires. On the other hand, is the argument that 'gay' has little meaning at all and that the experience of homosexuality occurs within particular historical moments and cultural contexts which provide a transitory

and non-transferable understanding of homosexuality to which the individual experience and the cultural understanding need not accord.

Both positions recognise the socio-political context in which individuals experience their homosexuality. The first attaches great importance to gay identity and community as a means of understanding homosexual behaviour. The latter views gay identity and community as being linked to homosexual behaviour only to the extent that individuals believe their homosexuality to have particular meaning that accords with how they understand 'gayness'.

Although the debate is interesting, it has always seemed absurdly oppositional to me. It is clear that there are some men who engage in homosexuality for whom that behaviour has little or no meaning beyond its immediate pleasure, and for whom notions of gay identity or community are totally irrelevant. Yet, equally clearly other men view 'being gay' as the central feature of their lives and it represents a core construct of their sense of self, and the ways they behave sexually merely represent this. And there are many other ways of either being gay or behaving homosexually that incorporate aspects of each or both or, indeed, neither of these. None of these seems to me to contradict either theoretical position.

While homosexuality can be experienced and understood in a variety of ways, homosexually active individuals also do so within a cultural context that has very clear and structured understandings and normative values around sexuality in general. It is possible to 'deconstruct' the concept of 'gayness', in both its social representation and its individual expression, while

simultaneously recognising the broad cultural, and subcultural, influences that help to shape it at every level.

My main interest here is how this interaction between general social forces and individual experience affects the nature of research into homosexuality. It is my contention that studies of gay men and studies of male homosexual behaviour have largely been neither, while simultaneously being both. As I see it, every study of homosexual behaviour or of gay men has been conducted for a particular reason, and that reason has determined the particular focus of the research as well as the context in which it has been conducted. This is not unlike any other research area, of course. However, what is crucial here is that it is particularly difficult to describe homosexual behaviour and identity in anything like an objective sense. These are concepts that rely heavily on their representation and interpretation. How they are manifested, through individuals, reflects this. What is being researched in studies of homosexuality or homosexuals needs to be fully cognisant of the complex interplay between behaviour, identity, meaning and desire, and how the nature of the research itself can affect this interplay.

Gay men, gay communities, gay cultures, each represent, in quite specific ways, the social relations of power, both at a macro societal level and at a micro individual level. Moreover, they both contest and reinforce dominant discourses. The latter is clearly evidenced by the very different philosophical approaches of the pre-Stonewall homophile movement and the post-Stonewall gay liberation movement, although all gay cultures contain aspects of resistance to the dominant homophobic aspects of society in

general. On the one hand, it might be argued that any positive expression of homosexuality actively contests the predominantly homophobic culture in which we live, but, on the other hand, specific subcultures may define certain forms of homosexual behaviour and identity as 'reactionary' or reinforcing a social – homonegative or sexist – stereotype.

These have been continually re-emerging themes within gay cultures. The rise of the gay liberation movement was accompanied by a strident rejection of the more 'conservative' behaviours and symbols that had accompanied the earlier 'homophile' movement. It was argued that the emphasis 'homophiles' placed on appearing 'respectable' reinforced the sexual values that led to homosexual oppression in the first place. This argument about 'respectability' has often re-surfaced through the years: Concerns about the visibility of either drag queens or leathermen was often an issue for debate regarding Mardi Gras in the early 1980s.[2] Concerns about appearing 'irresponsible' were at least one aspect of the debate about closing sex venues in the United States during the early response to HIV/AIDS, and this perspective emerged again in the writings of some prominent gay writers such as Michelangelo Signorile (1997) and Gabriel Rotello (1997) in their condemnations of gay men's 'promiscuity' and 'objectification' (though certainly not based on feminist grounds).

2 Such debates have been common to gay communities around the world. Scott Tucker, the winner of the 1986 International Mr Leather Contest wrote that by winning this title he became 'one of those embarrassments to the Public Relations Department of the gay movement. It was time … to demonstrate public solidarity with folks who are often defined as too queer to be gay.' (1996).

During the 1970s, there were deep schisms within the gay movement, primarily, but not entirely, between men and women. These schisms were based on the argument that gay men could not be truly 'revolutionary' unless they rejected all the cultural symbols and behaviours associated with masculinity. Of particular concern were issues such as 'objectification', 'promiscuity' and pornography. What is perhaps most interesting about these debates is that the behaviours and symbols they concern are viewed as marginal, at the extreme, of the community (although, as we can see from data presented elsewhere in this thesis, they are actually relatively commonplace, at least among gay men who participate in the organised gay community). The critiques of those behaviours have come from both the radical left and the conservative right of the gay movement.

On the other hand, there are those who espouse an 'in-your-face' sort of approach to gay men's sexuality, arguing that gay men can only be truly liberated when they openly acknowledge and celebrate those very aspects of gay men's sexuality that are denigrated or rejected by others. An interesting take on this argument are the writings of Mark Simpson in *Anti-Gay* (1996). He argued that gay men represent a sort of pure expression of masculine sexual desire, unconstrained by the need to compromise desire in order to attract and keep a female partner, but that 'gay' is a homogenised and commodified concept that now works to constrain gay men instead. Although Simpson's argument was with notions of 'gayness' as represented by gay identity and gay community, he also argued for an 'in-your-face' sexuality, but as a masculine homosexuality that has no political agendas beyond a

subversion of anything that constrains individual sexuality. Such a position does not sit easily with versions of feminism that condemn particular forms of sexuality because they maintain and reproduce oppression. Yet, it is also oddly reminiscent of certain early gay liberationist philosophies, despite their entrenched anti-masculinism.

Gay Liberation activist, Carl Wittman (1970), wrote 'A Gay Manifesto' in 1969. The document was reprinted widely within the gay movement and was enormously influential. While rejecting 'sexist' behaviour, the manifesto simultaneously defended gay men's experiences on their own terms. Regarding objectification, the Manifesto rejects exploitation and recognises the particular experiences of women in this regard, while at the same time it celebrates it: 'For us, sexual objectification is a focus of our quest for freedom. It is precisely that which we are not supposed to share with each other' (ibid.: 166). While the Manifesto acknowledges the feminist perspective that masculinity equals privilege, it makes a strong defence of the sexual extremes and argues for the same sort of in-your-face sexuality that Simpson argued for nearly thirty years later: 'a) we shouldn't be apologetic to straights about gays whose sex lives we don't understand or share; b) it's not particularly a gay issue, except that gay people probably are less hung up about sexual experimentation' (ibid.: 167). Even more directly akin to Simpson's writings was the equally influential 'Memoirs of an ancient activist', written by Paul Goodman (1972) in 1969. In this article, Goodman rejects the demonisation of any sexual expression and suggests that some demonised aspects of gay men's sexuality, such as its ascribed 'promiscuity',

are profoundly more honest expressions of sexuality than is evident in other contexts. He particularly celebrates 'perversity':

> A happy property of sexual acts, and perhaps especially of homosexual acts, is that they are dirty, like life: as Augustine said, Inter urinas et feces nascimur. In a society as middle class, orderly, and technological as ours, it is essential to break down squeamishness, which is an important factor in what is called racism, as well as in cruelty to children and the sterile putting away of the sick and aged. Also, the illegal and catch-as-catch-can nature of many homosexual acts at present breaks down other conventional attitudes. Although I wish I could have had many a party with less apprehension and more unhurriedly – we would have enjoyed them more – yet it has been an advantage to learn that the ends of the docks, the backs of the trucks, back alleys, behind the stairs, abandoned bunkers on the beach, and the washrooms of trains are all adequate samples of all the space there is. For both good and bad, homosexual behaviour retains some of the alarm and excitement of childish sexuality. (ibid.: 180).

Dennis Altman quoted this same passage in his influential book, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation* (1973: 101). He used it as an opportunity to discuss the contradictions of Goodman's somewhat individualised concept of liberation and the emerging Gay Liberationist perspective. Altman saw merit in both but seemed to be saying that Goodman's relatively uncritical individualism was not enough to qualify as 'liberation'. Regardless, Goodman's brand of liberation and that of the Gay Liberation Movement were in reality very much alike. Indeed, Altman went on

to quote several key documents of the early gay liberation movement that espoused the very same in-your-face sexuality that Goodman alluded to and Wittman promoted, such as the 'Blatant is Beautiful!' article by Brian Chavez in *Gay Sunshine*, October 1970, and the first Gay Liberation Front statement, boldly proclaiming: 'WE ARE GOING TO BE WHO WE ARE!' (cited in Altman, 1973: 120-122).

The important point for me is that, despite very different theoretical bases, the rhetoric has changed little since the emergence of Gay Liberation in 1969. The quote from Goodman's article is especially interesting in the way it parallels Mark Simpson's position. They are both reclaiming their right to 'get down and dirty', their right to their own perversity. They both express their contempt for middle-class sanitised and commodified forms of sexual expression that seem to minimise lust in favour of a more acceptable, 'nice', model of sexuality. The only difference is that Simpson extends that critique to the gay community and even gay identity itself. Yet, even in that regard, Simpson's position is not so very different to those of the early gay liberationists. In 'A Gay Manifesto', Wittman went on to question the merit of 'gay ghettos' in the long term (Wittman, 1970: 167-168). In 1974, Allen Young, another prominent figure in the early Gay Liberation movement wrote an article for the fifth anniversary of Stonewall edition of *Gay Sunshine*, entitled 'On human identity and gay identity: a liberationist dilemma' (1975), in which he argued that, despite their short-term political and personal importance, gay identity and gay community carried an essential contradiction that meant they ultimate worked against the very liberation they sought. He

saw ‘gayness’ as a limited concept because it boxed people into a narrow, restricted identity, creating a social space defined by that same gayness but failing to challenge the society around it. Though crudely stated, at heart this position is not so very different to that of Queer Nation and other ‘queer activists’ over twenty years later.

Though I have sometimes railed against it, this is a useful debate; not because there is any solution to it, or because it will eventually bring about ‘true’ liberation, to be revealed in all its revolutionary glory. No, this debate is useful because it is unresolvable. While I consider the queer activists of the 1990s to be just intellectually more sophisticated versions of the early gay liberationists, what is absolutely clear from the history of the gay movement and of gay communities, is that it is perfectly possible for societies like ours to increasingly tolerate, and even celebrate, homosexuality. Some might even believe we will shortly witness a time when the distinctions between gay and straight become relatively meaningless. But I wonder just how far we could have progressed had we not had this persistent questioning and badgering from the political, theoretical and sexual extremes, forcing the gay movement to demand more, at the same time as critically engaging us on every issue. My main argument with these extremes is their lack of historical perspective and their tendency to ‘throw the baby out with the bathwater’: gay identity and gay culture have served us well politically, continue to be useful in advancing our cause, and are a central aspect of the lives of many homosexual individuals. A critical perspective is useful, but total rejection is both unrealistic and fails to carry the mass of homosexual men and women with it.

A more productive position is to recognise the strategic importance of gay identity while simultaneously recognising its basis in social categories that require critical interrogation. Gay identity has been the primary means by which homosexuals have resisted dominant (heterosexual) discourse, even while it traps the individual homosexual into a socially defined category:

> One of the primary means of such resistance has been the strategic adoption of identity, and a concomitant employment of language which refers to the everyday lives and realities of people within specific historical, cultural, and discursive settings. To make sense of these events and issues, then, it is useful to employ the terms 'lesbian' and 'gay' provisionally. That is, these words refer not so much to some vague notion of ontological essence as much as they emphasise the underlying institutional structures which require that marginalised issues and people name themselves and demand attention… What I am suggesting further is that these identities and linguistic usages need to be contextualised in order that as marginalised groups and individuals, we not empower the very institutional and epistemological apparati which have silenced and ignored us for so long. (namaste, 1992: 59).

The notion of a 'gay sexuality' that is associated with both gay identity and gay culture is, perhaps, more problematic. Of course, as previously indicated, gay communities express their own, subcultural, norms, and these extend to the area of sexuality. In the context of HIV, research in this area has been restricted to the development of 'safe sex' norms (Kelly et al., 1992, 1997; McKusick et al., 1985; Catania et al., 1990), but it is nonetheless clear that sexual norms abound within gay culture. While many would argue that the

sexuality that is represented within gay culture is personally, and even socially, liberating, insofar as it provides positive images of otherwise 'perverse' and 'deviant' sex practices, there is also a sense in which gay men's sexualities are actually limited through their definition and representation in this way.

Overall, it seems, gay communities are generally sex-positive in their sexual philosophy and representations, and gay men, as a group, appear to have wide-ranging sexual repertoires and to exhibit broadly tolerant attitudes to most sex practices. In addition, the association of gender role with sexual role commonly accepted within dominant (hegemonic) sexual discourse is not as strong within gay communities. However, gay culture has its own dominant representations, and gay men in gay communities still find themselves faced with difficult personal choices and challenges regarding their own sexualities through a perceived need to conform to a particular way of 'being gay'.

CHAPTER 3. SEXUALITY: IDENTITY AND CATEGORISATION

I generally take a Foucauldian perspective in this thesis. However, I also reject 'deconstructionism' as inadequate to the task of accounting for individual circumstances in the context of a society where sexuality is defined through narrow functional norms, which play a key role in the development of sexual identity. The relationship between identity and behaviour, and how meaning is attached to sexuality in this context, are key points that underlie this thesis. An adequate exposition of this relationship between identity, behaviour and desire in gay men's lives and how this affects the nature of research into homosexuality, requires consideration of gay culture and gay communities. Gay culture has played a central role in defining and delimiting gay men's sexualities.

Biographical comments

Like many gay men, I was having sex with men before I came out as gay. Apart from a few clumsy attempts at sex with boys at school, I did not become sexually active until I entered university. My first true homosexual experiences were at beats on campus. Gradually I began to accept that I was gay. Fortunately, I also formed friendships within the university left and these people's attitudes made me feel safe: I could tell them how I felt and knew I would not be rejected.

Therefore, I came out with virtually no contact with the gay commercial scene and very little contact with gay life, other than through

individual encounters, and by learning the modus operandi of getting anonymous sex at beats. My view of myself, as a gay man, was framed by my experience of denial and my finding safety and acceptance within the student left. I had little understanding of how most gay men lived their lives. The experience of helping organise the first Mardi Gras in Sydney in 1978 alerted me to the need to think beyond my own perspective. It also presented me with a politically acceptable opportunity to engage with the gay commercial scene, and I discovered, in spite of myself, that I enjoyed much of what it had to offer. In addition, I began to meet other gay men who, while retaining a generally leftist perspective, had come to the gay movement in a different way. They had learnt about and participated in the gay commercial scene along the way, and they were able to reconcile the two. Their examples helped me learn how to use the gay scene to meet my own needs.

The important transition between my involvement in the generally leftist aspects of the gay movement and my immersion in the gay commercial scene was also a transition of my personal identity. When I had accepted my homosexuality as a university student activist, I had done so on the basis of my politics. I was 'gay' because I had a generally homosexual orientation. My identity had been forged by a reluctant acceptance of my sexuality, and was then given validity through my friends on the student left. When I entered the gay commercial scene and began to view that as the main space in which I could live my life as a gay man, I did so as much for myself as for my political beliefs. I could express my sexuality relatively unconstrained in the gay commercial scene.

It was the maleness of sex with men that I found deeply attractive. I realised that masculinity was actually important to me, and that I enjoyed exploring my own masculinity, through sex. The gay commercial scene allowed me this freedom. Once I had come to this realisation, I had a sense of celebration. I undertook a radical change of lifestyle and appearance: I frequented gay social and sex venues, self-consciously seeking to re-create myself; I joined a gym, gradually changing my body shape; I began wearing clothes that suited my new lifestyle; and I cultivated new friends who also enjoyed and participated in the gay scene. I did all this very deliberately. It was exactly my ambition to carve out a place for myself within the suddenly emergent gay community.

While I understood, and critically reviewed, the process by which individual gay men tried to conform to images that were represented as 'ideal' for gay men, I did not feel this myself. I knew this was the case and it was what I wanted, not because I believed I could better fit in that way, but because the images of gay men being represented from within the gay community were images that I found attractive and that seemed to fit with how I felt about myself. I was uncomfortable with the old-style 'camp' and effeminate images of gay men. This new masculine gay man – the 'clone' – seemed to suit me very well.

This is not to say that I found the process unproblematic. While I revelled in the changes I was bringing about in myself, there were aspects of the 'gay lifestyle' with which I did not feel comfortable. Mostly, these were things that seemed very middle-class to me – whether this was because most

gay men were, in fact, middle-class, or they were aspects of the old camp style that just carried on regardless of the new dominance of the clone, they just did not suit my somewhat working-class background. So, I ignored them. I rejected what I did not like. Of course, I was probably relatively fortunate in this regard. I felt confident in what I wanted and I felt successful in my own transition to an urban, masculine gay man. It worked well for me, whereas I knew this was not always the case for other gay men.

My relocation to San Francisco during the 1980s was an extension of this desire to locate myself at the heart of the emergent gay culture. During my first extended stay in San Francisco, I realised that I enjoyed living an almost entirely gay lifestyle. I continued to self-consciously cultivate my gay image to suit me. Early in 1985, while I was back in Sydney, I was interviewed for *Campaign* magazine, in an article entitled 'Garry Bennett[1]: the happy hedonist'. The article concerned how and why I had purposefully cultivated this image for myself (Johnston, 1985). Throughout the rest of the 1980s, I continued to move back and forth between San Francisco and Sydney, and continued to write for the gay press (mainly in Australia) and to do research work within the gay community that increasingly focussed on HIV. My gay identity fitted very comfortably and I easily found my place in the gay communities of Sydney and San Francisco.

In the 1990s, I returned to live in Sydney full-time. My relationship and my professional commitments have meant that I have remained in

[1] This was my name at birth – a name I changed formally in 1991 but had ceased to use by 1989. Indeed, the change of name was yet one more aspect of my continuing re-definition of myself.

Australia. During this time, aspects of my gay identity and how I relate to the gay community have changed yet again. I settled into a much less intense involvement in the gay commercial scene and gay community politics.

Nonetheless, my gay identity have remained central to how I viewed myself. I still chose to live in a 'gay ghetto', to work within the gay community, to attend major gay cultural events, to go to a predominantly gay gym, and to keep abreast of gay community affairs, both political and social. However, I no longer feel any affinity with the gay bar scene or the dance party circuit, and I increasingly restrict my involvement to aspects of gay life that fit me. Was this my own conscious choice or was this because I felt increasingly alienated from certain aspects of gay community life? I think it was probably a little of both, but it was generally unproblematic for me. While I miss some things that gay community life no longer seems to provide for me, mainly I just seem to have discarded aspects that no longer fit with the changes in myself. Yet, in general I continue to live a predominantly 'gay life' and feel comfortably immersed in Sydney's gay community – at least to the extent I need in order to pursue my own interests and contribute in a way that suits me.

Theoretical foundations

Gagnon and Parker (1995) provided a historical account of the theorisation of sexuality and how researchers have used theory to bring sexuality under the purview of science. In particular, they argue that the emergence of feminist and gay and lesbian studies have challenged the

presumptive (masculinist and heterosexual) bases on which theories of sexuality had been based.

Kauth (2000) has described in some detail, and critically reviews, the three main theoretical models of human sexuality: psychological including both Freudian and post-Freudian, as well those based in 'learning theory'; social constructionist, including both discourse theory and labelling theory; and biological, including anatomical, genetic and hormonal accounts. He then describes what he believes to be a synthesis of the various models, his own 'interactionist' model that accounts for the useful aspects he has identified in each model. While his critical review is perhaps overly dismissive and simplistic, and his particular interest in an evolutionary basis for homosexuality remains unproven and poorly applied, his more general case for an integrated, 'interactionist' account of sexuality has considerable merit.

Kauth argues that individuals are born with a biological predisposition toward particular aspects of sexuality, but this is moulded by the particular cultural context: individuals learn how to make their own particular predisposition accord with or work around the prevailing cultural beliefs and expectations. He states (ibid.: 206):

> Two major forces shape human lives – the genetic stuff that we receive from our parents and the social world in which we live. These forces are independent but interactive. Together biological and cultural forces create a bubbling dynamic stew of influences where one ingredient blends into others, adding its own flavour and enhancing the mix. To

> understand human behaviour, one must deal with both these forces individually and where they interface – the human body.

Nonetheless, the meaning attached to this 'interface' is a complex and dynamic product of the interaction between individual experience and social definitions.

Social-interactionism can provide the basis for understanding individual sexual behaviours, but it does little to explain the sexual categorisation that is at least as important to the processes of sexual development and identification. The social impetus to regulate and control sexuality has created, not necessarily consciously, a range of sexual categories. Gagnon and Parker (ibid.: 14-16) indirectly address this question at the end of their review of the history of the theorisation of sexuality, and they suggest that relations of power underlie the social construction of sexuality.

Discourses and sexual categories

Michel Foucault (1980) suggested that sexual types only come into existence because of specific power struggles, at that time and in those particular circumstances. Therefore, what is seen as a sexual type in one cultural group within one society at a particular historical moment, need not be the same in any other context.

Foucault argued that social categories arise from the interplay of social forces and structures such that those social relations are represented within and on those categories. Behaviour is organised, defined, regulated, structured and, ultimately, categorised according to the relative power of social forces. This,

necessarily, also implies a 'reverse discourse' (Foucault, 1980: 95). The construction of social categories reflects power relationships, thereby representing dominant ideologies, and reflects resistances (to the imposition, by dominant groups, of power relations) posed by dominated groups – in this case the group being categorised. This discourse and 'reverse discourse' is the arena for the structuring, organisation, definition and regulation of social groups (ibid.: 101). Jeffrey Weeks (1980: 18) pointed out that even 'reverse discourses' take place 'within the terms as laid down by those who wield the power to define, and hence the power to control and oppress.'

In fact, by their very resistance, categorised groups reproduce and reinforce social categories, both by their identification with it and by their attempts to redefine it. In order to challenge the negative construction of a social category, individuals must first identify themselves within the category – that is, individuals must define themselves as (socially constructed) members of that category, and then demand that members of that category, as an identifiable group, should not be so constructed. The categorised group is thereby forced into a position of attempting to renegotiate, or 'reconstruct', the category rather than challenge its very existence (which would necessitate the individuals' negation of their material conditions of existence).

Postmodernist accounts challenge the very concept of social categories and identities. Jean-Francois Lyotard (1984) argued that 'grand narratives of legitimation' (metanarratives) are not a sensible way of understanding society as it has now developed. He suggests that plural legitimations occur, at a local level, and that they are immanent in practice. In the postmodern world there is

no overarching social theory, nor is there a universalisable way of conceiving society and its components. Society is an interacting web of discursive practices. Consequently, social identities are complex representations of an ever-changing discursive moment, and general concepts such as social categories are not capable of describing these identities and often conceal differences in favour of a communitarian conceptualisation of social relations (Young, 1990). How, then, does this affect individuals? In this view, individuals represent themselves, through practice, in relation to their understanding of the interplay of social forces and the opportunities they provide at a given discursive moment. For many postmodernist accounts of the gay male category, the category itself is problematic, and they dismiss the pursuit of gay communitarian politics that appeals to identification with such a category as 'identity politics'. They argue that such a politics is a 'search for the real, true gay identity that lies beneath the layers of misrepresentation, and thus as also essentialist' (Stanley and Wise, 1993: 214). Stanley and Wise described such deconstructionist critiques as being simplistic misrepresentations of constructionist accounts of homosexual identities. Social constructionist accounts often describe such identities as fluid and encompassing competing positions, and grounded in experience. Indeed, for Weeks (1995) identities are necessarily paradoxical in that they assume 'fixity and uniformity while confirming the reality of unfixity, diversity and difference' and they are deeply personal but represent a cultural history and context.

Kauth (2000: 99) contested the view that describes sexual categories as being socially created concepts that convey particular sexual meaning, and with which individuals come to identify themselves. He described this as 'a "top-down" approach to identity labelling that views the labelled individual as a passive, helpless victim of powerful social forces.' He pointed out that, despite, the social constructionist thesis concerning the deployment of the term 'homosexual' and the subsequent development of homosexual identities and subcultures, individuals with same-sex erotic interests have existed throughout history and across cultures, have named themselves in a variety of ways and developed their own subcultures as appropriate to their particular social context. While he did not argue for a 'true' gayness, he did suggest that homosexuality, per se, may have some more fundamental, perhaps biological, features that transcend cultural contexts, but how this is expressed and understood, given meaning and represented, are all shaped by its particular cultural context.

Fraser and Nicholson (1988) claimed that a 'postmodernist critique need forswear neither large historical narratives nor analyses of societal macrostructures' (ibid.: 34). This is an argument to use postmodernist methods of social analysis in context, recognising that discourses occur within social relations that represent competing and unequal social forces.

With this formulation, we can return to Foucault's discursive analysis with greater clarity. The power of any social group to control or influence discourse is clearly delimited by that group's relationship with the relations of power within the relations of production and reproduction, and by the

similarly based power of other social groups with which it interacts within that discourse. Ultimately, the nature of all discourse reflects the relationship between interacting social forces and the relations of production. The greater power a social group can exercise, the more dominant it becomes and, therefore, the greater its ability to influence or control ideological production through discourse. This becomes culturally and historically entrenched, such that power, once achieved, has the hegemonic force to reproduce itself until an effective resistance can be made as social relations shift. This is a similar theoretical model to Pierre Bourdieu's (1973) concept of 'cultural capital'.

The place of sexual identity

Identity is a central component of sexual discourse and involves an overall concept of self that incorporates all aspects of both social and physiological existence. Rubin (1984) argued that culture mediates behaviour and meaning, thereby determining how individuals recognise their own differences as the basis of their own particular identity. A fully interactionist model of identity, however, proposes that individuals both react to the social environment and actively evaluate that environment. They are actively involved in the process of self-conceptualisation by conceptualising the world and selecting from the apparent alternatives presented (Starr, 1982-83: 258-259).

For Starr, however, identity is based primarily in behaviour: 'In an existential sense, each individual makes behavioural choices and, in the process, chooses him or herself.' (ibid.: 259). In this model, individuals interpret norms, make their own behavioural choices, and reinterpret those

behaviours with reference to their particular sociocultural context. Leder (1990: 92-99) emphasised the role of the 'Other' and intersubjectivity in self-awareness:[2]

> My awareness….is a profoundly social thing, arising out of experiences of the corporeality of other people and of their gaze directed back upon me. Am I fat or thin, beautiful or ugly, clumsy or agile? My self-understanding always involves the seeing of what others see in me (ibid.: 92).

The more general issue of the possible non-social basis for some behaviours and experiences – one's own corporeality – underlies Stanley and Wise's challenge to 'strict constructionism'. They argued that the body has its own 'rhythms and responses' and that we understand these 'through socially constructed frameworks of understanding' (Stanley and Wise, 1993: 197).

This raises more fundamentally interesting questions. Stanley and Wise ask how we might conceive of corporeality as both 'a linguistic creation' and as a 'physical reality', and is it possible to pursue this without resorting to essentialism (ibid.: 197-198). Independent of its being ascribed any social meaning, how does individual experiences, or even behaviour, affect the process of self-conceptualisation? Presumably, where such experiences are relevant to a particular type of social identity, their previous experience needs to be interpreted and evaluated at a later point, when their social meaning has become clear. This suggests that meaning and individual interpretation play an important role in the process of self-conceptualisation, but this is also in the

2 Leder referred specifically to the body, but his argument could be applied more broadly.

context of the body's 'physical reality'. Such a set of circumstances might apply in a variety of contexts, particularly those that relate to issues of sexuality.

Sexuality plays a key role – it is one of several core constructs – in the establishment of a self-concept (Hart and Richardson, 1981b: 90; Weeks, 1995: 36). The experience of sexuality differs according to the individual's particular situation, according to Hart and Richardson (1981b: 89):

> The maintenance of a self-construct as homosexual, heterosexual or bisexual will be influenced therefore by the individual's experience of the world…, the way in which the meaning of such experiences affects the individual's self-constructs…, and also the relationship of sexual identity to the other constructs the individual has of her/himself.

In effect, then, given that sexual identity is the product of an interactive and interpretive process, it is unique for each person. However, sexual categories represent sexual power relations, and identification with them must necessarily occur within the context of these power relations. Consequently, although a particular sexual activity might be experienced by many people in very different ways, the process of identifying with a particular sexual category is specific: it involves core identities of gender role and sexual role in relation to sexual behaviour and desire (Plummer, 1981b: 94). And it occurs within a particular social context, where corporeal experience is given meaning within social relations that valorise certain forms of behaviour, usually at the expense of others.

The boundaries between the actual sexual behaviours of individuals who identify quite differently as sexual beings are extremely fluid, overlapping considerably. For example, someone identifying as heterosexual might engage in as much, or even more, behaviour which would ordinarily be classified as homosexual as someone who identifies as gay, or vice versa. Murray (1984) argued that being gay did not necessarily mean that the individual was homosexual, and Marmor (1980b) explained that having a homosexual orientation does not necessarily mean that the individual has engaged in any sexual activity. Ultimately, sexual categories exist only insofar as societies have created these categories with particular meanings and have accorded them relative status through the particular behaviours that it has associated with those categories. Individuals identify with these categories, thereby either preserving social status or else countering the effects of stigmatisation.

The normative model of sexuality – the functional norm – is narrowly conceived and relatively fixed in contemporary Western cultures. It has two forms: the masculine man who engages in the active role within a broadly defined heterosexuality; and the feminine woman who engages in the passive role within a broadly defined heterosexuality. How people behave sexually does not necessarily bear a direct relationship to their sexual identity or to categorisation processes. The Kinsey (1948; 1953) data, although fifty years old, bear this out in that the extent of sexual 'deviance' was such that it was difficult to conceive of it as being statistically abnormal. The data provided an indication of the range of sexual behaviours and desires, suggesting that

supposedly abnormal and perverse behaviours are actually quite ordinary and commonplace.

However, sexual behaviour is not the same as sexual identity. Sexual identity is the result of many factors, including various desires and activities, circumstances, social and personal pressures, stigmatisations, and, especially, the individual's own interpretation of all this. The process of sexual identification does occur, nonetheless, within the constraints of a social structure. In contemporary Western societies, notions of gender-appropriateness are a major constraint, from which spring a host of lesser constraints. Individuals' experiences and activities, the general and particular levels and types of stigma, individuals' erotic fantasies, and how they interpret these factors, all underlie sexual identity.

This enormous complexity, and the specificity of experience, means that each individual remains sexually unique. Their behaviours and their circumstances are different, and how they interpret these are also different. In whatever context the primary events and interactions occur, they are discrete for the individual; and, yet, they are also bound within their cultural context by the social relations of power that determine the nature of sexual discourse. Deconstructionist accounts reject 'identity politics' because sexual identities are entirely individual; they argue that the categories to which they relate have no material reality, and, following Foucault, are constituted, from below, through a multiplicity of force relations. Alternatively, according to Stanley and Wise, rather than reject social categories we need to recognise that these categories reflect the relations of power within discourse and so have

'…immensely consequential political and social implications which need to be attended to, both intellectually and politically, rather than argued away as humanist naiveties' (Stanley and Wise, 1993: 220). This is how sexual ideology is structured, and, so, it acts as a relative, though certainly not complete, constraint on individual difference.

It is in this context that the politics of 'queer' arose in the late 1980s and early 1990s, to reject the categorising and structuring implied within the concept of 'gay', which it decried as 'assimilationist'. However, as Weeks (1995: 49) argued, while queer politics sought to challenge such categorisation it created its own new boundaries. For Weeks, though, queer politics was important '…because it is a reminder of the perpetual inventiveness of a collective sexual politics which stretches toward alternative ways of being… [It] is simultaneously deconstructive (contesting what is arbitrary and restrictive), and reconstructive (asserting the validity of desires and ways of being that have been ignored or denied).'

Nonetheless, social identities, based in social categories, have collective consequences as well as individual consequences, and have a collective basis. Identification with a social category requires recognition of at least some relevance of the social category to the individuals' own experience and circumstances. While they remain individuals with unique experiences and perspective, they are also necessarily accorded a collective identity. This collective identity is what underpins the development of subcultures and communities.

Gay communities and sexual subcultures

According to Clarke et al. (1976: 10), culture is the representation, through practices, of the ideas and values held by social groups and '...cultures always stand in relations of domination and subordination to one another.' (ibid.: 12). Subcultures '...are sub-sets – smaller, more localised and differentiated structures within one or other of the larger cultural networks.' (ibid.: 13).

A culture is therefore a set of practices reflecting a social group's values and beliefs. These practices include both the patterns of everyday life and symbolic expressions. However, such cultures have material conditions of existence and these determine their modes of signification – their representation and meanings (Barrett et al., 1979: 10). Cultures, like the social groups that form them, are stratified in relations of domination and subordination.

The relative success or repression of any culture is determined largely by the respective social group's relative power. 'Dominant culture' represents the cultural struggle between social forces, and this struggle is in a constant state of negotiation and renegotiation. How, then, is culture different from ideology? Gramsci (1971: 376) said that ideology is a '...system of ideas....' that defines both the superstructure and the individual consciousness, although he emphasised that ideology in the form of the superstructure determines any ideological representations at an individual level. The ability to reach an understanding of these ideological representations depends upon social (and class) position (Jabukowski, 1976: 104). Frankfurt School theorists posited

that ideology serves the interests of the dominant class by concealing or masking social contradictions (Held, 1980: 186). Williams (1981: 29) argued that to equate ideology with culture is to ignore the very real '...tensions, conflicts, resolutions and irresolutions, innovations and actual changes...' evident in a culture as a social group's set of practices. These practices derive from that group's material conditions of existence that may be in contradiction to the relevant ideological representations. In other words, a group may accept ideas and values that actually seem to stand in contradiction to their experience, and even their knowledge. Richard Johnson (1979: 236) claimed that ideologies can operate most effectively through cultures as they draw individuals into a social relationship; at the level of cultures and subcultures, the discourse between dominant (hegemonic) ideologies and subordinate social groups occurs, determining the extent to which a culture is a culture of assimilation and appropriation or a culture of resistance and rebellion.

Communities, however, are broad-based sets of inter-relationships that are relatively interdependent on each other and yet are also relatively independent of wider social relations. The existence of a culture does not, in itself, imply the existence of a community based on that culture. We often speak of a 'youth culture' in contemporary Western societies but there is no 'youth community'. Communities that have a cultural or subcultural basis can only be identified through actual institutions and organisations, expressing the interests of a social group through broad-based interdependent relationships. Herek and Glunt (1995) have applied the definition of a sense of community as proposed by McMillan and Chavis (1986) to the gay community. This

theory attributed four essential elements to a sense of community. One was that those who constitute the community feel they belong and share common cultural beliefs, rituals and symbols, as well as being able to identify those that do not 'belong'. A second was that members are influenced by and influence others in the community. A third was that community membership actually serves individual needs. The fourth was that community members share a common culture. For Weeks (1995: 47), 'Community stands for some notion of solidarity, a solidarity which empowers and enables, and makes individual and social action possible.' This sense of community, however, does not reveal the dynamic nature of real communities in the real world. Dowsett et al. (2001: 220) claimed that 'Communities are sophisticated, cultural processes of active and collective human endeavour in distinct and changing circumstances.'

Given that cultures are the product of a struggle between competing interests, and so represent the relations of power between various subcultural groups, no community can truly reflect that entire culture's interests. It, like the culture on which it is based, will reflect the struggles between individuals, groups and subcultures within that culture. As the community is an arena for this struggle (for control of the organisations and institutions of that culture), it represents the relationship between these various social forces (and, of course, their relationship to the wider society) at any particular moment. Communities reflect the temporary relations of power but may not truly represent any particular group.

Samuel Delaney (1999) described the intricate, and intimate, relationship between sociality and sexuality in the formation of a sense of community among homosexual men. For Delaney, the hidden-but-still-public sexual camaraderie that developed on the streets, in backrooms, and at beats provided a powerful communality, and it might be argued that this has been the foundation upon which concepts of gay community were built.

John D'Emilio (1983) described the transition from recognition of homosexuality as a way of being and a social category of people to an identity that describes an actual group of people to subcultures based on this identity and, finally, to a community in the urban centres of the United States. His description of the development of urban gay communities in the United States placed great emphasis on the growth of institutions (commercial and otherwise) for socialising, coming together and expressing aspects of gay subcultures. But he pointed out that an actual gay community could not come into existence until there was a convergence of the gay movement (in its broadest sense) and gay subcultures.

D'Emilio's account of the development of the San Francisco gay community suggests that a gay community exists only when the institutions and organisations, based on gay subcultures, consciously articulate, in some form, the interests of gay people – or at least those gay people who participate in the subcultures. The development of gay communities in contemporary Western societies shows remarkable similarity across national boundaries. This is probably because gay cultures have developed in similar ways with

similar strategies for survival within much of North America, Western Europe and Australasia, and, increasingly, in Hispanic and Asian societies.[3]

Gary Wotherspoon (1991) has detailed the development of Sydney's gay commercial scene and its relationship with the concept of gay community. However, the political and ideological development of Sydney's gay community has particular pertinence to an understanding of the nature of how gayness is represented from within that community. Since the late 1970s, there has been a massive explosion in the visibility and organisation of gay subcultures. This development has also encouraged a new concept of 'gay community', to a significant extent.

Yet, gay community was always, and remains, a problematic concept. Based, as it must be, in a sexual identity that finds its origin in social categorisation, a discourse around appropriate or ideal 'gayness' almost necessarily defines particular qualities and individuals as more or less part of that community. In a study by Grierson et al. (1997), they found that individuals were able to represent graphically how close they believed certain types of persons to be to the centre of the gay community. Interestingly, those individuals who might be argued as the most extreme of the stereotypes of gay men – drag queens and leathermen – were closest to the centre, along with young gay men (reflecting the perceived youth orientation of the gay scene).

Moreover, there are many who lack either the material resources or the knowledge to participate. Young, unskilled men (and women) often find

[3] For a comparison of North American and Western European gay lifestyles see: Bell and Weinberg (1978); Dannecker and Reiche (1974); and Weinberg and Williams (1974).

themselves unable to afford a gay lifestyle (Bennett, 1983; Dowsett et al., 1992: 318-319). Men from non-Anglo-Celtic backgrounds often lack the appropriate knowledge (and language) to either access or understand the gay community (Prestage et al., 1994; Pallotta-Chiarolla et al., 1999) or they may simply be excluded either directly as a result of discriminatory attitudes or indirectly through an unconscious presumption of Anglo-Celtic cultural values (cf. Peterson, 1992). At least as importantly, the gay community has been narrowly defined in terms of its most dominant group, and has thereby tended to describe and promote a relatively narrow concept of homosexuality that includes an assertively masculine sexuality (Blachford, 1981; Levine, 1992). This limits participation in gay lifestyles and inhibits the development of a gay identity among some – just as the traditional association of male homosexuality with effeminacy did in the past, and continues to do in smaller, less developed, gay communities (Dowsett et al., 1992: 319).

Rather than challenging the marginalised status of the homosexual category, the gay community has effectively offered '...a niche in society, one that in particular conjunctures will be tolerated and encouraged, but not a challenge to the oppression which makes ... (it)... so necessary.' (Johnston, 1981a: 6). The reconstruction of the male homosexual category (as the 'gay male' category) by the gay community actively promotes the containment of that category to a specific section of the community for whom this particular form of marginalisation is acceptable – or even desirable among those for whom the dominant gay male subculture offers a lifestyle that is both attractive and affordable.

The gay community represents the interaction of various gay subcultures and, hence, gay political activity tends to represent the interests of the more powerful subcultural elites within that gay community, primarily advocating the rights of those who identify with these subcultures. Whereas early Gay Liberation had been concerned with the social basis of sexuality and the structuring and channelling of sexuality, personally, through political and cultural means (Altman, 1973), more recent gay political movements have been primarily interested in ensuring that gay men have the right to express their own particular sexuality freely.

Masculinity and the concept of a 'gay sexuality'

The most significant change in the gay male category, at least within gay culture, has been its relative masculinisation (Blachford, 1981; Levine, 1992; Healy, 1995). The masculinisation of the gay male category has occurred through a reassertion of gay men's male gender identity, thereby resisting the stigmatisation of male homosexuality as 'effeminate' and disenfranchisement from the privilege of masculine status (Buchbinder, 1998: 127). Gay Liberation contested the inevitable association between gender behaviour, gender role, sexual behaviour, and sexual role. Gay culture incorporated this perspective by representing forms of masculinity among gay men, which were thereby specific to gay men: a 'gay masculinity'. This gay masculinity asserted both a homosexual identity and homosexual behaviour but as an expression of the gay male category and how it was represented within gay culture.

The assertion of a gay masculinity is at least partially contradictory and, especially, conflicts with, and reacts to, the hegemonic form of masculinity (Halkitis, 2000: 132). Gay masculinity is usually based on sexual self-expression and exploration. This suggests that a range of sexual behaviours may be found within masculinity, any or all of which might be relevant to a particular individual (Connell, 1995). It can also question the personal, societal, and even critical analyses of appropriate sexual self-expression. Fundamentally, it asserts sexuality as a positive experience in itself. It therefore challenges some strands of feminism that have been reticent to put sexuality forward as a priority in their political agendas and suggests they might contain elements of moralism that actually reinforce, rather than challenge, traditional notions of both masculinity and femininity. Gay masculinity contains critical elements of a social theory that, while possibly risking the reproduction of masculinity, can also challenge deeply held beliefs regarding sexuality. However, traditional (normative) concepts of masculinity, rooted as they are in gender-based power relations, offer little prospect for progressive social change.

The other significant break with traditional concepts of masculinity is that gay men self-consciously represent the male, even the masculinised male, as the object of sexual desire, and this male is the sometimes active, sometimes passive, partner in a sexual relationship wherein the partners are ascribed equal social status, at least ideologically. Hence, the distinctions between active and passive are blurred within gay culture, making for quite different concepts of ‘male’ and ‘masculinity’.

Objectification of the male body, promiscuity, anonymous sexual behaviour, pornography, and public sex have all been positively represented within aspects of gay culture at various times. They have even been avowed at times as symbols of gay men's sexuality, and, hence, as a form of resistance to the dominant (normative) conceptualisation of sexuality in general, and of male homosexuality in particular.

Individual gay men do not simply project the attitudes and beliefs of the gay community, just as they do not simply accept the commonly held negative stereotypes of homosexual men. Yet, just as with those stereotypes, the impact of the gay community's sexual attitudes cannot be discounted. Daniel Harris (1997) has described how the gay community has represented gay men's sexual attitudes and beliefs through its subcultural modes of representation and signification. This also occurs through gay men's use language and non-verbal modes of communication (Hayes, 1981; Darsey, 1981; Chesebro and Klenk, 1981).

Many American writers (for example, Levine, 1992; Murray, 1992; Rotello, 1997) have described this 'ideology of gay sexuality' but most have argued that the impact of AIDS and assimilationist politics during the 1980s have fundamentally shifted it toward a more conformist and 'relationally' based sexuality. Eric Rofes (1996), on the other hand, seems to argue that 'gay sexuality' has only been suppressed by the impact of AIDS both on gay communities and on gay political perspectives, and that the gay community's path forward can only be through reclamation of a distinctly gay sexuality. In his account of the 'bear subculture', Les Wright (1997b) seems to describe just

such a reclamation, though in a way that he suggests challenges hegemonic masculinity.

In contrast to these relatively optimistic perspectives on gay sexuality, Michelangelo Signorile (1997) argued that, rather than becoming more sexually conservative, gay male communities have simply incorporated more traditional concepts of masculinity into their sexual attitudes and have been commodified in such a way that gay sexuality has either been depersonalised or has actually become psychologically damaging. Harris (1997) similarly argued that gay sexuality has been assimilated and commodified, but he suggests that this presages both the end of a distinctly gay sexuality and even of gay identity.

Altman (1997) took issue with some of these lines of argument and argued that although there are aspects of all these perspectives relevant to Australian gay communities, it may be that the impact of AIDS in Australia has not caused such fundamental changes in gay sexuality. In some ways, most commentators would probably agree that in Australia gay sexuality appears to have resisted many of the conservatising influences that have so dominated the US situation. Regardless, what all commentators on gay men, and on the sexual attitudes and beliefs their communities espouse, appear to agree on is the continuing masculinisation of gay sexuality. In addition, regardless of these judgements about a concept of ‘gay sexuality’, homosexual men’s sexual behaviour in general is quite distinct from that of heterosexual men, even after accounting for the necessary physiological differences involved in a heterosexual versus a homosexual encounter. Homosexual men

are generally much more sexually active and engage in a far broader range of sex practices than is generally true of most heterosexual men (Kinsey, 1948; Michael et al., 1994).

This valorisation of masculinity was most forcefully – and overtly – expressed during the early 1980s in the 'clone' style that was usually represented as being highly desirable sexually (Johnston, 1981b; Levine, 1992, 1998). Although that particular subcultural type has largely disappeared, the gay masculinity it represented remains the dominant feature of gay sexuality (Locke, 1997). 'Even if one eschews the pumped and hairless clone and has access to a wider variety of gay men and gay subcultures, the shaved muscle boy aesthetic and all the baggage that comes with it is omnipresent.' (Signorile, 1997: 25).

However, masculinity has various forms among gay men. Bears represent one increasingly obvious form of gay masculinity that has little to do with the description provided by Signorile (see also Wright, 1997b: 8-11). Joyce Layland (1990) described various ways in which gay men express their masculinity. She pointed to the many divisions among gay men, many of which are directly attributed to perceptions of relative degrees of masculinity, and explained how masculinity is a particularly complex and fluid quality (ibid.: 132):

> So looking at masculinity on the 'gay scene' involves not looking at a unitary phenomenon, fixed over time and space, but a multi-faceted set of constructs, changing consistently, not only over time and space but also between men and groups of men. The meanings attached to it are

constantly negotiated and re-negotiated in processes of interpretation and communication.

The reality is that gay men are far more ambivalent individually about the sexual behaviours that are often encouraged or at least portrayed by representations of gay masculinity. Gay male community attitudes, or norms, can only represent the consequence of the interaction of individual gay men and their organisations, and the various modes of communication – the state of discourse – within the gay community at any given time. The general attitudes of that community are necessarily fluid due to this dynamic relationship, and are often controversial, even within it. Even so, general gay community norms are often expressed and identified with the gay (political) cause and the interests of the community (and, hence, those of individual gay men).

Attitudes and beliefs around anal sex are a clear indication of this ambivalence. In general, the fears of, and taboos against, anal sex appear to have two very basic sources. One is its association with 'perversity', due to its aspect of being sex-for-pleasure rather than being reproductively focussed in gender relations of power, which identifies it strongly with male homosexuality in (negative) function. The other is the very particular relationship between receptive anal intercourse and the feminine-passive role such that it can directly challenge identification as a masculine man.

Within gay culture, however, very little of this masculinist conceptualisation of anal sex is found. Jay and Young (1979a: 465-480) found that gay men generally attached no particular (gender-based) value to either the active-insertive or the passive-receptive role. They may have expressed a

personal preference, but this was almost entirely in relation to sexual satisfaction and was rarely related to gender role. Hite (1981) received similar comments from the gay men in her sample.

Nonetheless, role-playing has not been completely banished from gay men's heads, and sometimes a form of role-playing appears even when the men involved try to disavow it. A 34-year old man, a professional, who lived in inner Sydney and participated in gay community life, put it this way:

> … it's embarrassing to try and articulate it. If the other bloke's got a bigger dick and/or bigger muscles then he deserves to fuck me. If I've got the bigger dick and/or bigger muscles then I get to fuck the other bloke. It's such a silly reason. [4]

However, not all gay men engage in anal intercourse. Some gay men (Rotello, 1997: 42-43 and 76-77) argue that anal intercourse has become more popular because of the separation of gender role from sexual role during the post-Gay Liberation period, but there is little empirical evidence to support such a claim. Others claim that anal intercourse has always played a central role in gay men's sexualities (Eigo, 2001).

The gay community generally conveys a positive attitude toward anal sex practices. Some suggest that anal intercourse occupies such a central position in the concept of gay sexuality within gay culture that there is a degree of peer pressure to 'master' it. Many gay men have been preoccupied by this, as have gay publications providing information about gay men's

[4] Interview notes from Enacting Sexual Contexts Study, Sydney (McInnes et al., 2001).

sexuality (Jay and Young, 1979a: 681-682). Morin (1981: 167-168) argued that the gay community pressures gay men to 'perform', to be the 'perfect lover', in order to compete. In assuming that anal intercourse is essential to being a 'perfect gay lover', he also implied much more: anal intercourse has become central to the concept of a gay sexuality. Signorile (1997) certainly argued that sexual performance is an essential core component of what he described as the 'cult of masculinity' within the gay community, though he did not address the issue of anal intercourse specifically. Weintraub (1999/2000) argued that anal intercourse is presumed to be so central to gay sexuality that he found it difficult to confess to his lack of interest in it and his preference for a particular form of frottage:

> … despite a consensus that began to develop not long after I came out that anal intercourse was the culminating male-to-male sexual act, and that anything less was at best just foreplay, if not sexually immature. I resisted this view; despite enormous pressure to conform, cock-rubbing remained at the heart of my sexual desire and practice.

Later in the same article, Weintraub described how anal intercourse became pre-eminent in gay pornography and its acceptance as 'the defining gay sexual act' seemed to correspond with the rise of the 'clone' during the 1970s. He recounted a sexual encounter with a prominent gay activist, who objected to his refusal to take the receptive role in anal intercourse by stating: 'I don't think you're really gay unless you get fucked.' Interestingly, in a response to Weintraub's article when it was reprinted on the popular *Gay Today* website, Teddy Snider (2001) wrote: 'Anal sex, I believe, is the

absolute acme of gay male sexual expression…' He then described Weintraub as having 'hangups' about anal sex.

Hocquenghem (1978: 83-89) claimed that there is a necessary and inevitable link in perception, if not in practice, between male homosexuality and anal eroticism. The anus is symbolic of the privatisation of pleasure and is a symbolic challenge to the primacy of the phallus. Male homosexuality is pleasure-seeking activity that subverts the traditional concepts of masculinity (and, indeed, femininity). This link is occasionally represented in 'communitarian' terms as being a strong expression of the bond between gay men and the commitment they are able to make to each other.

Anal intercourse is viewed in various ways and practised differently among gay men depending on their own particular perceptions and context. Some view it as a necessary component of a successful sexual encounter, while others view it as something special, so important that they reserve it for special occasions. A 38-year old gay builder living in inner Sydney explained it this way:[5]

> Yeah I have an issue with I mean that part of sex is pretty sort of special with me I like it I like it a lot but um plus with being safe as well I'd rather know someone a lot better before they actually fuck me.

Anal sex is clearly normalised within gay communities, although some gay men may resist it both ideologically and practically. The impetus to explore and to learn how to practise aspects of anal sex that may not have

[5] Interview notes from Enacting Sexual Contexts Study, Sydney (McInnes et al., 2001).

formed part of an individual gay man's erotic interest suggest that the gay community's attitudes and beliefs around sexuality can directly affect their own sexual behaviours. Some men speak of the desire to experiment with fist-fucking, just out of curiosity – they have learnt about it through the gay community and decide to try it simply because it is possible. A 27-year-old car park attendant living in inner Sydney, who described himself as 'queer' and did not identify with the gay community (although he socialised mainly with gay men), expressed it like this:[6]

> It is interesting 'cause it is something to try but it wasn't sexual – it didn't turn me on, it didn't make me hard. It was more curiosity, like could I do this? … rather than it is going to turn me on. … I thought, cool, I have tried it twice. It hasn't worked twice. I don't need to try it a third time.

Critical implications

'Promiscuity', orgiastic sex, 'unusual and perverse' sexual activities, prostitution and drug use have all been associated with gay lifestyles in the wider society (Weeks, 1981a). Many of these have been adopted by some elements within the gay communities at various times, though they have usually been more positively reinterpreted by those involved. The open acceptance of these behaviours by and within sections of gay culture has afforded the opportunity for individual gay men to explore their own sexualities and move beyond the limitations imposed by a conservative culture

[6] Interview notes from Enacting Sexual Contexts Study, Sydney (McInnes et al., 2001).

through the dominant discourse. In addition, the espousal of undeniably masculine images of gay men, by and within gay communities, has significantly affected the behaviour and attitudes of many gay men.

Gay communities are complex phenomena with various interests, and those interests have different degrees of power or influence over the shape of those communities and the ideologies manifested within them. These affect the lives of individual gay men, as well as the relationship between homosexually active men, the nature of gay communities, and the ways in which male homosexuality is represented and perceived, both socially and individually. These representations interact with social forces and change with time as those social forces change relative to each other, as has happened in the development of a concept of a 'gay lifestyle' and of 'gay sexuality', increasingly incorporated into the ideology of the 'gay community'.

The relationship between these ideologies and the experiences and understandings of individuals who are homosexually active is not a simple one of cause and effect. For some, it can be said that there is a relative ease of fit between the ideology and their actual situation. However, for many this is not the case. Some may ultimately be incorporated into gay communities, undergoing a process of personal change to make this transition possible (and which varies considerably in its effectiveness). On the other hand, others, for a variety of reasons, are not able to identify with these communities. They may find themselves excluded from those communities to some extent, or are in opposition or resistance to the attitudes and beliefs represented within those communities, or else simply find no reason to identify themselves with, or in

any way relate to, those communities. So they express their homosexual behaviour in ways that quite different to those espoused within gay communities. The sexual behaviours and attitudes of individuals who are homosexually active are profoundly affected by the interaction between societal representations of homosexuality and the ideologies of gay communities.

For most research among homosexually active men since the advent of the HIV epidemic, the assumption has been that sexuality is manifested through sexual behaviour, or, at least, that, in terms of the risk of HIV infection, the only manifestation of sexuality that has any practical importance is the individuals' sexual behaviour. How such research interacts with perceptions of sexuality, both individually and socially, underscores the conflict between social definitions of sexual behaviours and how individuals interpret their own behaviours and those same social definitions. How society as a whole and both behavioural and social research, in particular, have responded to AIDS reflects a basic misunderstanding of sexuality that poses a major challenge for research about sexuality in general.

There have been remarkable changes in the use of condoms amongst some populations of gay men (Prestage et al., 1994). These changes largely reflect some generally accepted notions of 'safe sex' and the encouragement of such by organised gay communities. However, the reality of homosexually active men's lives does not simply reflect the values and beliefs of these communities. Though there is evidence of change in this particular aspect of the sexual behaviour of homosexually active men in general, this change is

neither uniform, nor does it indicate a fundamental change in these men's sexual desires, beliefs or self-concepts. There are marked differences in the ways homosexually active men express and understand their own particular sexuality, and, therefore, in the ways they respond to the various incitements to particular forms of sexual expression, both within and outside gay communities. These differences are based both in individual differences of personality and in social factors that have a direct bearing on the development of personality, including class, ethnicity, and other subcultural contexts (Dowsett et al., 1992; Connell et al., 1989; Hood et al., 1994; Kippax, Crawford et al. 1994; Prestage et al., 1994). While research among homosexually active men may have monitored these, quite limited, changes in sexual behaviour, the capacity for such research to represent these men's sexualities is largely restricted to a behavioural account. Has there been a change in the sexual desires, or in the meanings attached to particular sex practices, among gay men? Does a change in sexual behaviour among one group of homosexually active men represent the same thing as it does among a different group of such men, and, indeed, does it have any relationship at all to their own understandings of sexuality, or to changes in sexual desire or meaning?

CHAPTER 4. INTERROGATING IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY

Data from the studies referred to in this thesis can reveal many aspects of the lives, understandings and behaviours of homosexually active men. Taken at face value, these data have been used to describe gay men and the gay community in general, and to monitor behavioural changes among homosexually active men. We can also read them otherwise. A critical assessment of the data suggests that these studies can sometimes conceal as much as they reveal. The interaction between identity, community, culture, desire and behaviour is central to research into homosexuality and among homosexual men. Therefore, it is appropriate to examine these data with respect to these issues.

Biographical comments

The development, at the end of the 1970s, of a self-aware gay community that articulated a view that was separate to, and often in opposition to, the extremes (the 'mafia' and the gay left) that had until then dominated the political and socio-economic organisation of gay life in Sydney, was profoundly important for me. It helped me crystallise my understanding of the concept of 'gay community'. The term will always be a slippery, problematic concept, and it is unlikely to ever be able to clearly describe 'gay community' in a material sense. The implication of these sorts of early struggles was that, for me, gay 'community' is something that has to be based in the lived experiences of gay men (and lesbians), and needs to be directly responsible to

them. But who were the 'they' to which this refers? Who are the gay men (and lesbians) that ultimately must comprise this community?

My own theoretical perspective on the relationship between sexual identity and sexual behaviour grew out of personal experience and what I observed in other people. During the 1970s, as a left and gay activist in the highly theoretically-minded milieu of Sydney University student politics, I often found myself confronted with the contradiction between sexual identity and sexual behaviour. This contradiction often grew out of political praxis, but the implications were much greater in terms of individual circumstances. These broader implications, however, became more transparent much later, when I had to apply my own experience and what I understood of the politics of sexuality to the situation of persons in completely different circumstances and with entirely different perspectives to myself.

During the 1970s, in student left political circles, we had a strong commitment to the notion of 'the personal is the political' – the belief that what you do in your personal life arises from and influences the social and political context in which you live. However, for many of us, this slogan was also interpreted in reverse: that the political is also personal. In practice, what often happened was that we expected our personal behaviour to conform to a set of political values and beliefs. This might have been valid in an ideal world, where we had developed a perfect political and theoretical understanding of that world. Our political and theoretical perspectives, however, were often based in utopian ideals that bore little relation to the real

world in which we lived. Behaviour was judged according to a notion of 'ideological soundness'.

Consequently, instead of recognising ourselves and each other as imperfect individual beings, bound together by political and personal necessity, we often chastised ourselves and each other for our failures to behave in politically acceptable ways – something that in the 1990s came to be characterised as 'political correctness'. I am not concerned with the broader issues implied by this term. However, how this general attitude played out sexually among the people with whom I was acquainted had particular resonance in my later understandings of sexuality as both a social and an individual phenomenon.

There were two, connected, predominant understandings of sexuality in the student left circles of the 1970s. The first was the notion that sexist and heterosexist power relations underpinned all sexuality and thereby limited human potential for sexual difference. Within this perspective, women were restricted from asserting themselves sexually (and otherwise) by the power that men brought to bear, both consciously and unconsciously, while men were unable to express themselves as complete persons because they had to deny their feminine traits in order to maintain their sexual and social dominance. Furthermore, heterosexuality was seen as the central tenet of these sexist power relations and, as such, required that homosexuality be repressed, meaning that individuals were forced to deny any homosexual feelings, whether that be achieved consciously or unconsciously. The second understanding of sexuality was a neo-Freudian, often Marcusian, belief in an

innate universal ‘polymorphous perversity’, meaning that everyone has the capacity to respond erotically to a range of stimuli, including both heterosexual and homosexual.

Regardless of the validity of either or both these theoretical positions, the impact on individual behaviours among my peers had particular relevance to the development of my own understandings of sexuality. For some of my heterosexual colleagues, these theories of sexuality had the effect of encouraging them to experiment in homosexual behaviours. For some this appeared to be out of a misplaced sense of guilt: they felt obligated to at least try to express themselves sexually with close friends of the same gender, and for some it appeared to be something of a prurient curiosity. No doubt, some also felt that these theoretical understandings of sexuality freed them to express their homosexual desires, even if such desires were actually a relatively minor aspect of their sexuality. For some homosexual colleagues, myself included, there was a countervailing pressure to be open to the possibility of sex with the opposite gender, with all the same possible motivating factors.

Regardless of the motivation, what is of most interest in terms of my own developing understanding of sexuality, was the impact this had on individuals. Some found that their experiments with their own sexuality had long-term implications and, to varying extents, changed their way of viewing themselves sexually and how they continued to behave sexually. Others found that their attempts to experiment with their sexuality were largely unsuccessful and their sexual encounters of this sort were often embarassing and sometimes

emotionally fraught. Others found that, while they could engage in sexual activities that ran contrary to their 'natural' inclination, this did not profoundly affect their view of themselves or change the ways in which they interacted sexually in the long term. But in the midst of what appeared to be considerable sexual and personal confusion, several things were clear. It was certainly possible for some individuals to behave sexually in ways that did not conform to their view of themselves. It was also possible that some individuals could be locked into ways of behaving sexually that did not conform to their own desires, but equally it was possible for some people to remain largely unaware of some of their own desires until confronted by them through some activity. On the other hand, many others were simply unable to change their sexual behaviour in any way and their view of themselves remained firmly fixed. Whether any of these circumstances were delusional or real is entirely irrelevant to the general point: that sexual behaviour and sexual identity are not locked together in a mutually dependant relationship. Indeed, there appears to be a broad range of possible ways in which sexual behaviour and sexual identity can be experienced by individuals, and what that means, both socially and personally, can also be very different, depending on the circumstances. Sexuality is a particularly complex phenomenon and, in the end, individual experience and circumstances are crucial to understanding that complexity.

Between 1982 and 1983, when I was working on the establishment of the Twenty-Ten gay youth service, the broader social relevance of this complex understanding of sexuality first became clear. At that time, the situation of homeless young people was a major social issue. News media

were constantly concerned with 'young people at risk'. The risk was twofold – sex and drugs, with prostitution as the link between these two. Young men and women were generally represented as being vulnerable to older, sexually predatory men, whether they be heterosexual or homosexual. In particular, for young men and sexual risk, the implication was that they were not homosexual themselves but that they were being forced into homosexual activity, either through prostitution – in order to survive – or directly through the influence of these older men. In either case, it was also implied that their own sexuality could be profoundly 'disturbed' by this experience. Although the issue of consent figured in the debate, the issue arose at a time before the reform of laws criminalizing adult male homosexual acts in New South Wales. Consequently, there was no relevant age of consent legislation, as all homosexual acts between men were illegal. The context of this discussion was an overarching concern about young people and sex, or more particularly about young men and homosexuality.

There were two important issues here for me. To begin with, it was my view that sexuality was not fixed. One might view oneself in one way sexually at some stage in their life, but this could change in many ways over time. And secondly, I believed that what individuals did sexually need not affect how they view themselves – that sexual behaviour is not always linked to sexual identity, and how individuals interpret these two things can determine whether they are comfortable or not with their own particular circumstances.

This being the case it was perfectly reasonable to assume that many of the young men being represented as vulnerable to older homosexual men's

influences might have been homosexual themselves, but it could also be presumed that some of them might also have decided later that they were not homosexual. The issue of concern was whether this was problematic and it seemed to me that, given that sexuality is not fixed, the main reason it might be viewed as problematic was if it was assumed that homosexuality, per se, was problematic. The second point for me was the belief that the practice of homosexuality by young heterosexual men was necessarily problematic, which seemed to necessarily assume a simple fit between sexual behaviour, desire and self-identity. Yet it seemed that it would not be improbable that many young heterosexual men could engage in homosexual activity, for a variety of reasons, without it necessarily having any impact on their own sexual desires or their view of themselves sexually.

These beliefs were grounded both in the theoretical understandings of sexuality I had developed and in what I had observed as a participant in the gay scene. There were certainly many young men who were quite self-consciously homosexual, both in behaviour and identity, who participated in that scene. Also, I had met many young men who very clearly viewed themselves in heterosexual terms, or at least in non-homosexual terms, but who engaged in homosexual activity for reasons that had little to do with their own sexual desire (often for utilitarian purposes, through prostitution, and sometimes for simple gratification). Their own rationalisations tended to make a clear distinction between behaviour, desire and identity. What they did sexually served a particular purpose that was often interpreted in non-sexual ways; yet even when it was understood as sexual, such as those occasions

when they allowed a man to fellate them simply to gratify a desire for orgasm, the sexual behaviour itself was somehow distinguished from the sexual partner, so that the sexual practice itself was responsible for the orgasm, usually accompanied by sexual fantasy; but that practice was disembodied from the sexual partner who delivered that practice to them.

With these things in mind, I felt I had something important to contribute to the debate of the period. The research I was conducting to assist in the development of appropriate youth services for young gay men and lesbians was a vehicle for this. The *Young and Gay* report (Bennett, 1983), based on a survey of young gay men and young lesbians in the gay scene, allowed young people who were self-consciously homosexual to be represented through hard data, and it allowed the issues of vulnerability and risk to be dealt with in the context of homophobia. Where they were at risk, this appeared to be as a consequence of a society that failed to provide a safe space for such young people to explore and learn to understand their own sexuality. The survey also dealt with prostitution, but only in terms of extent. It gave little insight into the circumstances of those engaging in this activity. At this time, as part of the response to the general concern about young people at risk, a parliamentary inquiry into prostitution was being conducted in New South Wales. Along with Roberta Perkins and Terry Goulden, I decided to use the Twenty-Ten data as the basis of a submission to that inquiry. We conducted some additional depth interviews as a means of developing the profile of juvenile prostitution further. These interviews included young men who were not homosexual, though they engaged in homosexual prostitution.

The interviews clearly indicated that, although some men might be troubled by their experiences, many others made the distinctions between behaviour, desire and identity that allowed them to process these experiences relatively unproblematically.

Between 1988 and 1994, the complex relationship between identity, desire and behaviour became important to my work again, when I was asked to conduct research among homosexually active men who were not closely associated with the gay community or were not gay-identified. At that time, there was considerable concern that HIV would spread into the general population through the activities of closeted homosexual men whose homosexual activities were conducted in secret, while they maintained a heterosexual 'façade' in the form of a relationship with a woman. I was asked to conduct research to identify the extent of risk behaviour (in terms of HIV infection) among these men, both in terms of their encounters with other men and in terms of their relationships with female partners. There were several assumptions being made about these men and the reason for conducting such research. It was believed that, while there were many gay men living outside areas containing large and visible, organised gay communities, many of the homosexually active men living in these areas were closeted and so were not able to discuss their sexuality with others; that these closeted men were most likely homosexual men who were uncomfortable with their sexuality and, so, tried to keep it secret, but whose actual sexual behaviour with men was much like that of gay men; and that, whether they were gay-identified or not, homosexually active men not living in the geographical heart of organised gay

communities were relatively uninformed about HIV and safe sex, due to a lack of close contact with those communities and access to their HIV education resources.

My own particular perspective on these issues was not especially different to these assumptions. Although I saw the relationship between behaviour, identity and desire as complex, I had no reason to assume other than that, in general, most of these assumptions were correct. What I failed to do was to recognise the importance of meaning in how sexuality was enacted, both in terms of behaviour and identity. Indeed, it even seems to affect, if not constitute, desire.

In the end, the data collected concerning homosexually active men who were not associated with the gay community or who were not gay-identified indicated that these men were not at heightened risk for HIV infection. Indeed, if anything, they appeared to be at less risk for a number of reasons. They were less likely to engage in anal intercourse compared with gay men. They were unlikely to have tested HIV-positive. Much of their sexual contact with men was not with gay men or with men who regularly participated in the gay community, where HIV seroprevalence was highest.

The data also indicated that the assumption that most of these men were 'closeted homosexuals' was often incorrect. What is perhaps even more surprising, however, was the finding that being a 'closeted homosexual', or indeed a homosexually active man who has little or no social involvement with other homosexually active men, is not necessarily problematic for the individuals concerned. The BANGAR study (Hood et al., 1994), in particular,

raised serious questions about the extent to which homosexually active men who were not gay (in either identity or association) were simply 'closeted homosexuals'. Not only did most of them reject a homosexual label, a large proportion seemed to do so with a strong affirmation of their own particular circumstances. An image of a lonely and unhappy man secretly seeking out anonymous sexual contacts with other men while trying to maintain an unwanted heterosexual relationship seemed to be completely at odds with how many of these men described themselves and their lives. They were often very happy in their heterosexual relationships, and had reached an acceptable compromise with themselves about their sexuality and how to incorporate it into their particular circumstances. These men were relatively untroubled by their situation, but to the outside observer, and, indeed, to many of their female partners, this compromise might appear to involve deceit and be far less than acceptable. This was also true for some of the men themselves.

With regard to their sexual behaviour, the fact that it was not necessarily the same as that found among gay men is interesting in itself, apart from the issue of the risk of HIV infection. Again, the BANGAR study was perhaps the most insightful in this regard. Whereas other studies found that, at a population level, homosexually active men who were not gay behaved differently, sexually, to gay men, the BANGAR data included detailed information on how the men interpreted their own behaviour and that of other men. From these interviews it was clear that the men associated certain sexual practices with very particular aspects of identity. Although they varied from individual to individual, it was generally true that sensual practices, such as

kissing, were more closely associated with homosexuality and were more likely to be viewed as 'not masculine'. Also, in general, taking the receptive role in either oral intercourse or, especially, anal intercourse, was viewed similarly. And anal intercourse, in general, was closely associated with homosexuality.

There were several factors that bore on these beliefs. Of particular relevance was the cultural context: for example, the men of Arabic background in the BANGAR data appeared to give far greater importance to role in anal intercourse than to the practice of anal intercourse in general. Beliefs about desire also appeared to play an important role. For some men, it seemed to matter little what they did sexually with other men, or how often they did it, so long as their reason for doing it was not motivated by homosexual desire. A simple desire for gratification was sufficient to undercut the possibility of viewing their behaviour as being homosexual. For some men, it was the desire for a particular sexual practice, which they believed could not be provided by a woman, that made it possible to have sex with men without viewing it as homosexual. In these circumstances, the men are interested in the sexual practice itself and the sex partner who delivers that practice is relatively unimportant. Nonetheless, some men are unable to separate the practice from the partner – this is perhaps most obvious in the case of those men who purposefully seek pre-operative male-to-female transgendered sexual partners so that they can engage in receptive anal intercourse with an apparently female partner. Some other men view their sexual behaviour as being entirely separate from their sexual relationships, and their view of themselves is based on their

relationships rather than their behaviour. Often they described their sexual behaviour simply in terms of 'fun', while their relationships were about 'love'. This separation underpinned the way they viewed themselves and their behaviour. They were not homosexual because they loved their female partners, and what they did with men was just something 'kinky' that made life a bit more exciting, but had little importance in terms of the way they saw themselves.

The findings from these studies, while interesting in themselves, were intended to inform HIV prevention work. However, they had unintended consequences that seemed to have limited their capacity to achieve this. Up to this point there were few studies of homosexually active men that had successfully included large numbers of men who were not gay-identified or socially involved with gay men. The few such studies that did include these men were of clinical populations (for example, Socarides, 1978) or institutional populations (for example, Reiss, 1962; 1967), or were observational studies (for example, Humphreys, 1970). Consequently, there was considerable interest in the findings of studies like BANGAR, both within the gay community and outside it, as well as among HIV organisations. There were numerous media reports of the findings, both in print and electronic media, and the findings were discussed widely. However, the fact that these studies pointed to relatively low risk of HIV infection and the possible implication that these groups of men were a lower priority in general than were gay men was not usually highlighted. There was an even more important point: the circumstances in which such men were most at risk of HIV infection

were those that involved sexual contact with gay men, such as in gay sex venues.

These issues were rarely acknowledged in any of the reports on the findings from these data. This was not a conscious process of ignoring the major findings: it was simply that the data were interesting for reasons other than those concerning HIV. There had been little data available previously, and, therefore, little opportunity to discuss homosexual activity among men who were not gay. The fact that the men in these studies often did not view their circumstances as a problem, and that they often appeared to be relatively unconcerned about their situation, only heightened the interest. Most commentators had assumed that these men would be in difficult circumstances – they were pathologised. The fact that many men were quite happy the way they were was as much a surprise, as was the fact that many homosexuals lived relatively happy lives and were self-accepting to psychologists and others forty years earlier. And so, by focussing on this new revelation, many commentators often missed the point, with regard to HIV.

The relationship between association and identification with a concept of gay community and individual identity and behaviour has been central to my view of research among homosexually active men since I began this work in 1982. That was when I began researching the situation of gay youth as a youth worker. At that time I was attempting to establish a gay youth service – named Twenty-Ten, in reference to both the postcode of Darlinghurst, the geographic heart of Sydney's visible gay community, and the teenage years during which issues of identity are so very difficult for young gay men and

lesbians. I obtained funding from the Drug and Alcohol Authority of New South Wales to research drug and alcohol issues in this population.

The purpose of this exercise was clearly political: gay youth needed a specific welfare service, but, for any government to fund such a service, it needed hard evidence, in the form of data. A survey of young gay men and lesbians was the obvious way to obtain this evidence, and I opted for the expedient approach to sampling. I recruited young gay men and lesbians through the commercial gay scene of the inner city (primarily Darlinghurst and Kings Cross). These people were most easily accessible, and they were the ones most likely to be at risk in terms of this research (drug and alcohol issues) and in terms of current community concerns (youth homelessness and prostitution). However, I also included in the study issues of sexual identity and supportive relationships both within and outside the gay community. In writing the report on this project, issues relating to the importance of positive reinforcement of a personal gay identity, and the capacity to provide an environment supportive of that identity that is found through the gay community, were central. Whereas the subject matter of the research could easily have led to further marginalisation of the gay community and pathologisation of homosexuality, framing it in the way I did meant that it was primarily presented as a societal problem arising from homophobia. This was taken up by an editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, in response to media reports of the research findings, that condemned the discrimination and persecution faced by young gay men and lesbians and called for a more accepting approach to assist these young people live their lives in safety. This

was a groundbreaking development because it did two things. For the first time a major Australian mainstream media outlet had linked homosexuality and young people in a manner that was overtly supportive of their right to be gay, and did not demonise homosexuality at all. Secondly, the editorial was implicitly supportive of the gay community and its capacity to deal with these issues.

Armed with the findings from this research and the generally supportive response from the broader community, I managed to obtain government funding for Twenty-Ten. This was another breakthrough: government funding had not been made available to openly gay and lesbian organisations in New South Wales (and only in the late 1990s anywhere else in Australia), let alone to a project providing a service to support young gay men and lesbians.

The first stage of the Beats Study was conducted on behalf of the AIDS Education Unit at Western Sydney Area Health Service because no data on homosexually active men in that area were available. Data had been collected for studies of HIV among gay men, but men in Western Sydney comprised only a small proportion of those samples. Those studies had also primarily recruited their samples through gay community institutions, but it was also commonly believed that homosexual men in Western Sydney were less likely to be found this way because many would be 'closeted'.

I was contracted to survey homosexually active men in that area in 1988. I opted to do what is usually done in research among these populations (except for clinically-based studies): to adopt a broad-ranging recruitment

strategy, on the assumption that the broader the recruitment, the greater likelihood of including a broad range of homosexually active men in the sample. Representativeness was never a practical consideration. The particular difficulty in an area like Western Sydney was the lack of cultural institutions that bring these men together. Without these institutions, it was difficult to conceive an appropriate recruitment strategy. There was just one, small and infrequent, bar catering to a gay clientele, no commercial sex-on-premises venues, and a small, informal social group (attached to the bar). This was certainly insufficient for the purposes of recruiting a large sample of homosexually active men, and it provided no possibility for recruiting closeted men or men who had little social involvement with other homosexually active men.

I was forced, therefore, to look for other, less apparent, options. I realised that I had to focus on what it was that marked this population out from other men: that they sought sexual contact with other men. So, I turned my attention to the various known methods homosexual men use to make sexual contacts with other men and began to consider how these might lend themselves to a recruitment strategy. Some methods seemed impossible to utilise. For example, some men maintain a few close friends, often from school days, with whom they have sex. Such informal, personal networks provide no opportunity for recruitment. Other methods seemed simply inefficient, probably for most research projects but certainly for this one, which was only minimally-funded. An example of this would be the men who make sexual contacts through casual social interactions in ostensibly

heterosexual commercial venues. Not only would such a strategy require an enormous amount of time to make just a few contacts, it was difficult to conceive how this even be possible without the researchers actually endeavouring to make sexual contact themselves.

In the end, there were just three recruitment strategies that seemed at all feasible, in addition to surveying the clientele of the one gay commercial venue (which also incorporated the one gay organisation in the area). Beats were believed to be the primary method by which men made sexual contact with each other in Western Sydney, and I felt that, although it would be difficult, this was at least a feasible method of recruiting men into the study. Another possibility was through a local sex shop, managed by a gay man. Although not a sex-on-premises venue, the presence of a gay manager, and a large range of homosexual erotica, permitted us to consider this as another possibility. This manager knew many of the gay and bisexual clientele because of his unique position, and was in a position to ask others who purchased homosexual erotica if they would be willing to participate in the survey. This seemed like an unlikely, and problematic, method, but it was at least something that could be attempted. The final method involved the use of personal advertisements: several of the local newspapers contained 'personals' sections in their classified advertising. These included advertisements for local sex workers, as well as advertisements from individuals seeking a seeking a sexual encounter, and these advertisements (both for sex workers and others) were almost entirely heterosexual in content. However, it seemed likely that closeted homosexual men might look in any publication that included

possibilities for sexual contact, and so we decided that we could use this method if we backed it up by also advertising in the gay press for men that lived in Western Sydney to ring the number to participate in the survey.

In the end, the beats strategy and the personal advertising strategy were both quite successful. What was not anticipated, however, was that these two strategies had recruited men quite different to those ordinarily recruited into gay community samples. These men were much more working class, tended to have little or no social contact with other homosexually active men, and often did not view themselves in terms of homosexuality at all. The Beats Study had achieved its initial purpose: to survey homosexually active men in Western Sydney. However, the sample obtained was of such interest that we decided to conduct a follow-up survey, specifically of men not socially engaged with other homosexually active men, using these two successful recruitment methods. Findings from this second stage of the study are included in this thesis.

Homosexually active men in Sydney

To explore issues around the relationship between identity, behaviour and desire, and its implications for research among homosexual men, we need to understand the population with which we are concerned. However, it is impossible to accurately describe this population, given the peculiar difficulties in obtaining, or even conceptualising, a representative sample (Martin and Dean, 1990: 547; Donovan, 1992: 28). I draw on data from the various studies of this population that have been conducted since 1984. Some of the respondents for these studies were recruited from within the gay

community. Others had a much broader recruitment base, from among both men who participated in gay community life and men who did not. In general, all these studies find similar behaviour patterns and demographic profiles, despite respondents having been recruited in different ways and at different times, in different contexts. Comparing data from each of these studies, where they are available, provides a good overview of how research has described homosexually active men living in Sydney, particularly those who participate in gay community life. To provide the broadest overview, across a period of fifteen years, I have selected the baseline data from these surveys and studies:

- Social Aspects of the Prevention of AIDS study (SAPA – collected in 1986: see Connell et al., 1987);
- SMASH studies (collected in 1993: see Prestage et al., 1995a);
- 1989 Beats Study (see Prestage, 1992);
- 1993 BANGAR project (see Hood et al., 1994);
- 1996 Male Call sample (see Crawford et al., 1998); and
- February 1999 Periodic Survey sample (analysed independently, although see Prestage et al., 1996a, for a full description of the 1996 dataset).

This was a pragmatic choice based on a spread of datasets across a span of years and it should be noted that, on the variables described in this chapter, the choice of different years for each study made little difference to the findings (see Crawford et al., 1998: 15-35, Prestage et al., 1999; Prestage et al., 2000).

Drawing a sample

Neither homosexually active men in general, nor gay men in particular, are a known and quantifiable population. Sexual orientation and identity data have been either inadequate or absent from almost all general population data collection (Sell et al., 2001). Given this, truly representative samples could only be conceivably obtained through a general population study. Such studies would necessarily be expensive and inefficient (assuming that homosexuality is experienced by only a relatively small proportion of the population), and the nature of homophobia means that such a sampling method might be inappropriate anyway. Many researchers (Laumann et al., 1994: 284) are of the opinion that fear of disclosure, and even reluctance to discuss the issue, mean that any general population study would likely result in an under-representation of homosexually active individuals. Those most likely to acknowledge their homosexuality and participate fully in any such studies are those who are most comfortable with their own sexuality and able to participate free from fear of recrimination: those most closely associated with a concept of gay community and living in a relatively accepting social environment (Martin and Dean, 1990: 549).

The usual solution is to pre-select the target population and accept its limitations. Recruitment is then based on a setting where the target population is known to be relatively accessible. This approach necessarily represents primarily those men that participate in gay culture (Meyer et al., 1999; Sell et al., 1992) and tends to over-represent relatively well educated, middle-class individuals (Easterbrook et al., 1994). Such studies almost certainly obtain

skewed data (Gonsiorek, 1982). Most studies have been conducted this way in Sydney. SAPS (Tindall et al., 1989) used a range of medical practices and sexual health clinics known to service a relatively large proportion of gay patients. SAPA (Connell et al., 1987) and SMASH (Prestage et al., 1995a) relied on gay community social settings and organisations. The Periodic Surveys (Prestage et al., 1996a) recruited through gay commercial venues as well as clinic sites with large gay clienteles. Male Call (Crawford et al., 1998) and BANGAR (Hood et al., 1994) relied heavily on gay media and advertising in personal classifieds in erotic publications and local newspapers, as well as erotic video catalogue recipients. The Beats Study (Bennett et al., 1989a; Prestage, 1992) relied on advertisements in personal classified sections of local newspapers as well as on-site recruitment at 'beats'. Although some of these studies (SAPS and Periodic Surveys) attempted to obtain relatively representative samples within these particular settings, in none of them can we generalise to a broader population of homosexually active men. Nor do any of these studies explicitly examine whom they include and whom they exclude.

Indeed, Coxon (1995) argued that most samples of gay men are rarely what they claim to be. He claimed that what is represented as convenience samples, based on 'snowballing' techniques, are usually samples of particular social networks. What has been lacking, according to Coxon, is a critical interrogation of these samples using network analysis – but he simultaneously explained the difficulty of applying such techniques to samples of gay men (or, indeed, to any sample whose connections are based in sexual behaviour).

There have been some attempts in the United States to conduct household surveys of homosexual men (Catania et al., 2001). Yet even using this methodology the studies have been limited to neighbourhoods known to contain relatively large proportions of gay men: the Castro in San Francisco, West Hollywood in Los Angeles, and the Village in New York City. The obvious limitation in such studies is that the men most likely to live in such neighbourhoods are those who are openly gay-identified and who actively participate in the local gay community. There are other considerations – for example, neighbourhoods associated with local gay communities are often relatively expensive, thereby restricting the income range of the men who choose to live there (Black et al, 2002). Furthermore, such studies are necessarily based on inner urban areas, where populations of gay men are known to concentrate, making the studies economically feasible. Gay men living in suburban and rural localities are excluded.

Yet, even if we assumed that it was possible to conduct a 'representative' study, this implies several assumptions about homosexuality and gay men. To research these one must first define them, and such definitions are culturally, socially, contextually, and personally bound. As Sandfort (1997: 261-262) stated:

> …findings in a specific study depend heavily on the definition and operationalisation of homosexuality adopted, and on the way the sample has been put together. Furthermore, it presupposes the existence of an ahistorical, universal homosexual and ignores the diverse historical, social, cultural, and legal factors which affect the expression of homosexuality and, therewith, the outcomes of social scientific studies.

Sandfort contended that the definitions that underlie such studies can rely on a variety of behavioural, identity or attractional variables, and that whatever decisions were made about these necessarily obtained different samples.

The study samples referred to here were recruited in various ways. These differences in recruitment reflect both differences in the aims of the study (for example, SAPS was intentionally a clinical study with some behavioural data collected, Male Call was actively seeking to recruit outside the gay community, and the Periodic Survey sought to monitor 'high risk' behaviour among gay men at the heart of the HIV epidemic), and differences in approach and use of resources (in SAPA much effort was put into targeting gay organisations and personal networks, whereas in SMASH far more effort was put into recruiting through the gay commercial scene).

Research among homosexually active men in general is a far more difficult proposition than research among gay men. Gay men have a visible and well-organised community. Despite contention about how this community is defined and what it represents, it is, nonetheless, a recognisable entity that can be accessed. This is not the case for other homosexually active men, some of whom might self-identify as gay but many do not. Men who have sex with men but who do not identify as homosexual, or who are not attached to existing gay networks, are not easily reached and little is known about them (Weatherburn and Davies 1993: 153-166). Gay community-based studies usually include some behaviourally bisexual men (Connell et al., 1987), but this

does little to describe homosexually active men who do not generally participate in gay community life.

General population surveys of sexual behaviour are also a poor means of obtaining information about homosexually active men. Indeed, they are a poor means of enumerating homosexual behaviour in general. The British National Survey of Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles (Johnson et al., 1994) found only 1.1% of adult men reported sex with another man in the previous twelve months. The Project Sigma research team, however, made a strong case for treating these data with caution (Hickson et al., 1997: 15-16). They used data from their own gay male cohort and made certain logical assumptions about non-gay homosexually active men to argue that non-response rates from, and lying among, homosexually active men is likely to be relatively high compared to other populations. They estimated that a more realistic assessment of homosexual activity among adult British males would be around three to four percent. Drawing on data from several studies, they concluded that the majority of men who have sex with both men and women do not self-identify as either gay (homosexual) or bisexual, and, they estimated, there are as many such men as there are gay men (ibid.: 34-35).

Regardless of how many such men there are, we need to recognise that this other population of homosexually active men exists, and that they are not participants in gay community life. To understand the role gay identity and gay community play in the lives of homosexually active men, it is at least as important to understand the circumstances and attitudes of those who do not self-identify as gay or homosexual and do not participate in gay community

networks, as it is to understand gay men or those homosexually active men who do participate in gay community life. At some point, all men who engage in homosexual activity must consider their own personal relationship to the concept of 'gay', whether it is in the form of self-identity or of community. Why some men do not choose a gay (or even bisexual) self-identity, and choose not to associate with a community of homosexually active men, is as instructive as learning who are the men that comprise the gay community.

Although data collected among these non-gay community-attached men are much sparser, and less reliable, the three datasets used here (the Western Sydney Beats Study, the Project Male Call sample of men living in Sydney, and the BANGAR sample of men living in Sydney) provide some valuable information. There have also been several similar studies outside Australia using the Male Call methodology (for example, Worth et al., 1997), which was principally devised by me between 1988 and 1992 (Crawford et al., 1998: ii). All of these studies have indicated that non-gay community attached men are quite different in both behaviours and attitudes from gay community-attached men.

Regardless of the approach taken, no studies of homosexual men can claim to be 'representative', either of the broad population of homosexually active men or the more specific population of gay men. This is because of the difficulty in identifying and accessing the population. However, as Donovan (1992) pointed out, the problem is actually more fundamental than this. There is no clear consensus on what this population is. For Donovan, this was mainly an issue of terminology and a capacity to find an agreed method of defining

who is and who is not to be included. Donovan argued that, while there is a need for definitional clarity, it is the impetus to 'rush to the margins' that has plagued research in this area: theorists have understood the relativism inherent in the categories and have felt the need to account for the exceptions in order to be able to maximally include individuals. Donovan attempted to set definitional limits – a sort of utilitarian approach to the problem. This seems to have had little impact on researchers, however, who have continued to be troubled by this problem of definition, and what should and should not be included. As I see it, the problem is even more basic, and its cause can be found in the research endeavour itself. Homosexual behaviour, desire and identity are all slippery concepts, both theoretically and in the way they are represented, culturally and personally. The question is not so much 'can one obtain representative samples of homosexual men?' but 'what is it that we are studying when we endeavour to conduct such research?'. We need to cast a critical gaze across our data and measure those data against the ideological and practical concepts of homosexuality that are culturally and personally represented through the various socially defined categories of 'homosexual'. Each time we do this, it is essential that we interrogate the categories we are using in order to understand the realities of the lives our research purports to represent.

A demographic profile of homosexually active men

In most of the studies considered here, most men live in Sydney's inner city, which broadly corresponds with the geographical concentrations of the visible organised gay community. The exceptions were the Beats Study, which

was centred on Western Sydney, and BANGAR, which relied primarily on advertising in local suburban newspapers in Sydney. Laumann et al. (1994: 308-309) found a concentration of homosexually active men in urban locations and argued that migration to more tolerant and diverse settings that provided greater opportunity for same-gender sexual behaviour was the most likely explanation.

The respondents to each of the studies ranged in age between their late teenage years and their late sixties or early seventies, with the mean age being approximately 34. They tended overwhelmingly to be of Anglo-Celtic background, except where men of non-Anglophone background were specifically targeted, as was the case in the BANGAR project.

As would be predicted from the age structure, most samples of homosexual men have a higher rate of employment than is found in the general population. However, the proportion of men not actually in the workforce was noticeably higher in samples with a relatively high percentage of HIV-positive men, many of whom were in receipt of social security pensions or benefits. The men in these studies tended to be in professional occupations; very few were blue-collar workers. However, this was less true of men in the Beats Study and BANGAR project. In general, respondents were also relatively well educated, with high proportions having university education. Again, however, this was considerably less true of the BANGAR and Beats Study samples.

The majority of the men in these studies do not appear to be affiliated with an organised religion.

The general description of homosexually active men in Sydney that emerges from this research, therefore, appears to be of relatively well-educated men, often in professional occupations, living in the inner city. A relatively large proportion is aged between their late twenties and their forties and they are mostly of Anglo-Celtic background. They tend not to be religious. This broad profile changed little between 1984 and 1999. Even other Australian gay community samples are similar, as are samples recruited into large gay male population studies internationally (Saghir and Robins, 1973; Jay and Young, 1979a; Research and Decisions Corporation, 1984; Communication Technologies, 1989; Health Education Authority, 1991; Myers et al., 1993, 1995; Bochow, 2001; Catania et al., 2001).

In most studies of gay populations (Connell et al., 1987; Research and Decisions Corporation, 1984: 26; Ross, 1986; Tindall et al., 1989; Campbell et al., 19; Myers et al., 1993; Hickson et al., 1993: 9; Communication Technologies, 1989: 29; Kaslow et al., 1987: 315; Herek and Glunt, 1995), there is a serious under-representation of working-class men. Connell et al. (1987: 23) suggested two possible explanations for this: artefact of method, or characteristic of the sample. Although volunteer-based studies generally attract higher educated and more professionally employed samples, there is a surprising degree of consistency in the occupational and educational profiles of samples of gay men that suggests there might in fact be some genuine differences between gay male populations and general populations of adult men. Through the Class, Homosexuality and AIDS Project, Connell et al. (1991) argued that there were two possible reasons for this. Firstly, the

transition into a homosexual lifestyle is accompanied by some degree of upward class mobility. Secondly, the gay community and notions of 'gayness' are relatively middle-class phenomena that hold little appeal or resonance for working-class men, even those who are homosexually active.

Although studies such as BANGAR and Male Call have shown that homosexual behaviour can be found in all population groups (Hood et al., 1994; Kippax et al., 1994, 1997; Prestage and Drielsma, 1996), they have also clearly indicated that gay identification and association with either gay men or the gay community appears to be class-related in some ways. Barrett (2000: 178) has suggested that notions of working-class masculinity might restrict some working-class homosexual men's capacity to identify with gay culture. Healy (1995) has argued that, at least in the past, working-class homosexual men might have found other ways of expressing their homosexuality than through the gay community's representations of 'gayness'. An example of this was the 'gay skinhead' phenomenon found in Britain, although in recent years this style has tended to be more about other gay men adopting the symbols and image of skinheads. The Bear subculture also seems to resonate more with working-class men, yet even here there appears to be a preponderance of middle-class gay men (Rofes, 1997).

Sexual identity and relationships

In general, almost all the men in these samples identified as homosexual.[1] However, the Beats Study and the BANGAR project found a

1 The label homosexual used here refers to any of the following categories: 'homosexual', 'gay', 'camp' or 'queer'.

majority identifying (although in a somewhat reluctant and tortuous way) as bisexual. Male Call also found a somewhat higher proportion of non-homosexual identified men.

Most respondents in these samples became aware of their sexual interest in men at an early age, usually before they had reached their teenage years. They also began to have sex regularly with other men at an early age, mostly before they had reached eighteen, the legal age of consent for male homosexual acts in New South Wales (from June 1984).

Although the majority of men in these samples had sex with a woman at least once, only a small proportion had recently done before being interviewed. However, the majority of those in the Beats Study and BANGAR samples had some sexual contact with women in the six months before being interviewed, as had a relatively large proportion of the Male Call sample.

Overall, about half the men in these studies were in a sexual relationship with a man at the time of their interview, and the majority of these relationships were not monogamous.[2] Most had sex with casual partners, including the majority of those in a relationship. However, considerably fewer of the men in the Beats Study, BANGAR and, to a lesser extent, Male Call samples, were in a relationship with a man, although where they were in such a relationship it was at least as unlikely to be a monogamous relationship.

2 The concept of monogamy has various interpretations, particularly among the respondents to the various studies reported here. For our purposes, the concept of monogamy refers only to sexual relationships where there are two regular partners, both of whom restrict their sexual contact to their regular partner only. Relationships where there are more than two regular partners are not monogamous, even where they do not include sex with other partners.

The majority of men who reported having casual sex had fewer than ten partners in the previous six months period and only a minority – usually less than one in ten – had had more than fifty in that time.

Gay community attachment

As might be expected, those in gay community-based samples usually had a close relationship to the gay community. This was definitely not true for men in the Beats Study, BANGAR and, again to a lesser extent, Male Call. Most respondents to gay community-based samples saw themselves as being part of the gay community and the majority had been a member of a gay organisation. They also tended to indicate a close relationship to other gay men and commonly socialised in gay bars, dance parties and about one-third frequented gay sex venues. This was generally not true of the men in the other samples (BANGAR, Beats Study, and Male Call).

Recreational drug use

Recreational drug use patterns among homosexually active men were generally high, much higher than has been found in studies of the general population.[3] In addition, up to about one in ten respondents had injected drugs during the previous six months. There was some indication that there were changes over time in recreational drug use. Although fewer men in SMASH (1993) used tobacco and cocaine than in SAPA (1986), more used speed and ecstasy (a drug that was not as generally available in the mid-1980s as it became in the 1990s).

[3] Comparisons with the general population may not be entirely appropriate and comparisons with other populations of similar age and relationships status might find less remarkable differences between these men and other groups in the use of recreational drugs

HIV seroprevalence

Almost all gay men in Australian gay communities (about 90% in SMASH and the Periodic Survey) have been tested for HIV. This proportion was much higher than has been found internationally (Communication Technologies, 1989: 17; Myers et al., 1993: 42). Up to a quarter of the men in the gay community-based samples had tested positive to HIV. HIV testing was much lower among men in the non gay community-based samples and very few had tested positive.

Sexual identity and self-concept

Although each of the studies referred to in this thesis included men who identified as gay, or in other ways as homosexual, and men who did not identify as homosexual at all, most of these samples were obtained primarily from within the gay community. Consequently, there are two important limitations to an examination of the effects of sexual identity within most of these studies: They usually include only a small proportion of men who are not homosexually-identified (less than ten percent in most of the samples), thereby limiting analysis because there are insufficient men in the 'non homosexual' category. Also, although some of the men in these samples might not identify as homosexual, their presence within a sample of men recruited from within the gay community suggests that their non-identification with a homosexual label might be only temporary or might be more a form of political statement than reflecting their sexuality. The temporary nature of a non-homosexual identity for some of these men is most evident in the SMASH data: of those

who initially identified themselves other than as homosexual or gay, 85.8% eventually came to describe themselves as homosexual after just three years.

Of the various studies, only Male Call (both the 1992 and the 1996 samples) was sufficiently large and included men recruited from sources outside the gay community, to enable some detailed analysis of the relationship between sexual identity and sexual behavior. Nonetheless, some analysis of sexual identity was possible in the SMASH study. However, the fact that the SMASH sample was recruited from within the gay community, and that most of those who initially described themselves in ways other than as homosexual or gay eventually did identify as homosexual, suggest that the men who described themselves as other than homosexual should not be assumed to be similar to the non homosexually-identified men in the Male Call samples.

Although sexual identity was asked of the men in the other studies, the survey instruments generally included far less detailed questions. Their capacity to enlighten this issue further is therefore limited. Nonetheless, where the data are available, the Periodic Survey data generally reflect those of the SMASH study, whereas data collected for the BANGAR study tend to be similar to those drawn from Male Call.

Data presented here use three broad categories of sexual identity: those who described themselves as ‘gay’; those who described themselves in some way as ‘homosexual’ but did not specifically use the term ‘gay’ (usually they used the term ‘homosexual’ but occasionally they used the term ‘queer’); and those who did not describe themselves as ‘homosexual’ (usually they

described themselves as ‘bisexual’; sometimes they were unsure how to describe themselves; sometimes they described themselves as heterosexual in some way). SMASH data on sexual identity and bisexual behaviour have been reported in Prestage et al. (1995b).

Patterns of sexual behaviour

Examining the data from these two studies, there are some differences and much similarity between the two samples overall. However, within the two samples there are clear differences in the patterns of sexual behaviour according to how the men identify themselves sexually. Those who use the label ‘gay’ to describe themselves behave slightly differently to those who identify as homosexual but do not use that label, and both these groups behave quite differently to those who do not describe themselves as homosexual. For the most part, these differences seem to apply equally to both samples and the two studies are remarkably similar in this way.

Table 4.1: Sexual Relationships and Sexual Identity

	Male Call NSW 1996 [1]			SMASH baseline [2]		
	Gay [3]	**Homo. [4]**	**Other [5]**	**Gay [6]**	**Homo. [7]**	**Other [8]**
Celibate	8.2%	9.0%	9.6%	6.2%	4.7%	15.9%
Casual sex only	43.4%	52.0%	56.8%	44.5%	44.2%	48.7%
Open relationship	26.8%	15.0%	22.3%	24.6%	26.6%	15.0%
Multiple relationship	2.4%	0.0%	2.3%	0.9%	1.6%	2.7%
Monogamous	18.9%	24.0%	8.7%	22.3%	20.5%	14.2%
Other	0.3%	0.0%	0.4%	1.5%	2.4%	3.5%

1. p<.005.
2. p<.001.
3. N=380; Refers to those men who specifically used the term 'gay' to describe themselves.
4. N=100; Refers to those who used other homosexual labels to describe themselves, most commonly 'homosexual'.
5. N=229; Refers to those men who did not use any homosexual labels to describe themselves.
6. N=650; Refers to those men who specifically used the term 'gay' to describe themselves.
7. N=380; Refers to those who used other homosexual labels to describe themselves, most commonly 'homosexual'.
8. N=113; Refers to those men who did not use any homosexual labels to describe themselves.

Note: The p-value measures statistical significance. Between-group differences were tested for unequal variance, assuming unequal variance when Levene's test for equality of variances was significant at p<.05. Where p<.05 statistically significant differences can be observed. The lower the p-values, the greater the variance between groups, but this does not always necessarily translate to 'greater significance' in non-statistical terms. Such differences need to be both statistically significant, and 'sensible' (i.e. the observed differences make sense theoretically and practically).

Sexual relationships and partners

Male Call found fewer 'homosexual' men than 'gay' men were in a relationship of any kind, particularly an open relationship, but in SMASH there was little difference in patterns of relationships between the 'gay' men and the 'homosexual' men (Table 4.1). While the non-homosexually-identified men in both studies were least likely to be in a relationship, in Male Call they were particularly unlikely to be in a monogamous relationship. The non-homosexually-identified men in SMASH, were also more likely to be currently celibate.

The gay men in Male Call and SMASH were broadly similar in their patterns of relationships, but there were some differences between the two samples among the other men. The 'homosexual' men in Male Call were less likely to be in an open relationship, and were more likely to report being currently celibate with men, than were the similarly identified men in SMASH ($p<.05$). While the non-homosexually-identified men in Male Call were as likely to be in a relationship overall as were the non-homosexual men in SMASH, they were unlikely to be in a monogamous relationship and more likely to be in an open relationship; they were also less likely to report being currently celibate with men ($p<.05$).

Both studies found little difference between the men of differing sexual identities regarding casual sex in the previous six months, but the 'gay' men were more likely to have had a regular partner in that time, and non-homosexually-identified men were the least likely to have had such a partner (Table 4.2). However, among those that did have casual sex, 'gay' men had

more partners, and the non-homosexually-identified had the least number of casual partners.

The men in Male Call and SMASH had similar types of sexual partners in the previous six months, regardless of sexual identity. Although the SMASH men had a greater number of partners overall, only with regard to the non-homosexually-identified men was this difference significant ($p<.05$).

As might be expected, there were significant differences in the likelihood of having had sex with women according to sexual identity (Table 4.3). In both studies, the non-homosexually-identified men were more likely to have ever had sex with a woman and to have done so recently – nearly three quarters of those in Male Call had done so in the previous six months. There was little difference between the 'gay' men and the 'homosexual' men.

Among homosexually-identified men, whether they described themselves as 'gay' or not, there was little difference between the two samples. However, the non-homosexually-identified men in Male Call were almost twice as likely to have ever had sex with a woman, and to have done so recently as those in SMASH ($p<.001$).

Table 4.2: Sexual Partners and Sexual Identity

	Male Call NSW 1996			SMASH baseline		
	Gay	**Homo.**	**Other**	**Gay**	**Homo.**	**Other**
Casual partners [1]	81.6%	74.0%	81.0%	81.5%	81.1%	79.6%
Regular partners [2]	59.5%	51.0%	40.3%	58.9%	56.6%	37.2%
Number of casual partners						
– over 10 [3]	36.3%	24.0%	18.6%	38.7%	33.7%	27.5%
– over 50 [3]	7.9%	5.0%	4.3%	8.4%	5.5%	7.1%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Not significant.
2. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: p<.001.
3. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: p<.05. Includes only those men reporting sex with casual partners.

Table 4.3: Sex with Women and Sexual Identity

	Male Call NSW 1996 [1]			SMASH baseline [2]		
	Gay	**Homo.**	**Other**	**Gay**	**Homo.**	**Other**
History of sex with women						
– in previous six months	5.0%	10.0%	76.4%	2.8%	3.9%	43.4%
– over six months ago	56.3%	51.0%	21.0%	53.7%	56.6%	41.6%
– never	38.7%	39.0%	2.6%	44.5%	39.5%	15.0%

1. p<.001.
2. p<.001

Contexts of sexual behaviour

Non-homosexually-identified men in Male Call – but not SMASH – were less likely to have engaged in group sex (with men only) during casual sex (Table 4.4). Non-homosexually-identified men in both studies were more likely to have engaged in group sex that involved both men and women. Gay men in Male Call were the most likely to have engaged in group sex with other men.

Men in Male Call were less likely to have engaged in group sex that involved only men in the context of casual sex, than were their counterparts in SMASH, regardless of sexual identity ($p<.05$). On the other hand, men in Male Call were more likely to have engaged in group sex that included women, both with their regular male partner and with casual male partners than were their counterparts in SMASH ($p<.01$ among 'homosexual' men; $p<.001$ among non-homosexually-identified men).

There was little difference in the incidence or use of prostitution according to sexual identity in either study (Table 4.5). There were, however, differences in sex work between the two studies: regardless of sexual identity, the men in SMASH were more likely to have engaged in sex work; on the other hand the men in Male Call, also regardless of sexual identity, were more likely to have paid another man for sex, both recently and in the past ($p<.001$). It should be noted, of course, that older men were more likely to have had a history of involvement with sex work simply as they have had more opportunity to do so.

Table 4.4: Group Sex and Sexual Identity

	Male Call NSW 1996			SMASH baseline		
	Gay [1]	**Homo. [2]**	**Other [3]**	**Gay [4]**	**Homo. [5]**	**Other [6]**
Group sex with men only						
– cas partners [7]	42.2%	36.0%	32.8%	48.1%	46.1%	44.4%
– reg partners [8]	20.0%	11.0%	10.9%	18.5%	21.4%	21.4%
Group sex with men and women						
– cas partners [9]	4.2%	8.1%	25.4%	1.4%	1.5%	11.0%
– reg partners [10]	2.2%	11.8%	26.9%	0.8%	0.5%	7.1%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Casual partners: N=310; Regular partners: N=226.
2. Casual partners: N=74; Regular partners: N=51.
3. Casual partners: N=185; Regular partners: N=93.
4. Casual partners: N=530; Regular partners: N=383.
5. Casual partners: N=308; Regular partners: N=215.
6. Casual partners: N=90; Regular partners: N=42.
7. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: not significant. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
8. Not significant. Includes only those reporting sex with regular partners.
9. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: p<.001. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
10. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: p<.001. Includes only those reporting sex with regular partners.

Table 4.5: Prostitution between Men and Sexual Identity

	Male Call NSW 1996			SMASH baseline		
	Gay	**Homo.**	**Other**	**Gay**	**Homo.**	**Other**
Paid for sex [1]						
– previous six months	10.5%	13.0%	13.5%	0.2%	1.3%	0.9%
– over six months ago	55.8%	49.0%	55.5%	19.1%	21.6%	13.3%
Was paid [2]						
– previous six months	2.1%	3.0%	5.7%	5.7%	7.4%	8.8%
– over six months ago	10.0%	10.0%	2.6%	17.5%	17.1%	18.6%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Male Call: not significant. SMASH: p<.001.
2. Male Call: p<.005. SMASH: not significant.

Table 4.6: Dressing Up for Fantasy during Sex and Sexual Identity

	Male Call NSW 1996			SMASH baseline		
	Gay	**Homo.**	**Other**	**Gay**	**Homo.**	**Other**
Uses any clothing						
– cas partners [1]	15.9%	13.5%	23.8%	12.5%	10.4%	11.1%
– reg partners [2]	23.5%	25.5%	24.7%	17.2%	20.0%	16.7%
Uses women's clothing						
– cas partners [3]	4.2%	0.0%	18.3%	N.A.	N.A	N.A.
– reg partners [4]	4.0%	5.9%	16.1%	2.3%	1.9%	9.5%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Not significant. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
2. Not significant. Includes only those reporting sex with regular partners.
3. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: not significant. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
4. Male Call: p<.05. SMASH: not significant. Includes only those having sex with regular partners.

The non-homosexually-identified men were more likely to dress up as part of fantasy during sex, particularly when it involved wearing women's clothing (Table 4.6). This approached significance only among the men in Male Call, among whom about one in six of the non-homosexually-identified men had done so. Comparing the two studies, the men in Male Call tended to have dressed up as part of fantasy during sex more than did the men in SMASH, but it only approached significance among the non-homosexually-identified men (who were about twice as likely to have done so), particularly when it involved women's clothing.

Sex practices

There was little difference in the likelihood of engaging in leathersex practices (such as fisting, S/M, and watersports) according to sexual identity in either sample (Table 4.7). In general, there was also little difference regarding leathersex practices between the two studies among men who did not identify as 'gay'. The 'gay' men in SMASH, however, were somewhat more likely to engage in watersports with their casual partners than were their counterparts in Male Call ($p<.05$), but they were less likely to have engaged in fisting ($p<.001$) or sadomasochistic (S/M) practices ($p<.05$) with their regular partner.

Table 4.7: Leathersex and Sexual Identity

	Male Call NSW 1996			SMASH baseline		
	Gay	**Homo.**	**Other**	**Gay**	**Homo.**	**Other**
Fisting						
– cas partners [1]	16.5%	18.9%	16.8%	16.4%	14.3%	15.6%
– reg partners [2]	16.8%	19.6%	20.4%	7.3%	11.2%	9.5%
S/M						
– cas partners [1]	19.7%	10.8%	19.5%	24.0%	19.5%	20.0%
– reg partners [2]	27.0%	23.5%	26.9%	21.0%	20.0%	16.7%
Watersports						
– cas partners [1]	11.3%	10.8%	15.7%	13.4%	9.7%	12.2%
– reg partners [2]	19.9%	19.6%	22.6%	11.5%	9.3%	11.9%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive. None of these correlations is statistically significant.

1. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
2. Includes only those reporting sex with regular partners.

There was little difference between the two studies in the practice of anal intercourse according to sexual identity (although non-homosexually-identified men tended to restrict themselves to the insertive role during anal intercourse more than other men). There was also little difference in the practice of anal intercourse between the men in the two studies (although the non-homosexually-identified men in Male Call were somewhat less likely to engage in anal intercourse at all, and more likely to restrict themselves to the insertive role with casual partners, than were their counterparts in SMASH).

Among the men in Male Call, there was little difference in the practice of anilingus (or rimming) according to sexual identity, with either regular partners or casual partners (see Table 4.8). Non-homosexually-identified men in SMASH, however, tended to be less likely to engage in this practice than were other men in SMASH, and were significantly less likely to do so with casual partners. The non-homosexually-identified men in Male Call were, however, more likely to use sex toys, particularly with casual partners than were other men in Male Call.

The non-homosexually-identified men in Male Call were somewhat more likely to engage in anilingus with casual partners than their counterparts in SMASH ($p<.05$). Among the non-homosexually-identified men, those in Male Call were twice as likely to use sex toys with casual partners than were their equivalents in SMASH ($p<.001$), but the men in Male Call were more likely to use sex toys with their regular partners regardless of sexual identity (gay men: $p<.001$; non-gay homosexual men: $p<.05$; non-homosexually-identified men: $p<.005$).

Table 4.8: Anal Sex Practices and Sexual Identity

	Male Call NSW 1996			SMASH baseline		
	Gay	**Homo.**	**Other**	**Gay**	**Homo.**	**Other**
Anilingus						
– cas partners [1]	62.3%	62.2%	64.9%	67.9%	68.5%	53.3%
– reg partners [2]	75.2%	64.7%	74.2%	70.8%	68.8%	59.5%
Use of sex toys						
– cas partners [3]	26.1%	25.7%	44.9%	22.6%	23.4%	20.0%
– reg partners [4]	39.6%	41.2%	53.8%	27.9%	28.4%	23.8%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Male Call: not significant. SMASH: p<.05. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
2. Not significant. Includes only those reporting sex with regular partners.
3. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: not significant. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
4. Not significant. Includes only those having sex with regular partners.

Among the men in Male Call, there were some differences in the practice of oral intercourse according to sexual identity, with both their regular partners and with casual partners (Table 4.9). 'Gay' men were more likely to engage in oral intercourse in general, significantly so with their regular partners, but the 'homosexual' men were least likely to do so. However, 'gay' men were least likely to engage in oral intercourse when it specifically included ejaculation in the mouth (insertive or receptive), and the non-homosexually-identified men were most likely to do this. Within SMASH, however, there was little difference according to sexual identity in the practice of oral intercourse. Although some of the same trends existed, they were neither consistent nor significant.

Regardless of sexual identity, men in Male Call were more likely to engage in oral intercourse with ejaculation with their regular partner (non-homosexually-identified men: $p<.001$; gay men: $p<.001$; non-gay homosexual men: $p<.05$) and with casual partners (non-homosexually-identified men: $p<.001$; gay men: $p<.005$; non-gay homosexual men: $p<.005$), than were their equivalents in SMASH.

With more sensual practices, such as kissing and sensual touching, the non-homosexually-identified men tended to be less likely to engage in these practices with either their regular partner or with casual partners (Table 4.10). In Male Call these correlations were significant. 'Gay' men tended to be the most likely to engage in such practices in Male Call, but there was no difference between 'gay' men and 'homosexual' men in SMASH.

Table 4.9: Oral Intercourse and Sexual Identity

	Male Call NSW 1996			SMASH baseline		
	Gay	**Homo.**	**Other**	**Gay**	**Homo.**	**Other**
Any oral intercourse						
– cas partners [1]	97.1%	94.6%	96.2%	97.9%	98.7%	98.9%
– reg partners [2]	99.1%	90.2%	95.7%	96.1%	94.4%	92.9%
With ejaculation						
– cas partners [3]	49.0%	59.5%	67.0%	38.5%	42.2%	42.2%
– reg partners [4]	62.4%	64.7%	77.4%	46.5%	48.8%	40.5%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Not significant. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
2. Male Call: p<.005. SMASH: not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.
3. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: not significant. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
4. Male Call: p<.05. SMASH: not significant. Includes only those having sex with regular partners.

Table 4.10: Sensual Practices and Sexual Identity

	Male Call NSW 1996			SMASH baseline		
	Gay	**Homo.**	**Other**	**Gay**	**Homo.**	**Other**
Dry kissing						
– cas partners [1]	86.1%	71.6%	70.8%	90.3%	90.9%	83.3%
– reg partners [2]	96.9%	98.0%	86.0%	97.4%	98.1%	95.2%
Wet Kissing						
– cas partners [3]	85.8%	78.4%	75.1%	93.0%	94.5%	85.4%
– reg partners [4]	99.1%	94.1%	88.2%	95.5%	94.9%	92.9%
Sensual touching						
– cas partners [5]	96.1%	90.5%	96.8%	97.9%	98.4%	96.7%
– reg partners [6]	100.0%	100.0%	98.9%	99.5%	98.6%	100.0%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: not significant. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
2. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.
3. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: p<.05. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
4. Male Call: p<.001. SMASH: not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.
5. Male Call: p<.05. SMASH: not significant. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
6. Not significant. Includes only those having sex with regular partners.

Regardless of sexual identity, the men in Male Call were less likely to engage in dry kissing with casual partners (gay men: $p<.05$; other homosexual men: $p<.001$; and non-homosexual men: $p<.05$), than were their equivalents in SMASH. This was also true of wet kissing with casual partners (gay men: $p<.05$; other homosexual men: $p<.001$; and non-homosexual men: $p<.05$). Regarding sensual touching, however, there were differences between the two studies only with respect to the non-gay homosexual men: those in Male Call were less likely to engage in this practice with casual partners ($p<.005$).

Taking all sex practices together, four scales were developed. The first two scales, one for casual sex and the other for sex with regular partners, measured the number of sex practices engaged in where the respondent took the 'active' role. The other two scales measured the number of practices engaged in where the respondent took the 'passive' role. In the Male Call sample, those men who were homosexually-identified (whether as 'gay' or in some other way) scored lower on the scales measuring number of sex practices in the 'active' role than did those who did not view themselves as homosexual – this was true for sex with both casual ($p<.005$) and regular ($p<.005$) partners. There was no statistically significant difference, however, on those scales measuring the number of sex practices where the respondent took the 'passive' role, although those men who identified as homosexual tended to score higher than did those who did not view themselves as homosexual. The same trends were found in SMASH, although the correlations were not as strong statistically. While those who were homosexually-identified were as likely to

take either role during sex, those who did not identify as homosexual were more likely to restrict themselves to the 'active' role.

Relationship between identity and behaviour

These data suggest that sexual identity and sexual behaviour are related: homosexually active men who identify themselves differently in terms of their sexuality tend to also behave in slightly different ways. These differences reflect differences in belief about sexuality, and differences in the way the studies were constituted.

In summary, gay-identified men in Male Call were more likely to be in a relationship, particularly an open relationship, and were more sexually active, than were other men in that study. They had a generally broader sexual repertoire and were particularly more likely to engage in sensual practices. In SMASH, however, the gay-identified men were not so different to the other men in that study. They were more likely than the non-gay men to have a regular partner, and also had a larger number of sex partners, but were otherwise not particularly different in their sexual behaviour to the other men in SMASH.

The other homosexually-identified men in Male Call – those who did not describe themselves as gay – were somewhat less likely to be in a relationship than were the other men in that study. They also had a somewhat narrower sexual repertoire, but otherwise behaved much like other men in the study. In SMASH, however, the non-gay homosexually-identified men were generally much like the other men in that study.

The non-homosexually-identified men in Male Call were the least likely group in that study to be in a relationship, particularly a monogamous relationship, and were likely to have had fewer sex partners, but their sexual repertoire was not necessarily any narrower than that of other men, except with regard to sensual practices. Although they were less likely to have engaged in group sex with other men, they were more likely to have done so with women, as well as being more likely to have recently had sex with a woman in general. They were also more likely to have recently engaged in prostitution. The non-homosexually-identified men in SMASH followed similar patterns to their counterparts in Male Call when compared to the other men but the differences were not as strong or consistent in SMASH.

In general, these data might suggest that the gay men in these two studies were more sexually active than were other men and tended to have a broader sexual repertoire, while the other, non-gay, homosexually-identified men could be described as being somewhat less sexually adventurous. The non-homosexually-identified men, on the other hand, were generally the least sexually active, at least with other men, with a slightly more restricted range of sex practices, but they were the most likely to have sex that involved women.

Comparing the men in the two studies, however, important differences emerge. The men in Male Call were less likely to be in a relationship, particularly the non-homosexually-identified men, than were the men in SMASH. The non-homosexually-identified men in Male Call were more likely to have sex with women than were their equivalents in SMASH. Also, while the men in SMASH were generally more likely to have engaged in sex work,

the men in Male Call were more likely to have paid other men for sex. There were also some differences in sexual behaviour between the two samples: the men in Male Call were more likely to engage in oral intercourse to the point of ejaculation, regardless of sexual identity, but they were less likely to engage in sensual practices in general.

Overall, then, the non-homosexually-identified men in the Male Call sample appear to stand out as being quite different to the other men. Their sexual behaviour is particularly likely to include women and their sexual interactions with men appear to be less likely to include sensual practices or to be in the context of a relationship.

What emerges from these data is the importance of perception in how men behave – how they practise their homosexuality. Sexual self-concepts are related to sexual behaviour, but whether these underlie the behaviour, or the behaviour is the reason for the self-concept to develop as it does, is unclear. This is most likely an interactive process, but what is of equal importance in considering these issues is how sexual behaviours are perceived. An overall sexual identity is rooted in the meanings attached to particular sexual behaviours and how individual desire is accounted for in that context.

The BANGAR study (Hood et al., 1994) found that the relationship between perceived sexual identity and actual sexual behaviour is not the same for all homosexually active men. Bartos et al. (1994) obtained similar findings. Humphreys (1970) made the same point about the men he interviewed in 'tearooms' – the US term for beats. Sexual identity largely depends on attachment to or membership of a defined group or emotional involvement

with other persons of that group, but the sexual practices engaged in by differing groups at any time (even simultaneously) can be the same for each group. The following table (Table 4.11) shows possible combinations of these factors, indicating the fluidity of sexuality and the difficulty in using perceived sexual self-identity to assume sexual behaviour. Individuals might identify themselves in one way and behave in a variety of ways that might not be indicated by such an identity.[4]

Table 4.11: Relationship between Sexual Identity and Sexual Behaviour

Sexual Identity	**Homosexual Behaviour**	**Heterosexual Behaviour**
Homosexual	**x, z**	**x, y**
Bisexual	**o, q**	**p, o**
Heterosexual	**a, b**	**b, c**

A person may identify as homosexual and be (during any given time period) only homosexually active (case *z*), exclusively heterosexually active (case *y*), or both heterosexually and homosexually active (case *x*).[5] The interviews material associated with the BANGAR study highlight this.

[4] Bisexual behaviour has been purposefully excluded from the table, as it is a poor descriptor of sexual behaviour. Individuals, even bisexually-identified individuals, do not generally behave bisexually: they engage in both heterosexual and homosexual activity but rarely simultaneously, and they usually accept that those activities are homosexual or heterosexual practices. However, their description of themselves and their behaviour need not correspond, and they might describe their heterosexual and homosexual activities in very different ways, making any correspondence between the two (by using the label 'bisexual') inappropriate. It is more precise to describe such behaviour as being either heterosexual or homosexual. Individuals will engage in both sets of behaviours at various times, and, occasionally, this might occur simultaneously.

[5] The cases quoted here, and some of the discussion, include some, modified, text from the BANGAR study in a report prepared by this author jointly with others (Hood et al., 1994).

- Eric (case *z*) – a fifty-year-old youth custodian living in outer suburban Sydney, described himself as homosexual and had sex with a man just one week before being interviewed. His wife died some years previously and he had four children, the youngest of whom was 12. Because of family and work commitments, he had little contact with the gay community. 'I love their body, kissing, cuddling and a good play around with their dick.' Eric only had sex with men but only occasionally.

- Bill (case *x*, but at times case *y*) – living in one of Sydney's beach suburbs, had been married for twelve years. He described himself as 'homosexual' and had been having sex with other men, occasionally, for about five years. He discussed the situation with his wife and they maintained their sexual relationship. Sometimes for periods up to and exceeding six months, Bill could be described as exclusively heterosexual, while still identifying 'these days' as homosexual.

The same can be seen with regard to a bisexual identity.

- Paul (case *q*) – a 31-year-old professional who described himself as 'bisexual', who had been sexually active with men for fifteen years. Even though his last sexual contact with a woman was just over a year before and such contacts happen most infrequently, he was quite comfortable with his self-description as 'bisexual' and thought it was a perfectly adequate description of his sexuality. His last homosexual contact was the night before being interviewed.

- Alan (case *p*) – a 35-year-old professional from the eastern suburbs who described himself as 'bi', enjoyed sex equally with men and women and had been homosexually active since his early twenties. He met male sexual partners mostly at saunas where he felt 'safe' from discovery. He had been in a sexual relationship with a woman for over six months and had not had sex with a man during that time.
- Darren (case *p*) – 24 year old, living in outer suburban Sydney, had only had sex with one other man, twelve months prior. He had sex with a woman only a week before being interviewed, but described himself as bisexual and insisted that he enjoyed sex (in particular, oral sex) with men much more than with women.
- Trevor (case *o*) – 20 year old, living in outer suburban Sydney. He did not go to gay venues but knew 'a couple of gay people'. He described himself as bisexual and said he enjoyed sex equally with men or women. He had sex with a man on the day beforehand and had sex with a woman 2 weeks previously.

And, of course, this can apply to a heterosexual identity.

- Ian (case *b*) – 36-year-old technician who had been married for eight years. He did house calls and had been 'getting off' with male customers occasionally for the last five years, at their home or office. He described himself as 'straight' and said he enjoyed sex with women better than with men. He had sex with his wife 2

days before being interviewed and had sex with a customer (a man) 2 weeks before being interviewed.

- Phil (case *c*) – a 28-year-old blue-collar worker who had been married for two years. He described himself as 'straight', and said he enjoyed sex equally with men or women. He had a particular penchant for transgender partners and used transgender prostitutes in Kings Cross. He had sex with his wife the night before he was interviewed but had not had sex with a man for about nine months.
- Graham (case *c*) – a 29-year-old 'straight' tradesman, living in a country town, who had been married for six years. He had sex with his wife two nights beforehand but had not had sex with a man (it was a near relative) for two years, although 'I think about it a lot'.
- Evan (case *a*) – 32 year old living in Wollongong, described himself as 'straight' and said he enjoyed sex equally with men or women. His last sexual experience with a man was six weeks before while his last sexual experience with a woman was some four years previously. He described his homosexual activity as 'a change'.

These particular men had little, if any, social contact with other homosexually active men, and very little or no contact with the gay community, its organisations, venues or lifestyle. They did not see themselves as being part of the 'gay community' and they rarely disclosed their homosexual activities to others with whom they maintained personal and social relationships. They usually enjoyed their homosexual experiences, but

were very aware that other people in their social spheres might not condone such behaviour.

They commonly did not identify as homosexual and certainly did not think of themselves as gay. In most cases, they did not even call what they did 'homosexuality' – it was usually only 'sex' or simply 'mucking around' (often something they had been doing since adolescence). The important aspects of their personal lives concerned relationships with their 'mates', girlfriends or wives and families. They did not see their homosexual activity as a problem, let alone one that interferes with that part of their lives that they identified as 'emotional'; nor did they see it as an integral aspect of their self-concept.

In discussing such men – homosexually active men with little or no social involvement with other such men or engagement with gay culture – Krol (1990) pondered the cultural basis for sexual behaviour. While Krol recognised that culture does not simply determine behaviour, he agreed that cultural norms play an important part and that cultural tools are usually necessary to successfully engage in most behaviours. However, these particular men do not participate in a homosexual culture and, indeed, often appear to actively resist that possibility. Krol contended that they were able to make sexual contact at beats, and successfully engage in some form of sexual encounter, not through access to homosexual cultural tools, but by the application of cultural tools common to the wider society. Although this is generally true, it ignores two important points. First, although an individual might successfully manoeuvre himself to make such sexual contacts without recourse to homosexual cultural tools, beats – and other non-gay community

means of making homosexual contact – do have their own peculiar cultural symbols and behaviours, which individuals can learn without necessarily engaging with a homosexual culture. Second, the common cultural tools that Krol referred to, as being the basis of these men's negotiation of their sexual encounters, are tools that permit them to safely manoeuvre through a potentially unsafe situation. The underlying belief in these situations is that such behaviour is considered 'deviant' and therefore needs to be kept hidden, and that the situation requires careful and considered negotiation at every stage. This broader cultural context has particular implications for how individuals understand homosexuality in general and their own desires and behaviours in particular.

What anxieties the men in BANGAR had lay in fear of discovery and the damage it would do to their family and love relationships and their social relationships. Consequently, there was often a mismatch between sexual behaviour and sexual identity. Homosexual stigmatisation can mean that, for some, homosexual experience is denigrated and accompanied by a sense of guilt and shame – when divorced from a positive gay identity or viewed with regard to the negative stereotypes of homosexuality. Many in this situation seek to repress or deny their own homosexuality, which can lead to isolation. These are issues that must be resolved before such individuals can construct a positive sexual identity (Plummer, 1981b: 99-100). The stigmatised labelling of behaviour makes it particularly difficult for individuals to respond rationally – they are often forced to make extreme or unnecessary decisions (Becker, 1974: 42). Others, however, interpret their homosexual behaviour in

ways that have little impact on their self-concept and so it is of minimal importance to their personal and social relationships.

Laumann et al. (1994: 299-301) presented data about the intersection between same-gender identity, desire and behaviour. Their data indicated that these are analytically separable categories, but they argued that such separation probably has little relevance to the inter-related and complex ways these categories are experienced and interpreted by individuals. However, they believed their data indicated that a same-gender sexual identity was not practically 'an analytically separate dimension because it logically entails the existence of both desire and action.' They largely based this on the very few individuals that indicated a same-gender sexual identity without any expressed same-gender desire or behaviour (and the few they found in the data were dismissed as probably misunderstanding the questions). Contradictorily, however, they did not reject the possibility of a combination of identity and desire without behaviour, despite a similar lack of cases, and the fact that there were no cases of a combination of identity and behaviour without desire was used as further indication that same-gender identity cannot exist without desire. It is likely that their argument was intended to be specific to its cultural context (contemporary Western societies), but this is not sufficient explanation. The examples from BANGAR indicate that notions of identity, desire and behaviour are highly complex and individualised. One of the requirements for participation in BANGAR, however, was some desire for or experience of sex with men and so it was unlikely that men who identified as homosexual but had no such desire or experience would emerge. Yet, the

converse – men that identified as heterosexual but appeared to have no expressed desire for or experience of opposite-gender sex – was clearly the case for a few men. Indeed, I am reminded of a disabled man who was interviewed for the Beats Study. He identified as 'straight' but never had sex with women and seemed to express no desire to pursue this. His sexuality was completely confined to being fellated by men at beats. This was entirely about expedience: men were available to service him (via 'glory holes') and to attempt to do anything else was simply too much effort for him because, he believed, his disability made him too unattractive. I am also reminded of some feminist women in years gone by who identified as 'political lesbians': they did not actually engage in same-gender sexual behaviour and expressed no desire for it, but were politically committed to a lesbian identity as a consequence of their particular understanding of feminism. While these are unusual cases, they do suggest that sexual identity has some validity beyond merely being an expression of one's desires, and while it might not be useful at a population level, it still has analytical importance in understanding how individuals understand and represent their sexualities in particular contexts.

This variation in the range of sexual behaviours found among individuals of apparently similar sexual identities is also true in other population groups. In SMASH, even among men who identified as homosexual and regularly participated in gay community activities, or who were recruited into the study through gay community sources, some men occasionally had sex with women, and a small number did so regularly. This was a study of men associated with the gay community. They were not men

living outwardly heterosexual lives for whom sex with women was a necessity,[6] and so it must be assumed that for most of these men, their reported sex with women was, at least partially, a personal choice. Myers et al. (1995) and Weatherburn et al. (1990) have conducted similar analyses of data collected for studies of men recruited through gay community sources.

A survey of women who were associated with Sydney gay community life had similar findings (Richters et al., 1997). This study included women who identified as lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual, although they all participated in gay community activities. Not surprisingly, some bisexually-identifying women were actually exclusively homosexual or heterosexual at the time of the survey, and some of the heterosexually-identifying women reported having had sex with other women, sometimes just recently. A small, but significant, minority of lesbians were currently having sex with men.

Community and enculturation

Although each of the studies referred to in this thesis included men who identified as gay, or in other ways as homosexual, and men who did not identify as homosexual at all, most of these samples were obtained primarily from within the gay community. Consequently, they usually include only a small proportion of men who are not homosexually-identified (less than ten percent in most of the samples), thereby making detailed analysis of sexual

[6] Most of these men had disclosed their homosexuality to a wide range of people, including friends and family. Even most of the small proportion of men in the sample who did not identify as homosexual had done so. The majority of those who reported having sex with women had also done so, although, as would be expected, the former group were less likely to have done so than were the homosexually-identifying men, and the latter group were less likely to have done so than were the exclusively homosexual men.

identity difficult. Also, although some of the men in these samples might not identify as homosexual, their presence within a sample of men recruited from within the gay community suggests that their non-identification with a homosexual label might only be temporary, or might be more a political statement than actually reflect their self-identity. The temporary nature of a non homosexual identity for some of these men is most evident in the SMASH data: of those who initially identified themselves as being other than homosexual, 85.8% eventually came to describe themselves as homosexual after just three years.

Male Call (1992 and 1996 samples) was sufficiently large and included men recruited from outside the gay community, to enable analysis of the relationship between sexual identity and sexual behaviour. The SMASH sample was large enough to enable some detailed analysis of sexual identity. However, the SMASH sample was recruited from within the gay community, and most of those who initially described themselves in ways other than as homosexual eventually did identify as homosexual, suggesting that these men should not be assumed to be similar to the non homosexually-identified men in the Male Call samples.

Whereas the relationship between sexual identity and behaviour is a primary focus in this thesis, it can also be argued that identity merely reflects behaviour. This perspective suggests that individuals come to identify themselves through their behaviour. While the importance of the relationship between the two is acknowledged, according primacy to behaviour over

identity might lead us to suggest that sexual behaviour reflects social context more than personal identity.

A possibly more fundamental issue for this thesis concerns the relationship between sampling and behaviour. Recruitment methods for research among homosexually active men are often based in aspects of their sexual behaviour, and this can predetermine the nature of the samples obtained. This means that there is a potential for the behaviours and identities represented by those studies, and, therefore, of the relationships between these, to merely reflect the recruitment strategies chosen. If this is accounted for in subsequent analysis, then it is not necessarily problematic. Nonetheless, it raises difficult issues for an analysis of the relationship between identity and behaviour. The fact that the recruitment strategy can affect the data obtained, suggests that sexual context is possibly as important as either identity or behaviour in understanding the interrelationship between them.

Introducing sexual context into the analysis is, however, no easier than examining either sexual identity or behaviour, and it is precisely because sexual context is so important that this is the case. Rarely does a single study encompass a range of recruitment strategies that rely on quite discrete methods of sexual engagement, as was done in the Beats Study. In many studies, wide-ranging recruitment strategies were used, but within limitations: some were restricted to the institutional frameworks of the gay community, often even more specifically limited to recruitment through gay commercial venues. In other cases, although a variety of settings were used, they were primarily restricted to just one methodology.

One of the most fundamental sexual contexts for homosexually active men is their relationship to other homosexually active men, particularly through the gay community. Men recruited through the gay community and men recruited from outside the gay community appear to be very different on a broad range of items, particularly those relating to sexual identity and behaviour. However, what is not accounted for is the role played by the recruitment strategies themselves. Recruitment from within and outside gay community generally require different recruitment strategies, and these strategies themselves may underpin the differences observed. Equally important, though, is the extent to which this difference in context – the gay community – affects the particular circumstances, and, in particular, the sexualities of the men recruited by these methods.

Measures of gay community attachment devised by Connell and Kippax (1989) for the SAPA study were reproduced, in somewhat revised forms, in both Male Call and SMASH. These two studies were obtained using very different recruitment strategies, with entirely different premises. However, the fact that they employed common methods for measuring gay community attachment means they can be compared on this basis, to consider the role of this particular aspect of sexual context. The use of very different recruitment strategies in the two studies means that a comparison on this measure is particularly useful.

A scale used to measure social attachment to gay community life was employed by Crawford et al. (1998) to divide the Male Call sample into two sub-samples: those who were less closely engaged with gay community life,

and those who were highly engaged with gay community life. This method was employed likewise in the following analyses, using both the Male Call 96 sample of men living in New South Wales and the SMASH sample. However, the scale was modified slightly to account for some differences in the items used in the two studies. It was composed of the elements described in Table 4.12 that were common to the two studies.

Table 4.12: Gay Community Involvement Scale Items

ITEM	RESPONSE	SCORE
How much of your free time is spent with gay or homosexual men?		
	None, NR/DK	0
	A little	1
	Some	2
	A lot	3
How many of your friends are gay or homosexual men?		
	None, NR/DK	0
	A few	0
	Some	1
	Most	2
	All	3
Do you read any gay newspapers or magazines?		
	Never, NR/DK	0
	Occasionally	1
	Regularly	2
Are you or have you been a member of any gay organisation?		
	No, NR/DK	0
	Yes	1
If you go out with gay friends where do you usually go?		
Gay bars	*Yes*	1
Gay dance parties	*Yes*	1
Private parties	*Yes*	1
Theatre or cinema	*Yes*	1
Pool or beach	*Yes*	1

This 9-item scale has a range of 0 to 14. In SMASH, the mean was 10.57, standard deviation was 2.76 and coefficient alpha was 0.7909. In the 1996 Male Call sample of men living in New South Wales, its mean was 8.40, standard deviation was 3.90 and coefficient alpha was 0.8503. The samples were divided into sub-samples, according to whether they were relatively disengaged from gay community life (those who scored up to 8 on the scale: 178 or 15.4% in SMASH, and 313 or 44.1% in Male Call), or were highly engaged with gay community life (those who scored more than 8 on the scale: 975 or 84.6% in SMASH, and 396 or 55.9% in Male Call). I will refer to the former as 'Non-Gay-Community-Attached' or NGCA, and the latter as 'Gay-Community-Attached' or GCA.

Patterns of sexual behaviour

Both studies found that NGCA men were less likely to be in a relationship of any kind, particularly an open relationship compared with GCA men (Table 4.13). There was little difference, however, between the two studies, regardless of the men's level of engagement with the gay community.

Table 4.13: Sexual Relationships and Gay Community Involvement

	Male Call NSW 1996 [1]		**SMASH baseline** [2]	
	GCA [3]	**NGCA** [4]	**GCA** [5]	**NGCA** [6]
Celibate	4.8%	13.7%	5.3%	14.0%
Casual sex only	48.2%	49.8%	43.6%	51.1%
Open relationship	27.5%	18.8%	26.7%	11.2%
Multiple relationship	1.8%	2.2%	1.3%	1.1%
Monogamous	17.4%	15.0%	20.9%	20.8%
Other	0.3%	0.3%	2.1%	1.7%

1. $p<.001$.
2. $p<.001$.
3. N=396; those scoring higher on scale measuring gay community social involvement.
4. N=313; those scoring lower on scale measuring gay community social involvement.
5. N=965; those scoring higher on scale measuring gay community social involvement.
6. N=178; those scoring lower on scale measuring gay community social involvement.

Both studies also found that NGCA men were less likely to have had sex with either regular or casual partners, and were likely to have had fewer sex partners (Table 4.14) – in Male Call they were almost half as likely to have multiple sex partners. Comparing the two studies, the men in Male Call and SMASH had similar types of sexual partners in the previous six months, regardless of their degree of association with gay community life. Among NGCA men, those in SMASH had more partners than their equivalents in Male Call (p<.001).

Table 4.14: Sexual Partners and Gay Community Involvement

	Male Call NSW 1996		**SMASH baseline**	
	GCA	**NGCA**	**GCA**	**NGCA**
Casual partners [1]	84.1%	75.4%	82.1%	76.4%
Regular partners [2]	59.3%	43.5%	59.2%	38.8%
Both casual and regular partners [3]	44.9%	26.8%	43.5%	23.0%
Number of casual partners				
– more than 10 [4]	71.2%	45.3%	66.2%	47.8%
– more than 50 [4]	47.7%	19.5%	45.8%	34.6%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Male Call: p<.005; SMASH: p<.05.
2. Male Call: p<.001; SMASH: p<.001.
3. Male Call: p<.005; SMASH: p<.001.
4. Male Call: p<.001; SMASH: p<.01. Includes only those reporting sex with casual partners.

In both studies, NGCA men were less likely to have engaged in group sex with other men than were GCA men (Table 4.15). In Male Call, however, they were *more* likely to have engaged in group sex that involved women. Comparing the two studies, men in Male Call were generally more likely to have group sex with other men (NGCA men: p<.005 with regular partners; GCA men: p<.001 with regular partners and p<.05 with casual partners).

Among NGCA men, those in Male Call were also more likely to have group sex that included both men and women ($p<.001$).

There was little difference in either Male Call or SMASH between the men who were more or less closely engaged with gay community life, about whether they had paid someone else for sex (Table 4.16). However, in Male Call, the GCA men were more likely to have been paid for sex at some time. There was little difference between the two studies.

NGCA men in both Male Call and SMASH were far more likely to have had sex with women, both recently and ever, compared with GCA men (Table 4.17). Comparing the two studies, NGCA men in Male Call were generally more likely to have had sex with women, both recently and ever ($p<.001$) than their equivalents in SMASH. Among GCA men, however, this was not the case.

Table 4.15: Group Sex and Gay Community Involvement

	Male Call NSW 1996		SMASH baseline	
	GCA [1]	NGCA [2]	GCA [3]	NGCA [4]
With men only				
– with casual partners [5]	56.6%	35.2%	49.1%	31.5%
– with regular partners [6]	36.2%	19.8%	20.8%	5.8%
With men and women				
– with casual partners [7]	4.8%	19.1%	2.4%	2.2%
– with regular partners [8]	5.1%	16.9%	1.1%	1.4%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Casual partners: N=333; Regular partners: N=235.
2. Casual partners: N=236; Regular partners: N=136.
3. Casual partners: N=792; Regular partners: N=571.
4. Casual partners: N=136; Regular partners: N=69.
5. Male Call: p<.001; SMASH: p<.001. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
6. Male Call: p<.01; SMASH: p<.01. Includes only those with regular partners.
7. Male Call: p<.001; SMASH: not significant. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
8. Male Call: p<.005; SMASH: not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.

Table 4.16: Prostitution and Gay Community Involvement

	Male Call NSW 1996		SMASH baseline	
	GCA	**NGCA**	**GCA**	**NGCA**
Paid men for sex [1]				
– in previous six months	10.1%	14.1%	0.4%	1.7%
– over six months ago	57.6%	51.1%	19.9%	16.3%
Was paid for sex [2]				
– in previous six months	3.3%	3.5%	13.2%	10.1%
– over six months ago	11.1%	3.2%	11.5%	10.7%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Not significant.
2. Male Call: p<.001; SMASH: not significant.

Table 4.17: Sex with Women and Gay Community Involvement

	Male Call NSW 1996 [1]		SMASH baseline [2]	
	GCA	**NGCA**	**GCA**	**NGCA**
History of sex with women				
– in previous six months	8.6%	54.3%	4.6%	21.3%
– over six months ago	54.8%	30.7%	55.2%	43.8%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. p<.001
2. p<.001

In SMASH, GCA men were generally about twice as likely to have engaged in 'leathersex' practices, especially with casual partners, than NGCA men (Table 4.18). In Male Call, however, GCA men were somewhat more likely to have engaged in S/M practices, but there was little difference with regard to other 'leathersex' practices. Comparing the two studies, men in Male Call were generally more likely to have engaged in 'leathersex' practices with their regular partner. This was true both for NGCA men (fisting: $p<.005$; S/M practices: $p<.05$; watersports: $p<.005$) and for GCA men (fisting: $p<.001$; S/M practices: $p<.005$; watersports: $p<.005$). Regarding 'leathersex' practices with casual partners, however, only among NGCA men were the men in Male Call more likely to have engaged in fisting ($p<.05$) and watersports ($p<.05$) than were their equivalents in SMASH.

NGCA men in Male Call were about three times more likely to have used women's clothing as a sexual fetish during sex with casual partners than were GCA men, but they were no more likely to use clothing generally for fantasy during sex (Table 4.19). GCA men in SMASH, however, were more likely to use clothing generally as a part of fantasy during sex. Comparing the two studies, the men in Male Call tended to be more likely to have dressed up as part of fantasy during sex. This was particularly true of the NGCA men (casual partners: $p<.001$; regular partners: $p<.005$). Among GCA men, those in Male Call were more likely to have used clothing for fantasy with their regular partners ($p<.001$) than their equivalents in SMASH, but this was less true with respect to casual sex.

Table 4.18: Leathersex and Gay Community Involvement

	Male Call NSW 1996		SMASH baseline	
	GCA	**NGCA**	**GCA**	**NGCA**
Fisting				
– with casual partners [1]	16.8%	16.9%	16.8%	8.8%
– with regular partners [2]	17.9%	18.4%	9.3%	4.3%
S/M				
– with casual partners [3]	21.1%	14.8%	24.4%	8.8%
– with regular partners [4]	30.6%	19.9%	21.4%	7.2%
Watersports				
– with casual partners [5]	11.7%	14.0%	13.1%	5.9%
– with regular partners [6]	19.6%	22.0%	11.4%	5.8%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Male Call: not significant; SMASH: p<.01. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
2. Not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.
3. Male Call: p<.05; SMASH: p<.001. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
4. Male Call: p<.05; SMASH: p<.005. Includes only those with regular partners.
5. Male Call: not significant; SMASH: p<.01. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
6. Not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.

Table 4.19: Dressing Up and Gay Community Involvement

	Male Call NSW 1996		SMASH baseline	
	GCA	**NGCA**	**GCA**	**NGCA**
Use of any clothing as fantasy				
– with casual partners [1]	16.9%	20.0%	13.2%	2.9%
– with regular partners [2]	26.9%	18.3%	18.9%	10.0%
Used women's clothing as fantasy				
– with casual partners [3]	3.6%	14.8%	N/A	N/A
– with regular partners [4]	4.7%	11.0%	3.0%	0.0%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Male Call: not significant; SMASH: p<.05. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
2. Male Call: not significant; SMASH: p<.05. Includes only those with regular partners.
3. Male Call: p<.001. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
4. Not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.

There was little difference according to engagement with gay community life among the men in Male Call with respect to anal intercourse (Table 4.20). NGCA men were slightly less likely to have engaged in this practice with their regular partners, or were slightly more likely to restrict themselves to the insertive role during such encounters. Among those in SMASH, NGCA men were less likely to have engaged in this practice with casual partners, or were somewhat more likely to restrict themselves to the insertive role during such encounters. There was little difference between the two samples regarding anal intercourse, except that the NGCA men in SMASH were also less likely to take both the insertive and receptive roles during sex with casual partners ($p<.01$) than their equivalents in Male Call.

Table 4.20: Sexual Role in Anal Intercourse and Gay Community Involvement

	Male Call NSW 1996 [1]		SMASH baseline [2]	
Sexual role in anal intercourse	**GCA**	**NGCA**	**GCA**	**NGCA**
No anal intercourse				
– with casual partners	24.9%	26.3%	25.9%	34.0%
– with regular partners	12.8%	16.2%	13.6%	16.7%
Insertive only				
– with casual partners	20.1%	22.5%	19.5%	25.5%
– with regular partners	12.0%	19.9%	15.9%	20.8%
Receptive only				
– with casual partners	11.1%	10.2%	11.1%	14.2%
– with regular partners	18.4%	10.3%	12.2%	16.7%
Both insertive and receptive				
– with casual partners	43.8%	41.1%	43.5%	26.4%
– with regular partners	56.8%	53.7%	53.9%	47.9%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. With casual partners: Not significant. With regular partners: $p<.05$.
2. Casual partners: $p<.01$; Regular partners: not significant.

GCA men were generally more likely to engage in anilingus than were NGCA men, but this was only significant for sex with regular partners among men in Male Call and for sex with casual partners among men in SMASH (Table 4.21). On the other hand, NGCA men in Male Call were more likely to use dildos than were GCA men, while GCA men in SMASH were more likely to use dildos than were NGCA men ($p<.001$ with casual partners; $p<.05$ with regular partners). There was little difference between the two studies in the practice of anilingus. The NGCA men in Male Call were, however, somewhat more likely to engage in this with *casual* partners than their counterparts in SMASH ($p<.05$). Conversely, the GCA men in Male Call were also somewhat more likely to engage in this practice with their *regular* partners than were their counterparts in SMASH ($p<.05$). Compared with SMASH, the men in Male Call were more likely to use dildos regardless of their relationship to the gay community (GCA men: $p<.005$ with regular partners but not significant with casual partners; NGCA men: $p<.001$ with regular partners and $p<.001$ with casual partners).

Table 4.21: Other Anal Sex and Gay Community Involvement

	Male Call NSW 1996		SMASH baseline	
	GCA	**NGCA**	**GCA**	**NGCA**
Anilingus				
– with casual partners [1]	65.2%	60.2%	69.4%	50.7%
– with regular partners [2]	76.6%	67.6%	69.4%	69.6%
Use of dildos, etc.				
– with casual partners [3]	27.9%	38.1%	24.7%	10.3%
– with regular partners [4]	39.6%	50.0%	28.9%	18.8%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Male Call: not significant; SMASH: p<.001. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
2. Male Call: p<.05; SMASH: not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.
3. Male Call: p<.01; SMASH: p<.001. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
4. Male Call: p<.05; SMASH: p<.05. Includes only those with regular partners.

Table 4.22: Oral Intercourse and Gay Community Involvement

	Male Call NSW 1996		SMASH baseline	
	GCA	**NGCA**	**GCA**	**NGCA**
Any oral intercourse				
– with casual partners [1]	98.8%	96.2%	98.4%	97.8%
– with regular partners [2]	98.7%	98.5%	94.7%	100.0%
With ejaculation				
– with casual partners [3]	52.6%	61.4%	40.3%	39.0%
– with regular partners [4]	63.4%	71.3%	46.2%	52.2%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Male Call: p<.05; SMASH: not significant. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
2. Male Call: not significant; SMASH: p<.05. Includes only those with regular partners.
3. Male Call: p<.05; SMASH: not significant. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
4. Not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.

Table 4.23: Sensual Practices and Gay Community Involvement

	Male Call NSW 1996		SMASH baseline	
	GCA	**NGCA**	**GCA**	**NGCA**
Dry kissing				
– with casual partners [1]	85.2%	70.8%	91.3%	81.5%
– with regular partners [2]	98.3%	86.8%	97.4%	92.9%
Wet Kissing				
– with casual partners [3]	87.4%	72.9%	94.2%	84.3%
– with regular partners [4]	98.7%	89.7%	94.8%	92.9%
Sensual touching				
– with casual partners [5]	95.5%	95.7%	98.6%	94.1%
– with regular partners [6]	99.6%	99.3%	99.0%	95.7%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. Male Call: p<.001; SMASH: p<.001. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
2. Male Call: p<.001; SMASH: not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.
3. Male Call: p<.001; SMASH: p<.001. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
4. Male Call: p<.001; SMASH: not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.
5. Male Call: not significant; SMASH: p<.005. Includes only those reporting casual sex.
6. Not significant. Includes only those with regular partners.

In general, there was little difference in the practice of oral intercourse in either sample according to relationship with the gay community (Table 4.22). NGCA men were slightly less likely to engage in oral sex in general than were GCA men. However, with respect to oral intercourse that specifically included ejaculation in the mouth, the GCA men generally tended to be less likely to engage in this practice. The number of men that did not engage in any oral intercourse was very small, making comparisons across the studies difficult. Nonetheless, the GCA men in Male Call were more likely to engage in oral intercourse in general with their regular partners than were their counterparts in SMASH. However, regarding oral intercourse with ejaculation, there were clear differences between the study samples. Regardless of their degree of attachment to the gay community, compared with men in SMASH, the men in Male Call were more likely to engage in this practice both with their regular partner (NGCA men: $p<.01$; GCA men: $p<.001$) and with casual partners ($p<.001$ for both sub-samples).

In general, NGCA men were less likely to engage in sensual practices, both with casual and with regular partners, than were GCA men (see Table 4.23). With respect to the practice of sensual touching, where there was no overall difference, if we consider whether the respondents indicated they did this ‘often’ or ‘occasionally’, then GCA men were likely to indicate a greater frequency ($p<.001$). Regardless of their level of attachment to the gay community, the men in Male Call were generally less likely to engage in sensual practices with casual partners than their equivalents in SMASH.

During casual sex, compared with SMASH, NGCA men in Male Call were less likely to engage in either dry kissing ($p<.05$) or wet kissing ($p<.01$), while GCA men were less likely to engage in any sensual practice: dry kissing ($p<.005$), wet kissing ($p<.001$), sensual touching ($p<.005$). During sex with regular partners, however, the only difference was that the GCA men in Male Call were more likely to engage in wet kissing than their equivalents in SMASH ($p<.05$).

Relationship between gay community attachment and behaviour

These data tend to confirm the finding of Connell et al. (1990), that there is a relationship between association with gay community life and sexual behaviour among homosexually active men, and that homosexually active men who have varying degrees of engagement with the concept of gay community and with the actual institutions of such communities tend to also behave in slightly different ways. However, the same dilemma exists as that about the relationship between identity and behaviour: a lack of clear consistency in the findings. While it is as true of social engagement with gay community life as it was of sexual identity, that the findings from the two studies reviewed in this chapter are more alike than they are different, those differences we find suggest some complexity in this apparent relationship between these factors.

While in general the men in these two studies seemed to behave similarly, regardless of their relationship with the gay community and regardless of which study they were recruited into, the differences that do emerge reflect the sorts of differences that resonate with aspects of gay community attitudes toward sexuality as they do with beliefs about sexuality.

In addition, these differences reflect differences in the way the studies were constituted.

In summary, gay community attached men in Male Call were more likely to be in a relationship, particularly an open relationship, and were likely to have had a greater number of sex partners and to have engaged in group sex with other men, than were other men in that study. Although they were more likely to engage in oral intercourse, they were less likely to do so to the point of ejaculation. They were also more likely to engage in sensual practices and mutual masturbation. There was some suggestion that they were more likely to engage in S/M practices but were no more likely to engage in any other 'leathersex' practices. They were also less likely to use dildos. These men were also more likely to have been paid for sex at some time in their lives, but they were less likely to have had sex with women. There were similar trends in the SMASH study. The gay community attached men in SMASH were more likely to be in an open relationships, had more sex partners, and were more likely to engage in oral intercourse and sensual practices generally than the other men in the study. However, as was the case with their equivalents in Male Call, they were less likely than other men in SMASH to engage in oral intercourse that included ejaculation in the mouth. They were also relatively unlikely to have had sex with a woman, and were more likely to have been paid for sex at some time. However, in contrast to their equivalents in Male Call, they were more likely to engage in 'leathersex' practices in general, and more likely to use dildos.

Comparing the men in the two studies, however, other differences emerge. Compared with SMASH, men in Male Call were less likely to be in a relationship, particularly the men who were relatively disengaged from gay community life. Also, men who were relatively disengaged from gay community life in Male Call were especially more likely to have sex with women than their counterparts in SMASH. The men in Male Call were generally less likely to engage in group sex with other men but were more likely, especially those less engaged with gay community, to do so with women. There were also some clear differences between the two samples in the sorts of sex practices in which they engaged. The men in Male Call, and particularly those that were relatively disengaged from gay community life, were less likely to engage in sensual practices, but they were also more likely to engage in 'leathersex' practices and oral intercourse with ejaculation, and were more likely to use dildos.

Overall, the men who were relatively disengaged from gay community life in the Male Call sample, like the men who were not homosexually-identified in that sample, appear to stand out as being quite different to the other men. Their sexual behaviour is particularly likely to include women and their sexual interactions with men appear to be less likely to include sensual practices or to be in the context of a relationship.

In a probability sample of homosexually active men in the US, significant differences were found between men who lived in 'gay ghettos' and those who lived in other, neighbouring, parts of the cities in which the study was conducted (Mills et al., 2001). This analysis was primarily focussed

on demographic variables, sexual identity and gay community variables, and HIV-related behaviour variables. Nonetheless, the differences found corresponded in most respects to the sorts of differences we have observed between gay community-attached men and those who were relatively disengaged from gay community life in Sydney or the rest of New South Wales.

Critical implications

In the absence of anything else, I have used these samples here, fully aware of their limitations. Do they describe the gay community? Do they provide a profile of the men who comprise the gay community or, indeed, homosexually active men in general? Probably not. One might argue that their similarity across the various samples indicates they are broadly representative. This might be the case if their methodologies were also diverse, but they are not. The fact that they are all convenience samples, and heavily reliant on gay media, venues and events for recruitment, is as likely an argument for their apparent similarity as their potential representativeness. Convenience samples will most likely attract men who are most committed to and most strongly identify with the gay community (Harry, 1986), particularly as one of the primary features of the recruitment strategies in each study was the opportunity to assist the community. This sort of community identification and commitment have been associated with middle-aged, professionally educated individuals in other populations, and there is no reason to suppose this would be any different among gay men. This being the case, the highly professional, middle-aged bias in these samples is hardly surprising.

It might be argued that more purposive samples, such as the Gay Community Periodic Surveys, do not necessarily carry this same bias. The men are recruited on site, with low refusal rates in general. The surveys do not completely rely on volunteers or altruism. While this is generally true, it only raises another series of questions about the nature of the sites used for recruitment into these samples. Does participation in, and patronage of, gay community events and venues carry its own set of biases? In any case, it is clear that the reliance on a limited range of gay community events and venues means the resultant sample is necessarily biased in favour of those who frequent such events and venues. Are they indicative of men who comprise the gay community as a whole? Most likely not.

In the end, however, despite all the limitations I have outlined, these samples are adequate for my task here. Whether such samples are representative is less important than whether they are sufficiently diverse to permit an examination of the relationship between behaviours, identities and categories in the context of gay culture. These samples provide much data about participation in gay community institutions, homosexual behaviour and personal identity.

It is, however, perhaps prudent to consider Donovan's (1992) argument that what is required is definitional clarity, and a pragmatic approach to issues of inclusion and exclusion. As I previously explained, this seems to me to be just part of the problem: we need to cast our critical gaze even further into our topic area. While we need to understand the categories on which our research is based, and who is or who is not included within those categories, we also

need to reflect on the nature of the categories themselves and how the definitions both affect and are affected by the lived experience of the men we are researching. Donovan's argument that the 'exceptional cases' – those that exemplify the relativism of the categories – '…are sufficiently exceptional not to warrant inclusion…' (ibid.: 38) is useful insofar as it permits us to conduct our research in a strictly pragmatic sense, and this is probably quite appropriate in most cases. Rarely do those conducting such research have the luxury to fully theorise their research, and their research task usually has a much more immediate objective. However, to dismiss these exceptional cases completely would be a mistake, because their exceptionality permits us to examine more critically the categories with which we work. They provide us with concrete examples that help us to conceptualise the nature of the categories themselves, and, used properly, can assist us with the task of critically reviewing the data against these categories, as social constructions rather than implying an essentiality we know does not exist.

Yet, the data presented here suggest that while the exceptional cases may be a useful tool for our critical gaze, the realities of how categories of identity, behaviour, desire and community are represented, culturally and individually, mean that the complex interplays between these categories must be interrogated in order to properly understand the lived experiences of homosexually active men. It is not just that there are exceptional cases that belie the categories. Homosexuality and homosexual men are commonly represented and represent themselves in these data in disparate ways, for various reasons, and this variety needs to be understood if we are to fully

articulate what it is that we are observing. Laumann et al. (1994: 290) argued that research categories of homosexuality conflate '…same-gender behaviour, desire, self-definition, …[and] identification… as if all these elements must go together.'

In a related article, Juliet Richters (1998: 146) clearly expounded this particular theoretical conundrum:

> … although these concepts are analytically separable, in practice people form integrated identities within their society and shed or reinterpret bits of themselves so they can fit into a social role and a tolerably consistent self-image.

Eric Rofes touched on the complex nature of gay identities in an entirely different context. He described the varied experiences of the AIDS 'crisis' and the 'post-AIDS' sense of a normalised epidemic among particular groups of gay men – those that have remained uninfected throughout the entire course of the epidemic, gay men of colour, young gay men for whom AIDS has always been part of their cultural landscape, gay men living outside large urban gay communities, and HIV-positive gay men (Rofes, 1998: 82-117). In doing so, he provided a detailed exposition of how these experiences have produced very different understandings of sexuality and gay community that often mean these men have developed quite disparate ways of relating to gay culture.

CHAPTER 5. SAMPLING AND METHODOLOGY, IDENTITY AND BEHAVIOUR

While the issues of identity and enculturation are central to these data, what emerges from theoretical and empirical observation of them is a need to problematise the data themselves. If identity and community are so central to understanding the data, and if subtle differences can affect research findings, then we need to consider how the data are collected and the relationship of the data collection process with these issues.

Biographical comments

One of my primary theoretical motivations for exploring issues of sexuality and identity among homosexually active men who are neither gay nor participate in gay community life has been a lingering concern that the men we survey in HIV research are unusual in certain ways, and that what is needed are studies of other populations of men who engage in homosexual behaviour but who appear to do so in a very different context. My main purpose in this was to provide something with which to compare the experiences and behaviours of the men who were being described as 'gay men' and, by implication, representative of the gay community. Without such a comparison, it seemed to me difficult to fully appreciate just who these 'gay men' were.

During the 1990s, however, in the context of my HIV research work, it seemed that the more I learned about other populations of homosexually active

men, the more I was troubled by the ways in which gay community-based research data were used to describe gay men monolithically. The presence in these samples of men who did not identify as gay, or who had relatively little involvement in gay community life, alerted me to the heterogeneity of the samples themselves.

This concern became more pronounced in the years after 1996 in the context of apparent increases in unprotected sex with casual partners among gay men recruited into the Periodic Surveys (Van de Ven et al., 1998). While the overall trend was certainly in this direction, my own assessment of the data was that this trend was neither uniform across all sites, nor among all groups of gay men. Increasingly I began to wonder if it was appropriate to analyse data without first considering the contexts within which the samples were collected and what this might mean in terms of the kinds of men that would be included in those samples. After all, the Periodic Surveys included men who were recruited from very different kinds of sites.

In 2000, a modified version of Male Call, called Male Out, was conducted by the same research team as Male Call, and I sat on the advisory committee for the project. This study used a self-complete, and much abbreviated, version of the Male Call questionnaire, and posted these to the recipients of adult video catalogues. In Male Call, recipients of these catalogues had been encouraged to contact Male Call through a brochure sent to them in the post, reproducing the same advertisements used in other media. Findings from the Male Out study (Van de Ven et al., 2001) had been compared with findings from the two previous Male Call samples of men

recruited from the same sources. I had concerns about this, just as I had had with some analyses of the findings from the Periodic Surveys. In this case I was concerned about the methodology, rather than the context in which the recruitment occurred. Whereas Male Call relied on men responding to a titillating advertisement to ring a phone number, Male Out was a self-complete survey of men recruited through a direct mail to subscribers of adult video catalogues. While the comparisons were only of men recruited through these catalogues in both studies, I was still left wondering if these quite substantial differences in methodology might have implications for the types of samples obtained.

Sampling and recruitment issues

Sampling methods have great bearing on what is being described by the studies of homosexually active men considered in this thesis. The problem is that the focus of each study – homosexual behaviour – is neither clearly defined nor universally understood.

If homosexuality itself is so ill-defined and so difficult to classify and interpret, then studies of such behaviour need to be particularly careful. Very often, studies of homosexuality, or even of homosexual populations, rely on recruitment methods that target the behaviour itself, or that target institutions or events which are themselves predicated on such behaviour. This is problematic. To use the object of the research as the basis for identifying and including the research 'subjects' means that the research carries within itself its own bias. To begin with, no recruitment methodology could ever account for all possible permutations and variations of homosexuality. Moreover, the

concept of homosexuality only has meaning in particular social contexts, and that meaning reflects those same social contexts. Consequently, the concepts of homosexuality on which these recruitment methods are based are necessarily constrained by social context as well. What is being targeted by a given recruitment method is a concept of homosexuality that is derived from prevailing attitudes and understandings of human sexuality in general, and homosexuality in particular. It can never be otherwise. Every decision about how to recruit the target population – homosexual men – necessarily includes decisions about what constitutes homosexuality. Even if one takes the most liberal, inclusive strategy imaginable, this necessarily entails such decisions, because what is included in the concept is as important, and as driven by discourse, as what is excluded.

This being the case, we might wonder whether men recruited into studies of homosexuality that use differing recruitment strategies are actually the same populations at all. Certainly there are similarities, but there are also important differences. Although most of the studies referred to in this thesis have used a variety of recruitment strategies, only the second stage of the Beats Study purposefully used two quite distinctly different methods to survey ostensibly similar populations of homosexual men with the same instrument. In addition, although using a similar methodology overall, the Male Call study recruited through two very different contexts: within the gay community and outside the gay community. In the SMASH study, a wide-ranging recruitment strategy was used, so even though it primarily targeted men within the gay community, it included men recruited through a variety of situations and

contexts. In addition, while the Periodic Survey had a quite specific methodology – on-site recruitment using a brief self-complete questionnaire – it recruited through a variety of sites, each of which were different in certain ways. I describe the sub-samples obtained in each of these studies in detail here.

The Beats Study – methodological differences in sampling

The Western Sydney Beats Study was conducted in two stages. In the second stage, data were collected only from homosexually active men who had little or no organised or consistent social relationship with other men who have sex with men. Those men who had some social relationship with other homosexually active men were excluded from the sample using filter questions about sexual identity and association with gay community life. The men in the sample were recruited using two distinct methods. The first method involved the interviewers attending known beats and conducting interviews on-site with men using these beats to make sexual contact. The second method involved the placement of advertisements in the classified sections of local newspapers, inviting men who 'sometimes' had sex with other men to ring a telephone number. When these men responded to the advertisements, the interviewers explained the study and asked them to complete the interview over the phone. These were two very different methods, yet both intended to recruit the same sort of men. A man was eligible to be included in the study if he was either at the beat to make sexual contact with another man or had rung the telephone number because he sometimes had sex with other men, *and* if he

had little or no social contact with either homosexual men or gay community institutions. Men with clear evidence of such contact were filtered out.

The data were divided into these two recruitment groups: those obtained through on-site interviews at the beats; and those obtained from men responding by telephone to the personal advertisements. I will refer to men interviewed at beats as the 'Beats' group, and to men interviewed after responding to personal advertisements as the 'Phone' group.

Sexual preference and identity

Unlike most samples of homosexually active men, most men in these two samples neither identified as homosexual, nor expressed a preference for sex with men. Indeed, when asked about their sexual identity many responded haltingly and seemed to have difficulty with the question, expressing the opinion that because they were asked they felt obliged to say 'bisexual' (since that is the term commonly used to describe their sexual behaviour), but clearly giving the impression they would prefer not to apply such a label to themselves. For many, it was apparently the first time they were required to give a name to their sexual behaviour, and they were often not happy with the choices available. The large proportion of men who labelled themselves as bisexual should be thought of more as having acknowledged that their sexual activities or desires involve both men and women, but not as men who actually considered themselves as a 'bisexual'.

Men in the Phone group were about half as likely to express a preference for male sex partners or to describe themselves as homosexual (Table 5.1). Although few men in either group had disclosed their

homosexuality to their family, or indicated they had many gay friends, the Phone group was less likely to do so.

Table 5.1: Sexuality and Social Relationships (Beats Study)

	Beats	Phone
Gender preference [1]		
women mostly/ only	20.6%	40.8%
both men & women	29.3%	38.0%
men mostly/only	46.5%	21.1%
unsure	3.4%	
Sexual identity [2]		
heterosexual	10.3%	29.6%
bisexual	48.3%	54.9%
homosexual	36.2%	14.1%
unsure	5.2%	1.4%
Told immediate family [3]	20.6%	2.8%
Proportion of friends are gay [4]		
half or more	13.8%	4.2%
a few	50.0%	43.7%
none	32.8%	52.1%
unsure	3.4%	0.0%
TOTAL	**58**	**71**

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. p<.001
2. p<.001
3. p<.001
4. p<.001

Relationships with women

About half the men were either married or living in a de facto relationship with a woman. This tended to be more common among the Phone group. Most (84.5%) men in the Phone group had sex with women during the previous six months compared with just 48.3% of the Beats group (p<.001). However, there was little difference between the two groups in the nature of their sexual and emotional relationships with women. Although a higher proportion of the Phone group had sex with women, among those who had sex

with women, there was little difference in the types of relationships they had with those women.

Relationships with men

There was little difference between the two groups in their likelihood to have had a regular male partner in the previous six months, although it was unclear whether these could be described as being 'in a relationship'. For many, a 'regular partner' was simply that: someone with whom they regularly had sex.

Whereas nearly half (44.0%) the men in the Beats group had more than ten casual male partners in the previous six months, only 13.1% of the Phone group had done so ($p<.001$). This might have simply been due to availability: men at beats have access to a relatively large number of partners, whereas men using personal advertisements must first make contact with potential partners and then arrange to meet them, almost always on an individual basis.

Sex with men

Every respondent in this sample had some sexual interest in men. Nonetheless, a small proportion of interviews (a little more than 10% in both groups) were with men who had not had sex with other men during the previous six months. Most of these men had simply not had sex with other men for a period longer than six months; there were also a few individuals who, though they would like to, had not yet had any sex with other men.

The nature of their relationships with men was apparently different between the two groups. No survey data were obtained in this regard, although interesting and insightful comments were recorded by interviewers. These

observations were subsequently confirmed in a follow-up qualitative study of a similar sample of men to the Phone group, obtained in the same area using the same methodology (O'Reilly, 1992). The regular partners of the men at the beats were often viewed as homosexual lovers; while the regular partners of men in the Phone group were usually just good friends (old school mates, drinking buddies) with whom they regularly 'fooled around'. This latter group did not view these as 'a relationship'. It was more like having a very special friendship that happened to also involve sex. This pattern is probably reflected in the fact that, of the men with regular male partners in the Beats group, about half identified as homosexual and half as bisexual. None considered themselves heterosexual; among the men with regular male partners in the Phone group, one quarter identified as heterosexual, over half as bisexual and only one in ten as homosexual.

Table 5.2: Anal Intercourse with Male Partners during Previous Six Months (Beats Study)

	Beats	**Phone**
None	54.0%	18.3%
Insertive Only	22.0%	11.7%
Receptive Only	18.0%	55.0%
Both	6.0%	15.0%
TOTAL	**50**	**60**

Note: Some data were missing on this item. p<.001

The Phone group was more likely to have engaged in anal intercourse (particularly receptive) with their male partners, both regular and casual, during the previous six months (Table 5.2). When asked about the kind of sex practices in which they *usually* engaged with male partners, there was a similar trend: the Phone group was more likely to engage in most practices (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Types of Sex 'Usually' Involved in Encounters with Other Men (Beats Study)

	Beats	Phone
Any oral intercourse[1]	52.7%	74.6%
Receptive oral intercourse[2]	44.4%	60.6%
Any anal intercourse[3]	18.2%	51.4%
Receptive anal intercourse[4]	12.7%	45.7%
TOTAL	**58**	**71**

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. p<.01
2. p<.05
3. p<.001
4. p<.001

Perceptions of sex with men

The men were asked to describe how they viewed their sexual behaviour with men. As with the question on sexual identity, this question often caused the respondents to stumble over their words, and they often found it difficult to answer. Although a large majority of men described their sexual activities with other men as homosexual, many seemed to suggest that they did so only because they could not think of any alternative description. For many, it was not something they really thought about, and the assignation of a label, such as 'homosexual', to their activities was not especially comfortable for them.

Even so, about a quarter of the Phone group and one in six men in the Beats group refrained from labelling their behaviour as 'homosexual'. These numbers were small, but even so the men in the Phone group tended to opt for such descriptions of their activity with men as being 'different' and 'kinky' much more than did the men in the Beats group, who tended to use more predictable descriptions of their activities, such as 'just fooling around'. Perhaps this reflects the men in the Phone group's interest in a wider range of

sexual activities in general: they appeared to be a more sexually adventurous group of men for whom sex with men was merely another aspect of a broadly-based sexual imagination (or fantasy). Men in the Beats group generally seemed to seek out immediate and direct sexual gratification, with few indulgences in other forms of sexuality, while men in the Phone group spoke much more about sexual fantasy.

Sexual activities and desires

Respondents were asked about a range of sex practices. If they had engaged in each practice, they were asked if they enjoyed doing them. If they had not engaged in these practices, they were asked if they were interested in trying them.

The proportions of those who had actually engaged in each sex practice was higher than might have been expected (Table 5.4), as was the proportion that claimed to enjoy them or who said they would like to try them. Men in the Phone group were more likely to indicate they enjoyed or would like to try most sex practices with men, as well as sexual activities that involved the actual or symbolic presence of a woman.

Table 5.4: Sex Practices with Men (Beats Study)

	Beats	Phone
Anal intercourse		
receptive [1]	32.8%	69.0%
insertive [2]	56.9%	76.1%
Rimming		
rimming partner [3]	20.7%	46.5%
being rimmed [4]	39.7%	71.8%
Fisting		
fisting partner [5]	12.1%	23.9%
being fisted [6]	5.2%	28.2%
Ball play		
licking partner [7]	62.1%	81.7%
being licked [8]	74.1%	85.9%
Group sex		
men only [9]	48.3%	62.0%
men & women [10]	32.8%	69.0%
Voyeur/exhibitionism		
watching others [11]	55.2%	71.8%
being watched [12]	22.4%	44.8%
Fantasy play		
using straight porn [13]	58.6%	77.5%
women's clothes [14]	3.4%	23.9%
effeminate men [15]	13.8%	35.2%
Prostitution		
paying partner [16]	8.6%	15.5%
being paid [17]	13.8%	33.8%
TOTAL	**58**	**71**

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. p<.001
2. p<.05
3. p<.01
4. p<.001
5. Not significant.
6. p<.001
7. p<.05
8. Not significant.
9. p<.005
10. p<.001
11. Not significant
12. p<.01
13. p<.05
14. p<.005
15. p<.005
16. Not significant.
17. p<.05

When asked about the types of sex most enjoyed physically, 50.7% of the Phone group nominated anal intercourse, compared with just 10.3% of the Beats group (p<.001). Both groups were far more likely to nominate sensual

activities involving greater displays of affection, when asked about the types of sex they most enjoyed emotionally, but even on this question the Phone group was more likely to cite intercourse: 23.9% compared with 5.1% of the Beats group ($p<.05$).

The Beats group was less likely to view intercourse as an important aspect of sexual activities with men. Only 10.3% of the Beats group felt that it was important, compared with 31.0% of the Phone group ($p<.001$). Men in the two groups also differed in their preferences for particular roles during anal intercourse with men (Table 5.5). Those in the Beats group more often preferred to share roles, but when they preferred a particular role, it was more likely to be the insertive role than the receptive. Men in the Phone group, however, were more likely to express a preference for one role or the other and it was equally likely to be the receptive as the insertive role. This is particularly fascinating when sexual identity is taken into account: there was very little difference on this item between those identifying as heterosexual, bisexual, and homosexual.

Table 5.5: Preferences during Anal Intercourse with Men (Beats Study)

	Beats	**Phone**
Insertive role	8.6%	29.6%
Receptive role	20.7%	28.2%
Either/both	17.2%	8.5%
No anal at all	37.9%	22.5%
Other	15.4%	11.3%
TOTAL	**58**	**71**

$p<.05$

Demographic details

Demographically, there was little difference between the two groups. The range of ages in the two groups was similar. Culturally, both samples were overwhelmingly of Anglo-Celtic background. Neither group was well-educated when compared with other samples of homosexually active men. In addition, there was a larger proportion of blue-collar workers in the sample than has been found in most other studies of homosexual populations. Although men in the Phone group tended to be somewhat less educated and more likely to be employed in blue-collar positions, this was not statistically significant. However, on a crude measure of social class combining these two items, the differences were significant. Perhaps this tendency for men in the Phone group to score lower on a measure of social class reflects the observation that self-identification with homosexual behaviour has been more typically associated with middle-class than working-class men. Going to a beat, although not requiring such a self-identification, does require a self-conscious seeking out of sex specifically with men.

Implications of the sampling

The two recruitment groups in the Beats Study were different to each other in many ways. No other single item provided a broader range of statistically significant differences when correlated with other items than whether they were recruited through a beat or a personal advertisement. It differentiated between the various items far more strongly than any of the demographic items. Only items relating to sexual identity and sexual

preference provided measures of significant differentiation on a range of items nearly as broad.

Men in the Phone group had little social involvement with other homosexually active men and little commitment to, or identification with, a concept of homosexuality, even though their sexual repertoire was relatively broad and they tended to have a positive interest in exploring other possibilities for sex with men, in both the 'active' and 'passive' roles, although they did seem to prefer to restrict themselves to a particular role. They usually had ongoing sexual and emotional involvement with women, but were unlikely to view their sexual involvement with men as ever including a love relationship. They also tended to cluster toward the lower end of the measures of social class.

Although men in the Beats group also had little social involvement with other homosexually active men, they had somewhat more so than among men in the Phone group. This was also true of their commitment to, and identification with, a concept of homosexuality. Although somewhat more sexually active overall with men, their sexual repertoire was somewhat more restricted, being more focussed on oral sex. However, they seemed to prefer sharing sexual roles. Although many had ongoing sexual and emotional involvement with women, they were also more likely to be involved in a homosexual love relationship.

There was a tendency among these men to separate out sexual pleasure from emotional satisfaction, though the two groups expressed this in different ways. Both groups seemed to feel that emotional satisfaction was more

important in their lives than physical pleasure. For men in the Beats group, emotional satisfaction tended to come more through sharing roles and affection with their partner, whether their partner was male or female, whereas for men in the Phone group emotional satisfaction more often came through a heterosexual (married) relationship with a woman. Regardless, this primacy of emotional over sexual relationships was mirrored in the findings of the later BANGAR study.

However, for both groups sexual pleasure was not so easily reconciled with emotional satisfaction: the latter does not always guarantee the former. With men in the Beats group, sexual pleasure was often limited to a relatively narrow range of activities, particularly oral intercourse. Beats might provide a way to satisfy these particular desires, without unduly interfering with other aspects of their lives.

For men in the Phone group, this problem was not so easily resolved. Sexual pleasure for them often seemed related to an active sexual fantasy life, based on a sense of sexual adventure and experimentation: a desire to try various activities and explore the many ways to derive sexual pleasure. Beats are not always the best location for such explorations, nor were they necessarily even known to these men. Yet, they also wanted to fulfil their sexual desires without it affecting their lifestyle in general. One way this can be achieved is through prostitution (that is, to hire someone to do it with them). This was obviously an option many had tried or been willing to consider, given that they responded to an advertisement amongst other advertisements for prostitution. Another way was to find others with a

similarly adventurous spirit about their sexuality, as many had done, either through longstanding friendships or by meeting people in local pubs and clubs.

In either case, the satisfaction of physical and emotional desires was dealt with in different ways. Though the two sets of desires presumably coincided in many ways, they did not always do so, but the greater importance attached to emotional satisfaction meant they established their lifestyles around their emotional relationships and sought to fulfil what they perceived to be their more purely physical sexual desires as best they could.

Male Call – contextual differences in sampling

The Male Call Study, conducted in 1992 and again 1996, was a cross-sectional study conducted through anonymous telephone contacts. Homosexually active men were encouraged through advertisements to telephone a free-call number, and were then invited to participate in the survey. These advertisements were placed in a range of settings, some of which were clearly associated with gay community life (such as the gay media, gay organisations, flyers in gay venues, and gay clinics). Some of them were clearly not so associated (such as the non-gay media and erotic video catalogues that included heterosexual material). Some of them might or might not have been (such as the specifically gay-themed erotic video catalogues and personal networks). This resulted in a sample of men recruited from a diverse range of sources (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6: Recruitment Source of Sydney Samples (Male Call)

	1992	1996	Total
Gay Sources			
Gay media	201	192	393
Gay/HIV organisation	69	38	107
Gay clinic	4	1	5
Gay venue/flyers	24	38	62
Non-gay Sources			
Erotic video catalogues	40	52	92
Local press	90	61	151
Non-gay media	14	55	69
Other Sources			
Gay video catalogues	83	60	143
Snowballing/friends	73	113	186
Other/unsure	41	99	140
TOTAL	**639**	**709**	**1348**

Although these distinctions (in terms of their association with gay community life) might be debatable, they seem to enable sensible analysis. On a range of simple, yet clearly indicative, measures these three broad categories appear to elicit the sort of findings one might expect (Table 5.7). Those recruited through 'gay sources' were far more likely to self-identify as gay, view themselves as being part of the gay community, have been a member of a gay organisation, to often read the gay press, and to have mainly gay friends. There was little difference between the 1992 and 1996 samples in this regard.

Table 5.7: Gay Community Attachment and Recruitment Source (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Gay Sources	Non-gay Sources	Other Sources
Identifies as gay	72.8%	18.9%	54.2%
Views self as part of gay community	78.7%	29.5%	64.7%
Member of gay organisation	57.8%	11.5%	37.7%
Often reads gay press	79.7%	22.8%	55.5%
Has mainly gay friends	60.5%	16.4%	46.1%
TOTAL	**312**	**467**	**567**

Note: Each of these correlations was statistically significant to p<.001

On a general measure of social involvement in gay community life devised by the Male Call study team (Crawford et al., 1998), those recruited through 'gay sources' scored significantly higher (Table 5.8).

Table 5.8: Measure of Gay Community Attachment and Recruitment Source (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Gay Sources	Non-gay Sources	Other Sources
Mean	9.3504	4.8498	8.1524
Standard deviation	2.5843	3.2709	3.1867
TOTAL	**312**	**467**	**567**

p<.001

These rough categories appear to discriminate between men recruited primarily from within the gay community and men recruited from outside the gay community. A comparison of those recruited through 'gay sources' with those recruited through 'non-gay sources' highlights the extent to which recruitment affects the nature of the samples of homosexually active men. Those recruited through 'other' sources were not so easily classified as these two groups and, therefore, add little to the analysis. There being little difference between the 1992 and 1996 samples in this regard, and few differences in general (Crawford et al., 1998: 15), they have been combined to maximise the sub-samples.

Nonetheless, some categories include too few men to permit sensible analysis: the clinic samples included just five men, and several other such categories were included under the broad 'Other' category. After combining the 1992 and 1996 samples we can identify eight samples of sufficient size to permit some comparisons: gay media, gay or HIV organisation, gay venues and flyers, non-gay erotic video catalogues, local (suburban) press, other non-

gay press, gay video catalogues, and friendship or personal networks. However, while most of these are relatively discrete, some are more questionable than others are. 'Gay venues and flyers' is unclear because we cannot be sure what sort of venues they were, or whether respondents were personally approached at a venue or simply read a flyer. Also, there is probably little difference between the local and other non-gay press given that the advertisements were similar for both sorts of publication and placed in similar sections of each publication (the personal classifieds). I have excluded those recruited through 'other' methods from this analysis.

Association with gay community life

While men recruited through gay community-based sources were generally likely to be more closely involved in gay community life and to identify more strongly with things 'gay', there were also some differences according to the method of recruitment used (Table 5.9).

Table 5.9: Gay Community Attachment and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	**Local**	**Other**	**Gay venues /flyers**	**Gay /HIV org'n**	**Friendship netwks**	**Gay**	**Other**
Identifies as gay	73.2%	16.0%	13.2%	72.6%	72.0%	59.1%	56.6%	28.4%
Views self as part of gay community	76.8%	26.0%	19.1%	77.4%	87.9%	72.6%	62.9%	43.2%
Member of gay organisation	53.3%	7.3%	2.9%	58.1%	76.6%	41.9%	32.9%	25.3%
Often reads gay press	81.6%	16.7%	14.7%	77.4%	77.6%	52.2%	61.5%	38.9%
Has mainly gay friends	60.9%	8.0%	10.3%	50.0%	60.7%	54.6%	45.5%	33.7%
TOTAL	**393**	**151**	**69**	**62**	**107**	**186**	**143**	**92**

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive. Each of these correlations was statistically significant to p<.001

Men recruited through gay organisations were generally the most closely involved in gay community life. Those recruited through friendship networks were somewhat less actively involved and slightly less committed to a gay identity, compared with those recruited directly from within the gay community, but they had as many gay friends and as strong an identification with the gay community.

As might be expected, men recruited through non-gay erotic video catalogues were less involved in gay community life than those recruited through gay video catalogues. Yet, those recruited through the gay catalogues were generally less closely involved in gay community life and less likely to identify with it than those recruited through other gay community methods. Those recruited through the non-gay catalogues were more closely involved in gay community life and had a stronger identification with it than did men recruited through the non-gay press.

The measure of social involvement in gay community life devised by the Male Call team (Crawford et al., 1998) also found some differences among the various recruitment samples (Table 5.10). Men recruited through gay organisations scored the highest, while those recruited through video catalogues and, especially, the non-gay press scored lower, than those recruited otherwise.

Table 5.10: Measure of Gay Community Attachment and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	**Local**	**Other**	**Gay venues /flyers**	**Gay /HIV org'n**	**Friend-ship netwks**	**Gay**	**Other**
Mean	9.261	4.000	4.632	9.113	9.935	8.930	7.804	6.347
Standard deviation	2.616	2.889	3.190	2.711	2.237	2.954	3.129	3.401
TOTAL	**393**	**151**	**69**	**62**	**107**	**186**	**143**	**92**

p<.001

Table 5.11: Demographic Differences and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	**Local**	**Other**	**Gay venues /flyers**	**Gay /HIV org'n**	**Friendship networks**	**Gay**	**Other**
Age								
Under 25	22.7%	22.0%	29.5%	12.9%	22.5%	16.2%	9.8%	12.6%
25-29	24.0%	20.0%	26.5%	21.0%	24.0%	28.5%	15.4%	14.7%
30-39	29.6%	27.3%	13.2%	45.2%	29.6%	29.6%	27.3%	29.5%
40-49	17.9%	20.7%	14.7%	12.9%	17.9%	17.9%	25.2%	24.2%
50 or older	5.9%	10.0%	16.2%	8.1%	5.9%	5.9%	22.4%	18.9%
Education								
Up to Year 10	16.6%	36.0%	29.4%	19.4%	22.4%	10.2%	19.6%	28.4%
Years 11 & 12	25.8%	30.0%	23.5%	22.6%	16.8%	19.9%	25.2%	22.1%
Trade Cert./Diploma	17.9%	19.3%	32.4%	24.2%	24.3%	22.6%	16.8%	24.2%
University	39.8%	14.0%	14.7%	33.9%	36.4%	46.8%	38.5%	25.3%

Note: Each of these correlations were statistically significant to p<.001

Table 5.12: Demographic Differences and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	Local	Other	Gay venues /flyers	Gay /HIV org'n	Friendship netwks	Gay	Other
Occupation [1]								
Professional or managerial	48.6%	34.1%	35.0%	51.9%	51.8%	53.8%	53.3%	46.8%
Para-professional	19.1%	13.5%	16.7%	18.5%	27.1%	20.0%	20.8%	13.9%
Other white collar	20.4%	16.7%	15.0%	22.2%	12.9%	20.6%	15.0%	22.8%
Blue collar	11.9%	35.7%	33.3%	7.4%	8.2%	5.6%	10.8%	16.5%
Residential location								
2010-2011 postcode	28.5%	1.4%	2.9%	29.0%	19.7%	24.7%	7.0%	8.5%
Inner/eastern Sydney	39.8%	9.4%	22.1%	37.2%	33.5%	29.0%	35.0%	26.4%
Suburban Sydney	26.2%	74.0%	64.8%	28.9%	40.2%	40.3%	50.0%	53.7%
Blue Mtns, Central & Sth Coasts	5.4%	11.3%	10.4%	4.8%	6.5%	5.9%	9.1%	11.6%
Religion								
None	62.0%	54.7%	52.9%	45.2%	66.4%	54.8%	56.6%	47.4%
Religious affiliation	26.1%	40.8%	44.1%	30.7%	23.3%	38.2%	34.3%	37.9%
Other form of spiritual belief	11.7%	4.7%	2.9%	24.2%	9.3%	6.5%	8.4%	9.5%
TOTAL	**393**	**151**	**69**	**62**	**107**	**186**	**143**	**92**

Note: Each of these correlations were statistically significant to p<.001

1. Includes only those men in employment.

Demographic differences

There were some demographic differences between the sub-samples (Tables 5.11 and 5.12). In general, men recruited through gay community-based sources were more likely to be aged in their thirties, while the other men were both slightly older and slightly younger. Men recruited through gay community-based sources were also better educated. Although there was little difference between the various recruitment groups in their likelihood to be employed, among men who *were* employed, those recruited through gay community-based sources were more likely to be in professional employment and less likely to be in a blue collar position. They were also more likely to live in the inner and eastern areas of Sydney usually associated with the gay community. Men recruited through gay sources were less likely to be religious at all, but among those that held a religious belief they were more likely to have a non-traditional spiritual belief, often outside any organised religion.

There were also differences among the specific recruitment groups. For example, men recruited through the two types of non-gay press were somewhat older than those recruited through the gay press, and they were more likely to hold a belief in a Christian faith. Men recruited through gay venues were more likely to be in their thirties than were other men, and they were the most likely to live in the inner city and inner west of Sydney. They were also the most likely to hold a non-traditional faith. Men recruited through friendship networks were the most likely to have proceeded to university, and they were the least likely to be employed in a blue-collar position. Men recruited through video catalogues, both gay and non-gay, were generally

older than other men were. They were also generally similar in their occupation to men recruited through the gay community, although those recruited through the non-gay catalogues were slightly more likely to be employed in a blue-collar position. Men recruited through the video catalogues, regardless of whether it was through the gay or non-gay catalogues, were generally the most widely dispersed geographically, and were more likely to hold a belief in a Christian faith. However, those recruited through the gay catalogues were less likely to hold a religious belief than were those recruited through the non-gay catalogues. Those recruited through gay organisations were the least likely to hold any religious belief.

HIV status

Men recruited through gay community-based sources were more likely to have been tested for HIV and to have tested HIV-positive (Table 5.13).

Men recruited through personal advertisements in the non-gay press were least likely to have tested for HIV, and, with those recruited through non-gay video catalogues were unlikely to have tested positive. Men recruited through gay venues and gay organisations were the most likely to have tested positive. Those recruited through gay venues were also the most likely to have been tested for HIV.

Table 5.13: HIV Status and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	**Local**	**Other**	**Gay venues /flyers**	**Gay /HIV org'n**	**Friend-ship netwks**	**Gay**	**Other**
HIV-positive	10.5%	0.7%	1.5%	17.7%	17.8%	8.1%	4.8%	1.1%
HIV-negative	78.3%	54.7%	51.5%	77.4%	70.1%	76.9%	77.4%	75.8%
Untested/Unknown	11.2%	44.7%	47.1%	4.8%	12.1%	15.1%	20.3%	23.2%
TOTAL	**393**	**151**	**69**	**62**	**107**	**186**	**143**	**92**

p<.001

Relationships with women

In general, those recruited through non-gay sources were more likely to have ever been married (Table 5.14). While just one in seven (14.5%) of those recruited through gay sources had ever been married, over a third (34.9%) of those recruited through non-gay sources had been. More specifically, those recruited through the non-gay press were the most likely to have been married, and those recruited through gay organisations were the least likely to have been. About a quarter of those recruited through the video catalogues had been married, but whether the catalogue was gay or not appeared to make no difference.

In general, men recruited through the gay community were also less likely to have had sex with women, either recently or in the past (Table 5.14). Men recruited through the two types of non-gay press were the most likely to have had sex with women during the previous six months. Men recruited through gay organisations were the least likely to have recently had sex with women, but one in five of those recruited through friendship networks had done so.

Table 5.14: Relationships with Women and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	Local	Other	Gay venues /flyers	Gay /HIV org'n	Friendship networks	Gay	Other
Ever married	15.8%	36.7%	41.2%	14.5%	9.3%	16.1%	25.2%	27.4%
Sex with women								
Never	36.5%	10.0%	10.3%	32.3%	34.6%	30.1%	29.4%	15.8%
Over 6 mths ago	52.3%	24.7%	19.1%	51.6%	57.0%	50.5%	52.4%	43.2%
In previous 6 mths	11.2%	65.3%	70.6%	16.1%	8.4%	19.4%	18.2%	41.1%
TOTAL	**393**	**151**	**69**	**62**	**107**	**186**	**143**	**92**

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive. Each of these correlations was statistically significant to p<.001

Table 5.15: Relationships with Men and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	Local	Other	Gay venues /flyers	Gay /HIV org'n	Friendship networks	Gay	Other
No sex with men	4.3%	13.3%	13.2%	4.8%	4.7%	8.1%	10.5%	10.5%
Casual sex only	47.7%	58.0%	72.1%	53.2%	51.4%	41.9%	47.6%	48.4%
Open relationship	27.3%	11.3%	7.4%	24.2%	18.7%	24.7%	21.7%	28.4%
Multiple relationship	3.1%	4.0%	1.5%	0.0%	1.9%	3.1%	2.1%	5.3%
Monogamous	17.6%	12.7%	4.4%	16.1%	23.4%	17.6%	18.2%	6.3%
Other	0.0%	0.7%	1.5%	1.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.1%
TOTAL	**393**	**151**	**69**	**62**	**107**	**186**	**143**	**92**

p<.001

Relationships with men

Those recruited through gay sources were more likely to be in a relationship, either an open or a monogamous relationship, and to report being sexually active with men in general (Table 5.15). Men recruited through the gay press were the most likely to have been in a relationship with another man, while those recruited through the non-gay press were the least likely to have been and they were particularly unlikely to be in a monogamous relationship. Men recruited through friendship networks were the least likely to report having casual sex only with men. Men recruited through the non-gay video catalogues were particularly unlikely to be in a monogamous relationship with a man. Those recruited through the gay catalogues were similar to those recruited through gay venues and through gay organisations.

While men recruited through gay sources were generally likely to have a larger number of partners, this was particularly true of men recruited through gay venues and the gay press (Table 5.16). Men recruited through the non-gay press were particularly unlikely to have relatively large numbers of partners.

Table 5.16: Number of Male Partners in Previous Six Months and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Male Call Sydney Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	**Local**	**Other**	**Gay venues /flyers**	**Gay /HIV org'n**	**Friendship networks**	**Gay**	**Other**
None	1.8%	11.9%	8.7%	1.6%	6.5%	2.7%	8.4%	6.5%
One	15.0%	23.8%	20.3%	14.5%	17.8%	17.7%	20.3%	14.1%
2 – 10	46.3%	54.3%	53.6%	40.3%	45.8%	51.6%	45.5%	52.2%
11 – 50	28.5%	8.6%	14.5%	32.3%	24.3%	22.0%	22.4%	26.1%
More than fifty	8.4%	1.4%	2.9%	11.3%	5.6%	5.9%	3.5%	1.1%
TOTAL	**393**	**151**	**69**	**62**	**107**	**186**	**143**	**92**

p<.001

Sex with men

Despite the differences in sexual relationships with men, men in the various recruitment groups engaged in broadly similar sex practices. Men recruited through the gay community were slightly more likely to restrict themselves to the receptive role during anal intercourse, while men recruited through the non-gay press were particularly unlikely to restrict themselves to the receptive role (Table 5.17). There was little difference between men recruited through personal associations in their practice of anal intercourse. While men recruited through the video catalogues were generally less likely to engage in anal intercourse, those recruited through non-gay video catalogues were particularly unlikely to engage in receptive anal intercourse.

There was little difference between the recruitment groups regarding oral intercourse in general (Table 5.18). However, men recruited through the non-gay press were more likely to engage in oral intercourse that included ejaculation in the mouth, both with their regular partners and with casual partners. Men recruited through gay sources were somewhat more likely to engage in receptive oral intercourse in general with their regular partners, but less so in the insertive role. Men recruited through the non-gay press were the least likely to engage in insertive oral intercourse in general with their regular partner, but those recruited through the local press were the most likely to do so with ejaculation both with their regular partner and with casual partners. Men recruited through gay venues were the least likely to engage in receptive oral intercourse with casual partners that included ejaculation.

Table 5.17: Anal Intercourse with Men and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay [1]	Local [2]	Other [3]	Gay venues /flyers [4]	Gay /HIV org'n [5]	Friendship networks [6]	Gay [7]	Other [8]
Regular partners								
No anal intercourse	16.0%	14.6%	7.1%	5.7%	20.8%	11.0%	21.2%	28.6%
Insertive Only	11.7%	8.3%	28.6%	20.0%	15.1%	13.8%	10.6%	33.3%
Receptive Only	15.0%	4.2%	0.0%	22.9%	15.1%	14.7%	18.2%	7.1%
Both roles	57.3%	72.9%	64.3%	51.4%	49.1%	60.6%	50.0%	31.0%
Any unprotected	45.4%	41.7%	42.9%	40.0%	30.2%	48.6%	50.0%	40.5%
Casual partners								
No anal intercourse	31.0%	32.4%	21.4%	31.5%	36.4%	28.2%	36.3%	20.8%
Insertive Only	19.1%	18.0%	28.6%	18.5%	22.1%	18.3%	17.6%	28.6%
Receptive Only	13.5%	9.0%	1.8%	5.6%	7.8%	9.2%	16.7%	9.1%
Both roles	36.4%	40.5%	48.2%	44.4%	33.8%	44.4%	29.4%	41.6%
Any unprotected	14.7%	17.9%	26.3%	14.8%	13.0%	15.5%	18.6%	20.3%

1. Regular partners: N=206; Casual partners: N=319.
2. Regular partners: N=48; Casual partners: N=111.
3. Regular partners: N=14; Casual partners: N=56.
4. Regular partners: N=35; Casual partners: N=54.
5. Regular partners: N=53; Casual partners: N=77.
6. Regular partners: N=109; Casual partners: N=142.
7. Regular partners: N=66; Casual partners: N=102.
8. Regular partners: N=42; Casual partners: N=77.

Table 5.18: Oral Intercourse with Men and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	Local	Other	Gay venues /flyers	Gay /HIV org'n	Friend-ship netwks	Gay	Other
Regular partners								
No oral intercourse [1]	2.4%	4.3%	0.0%	5.7%	1.9%	6.4%	7.6%	4.8%
Any insertive [2]	90.3%	83.3%	64.3%	82.9%	90.6%	89.9%	86.4%	85.7%
Insertive with ejaculation [3]	46.1%	75.0%	71.4%	48.6%	32.1%	60.6%	42.4%	59.5%
Any receptive [4]	95.6%	87.5%	100%	91.4%	90.6%	92.7%	87.9%	88.1%
Receptive with ejaculation [5]	44.1%	56.2%	50.0%	54.3%	30.2%	50.5%	42.4%	45.2%
Casual partners								
No oral intercourse [6]	4.7%	8.1%	7.1%	5.6%	0.0%	4.2%	3.9%	5.2%
Any insertive [7]	89.0%	82.0%	80.4%	90.7%	98.7%	91.5%	89.2%	85.7%
Insertive with ejaculation [8]	37.0%	65.8%	80.4%	42.6%	40.3%	47.2%	41.2%	50.6%
Any receptive [9]	90.6%	85.6%	91.1%	90.7%	90.9%	86.6%	89.2%	87.0%
Receptive with ejaculation [10]	26.6%	32.4%	26.8%	20.4%	28.6%	31.0%	30.4%	31.2%

1. Not significant.
2. $p<.05$
3. $p<.001$
4. $p<.01$
5. $p<.05$
6. Not significant.
7. $p<.01$
8. $p<.001$
9. Not significant.
10. $p<.05$

There was no difference between the recruitment groups regarding most leathersex practices, such as fisting, S/M, watersports, use of sex toys, and dressing up as part of fantasy. This was also true when these items were combined to form a scale measuring engagement in leathersex. Regarding sensual practices, however, there were clear differences between those recruited through gay sources, who were more likely to engage in these practices, and those recruited otherwise (Table 5.19). However, apart from this overall difference, there was little to distinguish the different recruitment groups.

Similarly, where a sexual encounter involved either the physical presence of women (group sex situations) or their symbolic presence (women's clothing), other than that those recruited from outside the gay community were more likely to engage in these practices in general, there was little to distinguish between the various recruitment groups (Table 5.20). Men recruited through video catalogues were somewhat more likely than others to engage in these practices.

Men recruited through the gay press or gay video catalogues or at gay venues were more likely to engage in male-only group sex with casual partners.

Table 5.19: Sensual Practices and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	**Local**	**Other**	**Gay venues /flyers**	**Gay /HIV org'n**	**Friendship networks**	**Gay**	**Other**
Regular partners								
Dry kissing	98.6%	77.1%	93.9%	97.1%	94.3%	96.3%	93.9%	83.3%
Wet kissing	98.1%	79.2%	92.9%	97.1%	98.1%	99.1%	95.5%	78.6%
Sensual touching	100%	93.7%	100%	100%	98.1%	100%	100%	97.6%
Casual partners								
Dry kissing	87.5%	62.5%	73.7%	92.6%	79.3%	86.6%	77.5%	62.2%
Wet kissing	86.9%	58.9%	70.2%	85.2%	87.0%	90.8%	76.5%	71.6%
Sensual touching	96.6%	94.6%	89.5%	98.1%	92.2%	98.6%	96.1%	97.3%

Note: Each of these correlations was statistically significant to p<.001

Table 5.20: Other Sex Practices and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay [1]	Local [2]	Other [3]	Gay venues /flyers [4]	Gay /HIV org'n [5]	Friendship networks [6]	Gay [7]	Other [8]
Regular partners								
Group sex with men only	30.7%	42.1%	30.8%	28.0%	23.8%	28.8%	28.6%	26.1%
Group sex including women	2.6%	26.3%	7.7%	8.0%	0.0%	9.5%	10.7%	30.4%
Dressing up for fantasy	21.9%	15.8%	23.1%	28.0%	23.8%	21.9%	32.1%	26.1%
Using women's clothing	1.8%	15.8%	7.7%	0.0%	0.0%	8.2%	17.9%	17.4%
Casual partners								
Group sex with men only	54.4%	31.0%	27.3%	60.6%	37.0%	49.5%	52.1%	42.9%
Group sex including women	4.4%	31.0%	15.9%	12.1%	0.0%	9.5%	10.4%	23.8%
Dressing up for fantasy	14.4%	31.0%	15.9%	33.3%	7.4%	11.6%	18.8%	26.2%
Using women's clothing	3.1%	26.2%	9.1%	9.1%	0.0%	7.4%	12.5%	14.3%

Note: Each of these correlations was statistically significant to $p<.001$

Sexual preferences

There were also some interesting differences between the groups when they were asked about their sexual preferences (Table 5.21). In response to a question about the sex practice they found most physically satisfying with men, nearly half those recruited through non-gay sources cited oral intercourse – compared with just a quarter of those recruited through gay sources. While nearly half of those recruited through gay sources cited anal intercourse as the most physically satisfying, just a third of those recruited through non-gay sources did so. Those recruited through gay organisations were the most likely to cite anal intercourse as the most physically satisfying practice, while those recruited through the local press were the most likely to cite oral intercourse. These differences were even more obvious with respect to the sex practices with men they found most emotionally satisfying: Half the men recruited through gay sources cited sensual practices, compared with just a quarter of the men recruited through non-gay sources. Those recruited through the non-gay press were the least likely to cite sensual practices in this regard and the most likely to cite oral intercourse.

Table 5.21: Preferred Sex Practices and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	Local	Other	Gay venues /flyers	Gay /HIV org'n	Friendship networks	Gay	Other
Practice enjoyed most physically								
anal intercourse	47.3%	35.3%	34.3%	43.5%	52.8%	46.5%	43.4%	34.8%
oral intercourse	28.7%	49.3%	42.0%	21.0%	19.8%	23.8%	31.5%	41.3%
sensual practices	10.4%	5.3%	4.3%	16.1%	16.0%	11.9%	7.0%	4.3%
Practice enjoyed most emotionally								
anal intercourse	19.3%	22.7%	14.4%	19.4%	17.9%	14.9%	27.3%	18.5%
oral intercourse	9.7%	27.3%	23.2%	3.2%	4.7%	10.7%	14.7%	12.0%
sensual practices	48.1%	21.3%	23.2%	50.0%	55.7%	44.1%	35.7%	39.1%
Considered anal intercourse import.	66.1%	59.0%	53.7%	52.6%	68.4%	58.4%	65.0%	44.5%
Preferences in anal intercourse								
insertive role	25.5%	27.9%	40.0%	34.2%	34.2%	34.5%	28.3%	42.3%
receptive role	28.6%	29.5%	27.3%	21.1%	21.1%	20.4%	40.0%	28.8%
either role	39.1%	27.9%	20.0%	42.1%	39.5%	36.3%	26.7%	11.5%
no anal	5.2%	13.1%	10.9%	2.6%	5.3%	7.1%	5.0%	11.5%
TOTAL	**393**	**151**	**69**	**62**	**107**	**186**	**143**	**92**

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive. Each of these correlations was statistically significant to p<.001

In response to some specific questions about anal intercourse, two thirds of men recruited through gay sources rated this practice as being very important, compared with just half the men recruited through non-gay sources ($p<.05$). Those recruited through the non-gay video catalogues were least likely to consider anal intercourse as important. Also, whereas over a third of the men recruited through gay sources indicated that they enjoyed both the insertive and receptive roles equally, this was true of just one in five men recruited through non-gay sources, and was particularly unlikely among men recruited through non-gay video catalogues. Although the men recruited through non-gay sources were more likely to indicate a preference for a particular role (particularly the insertive role), they were also more likely to indicate that they did not enjoy anal intercourse at all.

Attendance of venues

It might be argued that the ways in which these men were recruited are indicative of their socialising patterns. Nonetheless, the differences between the various recruitment groups were highly significant. In general terms, of course, those recruited through gay sources were more likely to socialise in venues and situations associated with the gay community (Table 5.22).

Table 5.22: Places Socialised with Gay Friends and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	Local	Other	Gay venues /flyers	Gay /HIV org'n	Friendship networks	Gay	Other
Gay bars	81.1%	21.2%	34.8%	87.1%	83.2%	75.8%	55.2%	14.1%
Gay dance clubs	65.1%	20.5%	33.3%	66.1%	72.9%	64.0%	46.9%	38.0%
Gay group events	45.3%	13.9%	7.2%	50.0%	73.8%	38.7%	35.7%	20.7%
Private parties	87.0%	35.1%	50.7%	90.3%	93.5%	86.0%	81.1%	66.3%
Saunas	31.0%	9.9%	14.5%	32.3%	21.5%	31.7%	16.8%	17.4%
Adult bookshops	35.1%	11.3%	18.8%	22.6%	34.6%	28.0%	34.3%	22.8%
Sex cinemas	9.2%	9.9%	13.0%	6.5%	6.5%	5.4%	7.0%	10.9%
Pool or beach	65.1%	30.5%	36.2%	69.4%	67.3%	72.6%	57.3%	43.5%
Beats	15.0%	13.9%	13.0%	14.5%	11.2%	16.7%	8.4%	14.1%
Straight bars	35.4%	28.5%	37.7%	37.1%	28.0%	39.8%	36.4%	34.8%
Theatre	85.0%	33.1%	42.0%	82.3%	88.8%	83.3%	78.3%	58.7%
TOTAL	**393**	**151**	**69**	**62**	**107**	**186**	**143**	**92**

Note: Each of these correlations was statistically significant to p<.001

Of course, if they were recruited in a particular context, then they were far more likely to socialise in those same places. This was particularly noticeable in the case of gay bars and gay/HIV organisations (with regard to gay group events). While those recruited through gay sources were generally more likely to socialise in identifiably gay contexts, this difference was not as noticeable with regard to sex venues and the reverse was not true. Those recruited through sources not associated with the gay community were no more likely to socialise with gay friends in non-gay contexts than were those recruited through the gay community.

Men recruited through the non-gay video catalogues were particularly unlikely to socialise in gay community social venues, but those recruited through the local press socialised with gay friends in fewer places than did the other men.

As was the case with their socialising patterns with their gay friends, if the men were recruited in a particular context, then they were far more likely to use those same places to meet sex partners (Table 5.23). This was particularly noticeable in the case of gay bars and the non-gay press (with regard to personal advertisements). Again, as was found with regard to socialising with gay friends, while those recruited through gay sources were generally more likely to meet sex partners in identifiably gay contexts, this difference was not as noticeable with regard to sex venues and the reverse was not true. Those recruited through sources not associated with the gay community were no more likely to meet sex partners in non-gay contexts than

were those recruited through the gay community, except in the case of personal advertisements in the non-gay press.

Men recruited through gay venues used a broader range of places to meet partners than did the other men, while those recruited through the local press used fewer places in general.

Implications of sampling

The most important difference between the various recruitment groups concerned whether they were recruited from within the gay community or not. Given that this particular study primarily sought to achieve a sample with representation both from men associated with gay community life and men who were not, it is not surprising that this particular distinction in recruitment samples should be so important.

While there is a general similarity between the groups, men recruited from within the gay community are not the same as men recruited more broadly. Naturally, those recruited from within the gay community were more closely associated with gay community life and had more diverse and stronger social ties with other homosexual men. However, they were also better educated, more likely to be employed in a professional occupation, and less likely to hold a traditional religious faith. Not surprisingly, they were more likely to be in a relationship with a man and to have more male partners, and they were less likely to have sex with women. Those recruited from beyond gay community sources were generally more restricted in their sexual repertoire, particularly about sensual practices and taking the receptive role.

Table 5.23: Places where Meets Sexual Partners and Recruitment (1992 and 1996 Sydney Male Call Samples)

	Press			Personal associations			Video catalogues	
	Gay	Local	Other	Gay venues /flyers	Gay /HIV org'n	Friendship networks	Gay	Other
Gay bars	56.2%	23.8%	30.4%	67.7%	51.4%	52.2%	34.3%	33.7%
Gay dance clubs	41.2%	17.9%	27.5%	43.5%	47.7%	37.6%	23.8%	21.7%
Friends/ parties	53.9%	31.1%	42.0%	66.1%	56.1%	53.8%	43.4%	40.2%
Gyms	15.9%	10.0%	14.3%	25.0%	15.9%	15.1%	13.3%	10.0%
Sex clubs	35.1%	18.7%	33.8%	41.0%	21.2%	26.5%	33.3%	29.3%
Saunas	51.7%	28.5%	33.3%	51.6%	35.5%	40.9%	34.3%	29.3%
Internet	6.3%	3.3%	5.5%	5.3%	7.9%	10.6%	6.7%	9.6%
Work	17.0%	4.0%	5.8%	27.4%	17.8%	15.6%	9.8%	6.5%
Pool or beach	39.9%	19.9%	36.2%	50.0%	35.5%	44.1%	35.0%	28.3%
Beats	38.7%	34.4%	39.1%	32.3%	34.6%	38.7%	42.7%	30.4%
Parlours	13.9%	10.0%	35.7%	8.3%	7.2%	4.1%	7.2%	10.0%
Street prostitutes	8.7%	6.6%	14.5%	16.1%	4.7%	4.8%	6.3%	12.0%
Straight bars	13.0%	23.2%	18.8%	22.6%	9.3%	20.4%	12.6%	21.7%
Ads – gay press	26.7%	27.2%	29.0%	35.5%	23.4%	18.3%	39.2%	37.0%
Ads – straight press	7.6%	25.8%	30.4%	14.5%	8.4%	7.0%	11.9%	18.5%
TOTAL	**393**	**151**	**69**	**62**	**107**	**186**	**143**	**92**

Note: Each of these correlations was statistically significant to p<.001

Beyond these broad differences, there were also differences between the various recruitment groups. Men recruited through the non-gay video catalogues appeared to be relatively cautious sexually and to be especially disengaged from gay community life. They were somewhat older, more geographically dispersed throughout the metropolitan area, and were more likely to hold a Christian faith.

Men recruited through the local press were similar in many ways to those recruited through the non-gay video catalogues, although perhaps not quite so disengaged from gay community life. They were also the most likely to have sex with a woman and to have been married. As well as being somewhat older, they were also more likely to be employed in a blue-collar occupation. Sexually, they seemed to be particularly focussed on oral intercourse.

In contrast, those recruited through gay venues were heavily immersed in the commercial gay scene and were more likely aged in their thirties and lived in inner Sydney. They were also least likely to have had sex with women.

Men recruited through gay organisations were much like those recruited through gay venues, although their involvement in the commercial gay scene seemed somewhat less intense. Nonetheless, they were the most likely to identify with the gay community and had the greatest number of gay friends. Sexually, however, there was little to distinguish these men from others in the sample.

Men recruited through the gay press were similar to those recruited through gay venues and organisations. Sexually, they were like those recruited through gay venues, but socially they were more like those recruited through gay organisations.

Men recruited through friendship networks were broadly similar to men recruited through other gay community sources, but they appeared to be somewhat less closely involved in gay community life, and were somewhat less sexually active. They were particularly unlikely to be employed in a blue-collar occupation, but were somewhat more likely to be of non-Anglo-Celtic background.

Men recruited through the gay video catalogues were similar in some ways to men recruited through other gay community sources, but in other ways were more like the men recruited through the non-gay catalogues. While they were relatively disengaged from gay community life, they had stronger attachments to it than did men recruited through either the non-gay press or the non-gay video catalogues. Sexually, there was little to distinguish them from other men in the sample, although they were more likely to have been married. They tended to be somewhat older and more geographically dispersed than those recruited through gay community sources.

Periodic Surveys – site-specific differences in samples

The Gay Community Periodic Surveys have been conducted in Sydney every six months, since February 1996. Self-complete questionnaires are completed on-site by homosexually active men at a range of gay community

venues and medical practices. These venues and medical practices can be divided into several broad categories (see Table 5.24): clinics, inner-city gay bars, outer suburban gay bars, gay sex venues, gyms, small gay social events, and the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Fair Day held in summer each year. Data were not collected at every site on every occasion, although, on a site's entry into the study, surveys were usually conducted consistently at that site until it withdrew from the study entirely (Prestage et al., 1999).

Table 5.24: Recruitment Source of Sydney Periodic Survey Samples

	1996	**1997**	**1998**	**1999**	**2000**	**2001** [1]	**TOTAL**
Clinics	344	580	678	610	679	305	**3197**
Inner city bars			221	174	246	103	**744**
Suburban bars	138	219	165	173	74	16	**785**
Sex venues	567	607	689	656	469	233	**3221**
Gyms				199	183	103	**485**
Social groups	155	136	126	81	103	48	**649**
Fair day	1034	1088	1156	1450	1162	1326	**7216**
TOTAL	**2239**	**2630**	**3035**	**3343**	**2916**	**2134**	**16299**

1. Includes February sample only.

Although each of these categories seems to be distinct, there are some other considerations. Within each category, several sites might have been used and while the broad category might seem analytically sensible, it is possible that the sample from each individual venue was distinctly different. In the case of gay bars, for example, each venue markets itself to a particular clientele and this could mean that each venue attracts quite different sorts of homosexual men. Nonetheless, these broad categories are useful for our purposes here in considering how recruitment in different sorts of contexts within the gay community might affect the findings in a study of homosexual men. It might be argued that there is a rough distinction between two very broad types of recruitment site: those associated with the inner-city gay commercial scene –

inner-city gay bars, sex venues and gyms – and those that are not so directly identifiable as part of that scene – clinics, gay group social activities, suburban gay bars, and Fair Day. However, such a distinction is difficult to sustain. Although the inner-city gay bars, sex venues and gyms used in the survey are all gay commercial venues that advertise widely in the gay press, each of the other recruitment sites also advertises through the gay press and they are all identifiably gay.

Over time, there was little difference in the nature of the samples obtained from each of these sites or from different sorts of sites (Prestage et al., 2000). There being little difference in the surveys over time in this regard, and few differences in general over time, all the surveys have been combined to maximise the sub-samples.

Association with gay community life

Men recruited through sex venues or suburban bars were less attached to gay community life and less likely to identify as 'gay', while those recruited through gyms and Fair Day were more closely attached to gay community life and more likely to identify as 'gay' (Table 5.25).

These same differences among the various recruitment samples were found on a measure of social involvement in gay community combining the items concerning number of gay friends and amount of time spent with gay friends (alpha=0.7386, with a range from 2-8; Table 5.26).

Table 5.25: Gay Community Attachment and Recruitment (Periodic Surveys)

	Inner city bars	Suburban bars	Fair Day	Gay groups	Sex venues	Gyms	Clinics
Identifies as gay	92.4%	88.2%	93.7%	90.0%	85.9%	95.9%	92.9%
Mainly gay friends	60.7%	54.0%	64.5%	60.0%	50.8%	66.5%	64.7%
'A lot' of time spent with gay friends	58.0%	43.4%	61.2%	56.6%	43.1%	60.5%	56.8%
TOTAL	**744**	**785**	**7216**	**649**	**3221**	**485**	**3197**

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive. Each of these correlations was statistically significant to p<.001

Table 5.26: Measure of Gay Community Attachment and Recruitment (Periodic Surveys)

	Inner city bars	Suburban bars	Fair Day	Gay groups	Sex venues	Gyms	Clinics
Mean	6.985	6.641	7.101	6.999	6.529	7.149	7.007
Standard deviation	1.169	1.326	1.127	1.147	1.440	1.067	1.226
TOTAL	**744**	**785**	**7216**	**649**	**3221**	**485**	**3197**

p<.001

Demographic differences

There were some demographic differences (Tables 5.27 and 5.28). Men recruited through suburban bars and gay social group activities were younger than the other men, but men recruited through clinics were somewhat older while men recruited through gyms were the most likely to be aged in their thirties. In general, men recruited through gyms were somewhat better educated. Men recruited through suburban gay bars tended to be less well-educated, but this was largely due to age.

There was little difference in the likelihood to be employed, except those recruited through clinics were less likely to be in paid employment, largely due to the high proportion of HIV-positive men, many of whom were receiving social security. Among the employed men, those recruited through Fair Day were the most likely to be in professional employment, while those recruited through gyms were the least likely to be in a blue collar position. Men recruited through suburban bars were the most likely to be in blue-collar occupations. In general, men tended to live in areas close to where they were surveyed. It is not surprising then that men recruited through suburban bars were more likely to live in suburban Sydney.

Table 5.27: Demographics and Recruitment (Periodic Surveys)

	Inner city bars	Suburban bars	Fair Day	Gay groups	Sex venues	Gyms	Clinics
Age [1]							
Under 30	27.6%	55.5%	33.0%	62.1%	22.8%	29.5%	17.2%
30-39	45.6%	27.1%	40.5%	28.1%	44.3%	54.9%	45.4%
40 or older	26.8%	17.4%	26.5%	9.7%	32.9%	15.6%	37.5%
Aboriginal [2]	1.8%	2.4%	1.6%	2.7%	3.3%	1.1%	1.7%
Cultural descent [3]							
Anglo-Celtic	74.9%	78.1%	73.5%	69.2%	68.5%	68.5%	75.7%
Other European	11.3%	12.2%	12.1%	11.6%	13.9%	15.7%	12.9%
Asian	6.6%	2.6%	7.2%	10.5%	7.7%	10.2%	3.3%
Other	7.3%	7.3%	7.4%	8.9%	9.7%	5.0%	8.4%
Education [4]							
Up to Year 10	19.0%	31.0%	13.5%	17.0%	16.3%	9.2%	17.7%
Years 11 & 12	15.9%	20.8%	16.8%	22.2%	16.7%	16.1%	18.2%
Trade Certificate	24.6%	21.7%	19.6%	19.1%	20.1%	17.9%	20.5%
University	40.5%	26.5%	50.1%	41.8%	46.9%	56.7%	43.7%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. $p<.001$
2. $p<.01$
3. $p<.001$
4. $p<.001$

Table 5.28: Demographics and Recruitment (Periodic Surveys)

	Inner city bars	Suburban bars	Fair Day	Gay groups	Sex venues	Gyms	Clinics
Occupation [1]							
Prof. / managerial	36.3%	34.3%	47.5%	35.3%	43.2%	41.6%	40.7%
Para-professional	10.6%	7.4%	12.4%	13.9%	14.3%	19.1%	15.9%
White collar	41.9%	39.4%	30.5%	42.6%	30.2%	35.5%	34.8%
Blue collar	11.2%	18.9%	9.6%	8.3%	12.2%	3.7%	8.6%
Residential area [2]							
Inner-city	31.7%	2.2%	20.8%	15.9%	22.8%	68.7%	37.2%
Eastern suburbs	18.1%	1.0%	14.4%	12.3%	17.5%	14.0%	20.3%
Inner west	23.0%	9.3%	36.9%	35.6%	25.2%	9.5%	26.5%
Suburban areas	17.4%	74.4%	19.4%	28.8%	20.1%	4.9%	10.5%
Elsewhere	14.4%	13.1%	8.5%	7.4%	14.4%	2.9%	5.5%
TOTAL	**744**	**785**	**7216**	**649**	**3221**	**485**	**3197**

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. p<.001. Includes only those in employment.

2. p<.001

HIV status

Men recruited through suburban bars and gay social group activities were less likely to have been tested for HIV than men in the other samples (Table 5.29). Men recruited through clinics were far more likely to have tested HIV-positive, most likely because HIV-positive men see their doctors more often than do those who are not HIV-positive. Aside from this, men recruited through sex venues were somewhat more likely to have tested HIV-positive.

Relationships with women

Men recruited at Fair Day, gyms and clinics were equally unlikely to have had sex with a woman, while over one in ten of those recruited through suburban bars and sex venues had done so (Table 5.30).

Relationships with men

Some differences in their sexual relationships with men (Table 5.31) were a clear and direct consequence of the context in which the recruitment occurred: Men recruited in sex venues were more likely to report having casual sex and were very unlikely to report being in a monogamous relationship. Those recruited at Fair Day, an event particularly popular with gay couples, were more likely to be in a monogamous relationship. Men recruited at gyms and clinics were more likely to be in a relationship than men recruited at bars or gay group social activities, but the majority of these relationships were not monogamous. Young gay men were more inclined to report being in a monogamous relationship in these data, or not to have sex with men at all ($p<.001$). Nonetheless, these differences in the various recruitment samples were still found after controlling for age.

Table 5.29: HIV Status and Recruitment (Periodic Surveys)

	Inner city bars	Suburban bars	Fair Day	Gay groups	Sex venues	Gyms	Clinics
HIV-positive	13.5%	5.7%	10.8%	7.6%	19.3%	8.8%	45.0%
HIV-negative	78.5%	81.2%	79.3%	73.9%	70.2%	84.0%	52.1%
Unknown status	2.9%	13.1%	9.8%	18.5%	10.5%	7.1%	2.9%
TOTAL	**744**	**785**	**7216**	**649**	**3221**	**485**	**3197**

p<.001

Table 5.30: Sex with Women and Recruitment (Periodic Surveys)

	Inner city bars	Suburban bars	Fair Day	Gay groups	Sex venues	Gyms	Clinics
Not in previous six months	92.7%	88.4%	95.2%	91.7%	89.1%	95.3%	95.9%
In previous six months	7.3%	11.6%	4.8%	8.3%	10.9%	4.7%	4.1%
TOTAL	**744**	**785**	**7216**	**649**	**3221**	**485**	**3197**

p<.001

Table 5.31: Relationships with Men and Recruitment (Periodic Surveys)

	Inner city bars	Suburban bars	Fair Day	Gay groups	Sex venues	Gyms	Clinics
No sex with men	13.8%	28.0%	11.7%	19.6%	4.5%	6.5%	11.3%
Casual sex only	25.5%	15.2%	18.9%	25.8%	43.3%	26.3%	25.4%
Open relationship	30.0%	23.1%	30.0%	22.4%	44.0%	34.0%	35.3%
Multiple relationship	5.1%	2.8%	3.4%	3.9%	4.8%	5.0%	3.1%
Monogamous relationship	25.6%	30.8%	36.1%	28.3%	3.4%	28.3%	25.0%
TOTAL	**744**	**785**	**7216**	**649**	**3221**	**485**	**3197**

p<.001

Table 5.32: Number of Male Partners in Previous Six Months and Recruitment (Periodic Surveys)

	Inner city bars	Suburban bars	Fair Day	Gay groups	Sex venues	Gyms	Clinics
None	7.0%	13.1%	7.7%	7.3%	1.5%	5.0%	8.3%
One	18.1%	25.1%	27.5%	19.6%	3.3%	16.2%	18.1%
2 – 10	42.0%	44.0%	41.7%	51.9%	37.7%	45.0%	43.9%
11 – 50	27.1%	15.9%	18.9%	18.5%	41.6%	28.2%	24.1%
More than fifty	5.8%	1.9%	4.2%	2.8%	15.8%	5.6%	5.6%
TOTAL	**744**	**785**	**7216**	**649**	**3221**	**485**	**3197**

p<.001

Similar patterns were found with respect to numbers of sex partners (Table 5.32). Men recruited through sex venues, not unexpectedly, had more partners, while those recruited through suburban bars and Fair Day had fewer partners.

Sex with men

Men recruited through inner-city gay bars, gyms and sex venues were more likely to engage in anal intercourse with casual partners, while men recruited through suburban bars and Fair Day were somewhat less likely to engage in receptive anal intercourse with casual partners (Table 5.33). Men recruited through gyms and inner-city gay bars were also somewhat more likely to engage in anal intercourse with their regular partners and to do so without a condom, but only those recruited through gyms were specifically more likely to engage in receptive anal intercourse with their regular partners. Those recruited through sex venues, inner-city gay bars and clinics were somewhat more likely to engage in unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners. However, HIV-positive men in these data were more likely to engage in this practice (possibly due to positive-positive sex: Prestage et al., 1995d), and they were not evenly distributed across the various recruitment groups. After controlling for HIV status, it was found that HIV-positive men recruited through sex venues, gyms and inner-city gay bars were more likely to engage in anal intercourse without a condom with casual partners ($p<.001$) as were HIV-negative men recruited through inner-city gay bars ($p<.001$).

Table 5.33: Anal Intercourse with Men and Recruitment (Periodic Surveys)

	Inner city bars	Suburban bars	Fair Day	Gay groups	Sex venues	Gyms	Clinics
Regular partners							
No anal intercourse	8.7%	10.1%	12.6%	14.0%	10.8%	6.0%	13.2%
Insertive Only	15.4%	15.8%	15.5%	14.0%	19.3%	12.8%	15.4%
Receptive Only	12.9%	9.3%	10.8%	10.3%	9.8%	9.0%	12.9%
Both roles	58.6%	64.8%	61.1%	61.8%	60.1%	72.2%	58.6%
Any unprotected	56.9%	44.8%	51.3%	44.6%	44.3%	57.6%	48.4%
Casual partners							
No anal intercourse	19.9%	29.0%	28.1%	26.7%	18.2%	16.8%	23.2%
Insertive Only	19.3%	16.6%	17.3%	16.7%	20.8%	18.5%	15.7%
Receptive Only	9.2%	8.4%	7.0%	6.7%	6.4%	5.2%	10.2%
Both roles	51.7%	46.0%	47.6%	50.0%	54.7%	59.5%	50.9%
Any unprotected	33.8%	24.4%	20.4%	20.7%	31.2%	25.3%	30.1%

Note: Each of these correlations were statistically significant to p<.001

1. Reg. partners: N=473; Casual partners: N=544.
2. Reg. partners: N=495; Casual partners: N=487.
3. Reg. partners: N=5099; Casual partners: N=4758.
4. Reg. partners: N=408; Casual partners: N=450.
5. Reg. partners: N=1710; Casual partners: N=3066.
6. Reg. partners: N=335; Casual partners: N=368.
7. Reg. partners: N=2006; Casual partners: N=2382.

Men recruited through suburban gay bars were somewhat less likely to engage in oral intercourse, both with their regular partners and with casual partners (Table 5.34). Men recruited through gyms were particularly unlikely to engage in receptive oral intercourse with casual partners that included ejaculation in the mouth, and were somewhat less likely to engage in this practice with their regular partners.

Attendance of venues

Given that these men were recruited on-site at several gay community venues, their attendance at such venues was, in many instances, logical. In addition, questions about such attendance were only asked during the first two surveys and so the number of respondents was considerably less than on the other items reported in this section, and two of the recruitment groups – gyms and inner-city gay bars – were entirely excluded as a result. Nonetheless, the differences between the remaining recruitment groups were highly significant. In general terms, of course, those recruited through a particular type of venue were more likely to report attending such venues (Table 5.35).

Table 5.34: Oral Intercourse with Men and Recruitment (Periodic Surveys)

	Inner city bars	Suburban bars	Fair Day	Gay groups	Sex venues	Gyms	Clinics
Regular partners							
No oral intercourse	6.1%	14.6%	5.4%	2.4%	7.3%	5.5%	3.2%
Insertive without ejaculation	80.7%	75.7%	87.0%	90.9%	84.3%	89.3%	90.0%
Insertive with ejaculation	55.3%	53.8%	50.4%	52.6%	43.5%	42.6%	35.6%
Receptive without ejaculation	86.0%	78.8%	88.5%	93.2%	84.6%	92.5%	92.9%
Receptive with ejaculation	48.0%	54.4%	50.4%	53.6%	40.9%	39.1%	42.9%
Casual partners							
No oral intercourse	8.7%	12.9%	8.8%	2.9%	8.1%	8.7%	3.9%
Insertive without ejaculation	81.3%	78.5%	85.5%	90.4%	86.1%	89.1%	91.3%
Insertive with ejaculation	43.5%	41.3%	36.2%	35.7%	43.5%	28.8%	33.5%
Receptive without ejaculation	85.3%	79.3%	83.8%	92.4%	83.8%	87.1%	91.6%
Receptive with ejaculation	33.1%	34.6%	29.6%	28.6%	32.5%	19.4%	31.4%

Note: Each of these correlations were statistically significant to $p<.001$

Table 5.35: Places Attended in Previous Six Months and Recruitment (Periodic Surveys)

	Suburban bars	Fair Day	Gay social groups	Sex venues	Clinics
Gay bars [1]	98.4%	92.3%	97.2%	90.0%	88.1%
Gay dance parties [2]	57.5%	64.0%	71.7%	53.2%	56.3%
Gyms [3]	47.7%	54.1%	55.6%	53.8%	54.8%
Saunas [4]	33.0%	44.8%	39.4%	81.5%	52.2%
Beats [5]	27.8%	29.5%	34.8%	42.9%	34.6%
TOTAL	**126**	**999**	**144**	**539**	**328**

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive. Includes respondents to 1996 surveys only. Each of these correlations was statistically significant to p<.001

1. p<.001
2. p<.001
3. Not significant.
4. p<.001
5. p<.001

Most men had attended gay bars in the previous six months, but, apart from those recruited through bars, the men from gay social group activities were the most likely to have done so and they were also the most likely to have attended a gay dance party. Those recruited through Fair Day were also somewhat more likely to have attended a gay dance party. Apart from those recruited through a sex venue, men recruited through clinics were somewhat more likely to have attended a gay sauna and those recruited through suburban gay bars were the least likely to have done so. Men recruited through sex venues were also the most likely to have attended a beat in the previous six months, while those recruited through suburban bars were somewhat less likely to have done so.

Implications of sampling

Despite the general similarity between the various recruitment groups, men recruited from different sorts of gay community sites are not homogenous. There were differences between the various groups on a range of variables, both demographic and behavioural. In some cases, these differences were marginal or unimportant, but in others, they were considerable, both in their statistical significance and in their possible implications.

Men recruited through inner-city gay bars did not differ significantly from the sample as a whole in most respects. They were strongly gay-identified, highly attached to gay community life, well-educated, tending to be employed in professional occupations and aged in their thirties. They were also likely to live in inner Sydney. They tended to be sexually active and were somewhat more inclined to engage in anal intercourse than other men. In many

respects, these men fit many of the features of what might be described as a 'typical urban gay man'.

Men recruited through suburban gay bars, on the other hand, were different to men recruited in other contexts on many variables. They were less strongly gay-identified and less closely attached to gay community life than other men. They were younger, less well-educated and were more likely to be employed in blue collar occupations. They were unlikely to live in the inner city. They were also less likely to have been tested for HIV. They were more likely to have recently had sex with a woman, and they appeared to be less sexually active with other men. It has been suggested that men living in outer suburban areas are more reliant on beats and similar covert methods to find sex partners. However, in these data, men recruited through suburban gay bars were actually somewhat less likely to use beats, or, indeed, most methods, to meet sex partners. These men appear to be somewhat conservative or inexperienced sexually, with less involvement in gay community life.

Men recruited at Fair Day were much like the men recruited through inner-city gay bars. They were even more strongly gay-identified and were the most closely attached to gay community life of all the recruitment groups. They were most often in professional employment. While being particularly unlikely to have recently had sex with a woman, they were especially likely to be in a monogamous relationship with a man and to report having fewer male sex partners. They were somewhat less likely to engage in receptive anal intercourse with casual partners. This appears to describe a group of men who are highly gay community attached, but are relatively conservative sexually.

Men recruited at gay social group activities were similar to those recruited at Fair Day. They were relatively young, and they were less likely to have been tested for HIV, but they were more likely to have attended gay bars and dance parties than other men. In terms of their sexual behaviour and relationship to gay community life, however, there was little to distinguish these men from most others. These appear to be young gay men with an active involvement in the gay commercial scene but otherwise are relatively unremarkable.

In most respects, men recruited through gyms were also much like the men recruited through inner-city gay bars. If anything, these men possibly conformed even more closely to the stereotype of an 'urban gay man'. They were somewhat more closely attached to gay community life and were particularly well-educated, usually aged in their thirties, and were unlikely to be employed in blue collar occupations. They were especially unlikely to have recently had sex with a woman, and were usually in a sexually open relationship with a man. They were more likely than other men to have engaged in anal intercourse, both with regular and with casual partners, and they were particularly more likely to have engaged in receptive anal intercourse with their regular partners. On the other hand, they were less likely than other men to have engaged in receptive oral intercourse with casual partners that included ejaculation in the mouth. Their greater likelihood of anal intercourse, particularly receptive anal intercourse, suggests these men might be more sexually experienced and less conservative than other men in this study. In addition, it might be argued that the tendency to avoid receptive oral

intercourse with ejaculation could indicate a heightened degree of sophistication or concern about HIV.

The men recruited through clinics might well be described as a somewhat older version of the men recruited at inner-city gay bars. They were relatively older than men in the other recruitment groups, and they were more likely to have tested HIV-positive. These men were particularly unlikely to have recently had sex with a woman, and were especially likely to be in a sexually open relationship with a man. In general, this appears to describe a group of slightly older gay men who participate in gay community life, but not remarkably so.

The final group – men recruited through sex venues – is a slightly curious mixture of men who were somewhat less involved in gay community life and yet were very experienced sexually. They were less strongly gay-identified and had less social involvement in gay community life than other men in the study, and they were more likely to have recently had sex with a woman. Even so, they were likely to have had a greater number of male sex partners than other men. They were also more likely to have tested HIV-positive. Although they were somewhat less likely to be a relationship with a man, they were most likely to be in a sexually open relationship. They were more likely to engage in anal intercourse with casual partners, and the HIV-positive men among them were more likely to engage in unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners. They were also the most likely to have attended a beat. In some ways, these men seem to be reminiscent of those who are relatively marginal participants in gay community life, but they also appear

to be very active and experienced sexually. It might be that these venues attract a mixture of men with little involvement in, or identification with, gay community life and gay men who are particularly active sexually. One way to test this is to control for sexual identity in the analysis but the results do not provide any clear answers: most of the correlations remain true, although they tend to be less strong.

Critical implications

I have focussed here on differences in sampling and recruitment. Other methodological considerations, such as interview technique (Turner et al., 1997), or the use of language and terminology within a particular milieu in the construction of questionnaires (Dubois-Arber et al., 1997: 199-205), can have a direct bearing on the quality and nature of the data obtained. While these are important, my concern here is with the relationships between identity and behaviour, and how these relationships underpin the sampling frameworks of studies of homosexual men.

What emerges from these data is that subtle differences in methodology, whether in the form, context or location of recruitment, can obtain samples of men quite different on a range of identity and behavioural characteristics. Harry (1986), using a sample of homosexual men recruited in 1969-1970, found similar differences between men recruited in different ways. Sandfort (1997), using several Dutch samples, found such methodological differences obtained samples of men that differed in the psychological, social and behavioural aspects of homosexuality. He contended that convenience samples are biased, relying on a sub-sample of homosexually active men in a

broader population study as his measuring post – this was despite his contention that definitional decisions about homosexuality also determine the nature of the samples obtained. This means that without some 'objective' means of measuring homosexuality the sample is always biased. I suggest, further, that methodological differences could also result in samples that do not necessarily have common understandings of homosexual behaviour, desire and identity, or of gay culture and community.

Issues of definition and composition of gay communities must be considered in research among gay men, for simple (or not-so-simple) methodological reasons. What is the population from which we are drawing a sample? Is it based on behaviour or identity? Either way it is problematic. Neither homosexual behaviour nor homosexual identity is easily distinguished in the general population. Those who engage in homosexual behaviour or identify as homosexual do not necessarily congregate in particular places or use particular services, nor are they immediately identifiable in the general population. Furthermore, the issue of homophobia is crucial. When someone is asked if they are homosexual or if they engage in homosexual behaviour, their response will not necessarily be 'truthful'. This will depend entirely on whether they have accepted their own homosexuality – and so feel free to acknowledge that label as applying to themselves – and whether they feel that the person asking can be trusted with such sensitive information. Furthermore, there is variability in definitions of homosexuality. If individuals define homosexuality in different ways, depending on their personal and social

circumstances, there will always be a problem with consistency in asking individuals about their homosexuality.

This problem is difficult to resolve. To obtain a representative sample of homosexuals would require drawing a larger sample from the general population, but even this is problematic. How is homosexuality to be defined in order to draw that sample? However it is defined means that the population being investigated has already been described in some basic ways, thereby including or excluding individuals according to a predetermined set of parameters that define sexuality in general and homosexuality in particular. Moreover, this predetermination is, in many ways, fundamental to how that population can be described. For example, the definition of homosexuality that is used to define who should be included in the sample can be taken very broadly, for example, that the individual has ever had sexual contact with another person of the same gender. This effectively gives precedence to behaviour over identity, thereby potentially including many people who have never even considered the possibility that they might be homosexual, or have actively rejected this possibility. And even such a broad definition has the potential of excluding individuals who might be labelled as homosexual using another definition. A priest who has homosexual desires but has taken a vow of celibacy might be such a person. Indeed, there would be many people with homosexual desires who decided not to act on those desires, usually due to homophobia, either perceived or real. Young people who have not yet had the opportunity to act on their homosexual desires are another example. In addition, this broad definition is not sufficient to avoid all confusion. What is

understood as ‘sexual contact’, particularly with a person of the same gender, is not universally agreed on. What is understood as sex by one person might not be by another. The only solution to this is to ask detailed questions about sexual behaviour with both genders (including with transgendered persons) with everyone in a general population study.

In addition, this immediately raises a basic problem: such a study is impractical. It is an expensive use of resources that requires detailed interviews with a much larger population in order to identify the relatively small population you actually want to investigate. Even more problematic, to ask such detailed questions about sexuality presupposes a willingness to answer them at all, and, if willing, that respondents will be able or willing to answer honestly. Questions about sexual behaviour are highly personal and sensitive. Many people are unwilling to reveal these aspects of their lives. Moreover, homosexual behaviour is often stigmatised, and, as such, there is an imperative to conceal such behaviour. Consequently, many who engage in homosexuality would be unwilling to participate in a study that risked divulging such information, and, if they did, would be likely not to divulge it when asked.

Given these limitations, I have tended to take an expedient approach. My concerns have primarily been with homosexual men, and usually with those living within a broad concept of gay community. In addition, discussions about the concept of gay community tend to assume that what is meant by ‘gay community’ encompasses a population of self-identified gay men who share a common interest in their capacity to live their lives such that their

homosexuality is incorporated into other aspects of their lives, without the fear of discrimination or stigma. For these purposes, a study of gay men is not a study based on (homo)sexual behaviour. It is a study of those who identify themselves as gay and who are socially and sexually engaged with other gay men through the institutions of what has been defined as 'the gay community'. Who becomes included by this definition is necessarily predetermined, and that means the parameters of their behaviour and circumstances are also predetermined in some ways. I believe this is acceptable, given the limitations I described earlier and given that my purpose was self-consciously to describe gay men and the gay community, and the relationship between them.

When I have turned my attention to homosexual men who are not gay and who live and socialise outside gay community networks, this has usually been due to an interest in this population with other researchers concerned about HIV and its possible spread beyond the gay community. My interest, however, has been primarily to explore notions of identity and community among these men, because I believed their situation could raise issues and provide valuable insights that would be relevant to gay men as well. Consequently, I have taken an equally expedient approach to recruiting these men. Given that they are equally difficult to enumerate, and considerably more difficult to identify as a population, I used the one piece of information already known about them – that they made sexual contacts with men – as the basis for recruitment. I based recruitment strategies on known methods of making sexual contact between men that could sensibly be expected among such men and that were feasible to use as a basis for recruitment.

In practice, this means that, for studies of gay men, I have tended to use convenience samples of men recruited within gay settings: men attending gay community events; men at gay commercial establishments; men recruited through gay organisations; men using gay community services. By using a diverse range of recruitment strategies and comparing men recruited through these for differences, it is possible to account for recruitment biases. However, a clear bias still exists because it is an essential aspect of the definition of the population. These studies primarily represent those who actively identify with and participate in some form of gay community institutional setting. Moreover, individual men's likelihood to be represented within studies of this sort is proportionate to their degree of involvement in gay community life: the more often they participate the more likely they will be recruited into a study. Harry (1986) concluded, 'It thus appears that our studies of homosexual men are largely studies of active gays, those for whom their sexual orientation constitutes a lifestyle.'

Nonetheless, this limitation is not entirely problematic for my purposes here. My interest is with gay men, their sexual identities and sexual behaviour, within the context of the organised gay community. Broad-based samples of men recruited from within that community might not be representative of gay men in general, or even of those gay men who participate in and identify with the gay community. However, they are sufficient if they are diverse enough to allow analyses that distinguish different modes of participation in, and identification with, the gay community, and different styles of sexual identification and sexual behaviour.

This apparently expedient position is based on the purposes of the current project. I have no reason to require representativeness for analysis because I am not attempting to describe gay men or the gay community as a population. Rather, I am describing them as social categories. I am pursuing a theoretical concern about the relationship between identity and behaviour, and the particular role of gay culture for homosexually-identified and homosexually active men. Nonetheless, the data referred to in this chapter have, to some extent, been used as representative data for other purposes. The primary purpose of HIV-related survey research has been to monitor gay men for HIV infection and risk behaviour, with a secondary purpose being to identify factors related to these. The implication of such research is that the data collected are somehow representative of the target population and are therefore capable of predicting trends within the gay community. Certainly, in virtually every case, when these data have been reported, it has been so with many qualifications about the limitations in their capacity to represent gay men in general, and even gay men who participate in the gay community. Yet, still, such reports maintain that these data are representative, in broad terms. This might be true, but we need to be very clear exactly what is being represented by these data if we are to make sense of them and what they tell us about gay men's sexualities.

Each of these studies used gay community institutions as the basis for recruitment of participants. In the Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey men were recruited through gay community events or at gay venues. This was also how the SMASH study participants were mainly recruited. The earlier

SAPA study recruited mainly through the gay media and gay organisations. The Male Call study primarily recruited through gay and non-gay media, but the gay community affiliated men in the sample were mainly recruited through the gay media. Even the SAPS study used clinic sites that were identified as being associated with the gay community to recruit most of its participants. These were all convenience samples, although in the SMASH study I made some effort to minimise this by recruiting men directly on-site at gay community events and venues, rather than relying on respondents contacting the study team themselves.

The Periodic Surveys differed only slightly in that they were conducted on-site and attempted to survey everyone in attendance. Such surveys might be said to be representative, but I suggest that this is not the case. There is no evidence that the methodology used in any way reflects the usage patterns of the venues and events being surveyed: when do most people use the venue and do different sorts of people use it at different times? What about repeat usage and occasional usage? Without accounting for these variables, it is difficult to know what the survey actually represents. Most likely it over-represents regular patrons and it possibly under-represents some patrons because they only use particular venues at particular times. Such surveys are purposive, but they cannot be described as representative, and, as such, have many of the same limitations as do convenience samples.

The Male Call sample was also recruited in a way that, while not representative, might be argued was not just a convenience sample either. Male Call recruited gay men primarily through advertisements placed in

personal columns in the gay press, inviting men to ring a telephone number and 'talk about sex'. While the advertisements clearly indicated that it was a university project, they were sufficiently vague, as well as sexually explicit, as to make the reader somewhat uncertain of the purpose. It could be said that, as such, those who rang the number were not ringing to volunteer so much as they were ringing to find out what this was about and if it involved the possibility of sex (or at least talking about sex). It is, of course, impossible to know if this is the case, as questions were not asked about the motivation of the callers. However, only about one in five (21.3%) of the gay community attached men in the 1996 Male Call sample were recruited through sexually explicit advertisements other than the gay press, with a further 30.5% from similar advertisements in the gay press. The men could have responded due to the sexually explicit nature of the advertisements or, particularly with regard to the gay press, because the advertisements also indicated that this was part of a study and provided an opportunity to do something 'for the community'. Certainly, there is no reason to presume that a significant proportion was not motivated for either reason. In addition, most of the rest of the sample (nearly half) were recruited through sources that largely corresponded to those recruited in other studies, relying largely on a desire to 'assist the community'. Therefore, the extent to which Male Call could be said to be a different sort of convenience sample is, at the very least, limited.

Apart from the usual biases inherent in convenience samples, recruiting men through gay community sources means that the men who are included are only those men who participate in gay community activities.

Relying on such a methodology also means that the men who participate more frequently are likely to be over-represented because they are more likely to be present during the recruitment.

In addition to these problems, all these studies are limited in scope. Even if they could be described as representative samples, which, in a strict sense, they cannot, they could only represent those men who frequent the particular events or venues, or use the particular media or clinics, through which the recruitment occurred. Assuredly, there are gay men who use none of these and would have no possibility of being included in such studies. In addition, there is no reason to suppose that any two gay community events or venues are similar or attract a similar clientele, or that the various gay media have similar readerships, or that the same sorts of gay men use the various clinics associated with the gay community. Indeed, it might well be argued that a diverse range of such gay community institutions exists precisely because they have different target groups. That being the case, even given the limited scope of each study, they could not be described as representative unless they at least recruited men through every known source of that type (for example, studies that recruit their samples though gay community events and venues would need to include every such event and venue known at the time of data collection).

What, then, does this tell us about the samples described in this chapter? The men were recruited through a limited range of gay community institutions. For the most part, these institutions, whether they were gay venues, events, clinics or media, were selected because they were the most

accessible, well-known and popular, making them the most efficient means of obtaining a sizeable sample. In addition, any recruitment through the various community sites required the cooperation and assistance of the management of such sites. Therefore, those sites whose management had the greatest commitment to the gay community were the most likely to be included in the studies. All of which suggest that the men who were included in the various studies were generally active participants in the gay scene and were generally closely identified with gay community life. Certainly, they cannot be described as 'representative', but they are very useful samples for an analysis of the relationship between identity and behaviour in the context of the concept of gay community.

In my endeavour here to unearth the intricate complexities of homosexuality as it is lived and experienced, the finding that the men in the Male Call sample were more likely to have paid other men for sex, while the men in SMASH were more likely to have engaged in sex work, is particularly interesting. The primary recruitment method for Male Call was to place sexually titillating advertisements in the personal classified sections of gay magazines, local newspapers and other magazines. These columns generally contain advertising for the services of sex workers as well. It is not surprising, then, that the men who responded to those advertisements, and thereby made up much of the Male Call sample, were men who were looking for sex workers, or at least men who might have considered such a possibility. This has a bearing on the nature of the samples. Not everyone uses the services of prostitutes, and not everyone scans the classifieds for sexually explicit

advertisements. Men recruited through such a method must necessarily reflect, at least partly, the sort of men who would be inclined to do this. The question is, who are those men?

The methodology used to recruit the Male Call sample was based on a method I originally devised for the Western Sydney Beats Project. It was based on a simple observation that in the absence of any other easily identifiable means of recruiting homosexually active men, such as known meeting places or gathering points, the logical approach is to use the one common factor to this population as the basis for the development of recruitment strategies: their sexual contact with other men. This would seem sensible enough, particularly given that the men I was targeting in that study were men who were not gay and who had little or no social contact with other gay men or the institutions of the gay community.

The difficulty is, however, that it targets behaviour rather than identity, and, as we have seen, the recognition of that behaviour as being 'homosexual' is not consistent. Indeed, it appears that the less the individual identifies as 'gay' or 'homosexual', the less likely they are to perceive of their behaviour in those terms, or even to recognise it as being sexual. So, what does it mean if a man does not consider himself homosexual, considers his behaviour as other than homosexual, and yet responds to an advertisement appealing to men who 'sometimes' have sex with other men? This seems a crucial question if we are to understand who the men are that respond to recruitment strategies such as those used in Male Call. Even if the sample were similar to other samples of homosexually active men this would be an important point, but, there are

many fundamental differences between the men in the Male Call samples and the men in other studies of homosexually active men, and this is especially true of the men in that study who were not homosexually-identified. This makes the question about what sort of men would respond to such a strategy that much more important.

The difficulties with the Male Call sample do not end there. Unlike many other studies of homosexually active men, Male Call relied almost exclusively on a particular form of recruitment: sexually titillating advertising placed in the personal classifieds. There are, of course, many possible ways that men might make sexual contact with each other, even men who do not view themselves as homosexual and who do not use gay institutions. The Beats Study primarily utilised 'beats' to target such men, with some success. Some other methods were described by Chris O'Reilly (1992) in his report on another Western Sydney study of homosexually active men, and I outlined a range of such methods for an in-house report to the National Centre in HIV Social Research as part of the background preparation in the development of the Male Call study (Kippax et al., 1994; Crawford et al., 1998). This particular methodology was chosen for Male Call due to the apparent success I had achieved in the Beats Study in reaching men beyond the gay community, and its relatively efficiency. It was a pragmatic decision. In funding the National Centre in HIV Social Research to conduct a national survey of homosexually active men, the Commonwealth Department of Health had required that the study recruit a large sample and that it include sufficiently large numbers of men from outside the gay community to enable an

assessment of the behaviour and risks of HIV transmission among such men. The method finally adopted for Male Call seemed the best means of achieving this – but the issue of representativeness could not be properly addressed by such a study.

The data collected in Male Call were invaluable. Samples of homosexually active men had previously been quite unlike those recruited by this method. That a somewhat different population of homosexually active men had been recruited into a study of this sort was important. Nonetheless, we need to keep in mind how they were recruited and the implications this has for any analysis of the data.

The men most likely to respond to sexually titillating classified advertisements are necessarily the men who read such advertisements, most likely the men who commonly seek partners in that way. The fact that the men in Male Call were more likely to have paid for sex, and that the advertisements used to attract these men's attention were placed alongside advertisements by sex workers, suggests even more strongly that this is the case. Elsewhere in this thesis, the SMASH data were analysed with respect to the use of various methods for finding sexual partners. Interestingly, the men who commonly used personal advertisements were generally less closely associated with gay community life and less socially involved with other homosexually active men, yet seemed to have a broad sexual repertoire. The BANGAR study researched these men in much greater depth, using a similar methodology. One of the more important conclusions of that study was that these men often tended to be sexually gregarious. They sought sexual partners in a wide range

of settings, and tended to be the type of person who explored sexual possibilities, rather than maintaining a set pattern of sexual behaviour. They were on the alert for sexual possibilities, and were usually ready to consider new and different sexual scenarios. No doubt, this is a generalisation, and by no means is it an adequate description of the broad range of men who read personal classifieds or respond to sexually titillating advertisements. However, the description seems to make some sense in terms of what one might expect, and it seemed to describe at least a substantial proportion of the men in the BANGAR sample.

Given this, it is likely that the Male Call sample includes at least a relatively large proportion of 'sexually adventurous' men with little or no relationship to the gay community. Their relationship to their own homosexual behaviour is probably best described in terms of sexual adventure rather than homosexuality. Such men might very likely have primarily heterosexual relationships and see little reason to have any sort of social relationship with either gay men or the gay community. They might simply view the prospect of a sexual encounter, regardless of the gender of the other partners, as another opportunity. Whether this is true of a large proportion or just a minority of the men in Male Call (and, more particularly, the non-homosexually-identified men in that study), their presence in the sample necessarily raises questions about the nature of the sample and what sort of men are actually included, and being described by that study.

The larger question that arises from this concerns the nature of any study of homosexual behaviour. Certainly any analysis must take account of

the methodology used. However, when a study has as its primary focus a type of behaviour, and then relies on particular aspects of that behaviour to recruit its sample, these issues are paramount. As we have seen elsewhere in this thesis, the use of particular methods of finding sexual partners is not common to all homosexually active men. Some men use a wide variety of methods, while others do not, and some men use particular methods, while others do not. The differences are not just personal differences, reflecting individual personalities. There are many reasons for choosing or using particular methods to find sexual partners. Some of these are circumstantial, some are related to social context, but often they also reflect sexual preference – by which I do not necessarily mean the gender of their sexual partners, but the range of preferences they have with regard to sexual encounters. The method of finding a sexual partner often explains or suggests a great deal about a person's sexual preference, as well as their social and personal circumstances. This being the case, the reliance on a particular method of making sexual contact as the basis for the primary source of recruitment into the study, necessarily means that the behaviour being reported must reflect that methodology.

The role of the gay community in the lives of gay men, and in how homosexually active men in general construct their lives and identities, has been central to my work. The data presented in this chapter indicate just how important these issues are to an understanding of (homo)sexual behaviour and identity. However, they also indicate that they are not sufficient. The samples themselves are different, and these differences seem to have something to do with the nature of the samples and how they were recruited. It might be that

any recruitment strategy relies on a particular form of sexual interaction – such issues being so pervasive to how we (unconsciously) construct our social institutions and relationships. However, this becomes obvious when we cast our research gaze to sexuality itself, and, especially, when our research subject is an aspect of sexuality that is at least partially hidden and so requires us to use the sexuality itself as the means of recruitment. We could see this when we considered the differences between the two sub-samples in the second stage of the Beats Study, because they were explicitly recruited by using two quite different methods of sexual interaction.

The second stage of the Beats Study had many unanticipated outcomes, as did the first stage. In this case, it was the clear difference between the two samples. Whereas we (the research managers) had originally viewed the two methodologies as simply two different ways to recruit the same sort of men, what eventually emerged was that by using two different recruitment strategies, based on quite different ways of making sexual contact, we had obtained two *different* samples of homosexually active men. Certainly, the men in both samples had little or no social relationship with other homosexually active men or with gay community institutions; but that is to be expected, given that this was the basis of their selection into the study. However, apart from this and the fact that they had sex with other men, the two samples seemed very different. Indeed, even on these fundamental criteria they were different. The Beats group had more interaction with other homosexually active men, both social and sexual, than did the Phone group.

Men in the Phone group were far more heterosexually engaged, and far less likely to have disclosed their homosexual behaviour to others. Men in the Beats group were more likely to develop love-relationships with men and to describe their sexual behaviour in homosexual terms. While the men in both samples were relatively unlikely to engage in sensual practices (compared with samples of gay men), men in the Phone group tended to have a broader range of sex practices in their repertoire of sexual activities with men, and they were more interested in exploring a range of sexual possibilities with men. However, men in the Phone group were specifically less interested in the sensual practices than were those in the Beats group, and they tended to restrict themselves more to either the insertive role or the receptive role in what they enjoyed most, whereas men in the Beats group were more versatile with regard to roles.

Interestingly, the *Sydney Star Observer* has analysed the content of the personal advertisements placed in its classifieds on two occasions (1999 and 2001). It examined what sort of criteria advertisers used to express their preferences in a sexual partner and what sorts of sexual activity they preferred. Although not a serious research project,[1] one particular finding is oddly reminiscent of some of the findings in the Beats Study: most advertisers preferred a specific role, either insertive or receptive, and only a minority were 'versatile' in their expressed sexual preference (Al-Talib, 2001: 27).

[1] The author's intent was a humorous review of trends in the numbers of 'bottoms' and 'tops' in the Sydney gay community.

Whereas most research among gay men has studied what they do sexually, the analysis conducted by the *Sydney Star Observer* was about what they desire. In the Beats Study (as in the earlier SAPA study), we asked about both practice and desire. One might expect that what a person desires and what they do would ordinarily correspond. However, this is not necessarily true. Indeed, in the samples described in this chapter we have seen some differences emerge between what was expressed as sexual desire and what men actually did sexually.

This was also particularly evident in BANGAR, the other study of homosexually active men not socially attached to gay community life. It is likely that these differences are concealed to some extent by the ways in which questions have been framed, and by the ways sexuality is enacted. When people have sex, they do not necessarily engage only in those practices they particularly enjoy or desire the most: a sexual encounter involves others and, usually, these other people's sexual desires must also be satisfied. In addition, sexual encounters tend to involve a complex set of interactions and choreographies, and it is unlikely that those involved could engage in just one particular sex practice – other sex practices are used to complement an encounter, as foreplay, to enhance sexual pleasure. On this basis, simply measuring sexual behaviour might not always provide an accurate picture of an individual's sexuality or sexual preferences. This problem is exacerbated when we consider how questions about sexual behaviour are framed: they usually ask about the frequency that particular sex practices have been performed over a given period, and the response categories are usually fairly

blunt (such as ‘never, occasionally or often’). Given what actually occurs in a sexual encounter, this is likely to be non-discriminating in terms of individual behaviours. The fact that an individual engages in receptive oral intercourse during most sexual encounters does not necessarily mean they enjoy that practice specifically. Indeed, what they actually enjoy sexually, and what most of their sexual encounters could be oriented towards, might be something that they only engage in relatively infrequently. For example, a man might engage in receptive oral intercourse frequently, but what he actually wants is for his partner to ejaculate in his mouth. This, however, might only occur infrequently for a number of reasons: Many, even most, of his partners might prefer to ejaculate otherwise. Many partners might be unwilling to do this because of the potential for transmitting infections. And, although he enjoys it, he might only prefer to engage in this practice with particular types of partners or with selected individuals.

This being the case we should not rely on behaviour alone as the key to understanding either sexuality in general or individuals’ sexualities in particular. This suggests that relying on sexual behaviour alone is likely to conceal differences in sexuality that might be significant, at least to the individuals concerned and how they view themselves and their behaviour in relation to others. Surveys of sexual behaviour can tell us what individuals do sexually, although even in that regard they probably do not discriminate very well. However, they cannot tell us about sexual desire and what motivates individuals to engage in particular forms of sexual behaviour – at least not without other, complementary research questions being addressed.

The two samples obtained for the second stage of the Beats Study demonstrate this problem very well. Although relative to other samples of homosexually active men (those recruited through gay community settings and institutions), they might appear similar, when compared with each other they were quite different. However, in terms of the specifics of particular sex practices, these differences were relatively small and uncommon. They were far more evident with regard to questions about sexual desire, sexual meaning and sexual identity. In other words, although the particular sex acts respondents engaged in with their partners might have been similar in most respects, what they actually wanted sexually, what motivated them to engage in those particular sex practices, and what they understood that behaviour to mean, both personally and socially, could have been quite different. Similar issues were evident in the Male Call data, when comparing men recruited through gay community based sources compared with those recruited more broadly. However, the Male Call data also provided us with a greater variety of recruitment methods and contexts. The overwhelming differences between those recruited through the gay community and those recruited otherwise conceal more differences between these sub-samples, based on the various recruitment strategies.

Does this apply more generally to other studies of homosexual men, particularly to studies of men that are actively engaged with gay community life? In both SMASH and the Periodic Surveys, we have seen that particular recruitment strategies obtain quite different samples in many ways. Do these differences cut across the studies? In general, they appear to. Men recruited

through gay bars and dance parties in each of the studies tended to be well-educated professionals who appear to be highly engaged with gay community life in general, although particularly with the gay commercial scene, and they seem to be very sexually active. Men recruited through gay community events were generally similar to these, but were more likely to be in a relationship, and so tended to be a little less sexually active. Men recruited through sex venues, however, tended to be somewhat older and less engaged in gay community life, although they were usually very sexually active with a broad sexual repertoire. Although those recruited through gay organisations were strongly attached to gay community life, this tended to be through gay community events and groups rather than through the gay commercial scene. Friendship networks seemed to recruit men from a broad range of contexts, although they tended to be somewhat less involved in gay community life and more conservative sexually than many other men in the various studies. Men recruited through clinics were somewhat older and less engaged with gay community life, often HIV-positive, but they tended to be experienced sexually.

What seems apparent is that each recruitment strategy is based in a particular cultural and sexual context, reliant on particular ways of respondents either being homosexual or behaving homosexually. Individual homosexually active men are found in those contexts only to the extent that they reflect a set of desires and meanings that make sense and work for those particular men.

This has particular resonance in terms of how most studies of homosexually active men are conducted. Recruitment methodologies are

usually based on two possibilities: to recruit through gay cultural institutions (for example, the gay press, gay organisations, gay events, gay neighbourhoods, gay commercial establishments), or to recruit men using known methods of homosexual contact (for example, beats, personal advertising). Usually there is considerable crossover between these two. Gay bars are a social institution, but they are also a means of meeting new partners. Some men immerse themselves in community life, through gay organisations, and tend to meet their sexual partners in that context. Indeed, any gay cultural institution can also be viewed as a means of making sexual contact, and any formal method of making sexual contact can become a gay cultural institution.

It is often argued by behaviouralists that individual circumstance is best explained through behaviour: that to understand how and why people do the things they do, we only need to examine those behaviours within their social context; and that behaviour, within the constraints of social context, drives the world view and self-identity of those individuals. At a general level, this certainly has merit and, in general, the studies of homosexually active men support this argument. However, this is largely because it is a circular argument: If you use behaviour as your basis for obtaining research data in order to understand behaviour, then behaviour is likely to be your primary explanation for what you observe. How can it be otherwise? And, as I have already argued, sexual behaviour is such a complex interplay of personal interactions and specific choreographies that the relatively blunt instruments of most surveys of sexual behaviour fail to discriminate between the subtle nuances of sexual meaning, desire and identity. If your purpose is to identify

particular sexual behaviours and monitor them (as has often been the case with surveys of male homosexual behaviour since the advent of HIV/AIDS), then a simple survey of behaviour is probably sufficient. If, however, your purpose is to understand (homo)sexuality in men, then behaviour alone is not sufficient. In my view, this has been the essential failure of HIV/AIDS social research. It has given primacy to the monitoring of high-risk sexual behaviour, at the expense of understanding what drives individuals sexually and what they understand their sexual behaviour to mean. Eric Rofes (1996: 160-185) has written that anal sex has particular meaning and importance for gay men beyond the immediate threat of infection that is often portrayed through HIV-prevention work. He argued that a failure to recognise the deeper symbolism inherent in sex practices, and the particular importance of pleasure, was likely to lead to an inevitable crisis: Individual gay men engage in sexual acts for a variety of reasons, and often those reasons are driven by deeply-felt desires. To inveigle against those acts '…may be considered … phobic … [and] likely to spur the transmission of guilt through the discourse of safe sex' (ibid.: 161), and gay men have learnt, through painful experience, to mistrust a discourse based in guilt. Walt Odets (1995: 188-205) discussed similar issues by focussing more specifically on the psychological impact of the implicitly sex-negative messages contained in much HIV-prevention work.

The point I make is that sexuality is complex, far more complex than can be described by an examination of behaviour alone, even when it is considered within its social context. Sexual desire, meaning and identity are at least as important to a complete understanding of sexuality. However, when

research is conducted among homosexual populations, it inevitably must be based in aspects of homosexual behaviour. Even when utilising gay cultural institutions as a basis for recruitment, it necessarily prioritises a particular way of 'being homosexual'. If recruitment occurs through gay commercial establishments, then it is not just that it is most likely to enrol those who use such establishments into the study. Those who use such establishments are likely to reflect particular aspects of homosexuality – whether it be the types of men who are comfortable with such places, or those men who actively choose such places as their primary means of making sexual contact, or that the places selected for recruitment into the study are places that attract particular kinds of men and the men who are attracted to them. No matter how it is achieved, there is an almost inevitable bias in such research that favours particular forms of male homosexuality. In itself, this is not problematic, but what is essential is that these biases are recognised, discussed, and configured into any analysis.

We could see these differences in the two samples recruited into the second stage of the Beats Study, and, with such clearly different methodologies, we can readily identify some of the factors that might underlie these differences. In many other studies of male homosexual populations, these issues of recruitment context are not as easily identified, and, certainly, have not been clearly articulated, or even considered, by most analysts. Yet it is clear from the analyses of the datasets in this chapter that even given the relatively limited, and behaviourally-centred, nature of the data, such contextual differences can be readily identified.

CHAPTER 6. GAY SEXUAL SUBCULTURES

The gay community is defined through and by the gay men who comprise it. Gay lifestyles involve very particular modes of linguistic and expressive style, communication, interaction and interrelationships, self-presentation and sexuality. Whether gay lifestyles are loosely or narrowly defined, the meanings attributed to such lifestyles or any of their various aspects are culturally, historically and personally specific. Therefore, the gay community can be viewed as having a range of memberships, and even those who might be considered part of that community by others might not regard themselves as such.

Biographical comments

I have always taken pleasure in the sexual scenes the gay community offered. My relationship patterns and my sexual desires have always been well catered for within the gay scene. Sex, for me, is simple human pleasure and the gay scene seems to have accommodated this perspective very well.

While I prefer sex with men, this is an inadequate exposition of my sexuality. My sexuality is also about the particular kinds of men – both in appearance and in behaviour – depending on the particular context. At different moments in different situations, I will want a particular kind of sexual partner, for very idiosyncratic reasons. It is also about particular sex practices: While I enjoy some kinds of sex practices with men, there are others I do not enjoy, and there are some practices I will enjoy with certain kinds of partners and not with others, or in certain contexts but not others. Moreover,

just because I can enjoy a particular practice does not necessarily mean that I will always seek it out – what I *really* want and what I can enjoy in the meantime are not always the same thing. However, I suspect my sexuality is primarily about context: I prefer particular places and situations to enact my sexual fantasies.

When I first began to act on my homosexual desires, it was through beats and by meeting other men through personal advertisements. The men I met through personal advertisements usually only interested me for a little while. I tended to assess them for their romantic appeal, rather than their erotic appeal. However, the beats rarely failed to satisfy. Part of the attraction was the pursuit. Whether it was a new partner or a repeat partner, they still had to be pursued each time. In addition, there was the excitement of the risk of discovery. Moreover, part of it was sheer perversity of taking pleasure in pleasure for its own sake with other men. A simple, hedonistic delight in the physical presence of so much masculinity. While I am, of course, much more than this as a sexual being, at the very heart this is what has always given me the greatest pleasure and has continued to do so through the years.

When I actively began to engage with gay community life, these aspects of my sexuality largely determined how I pursued my gay lifestyle. During the years I lived my gay life within the student left, my only outlet for this was through beats. Once I discovered the gay scene, it provided me with many opportunities to pursue sexual pleasure in ways that suited my deepest sexual desires. It is likely that the gay scene's capacity to do this, and the little likelihood that I could pursue these desires to anywhere near the same extent

in any other setting (and particularly what I perceived as a relatively puritanical left), further encouraged my decision to commit myself to gay community life.

My first exposure to what pleasures the gay community could offer was when I learned about gay saunas. I made my first tentative forays into these in the late 1970s. It was not long before I began to regularly patronise these venues. Later, when other sorts of sex clubs began to emerge, during the late 1970s and early 1980s, I also patronised those. Although I did not confine myself to such venues, they were my preferred venues. Even so, during that period, I spent much of my time in gay bars and dance clubs, but I found these most enjoyable when the men were on display and the feel of male sexuality was predominant. While some gay men protest that predatory cruising is repellent, that was actually what made those venues enjoyable to me. In the early 1980s, as large dance parties started being organised, it was possible to openly mix both the club scene and the sex scene. Sexuality was often openly pursued, and even enacted, at dance parties. While this became much less true of the dance party subcultures of the 1990s, during the 1980s this aspect of gay dance parties greatly appealed to me.

Through the years, I met most of my sexual partners in these contexts, and I developed many new friendships and acquaintances in such places. While I would never have described these as 'sexual subcultures' or even thought of them as some sort of sexual network, I was certainly aware that some men regularly pursued their sexual satisfaction in this way, and others very purposefully avoided it. Most gay men occasionally used such places and

opportunities, but only because it was available. I understood quite well that I was one of those who actually preferred these sexual contexts and who tended to pursue most of their sex in that way because it suited their sexual desires.

Would I describe these now as sexual subcultures? Probably not, but they are more than just opportunities for sex. Over the years, in both San Francisco and Sydney, I have been able to observe the people and the venues in detail. Some men I would see regularly in certain saunas or sex clubs. Some of them I might see in any such venue, while others seemed to largely restrict themselves to one such venue, or a particular type of venue (or, indeed, to one particular part of one particular venue). Other men I only occasionally saw in such places, and others I would be very surprised if I ever saw them there. Some regular patrons were nodding acquaintances; some became friends. Some seemed to only ever go to those venues and have virtually no other interaction with gay community life – or at least with the aspects of gay community life with which I engaged over the years.

Whether this can be described as a 'subculture', my own sexual desires have largely determined how I have interacted with gay community life. The choices I have made about how I socialise and how I work have tended to reflect these aspects of my sexuality. The gay scene has accommodated my sexuality very easily. While nothing can ever be perfect, I have felt relatively fulfilled sexually. Nonetheless, I can recall many frustrating occasions when cruising gay bars and feeling that I was just not getting it right. Perhaps this was because I was trying to make the bars function in a way that did not quite work for my sexuality, whereas the sex venues could do so much more easily.

Regardless, it remains a moot point as to whether my sense of sexual ease within the gay scene will continue unabated: throughout most of this time I have been relatively young and the way I presented myself conformed very well with the physical ideal of a sexually desirable gay man. Now, in my late forties, the question arises whether the often-remarked on youth bias of the gay scene will alter my experience of the sexual possibilities offered within that scene. While it is difficult to offer an opinion on one's own situation in this way, it is perhaps interesting to note that as I have drifted away from this physical ideal, so too have my sexual interests drifted from the cruisiness of the gay scene to the comfort and companionship of the relationship I have with my partner. Whether this is due to age or a subconscious response to my own changed circumstances matters little.

Contextualising gay sexuality

Laumann and Gagnon (1995) have argued that sexuality has been largely represented as an individual phenomenon and that sexual research has tended to reproduce this by focussing on 'the individual sexual actor'. They claimed that individual sexuality is shaped through the connections between individuals, within a context of 'master statuses' that accord value to and hierarchise particular aspects of behaviour and identity. In describing how this occurs they rely on a highly privatised sexuality within a sexual pairing. The extent to which gay men's sexual lives are conducted within a more overtly social context suggests that the relationship between gay community or subcultural attitudes and beliefs and individual gay men's behaviour and identities is perhaps even more contingent.

The broad philosophical perspective of the gay community includes an open self-acceptance of gay identity and lifestyle, a positive regard for these and for other gay men (and a disavowal of the stigmatised stereotypes) and a personal commitment to gay community life, or at least to aspects of it. However, this philosophy is the product of the interacting power relations that construct, determine and define the gay community. Gay masculinity and its related sexual philosophy are important elements in the ideology of gay community and gay identity.

For many individual gay men their membership of the gay community – and even their gay identity – can be problematic even after reaching what Cass (1979) described as the stage of 'identity acceptance' in the process of coming out. Of course, for many, the challenge this ideology of gayness poses to the stigmatised and stereotyped conceptualisation of male homosexuality within the normative model of sexuality has enabled them to accept their own homosexuality and to 'come out' as gay. This has especially strengthened those who identify as both masculine and homosexual, particularly important to men who place great personal investment in their masculine self-concept (Stambolian, 1984: 154).

However, having accepted one's homosexuality, adopted a homosexual identity and begun to interact with male homosexual subcultures, the individual contends with the characterisation of gay identity within gay culture and the internally-structured concepts of gay lifestyle, gay masculinity and gay sexuality. This additional aspect of gay identification (and coming out) is the

current form of a problem which has always been a correlation of the existence of gay subcultures – and, indeed, of any subcultural existence.

Darsey and Jandt (1981) describe coming out as a process of re-identification (from the normative model and the stigma attached to personal experience) through communication. They found that the symbols, stylistic representations and philosophies of gay culture were especially important to the (ongoing) construction of a personal identity as gay (or not as gay).[1]

Habermas's (1979) model of ego development is useful in understanding this situation. Habermas posits four stages in the development of an egoistic individual: *symbiotic*, where individuals do not perceive themselves as separate from their environment; *egocentric*, where the distinction between self and environment is made but perception is only possible from the individual's own perspective; *socio-centric-objectivistic*, where individuals perceive that their own experience might differ from the material conditions of existence and so begins to internalise behavioural expectations; and *universalistic*, where individuals recognise behavioural expectations as cultural (functional) norms which may be assessed on the basis of their own values. This process of ego development is one that will allow them to situate themselves socially and to negotiate role expectations, even where these are contradictory or where they are inconsistent with personal experience or judgment. He argues (Habermas, 1979: 100):

[1] In the BANGAR study (Hood et al., 1994), many homosexually active men viewed the gay community negatively and saw little relevance to their own circumstances in it. By locating themselves outside the gay community, they also distanced themselves from a gay identity.

> … the ego is formed in a system of demarcations. The subjectivity of internal nature demarcates itself in relation to the objectivity of a perceptible external nature, in relation to the normativity of society, and in relation to the inter-subjectivity of language.

This is particularly important to the development of a sexual identity, given the cultural basis and specificity of sexuality. The individual's sexual identity is necessarily in a state of tension with the role expectations of the normative model of sexuality and the individual's own subjective experiences and interpretations of sexuality. Individuals' sexual behaviour and desire – and the meanings they attach to these – reflect that tension. For Healy (1995), sexual identities are necessarily rooted in desire which is given meaning through social and personal contexts.

Homosexual identities, based as they are in culturally created (socially constructed) sexual categories, have been culturally prescribed (and proscribed). Gay subcultures have resisted the negativity implied in these prescriptions, though they have not necessarily challenged the content of stereotyped categories. In the pre-Gay Liberation period, the 'camp' subculture was dominant among identifying homosexual men in Australia. George Stambolian's (1984: 154) 'Analist' described this as being the period of 'the tyranny of the sissies'. During this period the personal behaviour, sexuality and expressive style of many homosexual men were profoundly affected by the camp subculture. They tried to conform to the styles of 'campdom' and viewed themselves in these terms. Gay Liberation ended the dominance of 'camp'. Stephen Murray (1996) describes how the gay man was

(ideologically) masculinised within the gay community in the post-Gay Liberation era.

The dominance of masculinised gay subcultures in gay culture has replaced one subcultural form of 'being homosexual' with another. Many would argue these changes have largely been progressive in the way they validated male homosexuality, both for individual gay men and for society in general. Nonetheless, in reconstructing the male homosexual category – and broadening its potential base – it also created new 'requirements' or codes in terms of behaviour, sexuality and expressive style. Gay communities are complex and diverse entities and contain many potential subcultures, including some specific to lesbians. Individual gay men interact with these in ways that reflect their own particular circumstances and desires. Peacock et al. (2001) note, 'The sum of these attachments constitutes an individual gay man's relationship to a larger gay community.' An individual gay man's relationship to the gay community is mediated, and perhaps dominated, by these subcultural associations. Some gay subcultures conform to the dominant forms of gay culture, while others resist them, with varying degrees of success, depending on their relative power to influence hegemonic discourses.

The current dominance of gay culture by masculinised gay subcultures has incorporated individual gay men into or excluded them from gay community life on the basis of their personal relationship to the 'gay image' and their own – and others' – assessment of this. For some, it has meant a personal adjustment to 'meet the requirements' and they feel relatively comfortable with their participation in the gay community. For others it has

meant a denial of their gayness, either by themselves or by others. This is not an issue for those homosexually active men who deny even their own homosexuality: being gay is irrelevant to such men because they have not acknowledged their sexual behaviour as being homosexual or as indicative of a homosexual orientation. Others resolve the contradiction between their own experience and perspective and the role prescribed within gay culture, by accepting a gay identity but not viewing themselves as members of the gay community.

Probably most gay men resolve this dilemma by subtly adapting their appearance, style and behaviour, either consciously or unconsciously, to conform as much as they can to what they perceive to be the gay 'ideal'. Many, either concurrently with this adaptation or instead of it, interpret their own divergence from the 'gay image' as their own personal 'peculiarity' or 'inadequacy'. Some gay men, however, resolve the dilemma of their gay identity within gay culture by resisting the dominance of masculinised gay subcultures and identifying their gayness within a different, though less powerful or validated, subculture.[2] Consequently, there are numerous 'minority' gay subcultures whose relationship to the gay community is often strained. In addition, the experience of being gay, even for those who have ultimately reconciled their own particular circumstances and experiences with the (internally) dominant gay image, has often been interpreted as a 'personal

[2] During the 1991 Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade this was highlighted by the appearance of a group protesting the dominance of the masculinised gay stereotype: SMART – Slim Men Are Real Treats – parodied the traditionally muscular image of the various 'marching boys' entries in the parade.

problem', involving the need to conform to the hegemonic gay image and the conflicts this presents for individuals.

These are issues often addressed in comments about – and studies of – various sub-populations within the gay community for whom the dominant gay image conflicts with their own situation. Some of these sub-populations include: gay youth (Bennett, 1982 and 1983; Trenchard and Warren, 1984: 117-123; Shilts, 1977; Bergstrom and Cruz, 1983), older gay men (Weeks, 1981b; Saghir and Robins, 1973: 174; Berger, 1983), married gay men (Hart and Richardson, 1981c; Booker, 1985; Ross, 1983), non-Anglo-Celtic gay men (Goodman et al., 1983: 101-102; Boston Project, 1983: 34; Freiberg, 1984), bisexual men (Blumstein and Schwartz, 1976), and 'drag queens' and 'effeminate' gay men (Weinberg and Williams, 1974: 158-159; Tyler, 1991: 37-40). Less apparent – and, hence, less often researched – are those gay men who internalise their inability to 'satisfactorily' (on their own or their peers' assessment) conform to the gay image. This internalisation is interpreted as 'personal problems', which might be manifested in relatively extreme forms of emotional and psychological distress but are more often just a cause for personal concern and dissatisfaction with self.

These 'problems' might be expressed as an inability to 'look attractive' or to make oneself attractive. Within gay culture, physical appearance is very important and the 'ideal' gay man's physical appearance is based in a stylised masculinity. Clothing has been important to this: T-shirts, jeans (501s) and leather (Chesebro and Klenk, 1983: 95-96) as well as men's underwear (Harris, 1997: 160-178). Stylised 'macho' costumes – cowboy, bikie, police or

military uniform, construction worker, athlete – have often been incorporated and more feminine attributes (cosmetics, coiffured hair, perfumed scents, ornate jewellery) have often been frowned on. Attendance at a gymnasium to attain a solid defined musculature has become de rigueur for gay men (Stambolian, 1984: 82; Signorile, 1997: 3-12).

These physical features of gay masculinity are generally recognised as artifice and their stylised and exaggerated form differentiates them from normative concepts of masculinity (Chesebro and Klenk, 1983: 96-97). Nonetheless, they are important to the cultural definition of a 'successful' gay man. The ideal gay image is more than just a matter of physical appearance. It involves a whole style of personal interaction and sexual behaviour.

Many gay men have learnt to adjust their appearance, manner and expressive style in order to feel comfortable with or conform to the gay ideal, or else they have learnt to interpret these, or the ideal itself, in such a way as to avoid personal dissatisfaction. An enormous increase in the visibility of the gym culture within gay community life in the 1990s reflects this, as does a dramatic change in clothing styles from the 1980s. Their appearance among large sections of the gay male community, and their open incitement in gay advertising, fashion and fiction, suggest an adjustment to an 'acknowledged' gay ideal.

There have also been simultaneous changes in gay sexuality – the greater acceptance of anal sex practices (including intercourse and fist-fucking) and gay leathersexuality, and the rejection of sexual roles. Stephen O. Murray (1996: 80-98) used the greater visibility of the leathersex and various

S/M subcultures within gay culture to discuss how the masculinisation of the 'gay male' has profoundly affected the representation and practice of gay sexuality. Some of those homosexual men who are unable, or unwilling, to make such adjustments have internalised this lack of fit between themselves and the gay 'ideal' and considered themselves to have a 'personal sex problem' or to be 'sexually dysfunctional'. Such 'problems' are only relevant within the context of a recognised and accepted community norm. It is unlikely, for example, that many heterosexual men or women would be concerned about their ability to perform in fist fucking. Yet within gay culture fist fucking has been relatively widely recognised – and accepted, if not widely practised – and in some gay subcultures it has even become especially valued. Indeed, gay sexual educational material (including HIV-prevention material) usually includes, at least, some mention of this practice.

Relationship problems can also indicate a contradiction between seeking to adjust one's personal sexual experience and desire to an assumed gay sexuality. These include issues of monogamy, fidelity and jealousy in the context of the gay community's acceptance, and even encouragement, of open relationships and multi-partnered sexual activity (Jay and Young, 1979a: 357-361; Signorile, 1997: 208-265; Rotello, 1997). There are also relationship problems based on disagreements over sex practices: the need to be the 'perfect gay lover', regardless of one's personal desires, or even the actual circumstances of the relationship and each partner's desires. Jay and Young (1979a: 355) quote one gay man as saying:

> … on only two occasions during the relationship did he attempt to let me fuck him. The second time he began to enjoy it. The basic problem as we discussed it, however, was that he had real feelings about his masculinity being threatened by being fucked.

There are also 'personal problems' related to such matters as how masculinised gay sexuality has reconstructed 'cruising' – assessing the available men in terms of their potential as sex partners (Jay and Young, 1979a: 246). Cruising occupies an important place in gay culture, and it is a source of gay identification and sense of gay community (Taylor, 1980; Bennett, 1985a). Cruising, by its very nature, is related to concepts of promiscuity and anonymous sexual contacts, both of which are relatively well accepted by gay culture (Rotello, 1997; Signorile, 1997). Some gay men have trouble in adjusting to the perceived normality of these activities within gay community life. Unless they are able to reject these norms from some personal conviction – as in Habermas's (1979) concept of the universalistic stage of ego development –this difficulty is expressed as a personal problem. Jay and Young (1979a: 251-253) report statements from three different gay men on this matter:

> I have had a problem relating to the high degree of promiscuity the gay life seems to impose on me.
>
> It's a thrill once in a while, but I can't make a steady diet of it.
>
> One night stands are inevitable. I don't like them, but getting to know someone well enough to know that you will want to see them again before you sleep with them is unusual.

The relationship between gay identity, gay masculinity, gay sexuality, gay lifestyle and gay community is complex. Individual men might experience their homosexuality in a variety of ways and these can be interpreted variously. They can respond in various ways:

- denying their own sexual behaviour is homosexual, thereby avoiding homosexual identification;
- recognising their homosexual behaviour, but as different from that of gay men and, hence, also avoiding any homosexual identification, although perhaps recognising themselves as 'deviant' or 'different' in some way;
- identifying as homosexual but regarding their social and sexual behaviour as outside the gay community, and maintaining an isolated homosexual identity with little in common with other homosexual men;
- identifying as gay but regarding their social and sexual behaviour as outside the gay community, adopting a homosexual identity that stands apart from gay community life;
- regarding themselves as part of the gay community but rejecting the dominant values held by that community and identifying with a 'minority' or marginalised gay subculture that affirms their own particular styles and attitudes;
- regarding themselves as part of the gay community but rejecting particular aspects of that community in conflict with their own values, circumstances or experience;

- identifying strongly with the gay community and making appropriate adjustments to their own personal situation – or assessment of it – making them feel that they have comfortably and satisfactorily 'fitted in';
- identifying with the gay community and regarding their own personal inability to adjust to the ideal gay image and lifestyle as due to their own 'personal problems'.

These are arbitrary distinctions. Most homosexually active men probably have characteristics from a variety of these categories. They do, however, describe various possible routes available to men in assessing their own homosexuality.

Sexuality is contextual, or environmental. What is standard, possible or acceptable sexual behaviour in one situation is not necessarily so in another. Particular forms of sexuality are expressed according to their specific contexts, and so, in analysing gay sexuality, we need to consider these contexts and the forms of gay sexuality that can and do occur within each. More particularly, sexual behaviours, attitudes and identities are likely to vary according to the particular contexts. Sexual subcultures develop in response to these different contexts.

Empirical evidence for gay sexual subcultures

SMASH and Male Call collected data about where respondents socialised with their gay friends and where they met sexual partners. These data provide an opportunity to map socialising patterns in relation to sexuality, at least at a general level. Such patterns can be indicative of different ways of

being and acting 'gay'. Whether these can be described as 'subcultural' is, however, debatable.

In SMASH, the same cohort of gay men was interviewed over a period of several years. Therefore, we can identify sub-populations of men who used particular kinds of venues consistently throughout the study period (that is, during every year of the study). This assumes that the men returned to those venues each year because they chose to do so. It also assumes that each type of venue or method of making sexual contact is sufficiently homogeneous to allow gross generalisations. In addition, it assumes that the nature of these venues or methods of making sexual contact remained relatively stable over time. Although Male Call lacked the power of longitudinal analysis, we can at least distinguish between those respondents who used each type of venue or method of making sexual contact and those who did not.

Two related questions in both SMASH and Male Call asked if respondents attended various types of venues to socialise with their gay friends, and if they had had sex with casual partners in any of those venues. These particular questions were asked of the SMASH respondents at their first interview only.

Of course, socialising with gay friends does not necessarily address issues concerning the sexualised nature of patterns of socialising.[3] The

[3] The findings that applied to the question about meeting partners were generally true for this question as well, particularly with regard to SMASH and the GCA respondents in Male Call. As for the NGCA respondents in Male Call, the same trends could be found, but on each particular item, the respondents who socialised with gay friends at those types of venues were more likely to resemble the 'typical' gay man than those who did not do so. This was because those men who socialised with gay friends, regardless of where it took place, were likely to have stronger links with gay men and gay community life in general.

question about casual sex at the various types of venues was limited in its scope: not all venue types offer the possibility of sex on the premises and so fewer items were available for analysis; and the number of men having sex at each venue type was fewer than those who met male partners there, making for a less powerful analysis.[4]

Beats

'Beats' are public places frequented by men seeking homosexual contact. Such places can be streets, parks, public toilets or beaches (Perkins and Bennett, 1985: xi; Bennett et al., 1989a). Each of these particular locales has its own modes of sexual interaction but there are also some general features of beat sex.

Any public place has the potential to be a beat. However, beats are usually specified areas identified as such to men seeking homosexual contacts, though this is rarely acknowledged in any public – especially printed – form, due to the fear of reprisals from police or gangs of heterosexual youth. It is largely through non-verbal communication, such as the men's behaviour, that those who seek beats are able to identify them, although graffiti – especially on toilet walls – often acts as a signal of the presence of a beat. Beats operate at different hours depending on their particular location and context.

The actual modes of sexual interaction are partly determined by the physical context of a beat. A public toilet is particularly restrictive. Conversation is often impossible. If the interaction occurs at the urinal then the

[4] On these items, the general trends were much the same as those found with the question about meeting male partners.

sexual practices might be limited to mutual or even self-masturbation If the interaction is between two men in adjoining cubicles through a 'glory hole' – a hole in the wall between two toilet cubicles large enough for a penis to pass through – then the sexual practices are usually limited to fellatio. If the interaction is between men in the same cubicle then anal intercourse is possible, though difficult due to spatial restrictions and the need to minimise the risk of discovery. Speech is difficult in toilet encounters, making social contact after the sexual contact unlikely and anonymity the norm. Virtually all sexual interaction is restricted to a standing position. Given these restrictions, affection is uncommon: the lack of verbal exchange and the necessity to remain in a standing position focus the interaction directly on genital sex. The entire interaction is relatively depersonalised. Other locations for beats, such as parks, beaches and back streets, are less restrictive spatially but are otherwise little different to public toilets. The lack of any real privacy and the fear of discovery mean that each interaction is restricted by a need to be quick and unobtrusive. These interactions are also usually restricted to a standing position as well.

The furtive nature of beat sex means that such encounters are usually non-verbal, genitally-focused and depersonalised. There is little opportunity for social and personal relationships to develop in these contexts. They are encounters that are largely governed by their physical context.

The SMASH data indicate that use of beats is fairly common as a means of meeting partners, and that as much as one in four gay men consistently have sexual encounters in beats (Table 6.1). In addition, in

Sydney the use of public beaches and swimming pools as places to meet and have sex with other men is common. Indeed, a few beaches and pools are widely acknowledged as attracting a large number of gay men. As such, they are treated separately. The 1996 Male Call samples also indicate that the use of beats is common, among both GCA men and NGCA men. The use of pools and beaches is at least as popular among GCA men but is less popular among NCGA men ($p<.005$), thereby supporting the observation that these locations are perhaps more closely associated with gay community life.

There were 140 men in SMASH who reported using beats in the previous six months at every interview over a four-year period. Distinguishing characteristics of these regular beat users included that they were:

- slightly older ($p<01$);
- less likely to participate in the 'gym scene' ($p<.05$);
- less likely to have been in monogamous relationships ($p<.001$) and more likely to have consistently been in open relationships ($p<.001$);
- more likely to engage in casual sex ($p<.001$) and to have mostly anonymous partners ($p<.001.$);
- more likely to regularly engage in oral intercourse with ejaculation ($p<.01$) and group sex ($p<.001$) with casual partners; and
- more likely to consistently engage in group sex with their regular partners ($p<.05$).

Table 6.1: Use of Public Sex Environments among Gay Men

STUDY	SMASH	Male Call (GCA Sample)	Male Call (NGCA Sample)
YEAR	**1993-98**	**1996**	**1996**
Beats [1]			
Went with gay friends [2]	10.9%	15.8%	9.8%
Met partners there: [3]		38.4%	30.5%
– every year	24.1%		
– some years	32.8%		
– never	43.1%		
Had casual sex there [2, 5]	33.1%	26.7%	28.4%
Pools and Beaches			
Went with gay friends [2]	67.0%	75.1%	11.3%
Met partners there: [3]		41.8%	25.8%
– every year	26.2%		
– some years	42.9%		
– never	30.9%		
Had casual sex there [2, 5]	7.9%	16.6%	14.7%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive

1. Includes public toilets and parks.
2. SMASH data collected from baseline interview (n=1143).
3. SMASH data collected from annual interviews over four consecutive years (n=580).
4. Percentages for these items refer only to those men with casual partners.

The men who used beats to meet male partners in Male Call 1996 data were similar. They tended to be slightly older than the men in Male Call who did not use beats and they had more partners, with whom their sexual behaviour was much like the regular beat users in SMASH. Among the NGCA men, those who used beats were more likely to live with a female partner, and had a more restricted sexual repertoire in general than those NGCA men who did not use beats.

Some of these characteristics could indicate that some gay men in relationships who commonly engage in casual anonymous sex might regularly use beats. Beats are often thought to be associated with oral intercourse due to their lack of privacy or opportunity for more intimate encounters; it is also likely that men who particularly enjoy oral intercourse would therefore be attracted to using beats. The NGCA men who used beats were somewhat more conservative in their range of sex practices and it might be that many of them simply use beats because they are conveniently anonymous places for those living with female partners

Distinguishing characteristics of the 152 regular users of pools and beaches in SMASH included that they were:

- most likely to be aged in their thirties ($p<001$);
- more likely to be tertiary educated ($p<.05$);
- more likely to have consistently lived with other gay men ($p<.05$);
- less likely to have been in monogamous relationships ($p<.05$) and more likely to have consistently been in open relationships ($p<.05$);

- more likely to engage in casual sex ($p<.005$) and to have mostly anonymous partners ($p<.05$), and likely to consistently have more than five casual partners in a six month period ($p<.005$); and
- more likely to regularly engage in group sex ($p<.001$) with casual partners.

There is also a strong correlation between regular use of pools and beaches and both sexual ($p<.001$) and social ($p<.001$) involvement in gay community life, as well as some correlation with cultural ($p<.01$) involvement. Regular users of pools and beaches also scored higher on a disclosure of sexuality scale ($p<.01$).

The Male Call 1996 data were similar. The men who used pools and beaches to meet male partners tended to be more likely to have done sex work – either recently or in the past, and to have had more male partners. They were also more likely to have engaged in group sex with casual partners. Among the NGCA men, as well as the men who were not gay-identified, those who used pools and beaches were more likely to have engaged in a broad range of sex practices with regular male partners, as well as anal intercourse – both insertive and receptive – with casual male partners. They were also more likely to engage in oral intercourse with ejaculation in general, particularly in the receptive position.

As with regular users of beats, these characteristics might describe some gay men in relationships who commonly engage in casual anonymous sex. However, they also appear to resemble gay men at the core of the gay community more strongly, probably reflecting the greater identification of some of these sorts of public spaces with gay men and the gay community.

Some of the characteristics of the non-gay men who use pools and beaches are also suggestive of these men being somewhat less restricted in their range of sex practices than were the non-gay men who used beats.

Some men who used beaches to meet partners spoke specifically about the sexual availability of the men there, and about the possibilities of voyeuristic and exhibitionistic encounters. For example, a 38-year-old builder, gay-identified, who lived in inner Sydney,[5] said:

> …like at the beach I don't mind if anyone walks past and sees.

Bar cruising

'Cruising' for male partners can take place in any context, though bars are the most visible sites. It is an activity that is profoundly affected by the nature of the bars in which it occurs. In broad terms, cruising by homosexually active men can occur in heterosexual bars, mixed bars and gay bars. In heterosexual bars the cruising that occurs usually needs to be discreet, with vague conversation, perhaps generally erotic, but with no overt straying from heterosexuality. Only a very few gay men – or even homosexually-identified men – purposefully frequent such venues to this end on a regular basis. There are no overtly homoerotic signals and, so, the sexual encounters that eventuate between men as a consequence of cruising in a heterosexual bar can even be interpreted in heterosexual terms by the men involved. They can accommodate a homosexual encounter with the maintenance of a heterosexual identity.

[5] Interview notes from Enacting Sexual Contexts Study, Sydney, (McInnes et al: 2001).

Mixed bars are venues where a homosexual presence is accepted in a heterosexual setting. There is little need for discretion in cruising and conversation, but overtly homoerotic interactions might be somewhat restricted. Although some men in such encounters might retain a heterosexual interpretation of the encounter, most do not. Encounters in gay bars are overtly homoerotic. There is no need for discretion and there is little likelihood that men in such encounters would interpret the encounter in any other way than homosexually. Yet even in a gay bar the interactions are structured by their context: There are accepted modes of behaviour and communication that, though they might vary from bar to bar, are necessary considerations in any interaction (see Chesebro and Klenk, 1981). Gay dance parties function in similar ways to gay bars, except that they are irregular events attracting very large numbers of participants, and, often, they incorporate a clearly sexual theme that permits some encounters to be overtly sexual in nature.

The SMASH data indicate that most gay men use gay bars to meet sex partners (Table 6.2). They also commonly used gay dance parties for this purpose. The 1996 Male Call data also indicate that many GCA men use these venues, but far fewer of the NGCA men were likely to use them.

Table 6.2: Use of Gay Venues among Gay Men

STUDY	SMASH	Male Call (GCA Sample)	Male Call (NGCA Sample)
YEAR			
Gay Bars	**1993-98**	**1996**	**1996**
Went with gay friends [1]	87.4%	82.6%	7.9%
Met partners there: [2]		55.0%	22.5%
– every year	64.8%		
– some years	26.4%		
– never	8.8%		
Gay Dance Parties			
Went with gay friends [1]	70.5%	63.4%	4.0%
Met partners there: [2]		35.5%	11.3%
– every year	42.4%		
– some years	36.1%		
– never	21.6%		
TOTAL	**119** [1]	**128**	**577**

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. SMASH data collected from baseline interview (N=1143).
2. SMASH data collected from annual interviews over four consecutive years (N=580).

Distinguishing characteristics of the 246 regular users of gay dance parties in SMASH included that they were:

- more likely to be aged in their thirties and less likely to be older than forty ($p<.001$);
- less likely to be religious ($p<.05$);
- more likely to be tertiary educated ($p<.05$);
- more likely to be in professional or managerial occupations ($p<.005$);
- more likely to live in the known gay areas of inner Sydney ($p<.001$) and to have consistently lived with other gay men ($p<.001$);
- more likely to consistently identify as gay ($p<.01$), to consistently state that they were part of the gay community ($p<.001$) and to identify as participants in the 'gay scene' ($p<.001$);
- more likely to be associated with the leather subculture, either identifying as leathermen or participating in the leather scene ($p<.05$);
- more likely to participate in the 'gym scene' ($p<.005$);
- more likely to consistently use amphetamines ($p<.001$);
- more likely to have had piercings ($p<.005$);
- more likely to have casual partners ($p<.05$) and less likely to consistently have fewer than five partners in a six month period ($p<.001$);
- more likely to consistently only have casual partners of Anglo-Celtic background ($p<.001$);

- more likely to regularly engage in anal intercourse ($p<.05$) with casual partners – this also applied independently to both the insertive role ($p<.05$) and the receptive role ($p<.05$) because, among those who consistently engaged in anal intercourse with casual partners, they were more likely to take both roles ($p<.01$), which is commonly described as being 'versatile' in gay parlance;
- more likely to identify as 'bottoms' ($p<.05$), despite this versatility;
- more likely to consistently or regularly engage in fisting ($p<.05$), rimming ($p<.005$), watersports ($p<.05$), and group sex ($p<.005$) with casual partners;
- with their regular partners, more likely to consistently engage in oral sex ($p<.05$), anal intercourse ($p<.005$) – particularly receptive anal intercourse ($p<.05$) and withdrawal ($p<.01$), group sex ($p<.01$), and rimming ($p<.005$).

These characteristics appear to conform to what might be described as the quintessential 'urban gay man'. This is supported by a strong correlation between regular attendance at dance parties and the three scales measuring gay community involvement – sexual, social and cultural ($p<.001$). They also scored higher on the disclosure of sexuality scale ($p<.001$). In general, the sexual behaviour indicated might best be described as being a broad repertoire.

The Male Call 1996 data were similar: men who used dance parties to meet male partners tended to be aged less than forty, and more likely to have used 'party drugs' such as speed or ecstasy. Among the gay men in the sample

(whether measured by sexual identity or gay community attachment), when compared with those who did not use dance parties, those that did use them were likely to have had more male partners, more likely to self-identify as gay and view themselves as 'part of the gay community, and more likely to have engaged in group sex, fisting, and S/M with regular male partners, as well as oral intercourse with ejaculation – both insertive and receptive, the use of sex toys, watersports, S/M, and being rimmed with casual partners. Among the men who had less involvement in gay community life or were not gay-identified, those who used dance parties had a somewhat broader sexual repertoire than the non-gay men who did not use dance parties. They were also more likely to consider themselves as 'part of the gay community', but they were also more likely to have recently had sex with women.

Gay men in these data who consistently attended dance parties also actively participated in gay community life, regularly used amphetamines and were not sexually conservative. These men were both sexually and socially gregarious, most likely single, with strong attachments to particular 'scenes' within the gay community. Common gay parlance might describe these men as 'scene queens'. The non-gay men who used dance parties were probably men with a similar lifestyle, but not committed to a 'gay community' lifestyle. In a US study of men attending 'circuit-parties' (Mansergh et al., 2001), the profile of the men that emerged was quite similar in most respects.

Distinguishing characteristics of the 376 regular users of gay bars in SMASH included that they were:

- younger ($p<.001$);
- more likely to live in the known gay areas of inner Sydney ($p<.05$) and to have consistently lived with other gay men ($p<.05$);
- more likely to consistently identify as gay ($p<.001$), to consistently state that they were part of the gay community ($p<.001$) and to identify as participants in the 'gay scene' ($p<.001$);
- more likely to participate in the 'gym scene' ($p<.05$);
- more likely to consistently use amphetamines ($p<.001$) and to have regularly injected drugs ($p<.01$);
- more likely to only have casual sex ($p<.05$);
- less likely to regularly have any anonymous partners ($p<.01$) or to have a majority of anonymous partners ($p<.001$);
- less likely to only have casual partners of Anglo-Celtic background ($p<.001$);
- more likely to consistently engage in anal intercourse ($p<.01$) – particularly receptive anal intercourse ($p<.01$), sensual practices ($p<.05$), rimming ($p<.05$) and oral intercourse ($p<.05$) as well as sadomasochistic practices ($p<$.) and use of sex toys ($p<.005$) with casual partners;
- less likely to consistently engage in group sex ($p<.05$) with casual partners; and
- more likely to consistently engage in oral sex with ejaculation ($p<.05$), receptive anal intercourse ($p<.05$) withdrawal during anal intercourse

($p<.05$), rimming ($p<.005$), and the use of sex toys ($p<.05$) with their regular partners.

As with the regular users of dance parties, there was a strong correlation between regular use of gay bars and the three scales measuring involvement in the gay community – sexual, social and cultural ($p<.001$). They also scored higher on the disclosure of sexuality scale ($p<.001$).

Male Call 1996 data were similar. The men who used gay bars to meet male partners tended to have a broader sexual repertoire with their male partners than those who did not use gay bars. Among the gay men (whether measured by self-identity or gay community attachment), those who used gay bars were likely to have had more male partners, more likely to self-identify as gay and view themselves as 'part of the gay community', more likely to have used amphetamines, and more likely to have done sex work. Among the non-gay men, those who used gay bars also had a somewhat broader sexual repertoire than those that did not use gay bars. They were also more likely to have done sex work.

These data suggest that younger single gay men who are closely associated with gay community life and regularly use amphetamines are most likely to consistently attend gay bars. In addition, as with regular users of dance parties, these men appeared to be sexually adventurous. In some respects, they appeared to be a younger version of the regular dance party users. However, there were some differences. Although somewhat adventurous about the sexual practices they engaged in, they did not commonly engage in anonymous casual sex, and their social activities did not

extend to such diverse ‘scenes’ as the leather scene. In common gay parlance, they might be described as ‘young clubbers’. Also similar to the situation with the users of dance parties, the non-gay men who met partners through gay bars appeared to have a broad sexual repertoire, although they did seem more likely to restrict themselves to the insertive (‘active’) role more often.

Gyms

Gyms are a feature of many inner urban gay men’s lifestyles, and cruising for male partners certainly occurs in these contexts. This cruising is structured in the same way as it is in gay bars, although overt displays of sexuality rarely occur. Nearly half the men in SMASH used gyms to meet sexual partners and about 10% did so regularly (Table 6.3). The 1996 Male Call data, however, indicated that only about one in six GCA men used gyms to meet partners while far fewer NGCA men used them.

Table 6.3: Use of Gyms among Gay Men

STUDY	SMASH	Male Call (GCA Sample)	Male Call (NGCA Sample)
YEAR	**1993-98**	**1996**	**1996**
Went to gyms with gay friends [1]	33.2%		
Met partners at gyms: [2]		16.0%	9.4%
– every year	11.9%		
– some years	37.6%		
– never	50.5%		
Had casual sex at gyms [1, 3]	8.0%		

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. SMASH data collected from initial interview (n=1143).
2. SMASH data collected from annual interviews over four consecutive years (n=580).
3. Percentages for these items refer only to those men with casual partners.

Distinguishing characteristics of the 69 regular users of gyms in SMASH included that they were:

- more likely to be tertiary educated ($p<.001$);
- more likely to be in professional or managerial occupations ($p<.005$);
- more likely to consistently state that they were part of the gay community ($p<.05$);
- more likely, unsurprisingly, to say they participated in the 'gym scene' ($p<.001$);
- unlikely to identify as 'bears' ($p<.05$), which is also not surprising given that the stereotypical bear (heavy-set, older and hairy) does not sit well with the typical 'gym look';
- more likely to consistently express no preference for either the insertive or receptive role in anal intercourse ($p<.05$);
- more likely to consistently engage in rimming ($p<.05$) with casual partners; and
- more likely to consistently engage in oral sex with ejaculation ($p<.05$) with their regular partners.

Many of these characteristics are probably related to the fact that gym membership is relatively expensive, requiring a relatively stable income. There is little else in these data to indicate a particular sort of gay men.

There was, however, a strong correlation between regular use of gyms and sexual ($p<.001$) involvement in gay community life, as well as some correlation with both social ($p<.05$) and cultural ($p<.05$) involvement.

This item was not included in the Male Call 1996 questionnaire, but the Male Call 1992 data found that those who used gyms were more likely to live in the inner-metropolitan areas of Sydney commonly associated with the gay community. The gay-identified men who used gyms were more likely to engage in anal intercourse and rimming with casual partners. Otherwise, there was little difference between those who used gyms and those who did not.

Gym membership is commonly associated with gay community involvement. Men who regularly use gyms appear to be comfortably middle-class men at the heart of the gay community. Although there is certainly a gym culture, it does not appear to be associated with particular patterns of sexual behaviour.

Some men who used gyms to meet partners spoke about the sexual energy in these venues, and about the possibilities of voyeuristic and exhibitionistic encounters. For example, a 33-year-old retail worker, who identified as gay and lived in inner Sydney,[6] said:

> I deliberately choose a cruisy gym, one with lots of uni students and people who have gone to uni and continue to use the gym. It's a very cruisy change room environment where you can check out the boys. I know the showers are arranged so you can see up to seven other guys

[6] Interview notes from Enacting Sexual Contexts Study, Sydney (McInnes et al: 2001).

> while they have nothing on. It's just so much fun to watch two guys eyeing each other, playing with their dicks, a lot of sexual energy.

Commercial sex venues

Commercial sex venues that provide a space for men to have 'free' sex once inside have few equivalents outside homosexual milieus. Such venues can include spaces for both private and public sex. The range and types of sexual activities that occur in these venues depend on both the physical features of the spaces provided as well as the accepted modes of behaviour and communication among the men who frequent such venues. Lighting, bedding, degrees of privacy, provision of erotic imagery, availability of stimulants and erotic aids, background music, all play a role in creating a particular erotic mood or ambience and in structuring the erotic possibilities.

In SMASH most gay men used sex venues to meet sex partners and nearly half did so regularly. Well over a third regularly met partners at saunas and half those who had casual sex had sex in saunas (Table 6.4). About one in seven regularly met partners in commercial sex clubs, and one in ten at adult bookshops. The 1996 Male Call study found similar patterns of use of sex venues among GCA men. Among NGCA men, however, the patterns were a little different. Although they were as likely as GCA men to use adult bookshops, they were less likely to use saunas or sex clubs.

Table 6.4: Use of Sex Venues among Gay Men

STUDY	SMASH	Male Call (GCA Sample)	Male Call (NGCA Sample)
YEAR	**1993-98**	**1996**	**1996**
Saunas			
Went with gay friends [1]	27.0%	28.7%	12.6%
Met partners there: [2]		47.5%	33.1%
– every year	20.7%		
– some years	38.1%		
– never	41.2%		
Had casual sex there [1, 3]	51.9%	31.3%	25.0%
Sex Clubs			
Went with gay friends [1]	12.9%		
Met partners there: [2]		15.9%	15.2%
– every year	11.9%		
– some years	37.6%		
– never	50.5%		
Had casual sex there [1, 3]	38.3%	28.7%	14.7%
Adult Bookshops			
Went with gay friends [1]	18.1%	34.4%	7.9%
Met partners there: [2]		37.1%	31.1%
– every year	13.8%		
– some years	32.0%		
– never	54.1%		
Had casual sex there [1, 3]		18.8%	20.7%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. SMASH data collected from initial interview (N=1143).
2. SMASH data collected from annual interviews over four consecutive years (N=580).
3. Percentages for these items refer only to those men with casual partners.

Distinguishing characteristics of the 279 regular users of saunas in SMASH included that they were:

- more likely to be aged over twenty-five ($p<.005$);
- more likely to be in professional or managerial occupations ($p<.001$);
- more likely to have been tested for HIV and to have tested HIV-positive ($p<.05$);
- more likely to consistently state that they were part of the gay community ($p<.001$) and to identify as participants in the 'gay scene' ($p<.001$);
- more likely to be associated with the leather subculture, either identifying as leathermen or participating in the leather scene ($p<.05$);
- more likely to consistently use amphetamines ($p<.05$);
- less likely to have been in monogamous relationships ($p<.001$) and more likely to have consistently been in open relationships ($p<.001$);
- more likely to consistently have sex with casual partners ($p<.001$), more likely to regularly include anonymous partners among these ($p<.001$) and even to have a majority of anonymous partners ($p<.001$), and less likely to consistently have fewer than five casual partners in a six month period ($p<.001$);
- less likely to only have casual partners of Anglo-Celtic background ($p<.005$);
- more likely to consistently engage in anal intercourse ($p<.005$) – and, independently, both insertive anal intercourse ($p<.001$) and receptive anal

intercourse ($p<.01$) – with casual partners while, among those who consistently engaged in anal intercourse with casual partners, they were more likely to take both roles ($p<.05$), which is commonly described as being 'versatile' in gay parlance;

- more likely to identify as 'tops' ($p<.05$), despite this versatility;
- more likely to consistently express a preference for either the insertive or the receptive role in anal intercourse ($p<.01$);
- more likely to consistently or regularly engage in rimming ($p<.001$), fisting ($p<.05$), watersports ($p<.05$), and group sex ($p<.001$) with casual partners; and
- with their regular partners, more likely to consistently engage in receptive anal intercourse ($p<.05$), any anal intercourse without a condom ($p<.05$) group sex ($p<.001$), sadomasochistic practices ($p<.01$), the use of sex toys ($p<.05$), and watersports ($p<.05$).

Although these respondents were a somewhat younger age group, these data on them are reminiscent of the profile of regular users of dance parties. In addition, the sexual behaviour indicated here is more suggestive of a broad sexual repertoire than of a particular pattern of sexual behaviour, except perhaps the strong indication of a preference for multiple partners.

There was a correlation between regular use of saunas and both social ($p<.005$) and cultural ($p<.001$) involvement in gay community life, but not sexual involvement. Regular sauna users also scored higher on the disclosure of sexuality scale ($p<.001$).

Male Call 1996 data were similar. Men who used saunas to meet male partners tended to have had more male partners than those that did not use saunas. They were also more likely to have been rimmed by casual male partners.

Regular users of saunas appear to be gay single men at the heart of the gay community and, like the men who consistently attend dance parties, they are both sexually and socially gregarious.

Some men who used saunas to meet partners spoke about the sense of sexual excitement and adventure these venues create. A 33-year-old retail worker, who identified as gay and lived in inner Sydney,[7] said:

> The sauna is very exciting because it is unknown exactly what you are going to do. There is nothing like a new dick, one that you haven't seen or had and you get that when you go to the sauna generally … I can be completely anonymous … I went with a friend on buddies night because neither of us had been and we thought: hey, we are gay guys. We should at least go check this out.

Distinguishing characteristics of the 120 regular users of sex clubs in SMASH included that they were:

- more likely to be HIV-positive ($p<.05$);
- more likely to have consistently lived with other gay men ($p<.005$);
- more likely to consistently state that they were part of the gay community ($p<.001$) and to identify as participants in the 'gay scene' ($p<.001$);

[7] Interview notes from Enacting Sexual Contexts Study, Sydney (McInnes et al: 2001).

- more likely to be associated with the leather subculture, either identifying as leathermen or participating in the leather scene ($p<.05$);
- more likely to consistently use amphetamines ($p<.05$);
- more likely to have had piercings ($p<.05$);
- less likely to have been in monogamous relationships ($p<.001$) and more likely to have consistently been in open relationships ($p<.001$);
- more likely to consistently have sex with casual partners ($p<.001$), and, indeed, to only have sex with casual partners ($p<.05$), more likely to regularly include anonymous partners among their casual partners ($p<.001$) and even to have a majority of anonymous partners ($p<.001$), and more likely to consistently have more than fifty casual partners in a six month period ($p<.005$);
- less likely to only have casual partners of Anglo-Celtic background ($p<.001$);
- more likely to consistently express a preference for the receptive role in anal intercourse ($p<.05$);
- more likely to regularly engage in anal intercourse ($p<.005$) and, independently, both insertive anal intercourse ($p<.05$) and receptive anal intercourse ($p<.001$) with casual partners;
- more likely to consistently engage in anal intercourse without using condoms ($p<.005$) with casual partners;

- more likely to consistently or regularly engage in oral intercourse with ejaculation ($p<.01$) fisting ($p<.001$) rimming ($p<.005$), watersports ($p<.001$), use of sex toys ($p<.001$), sadomasochistic practices ($p<.001$) and group sex ($p<.001$) with casual partners; and
- more likely to consistently engage in receptive anal intercourse ($p<.05$), and group sex ($p<.001$) with their regular partners.

There was also a correlation between regular use of sex clubs and both social ($p<.001$) and cultural ($p<.01$) involvement in gay community life, but not sexual involvement. Regular sex club users also scored higher on the disclosure of sexuality scale ($p<.01$).

Again, Male Call 1996 data were similar. Among the gay men (whether measured by self-identity or gay community attachment), those who used sex clubs had more male partners, and were more likely to have done sex work – both recently and in the past – than were gay men who did not use sex clubs. They were also more likely to have engaged in group sex and leathersex practices. Among the non-gay men, those who used sex clubs were more likely to view themselves as being 'part of the gay community than those that did not use sex clubs.

These characteristics are suggestive of sexually and socially gregarious, often single, gay men at the heart of the gay community, with strong attachments to particular 'scenes'. The men also appear to have a consistently broader sexual repertoire than appears to be the case with other groups of men. If the men described here as regular users of sex clubs are of a particular type, then the higher proportion of HIV-positive men among their

number would make sense epidemiologically: once the virus entered this particular sub-population, given their sexual activity, it would be likely that the virus would circulate rapidly among them. The few non-gay men who used sex clubs to meet partners were unusual in their identification with the gay community. It might be that these men were actually not especially different to the gay users of sex clubs, except that they did not socialise widely within the gay community, thereby scoring relatively low on the scale measuring gay community attachment.

Distinguishing characteristics of the 80 regular users of adult bookshops in SMASH included that they were:

- more likely to be aged over thirty ($p<.05$);
- less likely to have been in monogamous relationships ($p<.001$) and more likely to have consistently been in open relationships ($p<.05$);
- more likely to consistently have only sex with casual partners ($p<.001$), more likely to regularly include anonymous partners among these ($p<.001$) and even to have a majority of anonymous partners ($p<.001$), and more likely to consistently have more than fifty casual partners in a six month period ($p<.005$);
- more likely to have had transgendered casual partners ($p<.05$);
- less likely to only have casual partners of Anglo-Celtic background ($p<.001$);
- more likely to consistently group sex ($p<.001$) with casual partners; and

- more likely to consistently engage in oral sex with ejaculation ($p<.001$), to ever engage in only the receptive role in anal intercourse ($p<.05$) and less likely to consistently engage in insertive anal intercourse ($p<.05$) with their regular partners.

The Male Call 1996 data were similar. Both the gay and the non-gay men (whether measured by gay community attachment or self-identity) who used adult bookshops to meet partners tended to have had more partners, engaged in a relatively broad range of sex practices, and were more likely to have done sex work.

These men were similar to those who regularly use beats: men in open relationships that engaged in considerable anonymous casual sex. Although they also appeared to be particularly inclined toward oral intercourse, they also had a broad sexual repertoire.

Some men who used sex venues to meet partners spoke about how sex is more straightforward and openly acknowledged in such places. A gay man who was married, and whose wife knew about his sex with men,[8] said:

> I think possibly these venues that I do frequent is because you can get your sex quickly. No fuss, no bother, no sort of wining and dining and emotional entanglement. It's just for pure sex.

Private parties and social group events

Public and commercial venues are not the only places where sexual interactions occur among gay men. More private contexts, such as private

[8] Interview notes from Enacting Sexual Contexts Study, Sydney (McInnes et al: 2001).

parties or social functions organised by gay groups, also provide such opportunities. Most men in SMASH used these methods to meet sex partners. About half the men regularly used private parties to meet sexual partners, and about a quarter regularly met partners at social group events (Table 6.5). The 1996 Male Call data generally supported these findings for GCA men, but NGCA men were far less likely to attend, or meet partners at, either of these sorts of functions.

Distinguishing characteristics of the 209 regular users of gay social group events in SMASH included that they were:

- more likely to be tertiary educated ($p<.05$);
- more likely to consistently state that they were part of the gay community ($p<.05$) and to identify as participants in the 'gay scene' ($p<.05$);
- more likely to be associated with the leather subculture, either identifying as leathermen or participating in the leather scene ($p<.01$);
- less likely to consistently use amphetamines ($p<.05$);
- less likely to have had sex with women ($p<.05$);
- more likely to have consistently been in monogamous relationships ($p<.01$); and
- more likely to regularly engage in anal intercourse ($p<.05$), rimming ($p<.05$), sensual practices ($p<.05$), sadomasochistic practices ($p<.05$), watersports ($p<.005$), and use of sex toys ($p<.01$) with casual partners.

Table 6.5: Use of Social Functions among Gay Men

STUDY	SMASH	Male Call (GCA Sample)	Male Call (NGCA Sample)
YEAR	**1993-98**	**1996**	**1996**
Private Parties			
Went with gay friends [1]	87.7%	93.9%	15.2%
Met partners there: [2]		53.6%	19.9%
– every year	62.8%		
– some years	31.6%		
– never	5.7%		
Social Group Events			
Went with gay friends [1]	64.0%	43.2%	2.6%
Met partners there: [2]			
– every year	36.0%		
– some years	47.5%		
– never	16.4%		

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. SMASH data collected from initial interview (N=1143).
2. SMASH data collected from annual interviews over four consecutive years (N=580).
3. Percentages for these items refer only to those men with casual partners.

There was a strong correlation between regular use of gay social group events and the three scales measuring social, cultural and sexual involvement in gay community life ($p<.001$).

This item (use of gay social group events) was not included in either the Male Call 1992 or Male Call 1996 questionnaires and so there were no data available.

These data suggest that gay men who regularly meet sex partners through gay group events strongly identify with the gay community, but their social and sexual involvement in the gay scene is relatively restricted. In addition, they avoid recreational drugs and they do not generally engage in casual sex – though when they do they are adventurous in their range of sex practices.

Distinguishing characteristics of the 353 regular users of private parties in SMASH included that they were:

- more likely to be in professional or managerial occupations ($p<.05$);
- more likely to identify as participants in the 'gay scene' ($p<.01$);
- more likely to consistently use amphetamines ($p<.05$);
- less likely to regularly have sex with anonymous partners ($p<.01$) or to have a majority of anonymous partners ($p<.005$) and more likely to consistently have fewer than five partners in a six-month period ($p<.01$).

There was also a strong correlation between regular use of private parties and both sexual ($p<.001$) and social ($p<.001$) involvement in gay community life, as well as some correlation with cultural ($p<.05$) involvement.

Again, Male Call 1996 data were similar. Compared with men who did not use private parties to meet sex partners, those that did so tended to have slightly broader sexual repertoires. Among the gay men, those who used private parties were slightly older, and more likely to have used amphetamines than were the gay men that did not use private parties. Among the non-gay men, those who used private parties were more likely to have had sex with women in the previous six months and were somewhat more likely to state a preference for the insertive role in anal intercourse.

Men who use private parties to meet partners appear to be comfortably middle-class, slightly older, gay men at the heart of the gay community, who do not generally engage in anonymous sexual encounters. Sexually, they do not appear to be either conservative or particularly adventurous. These data suggest little regarding sexual subcultures. It is likely that this method of making sexual contact is not especially representative of a particular sexual subculture.

Personal advertisements

Sexual interactions can occur among gay men through contexts that offer little opportunity for socialising with groups of other homosexual men. These latter include personal advertisements, which can be found in both the mainstream and the gay press, as well as male prostitutes who often advertise in the same publications. Other contexts for sexual interaction, such as straight bars, might be more social but bear little relationship to the gay community and offer equally little opportunity to socialise openly with other homosexual men. About half the men in SMASH used personal advertisements to meet

sexual partners and about one in six used male prostitutes (see Table 6.6). About a quarter met partners in straight bars. However, very few regularly used any of these to meet male partners. Male Call 1996 suggested slightly more men used these sorts of methods to meet male partners, although this might be partly because the method of recruitment was largely through advertisements in similar sections of the same publications where men found both personal advertisements and advertisements for male prostitutes.

Distinguishing characteristics of the 76 regular users of personal advertisements in SMASH included that they were:

- less likely to have completed high school or have a university education ($p<.05$);
- more likely to be religious ($p<.05$);
- less likely to use amphetamines ($p<.001$) or to have injected drugs ($p<.05$);
- less likely to consistently mainly have sex with anonymous partners among these ($p<.005$) and more likely to consistently have more than fifty casual partners in a six month period ($p<.005$);
- more likely to have had transgendered casual partners ($p<.001$).

Table 6.6: Use of Other Socialising Options among Gay Men

STUDY	SMASH	Male Call (GCA Sample)	Male Call (NGCA Sample)
YEAR	**1993-98**	**1996**	**1996**
Straight Bars			
Went with gay friends [1]	32.1%	43.2%	17.9%
Met partners there: [2]		17.7%	25.2%
– every year	3.6%		
– some years	21.6%		
– never	74.8%		
Personal Advertisements			
Met partners through ads: [2]		32.1%	38.4%
– every year	13.1%		
– some years	39.3%		
– never	47.6%		
Places of Prostitution			
Met partners there: [2]		11.3%	21.2%
– every year	2.6%		
– some years	14.5%		
– never	82.9%		
Had casual sex at parlours [1, 3]	3.9%	3.5%	6.9%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.

1. SMASH data collected from initial interview (N=1143).
2. SMASH data collected from annual interviews over four consecutive years (N=580).
3. Percentages for these items re fer only to those men with casual partners.

Male Call 1996 data were similar. Among the gay men, those who used personal advertisements were more likely to have done sex work, less likely to identify as gay and less likely to have used amphetamines. They were also more likely to have engaged in group sex, and to have used sex toys with their regular partners. Among the non-gay men, those who used personal advertisements were more likely to live with a female partner. They were also more likely to have engaged in S/M with regular male partners, and to have engaged in watersports, and fisting with casual partners.

Gay men who use personal advertisements appear to be quite atypical gay men. They are not middle-class and their participation in the gay 'scene' appears somewhat restricted. They rarely engage in anonymous sex. Having transgendered partners might also be suggestive of men whose association with gay community life is marginal: the choice of transgendered partners can sometimes be as much about the sexual ambivalence of the particular man as about the desire for transgendered partners. The non-gay men who use personal advertisements, on the other hand, appear to have a broad sexual repertoire; it might be that the use of personal advertisements is just a conveniently discrete method of exercising their adventurous sexualities while maintaining their heterosexual relationships.

Gay sexual subcultures

Although there is considerable interaction across venues, particular sorts of venues and functions do appear to attract different groups of gay men, as the profiles above suggest. From the SMASH data we can determine whether regular users (over time) of one venue type also use other venue types

and whether those who do not use one particular venue type are more likely to use some other venue type.

Table 6.7: Scores on Scales Measuring Use of Methods of Meeting Partners

	Mean	Std Deviation
Beats	1.571	1.651
Pools and Beaches	1.900	1.600
Dance Parties	2.405	1.624
Gay Bars	3.143	1.347
Gay Social Group Events	2.381	1.517
Gyms	1.141	1.428
Private Parties	3.171	1.263
Saunas	2.510	1.657
Sex Clubs	1.533	1.585
Adult Bookshops	1.095	1.462
Personal Advertisements	1.231	1.449

Scales were devised from the SMASH data to measure the use of various sorts of venues for meeting sex partners (see Table 6.7). Scores were assigned for each year in which respondents reported use of the particular sort of venue, and they scored an extra point if they indicated in their initial interview that they socialised in those sorts of venues with their friends. Separate scales measuring use over two, three, four and five years were developed but there were no discernable differences, whichever period was selected. Four-year scales were used in the following analyses, as this period provided a sufficiently large number of respondents while retaining a reasonable length of time to make such measurements meaningful. Therefore, the range for each scale was from 0 to 4. Scales were devised for the use of beats, gay bars, dance parties, saunas, sex clubs, private parties, gyms, and social group events.

Table 6.8: Correlations between Consistent Use of Types of Venues

		Beats	Dance parties	Gay bars	Gay groups & events	Gyms	Private parties	Saunas	Sex clubs
Pearson's correlation	***Beats***	1.000	-.021	-.122	.004	.069	-.127**	.167**	.127**
	Dance parties	-.021	1.000	.418**	.227**	.153**	.305**	.102**	.144**
	Gay bars	-.122**	.418**	1.000	.308**	.180**	.427**	-.006	.081*
	Gay gps/events	.004	.227**	.308**	1.000	.190**	.349**	.026	.049
	Gyms	.069	.153**	.180**	.190**	1.000	.154**	.047	.072
	Private parties	-.127**	.305**	.427**	.349**	.154**	1.000	-.051	-.035
	Saunas	.167**	.102**	-.006	.026	.047	-.051	1.000	.289**
	Sex clubs	.127**	.144**	.081*	.049	.072	-.035	.289**	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	***Beats***	.	.591	.002	.914	.073	.001	.000	.001
	Dance parties	.591	.	.000	.000	.000	.000	.008	.000
	Gay bars	.002	.000	.	.000	.000	.000	.885	.037
	Gay gps/events	.914	.000	.000	.	.000	.000	.501	.204
	Gyms	.073	.000	.000	.000	.	.000	.229	.062
	Private parties	.001	.000	.000	.000	.000	.	.189	.363
	Saunas	.000	.008	.885	.501	.229	.189	.	.000
	Sex clubs	.001	.000	.037	.204	.062	.363	.000	.

***Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)*
****Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)*

Correlations between some of these scales can be seen in Table 6.8. Of course, there is a tendency for each of these scales to correlate as those men who are more active, socially and sexually, are more likely to do so across all the different possible methods. Nonetheless, there are some clear patterns that emerge from these data and, to a large extent, they tend to confirm the patterns suggested in the data already presented in this chapter.

Beats

Those men who consistently used commercial sex venues, such as saunas and sex clubs, as a place to socialise and meet male partners were more likely to also use beats, but those who regularly used gay social venues such as gay bars and dance parties were not. Indeed, those who never used gay bars used beats more often. Those who did not use private parties were also more likely to use beats. This might represent two different patterns: men who do not generally socialise in the gay scene and are less likely to socialise with gay friends might be more likely to use beats as their means of meeting sexual partners; and, men who tend to take every opportunity to meet sexual partners, regardless of context or form of sexual behaviour, will be inclined to use beats as just one other source of sexual contact.

Pools and beaches

The use of pools and beaches was similar to the use of beats in that the men who consistently used commercial sex venues were also more likely to also use pools and beaches. However, unlike the use of beats, those who regularly used gay social venues such as gay bars and dance parties, as well as those who meet partners through private parties, were also more likely to use

pools and beaches. Although superficially, pools and beaches appear to be just another form of beat, they often can function quite differently. Many beaches and pools in Sydney have become well-known as places frequented by gay men, some even being tagged as 'gay beaches'. In some ways they can function in ways similar to other gay social venues, and, at those locations where sexual contact can occur, they function in ways similar to a beat. The fact that these locations also offer physical activity in the form of swimming, it is no surprise that the men who regularly use gyms to meet partners would also be more likely to use pools and beaches. The men who use pools and beaches appear to socialise widely within the gay community.

Dance parties

Those men who regularly use social venues such as gay bars, or who meet partners through private parties, are more likely to also use dance parties for meeting sex partners. Those who regularly use commercial sex venues are also somewhat more likely to use dance parties, though the relationship is not as strong as with social venues. The men who regularly use gyms and pools and beaches also tend to use dance parties more frequently. There is no relationship with the use of beats. Dance parties are important social functions within the gay community. They tend to be a focus for much social activity, particularly the Mardi Gras Party and Sleaze Ball (both organised by the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Ltd). Consequently, the men who regularly attend these parties tend to be those at the core of the gay community, particularly within the gay commercial scene. They lead active

social and sexual lives and so it is no surprise that they are inclined to use all sorts of venues associated with the community to meet their partners.

Gay bars

Those men who regularly use social venues such as dance parties and gyms, as well as private parties, to socialise and to meet male partners, are more likely to also use gay bars. There is very little relationship between the use of commercial sex venues and gay bars, except that regular users of sex cinemas are less likely to use gay bars. Those who regularly use beats are also less likely to use gay bars. Beats have a relatively low profile within the gay community. Indeed, they tend to be thought of as places where non-gay men can be found. The regular users of gay bars tend to be men who are closely involved in the social life of the gay commercial scene but also participate socially in the gay community as a whole.

Social group events

Those men who regularly use social venues such as gay bars or dance parties, as well as private parties, to socialise and to meet male partners, are more likely to also use gay group events, but there is no relationship between the use of commercial sex venues or beats and gay group events. Regular users of personal advertisements as a method of meeting male partners are more likely to also meet partners through gay group events. Gay group events are, of course, highly visible activities within the gay community and indicate a very close involvement in gay community political and social life. The men who meet their partners in this way are likely to be at the heart of the gay community as a whole and lead active social lives, but are no more likely to

use sex venues. Of course, given that these men are likely to have a relatively high profile within the community, they might be less inclined to use sex venues for that very reason.

Gyms

Those men who regularly use social venues such as dance parties and gay bars, as well as private parties, to socialise and to meet male partners, are more likely to also use gyms. Those who regularly use saunas are also somewhat more likely to use gyms but there is not such a strong relationship between the use of sex clubs and gyms. This might simply be a preference for certain sorts of facilities: gyms very often have saunas within them, providing the most explicit opportunity for men to meet potential partners in those venues. It would seem reasonable to expect that if a man enjoys the use of saunas, he is likely to go to those places where saunas are available. The fact that near-nakedness is common to both gyms and saunas is at least noteworthy. The regular users of gyms appear to be men at the heart of the commercial gay scene, leading active social and sexual lives within that scene.

Private parties

Those men who regularly use gay social venues are more likely to also use private parties. Those who regularly use saunas or beats are less likely to use private parties. While the men who regularly use private parties appear to lead active social lives within the gay community as a whole, they appear to be relatively restricted in their sexual involvement both within and outside the gay scene.

Saunas

Those men who regularly use other sex venues and beats are more likely to also use saunas. Those who regularly use gyms or dance parties are also somewhat more likely to use saunas, but there is no relationship between the use of saunas and the use of other gay social venues and events. The men who regularly use saunas appear to be actively involved in the sexual aspects of the gay scene but they tend to only participate socially in a few aspects of the gay scene. They are also inclined to seek sexual contacts outside the gay community.

Sex clubs

Those men who regularly use other sex venues or beats are more likely to also use sex clubs. Those who regularly use dance parties are also more likely to use sex clubs, but there is little relationship between the use of sex clubs and the use of most social venues and events. They appear to be similar to the men who use saunas regularly, except that they are perhaps a little more inclined to use a broad range of places where sexual contacts are readily available.

Adult bookshops

Those men who regularly use other sex venues or beats are more likely to also use adult bookshops. There is no relationship between the use of adult bookshops and the use of gay social venues and events. The men who regularly use adult bookshops appear to be those who are most inclined to use a broad range of opportunities to make sexual contacts, regardless of other aspects of their social life or their involvement in gay community life.

Personal advertisements

Those men who regularly used gay group events or dance parties were more likely to also use personal advertisements to meet their partners. There is no relationship between the use of personal advertisements and the use of most sex venues. Personal advertisements are unlike the other methods of meeting partners mentioned here. They do not have a physical location and the men who use them almost invariably do so in isolation, without any social contact with others doing the same. Consequently, this method of sexual contact does not lend itself easily to the development of a sexual subculture. Given that the men who regularly attend gay group events, and, to a lesser extent, dance parties, have a relatively high profile within the gay community, it might be that the relatively anonymous and low-profile nature of this method of meeting sexual partners is the reason these men tend to use personal advertisements.

Summation

In general, regular use of commercial sex venues or of beats indicated more regular use of other sex venues or beats, while regular use of more strictly social venues indicated more regular use of other such venues. However, there was some interaction between certain kinds of social and sexual venues. The use of dance parties, in particular, seemed to be related to the use of all other sorts of venues, except beats. There was also some relationship between regular use of gyms and regular use of saunas. On the other hand, there appeared to be a negative relationship between the use of private parties and the use of both beats and saunas: those who attended private parties were unlikely to be regular users of either beats or saunas.

There was a similar negative relationship between the use of gay bars and the use of beats. The differing overall frequencies in use of these various venue types, and the different profiles of the regular users of these venues, indicate that there are different patterns of usage of particular venues. These data are, at the very least, suggestive of different patterns of socialising for sexual encounters within the gay community.

It is, of course, self-evident that regular use of a type of venue or method of meeting sex partners is most likely to indicate a degree of enjoyment, satisfaction and success with these. However, does it have any greater meaning than this? Does it also affect self-concept? Does it influence modes of sexual expression and self-representation? If this is indicative of subcultural forms, then it is also likely to have such effects. The lack of uniformity across these various modes of socialising indicates that these are different sub-populations in at least some respects. The men who participate in these networks recognise this, in varying degrees. A study of men attending circuit-parties in the USA (Mansergh et al., 2001) took as its premise that such men were a definable population whose characteristics could be described – indeed they appeared to be quite similar to the population of users of dance parties found in SMASH and Male Call. Nearly all the men in this study stated that a strong motivation for attending circuit-parties was 'to be with friends', and about two-thirds cited the desire for a 'feeling of community'.

The broad categories used here are expedient. In practice, these categories also conceal differences. There are different sorts of gay bars, attracting quite specific clienteles. This is also true of all the other categories

presented. The broad categories reveal broad differences. A more useful way of exploring such differences would be through an observation of subcultural differences, which might transcend these broad categorical differences presented here, of course. These subcultural differences are best described as 'scenes', a term that has wide usage and recognition among gay men. Unfortunately, these data do not allow such an approach – although some of the Periodic Survey data could lend itself to such an analysis because the types of recruitment sites used were few in number and could be classified in terms of 'scenes'. In a Dutch study of gay men, de Wit et al. (1997) identified three kinds of sexual 'scenes': one associated with outdoor cruising areas, cinemas and hotel rooms; another associated with saunas and sex clubs; and the third associated with sex in private homes. They found that men in each of these 'scenes' could be distinguished on a range of characteristics. Similarly, a study of homosexually active men in the US, found that men using sex venues and beats differed on several key variables from men who did not use public sex environments of any sort (Binson et al., 2001). More particularly, they also found that they could distinguish between men that used different kinds of public sex environments.

The data here are also not exhaustive: there are certainly other types of sexual networks and 'scenes' among gay men that are not adequately addressed here. In particular, there is the development in recent years of the internet as a means of making sexual contacts and identifying a broad range of sexual networks (Benotsch et al., 2002).

Critical implications

My particular interest in gay community sexual subcultures began to develop in the mid-1990s in response to two developments. The first was a response to a theoretical challenge, that of 'queer politics', and the second was in response to evidence from data collected in SMASH.

From the beginning of the 1990s, queer activists were challenging what they referred to as the 'gay hegemony'. This challenge occurred on a number of levels. It decried the notion of 'gay community'. Queer activists claimed there was no such thing as a homogeneous gay community that encompassed all same-sex-attracted individuals. At the same time as denying its existence, they also claimed the gay community was exclusionist in that it primarily accommodated the interests of white, middle-class gay men, particularly those in their 30s and 40s. The challenge to the 'gay hegemony' also rejected the notion of a gay identity, but it did so as both a theoretical and a political challenge. Gay identity was rejected as a theoretical 'dead end' in that it assumed a separate sexual category of 'gay', with which homosexually active individuals were expected to identify and which carried its own sexual stereotypes to which those same individuals were expected to conform. Gay identity was also rejected politically because it failed to challenge sexual norms. Regardless of the validity of these claims, these arguments gave a new and sharper focus to a debate about the nature and existence of gay communities that had been waged within the gay intelligentsia.

My own view was, and remains, that gay communities are slippery entities whose existence and attributes are defined, through discourse, by the

individuals who have an interest in them. Also, gay men (and lesbians) have historically been keenly interested in the political and social aspects of their collective existence, making the nature of this discourse both robust – politically and theoretically – and sustained. This being the case, it is not surprising that the debate around the nature of the gay movement and gay community that first emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s would continue to resonate through the years, and would re-emerge in the context of other developments – especially the relatively successful containment of the HIV epidemic in Australia by mobilizing gay community attachment, and the more liberal and tolerant approach by the state and public opinion to gay men and lesbians by the end of the twentieth century. The gay community exists solely because there is a social category of 'gay man' with which many homosexually active men identify and because they generally believe they share common interests with others who so identify. A denial of its existence is both unrealistic and does little to advance the theoretical understanding of gay men's lives. The criticisms posed by queer activists are reminiscent of arguments posed by gay left activists in opposition to the concept of a gay community. There are two basic tenets to these arguments: that the concept of a 'gay community' is monolithic and excludes those for whom the gay labels do not easily fit; and that the acceptance of a gay community separates out gay men (and lesbians) as a social category, thereby failing to challenge the dominant forms of sexuality in society and relegates these individuals to the status of a 'sexual minority' with a primary focus on the pursuit of a rights agenda.

It seems to me that these are not useful arguments. In themselves, they are insufficient to deny the existence of a gay community, although they are important political appraisals of the manner in which it is defined and structured. The failure to challenge sexual norms could be viewed as a political failure on the part of the gay movement. Alternatively, it might be argued that such challenges are occurring continuously and that the changes in social attitudes reflect these changes, but that the process is slow and evolutionary. The belief that the gay community excludes individuals by minimising perceived differences among gay men (and lesbians) is an argument about the nature of power in any social group. Power is never distributed equitably, but always reflects social relations. Whether groups are constituted as 'communities', 'cultures', or 'movements', questions about the distribution of power and how that is reflected in representations of the group will always exist. Individuals are included or excluded on the basis of that distribution of power.

The capacity of individuals to identify with, and conform to, a particular set of social conditions can be viewed in terms of cultures of assimilation and resistance. Cultures are established through social relations that reflect the distribution of power. The nature of those cultures is largely determined by their relationship to the social relations of power, but they exist within the context of competing discourses. Consequently, all cultures contain within them elements of both assimilation and resistance. This also means that cultures will tend to contain within them their own subcultures of resistance and, so, are complex social entities. They are not simple constructs that

encourage easy definitions and conceptualisations. In virtually every case, it is possible to identify subcultures within broader cultures, and, at every level, these cultures contain elements of both assimilation and resistance. Communities are merely institutionalised ways of organising and representing cultures. On this basis, the gay community is a vehicle for some notional 'gay culture', which simultaneously conforms to and challenges societal understandings of sexuality. Moreover, it contains within it subcultures that challenge its own existence and definitions in a variety of ways. Consequently, it is no surprise that 'the gay community' should be challenged both from within and outside. Rather than denying its existence, such challenges prove its own contradictory existence. A more useful theoretical tool is to consider these challenges in terms of a multitude of subcultures within gay communities.

In earlier discussions of stereotyping and social norms, it was apparent that individuals rarely, if ever, actually conform to these norms. The idea of an easy fit between identity, behaviour and social categories is largely fanciful. Individuals are, themselves, a plethora of contradictions. Often, this makes identity especially problematic. However, it is in this very murky process that subcultures of resistance emerge.

Do sexual subcultures resist or conform? Probably both, and to varying extents depending on the particular context. Largely, this depends on the degree to which such subcultures actually exist and those who participate in and comprise the subcultures are aware of them as some sort of cultural grouping with which they can identify or in which they participate.

Sometimes, what might be termed a subculture is actually just a grouping of individuals whose behaviour is observably similar. Other individuals, however, know they are part of a 'scene', that they participate in a set of activities they hold in common with others like themselves, but this awareness extends no further than such individualised understandings. The extent to which these sets of activities can be described as 'subcultures' is probably related to how much individuals are able to 'badge' themselves or others. Other analysts have described this in terms of cultural symbols or icons, but, particularly with regard to sexual subcultures, these symbols might be much less apparent than these writers suggest. Certainly gay leathermen wear clothing and accessories that mark them out as such, but what are the emblematic symbols that apply for participants in other sexual 'scenes' among gay men? Perhaps the men's mere presence in a particular sexual context, such as a gay sex club or sauna, is sufficient in itself. This seems an inadequate definition of a gay sexual subculture because it lacks a shared sense of commonality.

Participation in a sexual 'scene' is a prerequisite for a sexual subculture, but those individuals must also have a sense of themselves as participating in that scene along with others. Not all those who participate in these scenes might also have such awareness, but if it is to be defined as a subculture then at least some of them must have such awareness. Does this mean that not all those who participate in a sexual scene comprise the associated subculture? No. Even though they might not be fully conscious of the subculture, their participation in the sexual scene has a direct impact on the

nature of that subculture. The very failure to recognise the subcultures in which one participates is an aspect of that subculture's structure.

Perhaps this is best likened to the process of coming out and the way this affects gay culture as a whole. Homosexual individuals often experience a phase in their coming out process where they participate in homosexual activity and interact with other homosexual people, but deny their own homosexuality (Cass, 1979). For many, this extends to participating in aspects of gay community life. This is a process, not necessarily uniformly experienced, but historically common to many. Gay cultures have developed in the context of this relatively common experience. Access to venues, types of services, and ways of interacting, have all tended to take into consideration the issues that accompany these experiences. These are issues such as a conscious need to permit individuals both to deny and to act on their own homosexuality, and a need for a safe space in which they can experience and understand their own sexuality. While not always uppermost, these issues are an ever-present undercurrent in gay community institutions, and even interpersonal relations.

Gay sexual subcultures vary enormously. In a sense, because gay communities are one of the few subcultures that have developed on the basis of sexuality, it is probably not surprising that there should be greater diversity and awareness of sexual subcultures within gay communities than might be found in other contexts. Yet, beyond this immediately apparent diversity, there is a diversity of experience and recognition of these subcultures. While individual men might participate in the same sexual 'scenes' as others, their

experience of those scenes and how they understand them can be quite different.

A good example of this can be seen in the use of beats. Some men use beats because they do not consider themselves gay, or are uncomfortable about being recognised as such. Beats merely provide anonymity for these men. For many of these men their experience of beats is one of simple expedience, and their lack of identification with a gay identity or with a community of other homosexual men means that they are often unlikely to have a sense of themselves as participating in a sexual scene. On the other hand, some men, whether they consider themselves gay or not, view beats in precisely the opposite way: as places of danger. For them, the possibility of discovery, the 'danger', only heightens the erotic appeal of beats. While they might have other reasons for using beats, their sense of beats as opportunities for 'dangerous sex' can give them a sense of shared experience with others. For some, they and other beat-users might seem to be 'sexual outlaws'. A different take on the 'sexual outlaw' experience is that of the men who use beats because closeted men do: some men are attracted to the idea of sex with 'straight guys' and see beats as a good place to find them. Alternatively, they might be attracted to labourers or other blue-collar workers and see beats as places where they are more likely to find such men. Another, very different, experience of beats is possible in some suburban and non-metropolitan areas of New South Wales where beats are the only locally available meeting places for homosexual men. In these circumstances, sometimes beats will also be the place where homosexual men come to socialise, even at the same time as

closeted men are furtively seeking sexual contacts and some men are looking for the erotic charge of 'dangerous sex'. Men who use beats to socialise with other homosexual men might simultaneously experience the beat as a 'dangerous place' and a safe place. Its danger lies in the risks involved in public sex, but its safety is found in the capacity to meet with and draw support from the presence of other homosexual men.

The point is that each of these experiences takes place in what is apparently the same sexual 'scene'. Each experience carries elements that both resist and conform to the dominant cultures, whether they are gay culture or the wider culture. Homogeneity of sexual experience, or even of gay men's sexual experience, makes little sense in trying to grapple with the concept of sexual subcultures. While at a population level we can recognise general behavioural trends, to properly understand how these subcultures work, both for individuals and for the ongoing development of gay cultures, we need to be able to both understand and contextualise individual experience of sexual 'scenes'. It is perception, how individuals understand their experience of these 'scenes' and the meanings they attach both to the scenes and their experience of them, that is the basis of these differences.

To return to the issue I began with, this perspective on sexual subcultures makes the issue of 'gay community' both more complex and clearer at the same time. Gay sexual subcultures are just one aspect of gay community life, but the complex ways in which individual experience and understanding is played out in these subcultures, underline the complexity of the gay community as a whole. Discourses about 'living gay' and the nature of

gay community are based in these subcultural experiences. That these discourses both reinforce and contest notions of gay community is to be expected.

Gay sexual subcultures provide spaces for homosexual men to explore and express various aspects of their sexualities. Individuals find some of these 'work' for them and others do not. In some circumstances, these subcultures might be associated with gay community life and in others they might not. Homosexual men respond to their experiences of these subcultures and generally make choices about them based on those experiences and their sense of their own sexualities. They might participate in a broad range of subcultures or restrict themselves to just one or a few. They might perceive them as being some sort of cultural entity, a 'scene', or they might not. Moreover, their participation in those subcultures might enhance their sense of commonality with other homosexual men, or it might not.

CHAPTER 7. RESEARCHING HOMOSEXUAL DESIRE

In 1972, Dennis Altman wrote: 'Homosexuals can win acceptance as distinct from tolerance only by a transformation of society, one that is based on a "new human" who is able to accept the multi-faceted and varied nature of his or her sexual identity' (Altman, 1973: 233). At that time, his book, *Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation*, was a gay manifesto. The next sentence after that quote reads: 'That such a society can be founded is the gamble upon which the gay and women's liberation movements are based; like all radical movements they hold to an optimistic view of human nature, above all to its mutability.'

This was the basis of the gay movement, and of the ideological approach that has underpinned the work of many gay theorists. In 1971, one of the prominent gay activists of the time, Allen Young, wrote 'Gay, in its most far-reaching sense, means not homosexual, but sexually free… This sexual freedom is not some kind of groovy lifestyle with lots of sex… It is sexual freedom premised upon the notion of pleasure through equality.' (Jay and Young, 1972: 28).

I refer to these as a reminder that issues raised by queer theorists in the 1990s were central to the Gay Liberation movement from its very moment of inception, and to point out that the relationship between identity and behaviour has been central to an understanding of the situation of gay men by social researchers and activists for many decades.

Research can help understand aspects of this. SMASH data suggest that sexual behaviour is mutable. While there were some men who never engaged in certain practices, and others who regularly engaged in those same practices, there were also many men who occasionally engaged in particular sexual practices. This suggests that sexuality is constantly in flux and individuals' behaviour can alter in many ways over time. If individuals change in their patterns of sexual behaviour, so too can communities.

Comparing the incidence in SMASH, during 1996, of some less common sexual practices among homosexually active men, such as fisting or S/M, and some other more common practices, like rimming, with their incidence in the SAPA data from a decade earlier, is illuminating. In some instances, the incidence of these practices among gay men doubled or even more over the intervening decade. See Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: Changes in Sexual Behaviour over Time

	1986 (SAPA)	**1996 (SMASH)**
Practice		
Rimming	22%	52%
S/M	8%	17%
Using sex toys	9%	14%
Fisting	8%	12%
Watersports	2%	10%

Note: Items are not mutually exclusive.
Note: These data are based on the total sample in both studies.

Despite this overall picture of sexual behaviour as generally being fluid, the existence of groups of men who consistently engage in a particular pattern of sexual behaviour while others just as consistently avoid those same sexual practices, also implies the possibility of sexual subcultures among gay men. The overall increase in the incidence of some sex practices among gay

men, and the relatively common occurrence of many gay men occasionally engaging in most of these practices, also suggest considerable movement into and out of those subcultures.

The changes in sexual behaviour that occur over time are also mirrored in gay men's sexual relationships and sexual contexts. Where they have sex and with whom, how they meet partners, and what else they do to accompany their sexual interactions, all appear to be subject to the same sorts of fluctuations over time (Prestage et al., 2000).

While most analysts might regard the changes in sexual behaviour and relationships as predictable, they might be more surprised by the extent to which sexual identity is also in flux. While SMASH was a strongly gay community based study and nearly all the men described themselves as 'gay' at some time during the study, a gay self-identity was not universally held by respondents. Only a third consistently described themselves as gay at every interview, although most used the more general label of 'homosexual' on other occasions (ibid.). There were also small minorities of men who either used the label 'queer' or described themselves in non-homosexual terms, although usually only once or twice, not every year.

What is particularly interesting about these data on self-identity is the way they interact with data on sexual behaviour. Superficially, one might expect there to be little to distinguish between the sexual behaviour of groups of homosexually active men recruited through gay community sources. What possible difference is there between men who describe themselves as 'gay' every time they are asked, and men who only do so intermittently but on the

other occasions usually describe themselves in other ways as being homosexual, or who sporadically use the term 'queer'? Yet, there are notable differences, as reported in Chapter 5, in the descriptions of the relationship between sexual identity and sexual behaviour.

It is not the particularities of these different patterns that are important. What matters is that there *are* these differing patterns of sexual behaviour among men who appear to have only subtle differences in their sexual identity. Neither behaviour nor identity is fixed or static in these data. There are, of course, individuals whose behaviour and identity change little over time. In addition, in most cases, the changes that occur are only minor and might not be all that apparent or seem all that important, while in some cases the changes are dramatic.

Nor is there a necessary relationship between identity and behaviour. While there are general trends, there are always individuals for whom the usual patterns simply do not apply. Some gay men consistently and clearly identify as gay, yet often have sex with women. Some men never view themselves as homosexual, and yet regularly take the receptive role in anal intercourse.

And, yet, there are patterns. Data collected from non gay-identified homosexually active men indicated that sexual behaviour and sexual identity were linked. Certainly, some men who were homosexually active, but did not consider themselves as homosexual, interpreted their behaviour in ways that made sense for them. They often defined their homosexual activity as being other than sexual, particularly by restricting their range of sex practices to

those they did not include in their definition of sex. That is a crucial point. They selected, either consciously or unconsciously, the sex practices in which they engaged, and their sexual behaviour generally reflected those selections. Their sexual behaviour was at least partly driven by the way they viewed themselves, that is, by their sexual identity.

This is not to suggest that their behaviour was merely a reflection of their self-concept. The existence of a homosexual desire among many of them required them to adopt a particular way of viewing themselves and interpreting their sexual behaviour. The BANGAR data demonstrated that context was an important factor: for some men it was their introduction to particular sexual practices by other men that required them to reconsider their view of themselves.

The point is that this is an interactive process. Identity, behaviour and desire are not separable components of an individual: they are core aspects of how individuals relate to their social and material environment. This is not a new insight. It has been central to how gay theorists have worked for the past three decades. The complexity of sexuality as a social phenomenon and as a personal expression has been the cornerstone of the gay movement since the very beginnings of the Gay Liberation movement. What is new is how the impact of HIV on gay communities has allowed the biological and the social sciences to reposition sexuality as simple behaviour. Most social research on homosexually active men and HIV-risk has focussed intently on behaviour, almost as though it exists independently from its social and political context. The central concern has been how to change gay men's sexual behaviour.

More sophisticated analyses have suggested that such changes can only take place by considering gay men's social context, but even this has often been limited to simple measurement of gay men's social *behaviour* as a means of assessing their relationship with their communities and their peers. Subjective meaning, the nature of desire and how that impacts on individual sexual subjectivity, has largely been ignored, and it has rarely been present in the analysis of survey data, or, indeed, any data collected within the context of HIV-related social research.

What has been missing is the personal and political context. Gay men are not just created with a fully formed sexual repertoire. A man does not *become* 'gay' simply by having sex with another man. However, the process of recognising one's own sexuality and taking on a gay identity, or even rejecting a gay identity in favour of another type of identity, is also a process that influences one's sexual behaviour in some fairly fundamental ways. If I were not able to view myself as 'gay' then my sexual behaviour, indeed my very sexuality, would be fundamentally different. And I do not simply mean that I would view it differently; it *would* be different. Homophobia is one important aspect of this: denial of one's gayness often necessitates a much more secretive and circumscribed sexuality. But equally important is the influence of gay culture: what is acceptable or desirable, and what is not, within the gay community; what ideas and theories are being discussed within it; what other gay men in that community think and do; how gay men's sexuality is represented within the gay community; and what is physically possible within gay community spaces.

And this brings me back to myself. In this thesis, I have related my own historical and personal relationship to certain data collected, in parallel with a reanalysis of these data in the context of an investigation into the problematic relationship between sampling and subjectivity. My own relationship to my sexuality and to a concept of gay community can hardly be described as unproblematic. At times, I have found a comfortable space for myself within particular sexual contexts, and at other times, I have found it necessary to either redefine myself or restructure the sexual and cultural context within which I have found myself. In addition, I have actively used my research among gay and other homosexually active men in this endeavour. However, what is equally clear is that my sense of self as a sexual subject, as a gay man, neither rejects nor conforms to any dominant representation of 'gay'. My sexuality remains my own and I remain myself, but in the context of an active embracing of the twin concepts of 'gay' and 'gay community'. My own 'gayness' is simultaneously unique and part of broader cultural and subcultural patterns to which I, consciously or unconsciously, reluctantly or willingly, conform. So, when I cast an investigative eye across the populations of homosexual men unearthed by my own research endeavours, I both see myself reflected back and am challenged by representations of homosexuality and gay that conflict with my own expectations and presumptions.

In this context, then, I am forced to question my own findings. The samples of homosexually active men I have obtained cannot objectively represent anything other than themselves. They can, however, provide insights into ways of being 'gay' and, therefore, into the nature of sexual being. That

there are clear and distinct patterns of enacting one's homosexuality is clear. The data suggest this more than anything else. However, what these patterns mean and how they affect or reflect individuals' sexual subjectivity remains unclear. The research endeavours with which I have been associated have been dictated by the necessity to satisfy the requirements of an HIV-prevention and behaviour-modification paradigm as much as have the research endeavours of others in this field.

Nonetheless, when I consider my own history and my own sexuality, I begin to believe that I can understand these different patterns, these various ways of living gay. That the sexual behaviours, beliefs and desires of men recruited in sex venues should differ from those of men recruited through gay community social events is perhaps no surprise. That they actually view themselves as quite different types of sexual beings, and yet retain a common gay identity, is perhaps not quite as obvious. Yet, even within the primary impetus to research within these populations – HIV-prevention – such differences are of fundamental importance. What motivates these men sexually, and, therefore, how they respond to changing sexual cultures and challenges to their sexual circumstances, might actually be very different indeed. What is perhaps even more difficult to incorporate into a research agenda is that these broad differences in sampling are actually blunt measures of differences in sexual subjectivity. It is not just the physical context in which a sample is obtained that determines the differences in patterns of homosexual expression. It is the complex interaction between these physical spaces, their cultural and subcultural context, the meaning that is attached to them and

individuals' understandings of each of these in relation to their own desires and sense of themselves as both social and sexual subjects.

Gay men's sexualities, sexual behaviour, even their sexual desires, are all fundamentally affected by their experiences of coming out and 'discovering' themselves and 'their' community in the context of a homophobic world. It is not enough to ask how they behave sexually, or even how they behave socially. To properly understand homosexual behaviour and the ways gay men respond to changing circumstances, it is essential to ask how they view themselves, how they interpret their own behaviours, and how they situate themselves in their social context. What role does 'gayness' play in their daily lives? None of their daily choices can be fully separated out from their experience of the world as gay people. In considering this relationship it is not possible to say what is the more important or what drives what. Desire, identity and behaviour are intimately bound. Before coming out most gay men experience homosexual desires, but not all of them do so. Many acted on those desires, but others did not. Certainly, I have known gay men who did not engage in any homosexual behaviour before they came out. However, no matter whether their homosexual desires and behaviour pre-dated their coming out or not, their sexualities did not remain static after coming out. They continued to develop, and the adoption of a particular sexual identity was one important aspect of how their sexualities developed. This recognition of one's own sexual identity affects how we view ourselves and those around us, and our range of options. Moreover, this is as true of non-gay people as it is for gay men. The only difference is that it is rare for heterosexually-identified

people to consider their sexual identity as such, except as a means of distinguishing themselves from homosexuals. A heterosexual identity is not problematised in the same way as a homosexual identity. Therefore, while their sexuality in general might still be problematic, their sexual identity is not.

Coming back to what this means for social research, the failure to recognise the importance of the relationship between identity, desire and enculturation as factors in understanding sexual behaviour has been fundamental to a failure to critically engage with the nature of the research conducted among homosexual men. This thesis has demonstrated that samples of homosexually active men differ on a broad range of social, behavioural and identity variables, and that it is possible to identify sub-populations of homosexual men within these samples. These sub-populations appear to be bound by their own discrete differences on these same variables. Without critically engaging the assumptions that underlie research among homosexual men, the ways these men are represented by social science will fail to reflect who gay men really are, and thereby also fail to deal with questions about the nature of sexuality in general and its place in society.

This is not to suggest there can ever be a 'true' representation of either homosexuality or gay men. The difficulty is not how to arrive at an objective truth about homosexuality, but how to unearth and make clear the many subjective guises that sexuality assumes. What is it that is being represented as homosexuality, as gay, as sex? How do the differences in how the actor and the observer view these affect the outcome? What the data presented here suggest most strongly is that what have been presumed to be samples of gay

(or homosexual) men have actually been samples of particular types of sexual subjects, and their gay identity or homosexual behaviour are only meaningful through an analysis of that subjectivity. Indeed, even though they might have a common 'gay' identity or participate similarly in the gay community, this does not necessarily mean that they are similar sorts of sexual beings or that they will respond to gay sexual cultures in the same way. Behaviourally-based research among gay men has been the dominant paradigm since the HIV epidemic has emphasised the need to alter behaviour and has largely framed the nature of the research conducted among gay and other homosexually active men.

Gay Liberation was always concerned with fundamental changes in society and it demanded that we all, gay and straight, question ourselves, examine our own desires, and change the values that restrict our ability to choose, or even to see the possibilities of choice. When we ask why it is that gay men behave sexually as they do, we also have to ask how they view themselves and the world around them, and what impact does homophobia have on that perspective. In the end, personal behaviour is limited by the social context, and that context is fundamentally shaped by the values and beliefs of us all. We need to integrate our tendency toward behaviourism, driven by a desire for simple answers to complex problems, with our much greater need to understand these complex issues at a personal level, at a community level, and at a social level.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adorno, T. 1962:

‘Sociology and empirical research’, in Connerton, 1976.

Allen, J. and P. Patton (eds) 1983:

Beyond Marxism? Interventions After Marx, Intervention Publications, Sydney.

Allison, D.B. (ed) 1977:

The New Nietzche, Dell Publications, New York.

Al-Talib, Z. 2001:

‘The personals are not political’, *Sydney Star Observer*, 31 May: 27.

Althusser, L. 1971:

Lenin and Philosophy, Monthly Review Press, New York.

Althusser, L. 1969:

‘Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses’, in Althusser, 1971.

Altman, D. 1997:

‘The more things change …’, *Outrage*, 171, August: 77-78.

Altman, D. 1973:

Homosexual: Oppression and Liberation, Penguin Books, Middlesex.

Bancroft, J. (ed) 1997:

Researching Sexual Behaviour, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

Barrett, D. 2000:

‘Masculinity among working-class gay males’ in Nardi, 2000.

Barrett, M., P. Corrigan, A. Kuhn and J. Wolff (eds) 1979:

Ideology and Cultural Production, Croom Helm, London.

Barthes, R. 1986:

The Rustle of Language, Hill and Wang, New York.

Bartos, M., J. McLeod and P. Nott 1994:

Meanings of Sex Between Men, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Becker, H. 1974:

'Labeling theory reconsidered', in McIntosh and Rock, 1974.

Bell, A. 1976:

'The bath life gets respectability', in Jay and Young, 1979b.

Bell, A. and M. Weinberg 1978:

Homosexualities: A Study of Diversity Among Men and Women, Simon and Schuster, New York.

Bennett, G. 1982:

Gay Youth: Deviant Subculture or Misrecognised Category, unpublished BA thesis, School of Sociology, University of NSW.

Bennett, G. 1983:

Young and Gay, unpublished monograph, Twenty-Ten, Sydney.

Bennett, G. 1985a:

'I breathe, I cruise', *Campaign*, 114.

Bennett, G. with A. Petherbridge 1986:

Report on a Survey of Sydney Gay Sauna Patrons, unpublished report, Gay and Lesbian Counselling Service of NSW, Sydney.

Bennett, G., F. Bray, and S. Chapman 1989a:

'Sexual practices and 'beats': AIDS-related sexual practices in a sample of homosexual and bisexual men in the western area of Sydney', *Medical Journal of Australia* 1989, 151: 309-314.

Bennett, G., S. Chapman and F. Bray 1989b:

'A potential source for the transmission of the human immunodeficiency virus into the heterosexual population: bisexual men who frequent "beats" ', *Medical Journal of Australia*, 151: 314-318.

Benotsch, E., S. Kalichman and M. Cage 2002:

'Men who have met sex partners via the Internet: Prevalence, predictors and implications for HIV prevention', *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, (31) 2: 177-183.

Berger, R. 1982:

Gay and Grey: the Older Homosexual Man, University of Illinois Press, Urbana.

Bergstrom, S. and L. Cruz (eds) n.d.:

Counselling Lesbian and Gay Male Youth, National Network of Runaway and Youth Services Inc. San Francisco.

Binson, D., W. Woods, L. Pollack, J. Paul, R. Stall and J. Catania. 2001:

'Differential HIV risk in bathhouses and public cruising areas', *American Journal of Public Health*, (91) 9: 1482-1486.

Blachford, G. 1981:

'Male dominance and the gay world', in Plummer, 1981a.

Black, D., G. Gates, S. Sanders and L. Taylor 2002:

'Why do gay men live in San Francisco?', *Journal of Urban Economics*, (51) 1: 54-76.

Blumstein, P. and P. Schwartz 1976:

'Bisexuality in men', in Warren, 1976.

Bochow, M. 2001:

'Gay men, AIDS and safer sex in Germany – new developments', *Deutsche AIDS-Hilfe*, 40.

Booker, R. 1985:

'Counselling married gay men', in Goulden, 1985.

Boston Project 1983:

Toward an Agenda for Gay and Lesbian Citizens, City of Boston, Boston.

Bourdieu, P. 1973:

'Cultural reproduction and social reproduction', in Brown, 1973.

Bourdieu, P. 1975:

'The specificity of the scientific field and the social conditions for the progress of reason', *Social Sciences Information*, (14) 6: 19-47.

Bronski, M. (ed) 1996:

Taking Liberties: Gay Men's Essays on Politics, Culture, and Sex, Masquerade Books, New York.

Brown, R. (ed) 1973:

Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change, Tavistock Publications, London.

Buchbinder, D. 1998:

Performance anxieties: re-producing masculinity, Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Callen, M. 1983:

How to Have Sex in an Epidemic, monograph, News From the Front Publications, New York.

Campbell, D., G. Prestage, J. Noble, S. Kippax, J. Crawford, P. Van de Ven, P. Kinder and D. Cooper 1997:

Scales and indicator variables from the Sydney Men and Sexual Health (SMASH) study, National Centre in HIV Social Research, Sydney.

Campbell, J. and S. Bunting 1991:

'Voices and paradigms: perspectives on critical and feminist theory in nursing', *Advances in Nursing Science*, 13 (3): 1-15.

Campbell, I., P. Burgess, I. Goller, and R. Lucas 1988:

A Prospective Study of Factors Influencing HIV Infection in Homosexual and Bisexual Men: A report of findings – Stage I, Melbourne, Department of Psychology, University of Melbourne.

Campioni, M. and E. Gross 1983:

'Love's labours lost: Marxism and feminism', in Allen and Patton, 1983.

Cass, V. 1979:

'Homosexual identity formation: a theoretical model', *Journal of Homosexuality*, (4) 3: 219-235.

Catania, J., T. Coates, R. Stall, L. Bye, S. Kegeles, F. Capell, J. Henne, L. McKusick, S. Morin, and H. Turner 1991:

'Changes in condom use among homosexual men in San Francisco', *Health Psychology* 1991, 10: 190-199.

Catania, J., D. Osmond, R. Stall, L. Pollack, J. Paul, S. Blower, D. Binson, J. Canchola, T. Mills, L. Fisher, K. Choi, T. Porco, C. Turner, J. Blair, J. Henne, L. Bye, and T. Coates 2001:

'The continuing HIV epidemic among men who have sex with men', *American Journal of Public Health*, June, 91 (6): 907-914.

Chavez, B. 1970:

'Blatant is beautiful!', *Gay Sunshine*, October.

Chesebro, J. (ed) 1981a:

Gayspeak: Gay Male and Lesbian Communication, Pilgrim Press, New York.

Chesebro, J. and K. Klenk 1981:

'Gay masculinity in the gay disco', in Chesebro, 1981a.

Clarke, J., S. Hall, T. Jefferson and B. Roberts 1976:

'Subcultures and class', in Hall and Jefferson 1976.

Clarke, J., C. Critcher and R. Johnson (eds) 1979:

Working Class Culture, Hutchinson and Co., London.

Coates, R., C. Soskolne, S. Read, M. Fanning, M. Klein, F. Shepherd, L. Calzavara, J. Johnson, and M. O'Shaunessy 1986:

'A prospective study of male sexual contacts of men with AIDS-related condition (ARC) or AIDS: HTLV-III antibody, clinical and immune function status at induction', *Canadian Journal of Public Health:* 77, Suppl: 26-32.

Communication Technologies 1989:

HIV-Related Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors Among San Francisco Gay and Bisexual Men: Results from the Fifth Population-Based Survey. Appendices. San Francisco Department of Public Health, San Francisco.

Connell, R.W., G.W. Dowsett, P. Rodden, M.D. Davis, L. Watson and D. Baxter 1991:

'Social class, gay men and AIDS prevention', *Australian Journal of Public Health*, 15 (3): 178–189.

Connell, R.W., J. Crawford, S. Kippax, G. W. Dowsett, D. Baxter, L. Watson and R. Berg 1989:

‘Facing the epidemic: changes in the sexual lives of gay and bisexual men in Australia and their implications for AIDS prevention strategies’, *Social Problems*, October, 36 (4): 384–402.

Connell, R.W., J. Crawford, G. W. Dowsett, S. Kippax, S. Sinnott, P. Rodden, R. Berg, D. Baxter, and L. Watson 1990:

‘Danger and context: unsafe anal sexual practice among homosexual and bisexual men in the AIDS crisis’, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 26: 187-208.

Connell, R.W., J. Crawford, S. Kippax, G. W. Dowsett, G. Bond, D. Baxter, L. Watson, and R. Berg 1987:

Social aspects of the prevention of AIDS. Study A, report no. 1. Method and sample, Sydney: School of Behavioral Sciences, Macquarie University.

Connell, R.W. and S. Kippax 1989:

Practice and pleasure: sexuality in a sample of gay and bisexual men. Sydney: School of Behavioral Sciences, Macquarie University. [Revised version published as: Connell, R. W., and Kippax, S. (1990). ‘Sexuality in the AIDS crisis: Patterns of sexual practice and pleasure in a sample of gay and bisexual men’, *The Journal of Sex Research*, 27: 167-196.]

Connell, R.W. 1995:

Masculinities, Allen & Unwin, St. Leonards.

Connell, R.W., and G.W. Dowsett (eds) 1992:

Rethinking Sex: Social Theory and Sexuality Research, Melbourne University Press, Carlton.

Connerton, P. (ed) 1976:

Critical Sociology, Penguin Books Middlesex.

Connors, D. 1988:

‘A continuum of researcher-participant relationships: An analysis and critique’, *Advances in Nursing Science*, 10 (4): 32-42.

Coxon, A. 1995:

‘Networks and sex: the use of social networks as method and substance in researching gay men’s response to HIV/AIDS’, in Parker and Gagnon, 1995.

Crawford, J., S. Birmingham, and S. Kippax 1996:

An analysis of trends over time in social and behavioural factors related to the transmission of HIV in men who have sex with men, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

Crawford, J., S. Kippax, P. Rodden, S. Donohoe, and P. Van de Ven 1998:

Male-Call 96. National telephone survey of men who have sex with men, National Centre in HIV Social Research, Macquarie University, Sydney.

Darsey, J. 1981:

‘Gayspeak: a response’, in Chesebro, 1981a.

Darsey, J. and F. Jandt 1981:

‘Coming out as a communicative process’, in Chesebro, 1981a.

Delaney, S. 1999:

Times Square Red, Times Square Blue, New York University Press, New York.

Deleuze, G. 1977:

‘Nomad thought’, in Allison, 1977.

D’Emilio, J. 1983:

Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Derrida, J. 1973:

Speech and Phenomena, Northwestern University Press, Evanston.

de Wit, J., E. de Vroome, T. Sandfort, and G. van Griensven 1997:

‘Homosexual encounters in different venues’, *International Journal of STDs and AIDS*, 8 (2): 130-134.

Donovan, J. 1992:

‘Homosexual, gay, and lesbian: Defining the words and sampling the populations’, in Minton, 1992.

Dowsett, G. 1990:

‘Reaching men who have sex with men in Australia: an overview of AIDS education: community intervention and community attachment strategies’, *Australian Journal of Social Issues*, 25 (3), August.

Dowsett, G. 1996:

Practicing Desire: Homosexual sex in the era of AIDS, Stanford University Press, Stanford.

Dowsett, G., M.D. Davis and R. W. Connell 1992:

‘Working class homosexuality and HIV/AIDS prevention: Some recent research from Sydney, Australia’, *Psychology and Health*, 6: 313-324.

Dowsett, G., J. Bollen, D. McInnes, M. Couch, and B. Edwards 2001:

‘HIV/AIDS and constructs of gay community: researching education practice within community-based health promotion for gay men’, *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 4 (3): 205-223.

Dubois-Arber, F., B. Spencer and A. Jeannin 1997:

‘Methodological problems in trend analysis of sexual behaviour’ in Bancroft, 1997.

Easterbrook, P., S. Chmiel, D. Hoover, A. Saah, R. Kaslow, L. Kingsley and R. Detels 1993:

‘Racial and ethnic differences in human immunodeficiency virus type 1 (HIV-1) seroprevalence among homosexual and bisexual men: the multicenter AIDS cohort study’, *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 138 (6): 415-429.

Eigo, J. 2001:

‘Sexual ecology: an activist critique’, Sex Panic!, <http://www.geocities.com/West Hollywood/Heights/5777/ctq.htm>.

Farran, D. 1990:

‘“Seeking Susan”: producing statistical information on young people’s leisure’, in Stanley, 1990.

Fay, B. 1987:

Critical Social Science: Liberation and its Limits, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Flax, J. 1983:

'Political philosophy and the patriarchal unconscious: a psychoanalytic perspective on epistemology and metaphysics', in Harding and Hintikka 1983.

Foster, H. (ed) 1983:

The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture, Bay Press, Washington.

Foucault, M. 1980:

The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction, Vintage Books, New York.

Fraser, N. and L. Nicholson 1988:

'Social criticism with philosophy: an encounter between feminism and postmodernism', in Nicholson, 1990.

Freiberg, P. 1984:

'Gay voices from the Third World … Are we listening?', *The Advocate*, 386.

Fuss, D. (ed) 1991:

Inside/Out: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories, Routledge, Chapman and Paul, New York.

Gagnon, J. and R. Parker 1995:

'Conceiving sexuality' in Parker and Gagnon, 1995.

Gagnon, J. and W. Simon (eds) 1967:

Sexual Deviance, Harper and Row, New York.

J. Gagnon and W. Simon 1973:

Sexual Conduct, Hutchinson and Co., London.

Garfinkel, H. 1967:

Studies in Ethnomethodology, Polity Press, Cambridge.

Gay Left Collective (eds) 1980:

Homosexuality: Power and Politics, Allison and Busby, London.

Glaser, B. and A. Strauss 1967:

The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research, Aldine Publishing Co., New York.

Gonsiorek, J. 1982:

'Mental health: introduction', in Paul et al., 1982.

Goodman, G., G. Lakey, J. Lashof and E. Thorne 1983:

No Turning Back: Lesbian and Gay Liberation for the 80s, New Society Publishers, Philadelphia.

Goodman, P. 1969:

'Memoirs of an ancient activist', in McCaffrey, 1972.

Goodman, P. 1970:

Growing Up Absurd, Sphere Books, Aylesbury.

Goulden, T. (ed) 1985:

An Introduction to Counseling Lesbians and Gay Men, Gay and Lesbian Counseling Service, Sydney.

Gramsci, A. 1971:

Selections from the Prison Notebooks, International Publishers, New York.

Grierson, J. 1997:

'He's in, he's out, and he's just embarrassing: Changes in the conceptualisation of gay community as a result of the AIDS epidemic', paper presented at AIDS Impact: 3rd International Conference on Biopsychosocial Aspects of HIV Infection, 22-25 June 1997, Melbourne.

Guattari, F. 1984:

Molecular Revolution, Penguin Books, London.

Habermas, H. 1974:

'Theory and practice in a scientific civilization', in Connerton, 1976.

Habermas, J. 1979:

Communication and the Evolution of Society, Beacon, Boston.

Habermas, J. 1983:

'Modernity – an incomplete project', in Foster, 1983.

Halkitis, P. 2000:

'Masculinity in the age of AIDS: HIV-seropositive gay men and the "Buff Agenda"', in Nardi, 2000.

Hall, S. and T. Jefferson (eds) 1976:

Resistance through Rituals, Hutchinson and Co., London.

Harding, S. and M.B. Hintikka (eds) 1983:

Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science, D. Reidel Publishing Co., Dordrecht, Holland.

Harding, S. 1986:

The Science Question in Feminism, Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Harris, D. 1997:

The Rise and Fall of Gay Culture, Hyperion, New York.

Harry, J. 1986:

'Sampling gay men', *Journal of Sex Research*, 22 (1): 21-34.

J. Hart, J. and D. Richardson (eds) 1981a:

The Theory and Practice of Homosexuality, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Hart, J. and D. Richardson 1981b:

'The development and maintenance of a homosexual identity', in Hart and Richardson, 1981a.

Hart, J. and D. Richardson 1981c:

'Married and isolated homosexuals', in Hart and Richardson, 1981a.

Hayes, J.J. 1981:

'Gayspeak', in Chesebro, 1981.

Healy, M. 1995:

Gay Skins: Class, Masculinity and Queer Appropriation, Cassell, London.

Held, D. 1980:

Introduction to Critical Theory, Hutchinson and Co., London.

Herdt, G. (ed) 1992:

Gay Culture in America. Essays from the Field, Beacon Press, Boston.

Herek, G. and E. Glunt 1995:

'Identity and community among gay and bisexual men in the AIDS era. Preliminary findings from the Sacramento Men's Health Study', in Herek and Greene (1995).

Herek, G. and B. Greene (eds) 1995:

AIDS, Identity and Community. The HIV Epidemic and Lesbians and Gay Men, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Hesse, M. 1980:

Revolution and Reconstruction in the Philosophy of Science, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

Hickson, F., P. Weatherburn, P. Davies, and P. Keogh 1993:

The Gay Men's Sex Survey at Pride '93, Project Sigma, London.

Hickson, F., P. Davies, and P. Weatherburn 1997:

Community HIV/AIDS Prevention Strategy Research and Development Review 1997, Project Sigma, London.

Hite, S. 1981:

The Hite Report on Male Sexuality, Alfred A. Knopf, New York.

Hocquenghem, G. 1978:

Homosexual Desire, Allison and Busby, London.

Hood, D., G. Prestage, J. Crawford, C. O'Reilly and T. Sorrell 1994:

The BANGAR Report, Bisexuality and Non Gay-Attachment Research, unpublished monograph, Western Sydney Area Health Service, Sydney.

Hubbard, R. 1979:

‘Have only men evolved?’, in R. Hubbard et al., 1982.

Hubbard, R., M. Henifen and B. Fried (eds) 1982:

Biological Woman – the convenient myth: a collection of feminist essays and a comprehensive bibliography, Schenkman Publishing Co., Cambridge MA.

Jabukowski, F. 1976:

Ideology and Superstructure, Allison and Busby, London.

Jay, K. and A. Young (eds) 1972:

Out of the Closets: Voices of Gay Liberation, Douglas Books, New York.

Jay, K. and A. Young (eds) 1975:

After You’re Out, Links Books, New York.

Jay, K., and A. Young 1979a:

The Gay Report: Lesbians and Gay Men Speak Out About Sexual Experiences and Lifestyles, Summit Books, New York.

Jay, K. and A. Young (eds) 1979b:

Lavender Culture, Jove/HBJ Books, New York.

Johnson, A., J. Wadsworth, K. Wellings and J. Field 1994:

Sexual Attitudes and Lifestyles, Blackwell Scientific Press, London.

Johnson, R. 1979:

‘Three problematics of a theory of working class culture’, in Clarke et al., 1979.

Johnston, C. 1981a:

‘Male homosexuals and the elusion of liberation: problems of theory and practice’, paper for the 7th National Homosexual Conference, Adelaide; published as ‘Foucault and gay liberation’, *Arena*, 61 1982.

Johnston, C. 1981b:

‘The new gay radicalisation’, paper for the Socialism and Homosexuality Conference, Melbourne, 25-26 April.

Johnston, R. 1985:

'Garry Bennett: the happy hedonist', *Campaign*, 112: 9-10.

Kaslow, R., D. Ostrow, R. Detels, J. Phair, B.F. Polk, and C. Rinaldo 1987:

'The Multicenter AIDS Cohort Study: Rationale, organisation, and selected characteristics of participants', *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 126 (2): 310-318.

Kauth, M. 2000:

True Nature: A Theory of Sexual Attraction, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, New York.

Keller, E.F. 1978:

'Gender and science', in Harding and Hintikka 1983.

Kelly, J., D. Murphy, R. Roffman, L. Solomon, R. Winett, L. Stevenson, J. Koob, D. Ayotte, B. Flynn, and L. Desiderato 1992:

'Acquired immune deficiency syndrome/human immunodeficiency virus risk behaviour among gay men in small cities', *Archives of Internal Medicine*, 152: 2293-2297.

Kinsey, A., C. Martin and W. Pomeroy 1948:

Sexual Behavior in the Human Male, W.B. Saunders and Co., Philadelphia.

Kinsey, A., P. Gebhard, C. Martin and W. Pomeroy 1953:

Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, W.B. Saunders and Co., Philadelphia.

Kippax, S. 1998:

'The researcher and the researched: the reflexive partnership between Macquarie University and Sydney gay community', Paper presented to Second European Conference on the Methods and Results of Social and Behavioural Research on AIDS, Paris, January 1998.

Kippax, S., J. Crawford, P. Rodden, and K. Benton 1994:

Report on Project Male-Call: National telephone survey of homosexually active men, Commonwealth Department of Health, Housing and Human Services, Canberra.

Kippax, S., J. Crawford, P. Rodden, and S. Donohoe 1997:

Report on Project Male-Call II: National telephone survey of homosexually active men, Commonwealth Department of Health and Family Services Canberra.

Krol, J. 1990:

'Restroom to tearoom, a cultural conversion: A note on Humphreys, Delph, and Swindler', *Deviant Behavior*, 11: 273-280.

Lacan, J. 1977:

Ecrits, Norton Publications, New York.

Latour, L. and S. Woolgar 1986:

Laboratory Life. The Construction of Scientific Facts, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

Laumann, E., J Gagnon, R. Michael and S. Michaels 1994:

The Social Organisation of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Laumann, E. and J. Gagnon 1995:

'A sociological perspective on sexual action', in Parker and Gagnon, 1995.

Layland, J. 1990:

'On the conflicts of doing feminist research into masculinity', in Stanley, 1990.

Leder, D. 1990:

The Absent Body, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Levine, M. 1992:

'The life and death of gay clones', in Herdt, 1992.

Levine, M. 1998:

Gay Macho: The life and death of the homosexual clone, New York University Press, New York.

Locke, P. 1997:

'Male images in the gay mass media and bear-oriented magazines: analysis and contrast', in Wright, 1997a.

Lyotard, J-F. 1984:

The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge, trans. G. Bennington and B. Massumi, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

Mansergh, G., G. Colfax, G. Marks, M. Rader, R. Guzman, and S. Buchbinder 2001:

'The Circuit Party Men's Health Survey: findings and implications for gay and bisexual men', *American Journal of Public Health*, 91 (6): 953-958.

Marmor. J. (ed) 1980a:

Homosexual Behaviour: A modern reappraisal, Basic Books, New York.

Marmor, J. 1980b:

'Overview: The multiple roots of homosexual behaviour', in Marmor, 1980a.

Martin, J. and L. Dean 1990:

'Developing a community sample of gay men for an epidemiologic study of AIDS', *American Behavioural Scientist*, 33 (5), May/June: 546-561.

McCaffrey, J. (ed) 1972:

The Homosexual Dialectic, Prentice-Hall Inc., New Jersey.

McInnes, D., M. Hurley, G. Prestage, and O. Hendry 2001

Enacting Sexual Contexts: Negotiating the self, sex and risk in sex on premises venues. School of Cultural Inquiry University of Western Sydney, Sydney

McIntosh, M. and P. Rock (eds) 1974:

Deviance and Social Control, Tavistock Publications, London.

McKusick, L., W. Horstman, and T. Coates 1985:

'AIDS and sexual behaviour reported by gay men in San Francisco', *American Journal of Public Health*, 75: 493-496.

McMillan, D. and D. Chavis 1986:

'Sense of community: A definition and theory', *Journal of Community Psychology*, 14: 6-23.

McPherson, K. 1983:

'Feminist methods: a new paradigm for nursing research', *Advances in Nursing Science*, January: 17-25.

Meyer, I. and M. Colten 1999:

'Sampling gay men: random digit dialing versus sources in the gay community', *Journal of Homosexuality*, 37: 99-110.

Michael, R.T., J.H. Gagnon, E.O. Laumann and G. Kolata 1994:

Sex in America. A Definitive Survey, Little Brown and Co, London.

Mills, T., R. Stall, L. Pollack, J. Paul, D. Binson, J. Canchola, and J. Catania 2001:

'Health-related characteristics of men who have sex with men: a comparison of those living in "gay ghettos" with those living elsewhere', *American Journal of Public Health*, June, 91 (6): 980-983.

Minton, H. (ed) 1992:

Gay and Lesbian Studies, Haworth Press, New York.

Morin, J. and E. Garfinkle 1981:

'Male Homophobia', in Chesebro, 1981.

Morris, M. and P. Patton (eds) 1979:

Michel Foucault: Power, Truth, Strategy, Feral Publications, Sydney.

Murray, S.O. 1984:

Social theory, homosexual realities, Gai Saber Monograph no. 3, Gay Academic Union, New York.

Murray, S.O. 1992:

'Components of gay community in San Francisco' in Herdt, 1992.

Murray, S.O. 1996:

American Gay, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

Myers, T., G. Godin, L. Calzavara, J. Lambert, and D. Locker 1993:

The Canadian Survey of Gay and Bisexual Men and HIV Infection: Men's Survey, Canadian AIDS Society, Ottawa.

Myers, T., D. Allman, E. Jackson, and K. Orr 1995:

‘Variation in sexual orientations among men who have sex with men, and their current sexual partners’, *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 86 (6): 384-388.

namaste, k. (sic) 1992:

‘Deconstruction, lesbian and gay studies, and interdisciplinary work: Theoretical, political and institutional strategies’, in Minton, 1992.

Nardi, P. (ed) 2000:

Gay Masculinities, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks.

Nicholson, L. (ed) 1990:

Feminism/Postmodernism, Routledge, New York.

Odets, W. 1995:

In the Shadow of the Epidemic: Being HIV-Negative in the Age of AIDS, Cassell, London.

O'Reilly, C. 1992:

Sydney West Men who have Sex with Men Project. A Report on Initial Outreach Work to Non-Gay Identifying Men who have Sex with Men Living in Western Sydney, Western Sydney Area Health Service AIDS Education Unit, Sydney.

Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., Van de Ven, P., Prestage, G, and Kippax, S. 1999:

‘Too busy studying and no time for sex?’ Homosexually Active Male International Students and Sexual Health, National Centre in HIV Social Research, Sydney.

Parker, R. and J. Gagnon (eds) 1995:

Conceiving Sexuality: Approaches to Sex Research in a Postmodern World, Routledge, New York.

Patton, P. 1983:

‘Marxism in crisis: no difference’, in Allen and Patton, 1983.

Paul, J. 1984:

‘The bisexual identity: an idea without social recognition’, *Journal of Homosexuality*, (9) 2/3: 45-63.

Paul, W., J. Weinreich, J. Gonsiorek and M. Hotvedt (eds) 1982:

Homosexuality: Social, psychological, and biological issues, Sage, Beverly Hills.

Peacock, B., S. Eyre, S. Crouse Quinn, and S. Kegeles 2001:

'Delineating differences: sub-communities in the San Francisco gay community', *Culture, Health and Sexuality*, (3) 2: 183-201.

Perkins, R. and Bennett G. (eds) 1985:

Being a Prostitute. Prostitute Women and Prostitute Men, George Allen & Unwin, Sydney.

Perkins, R., G. Prestage, R. Sharp and F. Lovejoy 1994:

Sex Work and Sex Workers in Australia, University of NSW Press, Sydney.

Peterson, J.L. 1992:

'Black men and their same-sex desires and behaviours', in Herdt, 1992.

Plummer, K. (ed) 1981a:

The Making of the Modern Homosexual, Hutchinson and Co., London.

Plummer, K. 1981b:

'Going gay', in Hart and Richardson, 1981a.

Poulantzas, N. 1978:

State, Power, Socialism, Verso, London.

Prestage, G. 1992:

Report on the Western Sydney Beats Project, Stage 2, unpublished report, Macquarie University AIDS Unit, Sydney.

Prestage, G. and D. Hood 1993:

'Targeting non gay-attached homosexually active working-class men', paper delivered to Social Aspects of AIDS Conference, July 1993, London.

Prestage, G., S. Kippax, J. Noble, J. Crawford, D. Baxter and D. Cooper. 1994:

'Negotiated safety and condom use in a sample of gay men', Paper presented at 6th National Conference of the Australian Society for HIV Medicine, Sydney.

Prestage, G., S. Kippax, J. Noble, J. Crawford and D. Cooper 1995a:

Methods and sample. Report A.1. Sydney Men and Sexual Health, HIV, AIDS and Society Publications, Sydney.

Prestage, G., S. Kippax, J. Crawford, J. Noble, P. Van de Ven, D. Campbell, B. Baxter and D. Cooper 1995b:

Sexual identity and sexual behaviour with both men and women in a sample of homosexually active men in Sydney, Australia. Report C. 2. Sydney Men and Sexual Health, HIV, AIDS and Society Publications, Sydney.

Prestage, G, S. Kippax, J. Noble, J. Crawford, D. Baxter and D. Cooper 1995d:

A demographic, behavioural and clinical profile of HIV-positive men in a sample of homosexually active men in Sydney, Australia. Report B.3, Sydney Men and Sexual Health, HIV, AIDS and Society Publications, Sydney.

Prestage, G., S. Kippax, P. Van de Ven, J. French, J. Richters, D. Campbell, J. Crawford, J., A. Grulich, P. Kinder and J. Kaldor 1996a:

The Sydney Gay Community Periodic Survey, February 1996. A Demographic and Behavioural Profile of a Cross-Sectional Sample of Homosexsually Active Men in Sydney, Australia, HIV, AIDS and Society Publications , Sydney.

Prestage, G., and P. Drielsma 1996d:

'Bisexual men in semi-metropolitan NSW', *Australian Journal of Public Health*, (20) 4: 386-392.

Prestage, G., S. Knox, S. Kippax, K. Benton, M. Mahat, J. Crawford, J. Richters, J. French and P. Van de Ven 1997a:

A Demographic and Behavioural Comparison of Three Samples of Homosexually Active Men in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, National Centre in HIV Social Research , Sydney.

Prestage, G, P. Van de Ven, S. Knox, A. Grulich, S., Kippax and J. Crawford 1999:

The Sydney Gay Community Periodic Surveys 1996-1999: Changes over time, National Centre in HIV Social Research, Sydney

Prestage, G., S. Kippax, J. Crawford, A. Grulich, P. Van de Ven and S. Knox 2000:

Changes in behaviour over time: 1993-1998. Report C.5, Sydney Men and Sexual Health. National Centre in HIV Social Research, Sydney.

Prestage, G. 2002:

'Review: True Nature. A theory of sexual attraction', *Culture, Health and Sexuality* (4) 2.

Reason, P. and J. Rowan (eds) 1981:

Human Inquiry: A Sourcebook of New Paradigm Research, Wiley Publications, New York.

Reiss, A. 1962:

'The social integration of queers and peers', *Social Problems*, 9:102-119.

Reiss, A. 1967:

'Sex offences: the marginal status of the adolescent', in Gagnon and Simon, 1967.

Research and Designs Corporation 1984:

Designing an Effective AIDS Prevention Strategy for San Francisco: Results from the First Probability Sample of an Urban Gay Male Community, San Francisco AIDS Foundation, San Francisco.

Research and Designs Corporation 1985:

A Report on Designing an Effective AIDS Prevention Campaign Strategy for San Francisco, San Francisco AIDS Foundation, San Francisco.

Richardson, D. 1981:

'Lesbian identities', in Hart and Richardson, 1981a:

Richters, J. 1998:

'Understanding sexual orientation: A plea for clarity', *Reproductive Health Matters*, 6 (12), November: 144-149.

Richters, J., G. Prestage, S. Lubowitz, S. Bergan 1997:

SWASH Report, National Centre in HIV Social Research, Macquarie University, Sydney.

Rofes, E. 1983:

'I Thought People Like that Killed Themselves': Lesbians, Gay Men and Suicide, Grey Fox Press, San Francisco.

Rofes, E. 1996:

Reviving the Tribe: Regenerating Gay Men's Sexuality and Culture in the Ongoing Epidemic, The Haworth Press, New York.

Rofes, E. 1997:

'Academics as bears: thoughts on middle class eroticization of workingmen's bodies', in Wright 1997a.

Rofes, E. 1998:

Dry Bones Breathe: Gay Men creating post-AIDS Identities and Cultures, The Haworth Press, New York.

Rofes, E. 2001:

'Imperial New York: destruction and disneyfication under Emperor Giuliani', *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 7 (1): 101-109.

Ross, M. 1983:

The Married Homosexual Man: A Psychological Study, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.

Ross M. 1986:

Psychovenereology, Praeger, New York.

Rotello, G. 1997:

Sexual Ecology: AIDS and the Destiny of Gay Men, Dutton, New York.

Rubin, G. 1984:

'Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality', in Vance, 1984.

Saghir, M. and E. Robins 1973:

Male and Female Homosexuality, Williams and Wilkins, Baltimore.

SAMOIS (eds) 1982:

Coming to Power, Alyson Publications, Boston.

Sandfort, T. 1997:

‘Sampling male homosexuality’, in Bancroft, 1997.

Sartre, J-P. (1943) 1958:

Being and Nothingness, Methuen & Co., London.

Sartre, J-P. 1968:

Search for a Method, Vintage Books, New York.

Schwartz, H. and J. Jacobs 1979:

Qualitative Sociology. A Method to the Madness, The Free Press, New York.

Sell, R. and C. Petrulio 1996:

‘Sampling homosexuals, bisexuals, gays and lesbians for public health research: a review of the literature from 1990 to 1992’, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 30: 31-47.

Sell, R. and J. Blake Becker 2001:

‘Sexual orientation data collection and progress toward Healthy People 2010’, *American Journal of Public Health*, 91 (6): 876-882.

Sherr, L. (ed) 1993:

AIDS and the heterosexual population, Harwood Academic publishers, Geneva.

Shilts, R. 1977:

‘Gay youth, the lonely youth’, *The Advocate*, 1 June.

Signorile, M. 1997:

Life Outside. The Signorile Report on Gay Men: Sex, Drugs, Muscles, and the Passages of Life, Harper Collins Publishers, New York.

Simpson, M. (ed) 1996:

Anti-Gay, Freedom Editions, London.

Sister Mary Third Secret of Fatima 1993:

‘A nun’s story’, *National AIDS Bulletin*, 7, May: 17-19.

Snyder, T. 2001:

‘Is anal sex really the villain?’, letter posted to *Gay Today* website, 23 March 2001, <http://www.gaytoday.badpuppy.com/letters.htm>.

Socarides, C. 1978:

Homosexuality, Jason Aronson, New York.

Stambolian, G. 1984:

Male Fantasies/Gay Realities, Sea Horse Press, New York.

Stanley, L. (ed) 1990:

Feminist Praxis: Research, Theory and Epistemology in Feminist Sociology, Routledge, London.

L. Stanley, L. and S. Wise 1990:

‘Method, methodology and epistemology in feminist research processes’, in Stanley, 1990.

Stanley, L. and S. Wise 1993:

Breaking Out Again: Feminist ontology and epistemology, Routledge, London.

Starr, J.M. 1983:

‘Toward a social phenomenology of aging: Studying the self process in biographical work’, *International Journal of Aging and Human Development*, 16(4) 1982-1983.

Starr, P. 1982:

The Social Transformation of American Medicine, Basic Books, New York.

Taylor, L. 1980:

‘The hunt, hunter and hunted’, *Gay Left*, 10.

Taylor, S. and R. Bogdan 1984:

Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods. The Search for Meanings, John Wiley & Sons New York.

Tindall, B., C. Swanson, B. Donovan, and D. Cooper 1989:

‘Sexual practices and condom usage in a cohort of homosexual men in relation to human immunodeficiency virus status’, *The Medical Journal of Australia*, 151: 318-322.

Trenchard, L. and C. Warren 1984:

Something to Tell You, unpublished monograph, London Gay Teenage Group, London.

Tsang, D. (ed) 1981:

The Age Taboo, Alyson Publications, Boston.

Tucker, S. 1996:

‘Blight and fruit: some thoughts on sex, death, and censorship’, in Bronski, 1996.

Turner, C., H. Miller and S. Rogers 1997:

‘Survey measurement of sexual behaviour: problems and progress’, in Bancroft, 1997.

Tyler, C. 1991:

‘Boys will be girls: the politics of gay drag’, in Fuss, 1991.

Van de Ven, P., G. Prestage, J. French, S. Knox, and S. Kippax 1998.

‘Increase in unprotected anal intercourse with casual partners among Sydney gay men in 1996-98.’ *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 22*, 814-818

Van de Ven, P., P. Rawstorne, J. Crawford, and S. Kippax, 2001

Facts and Figures, National Centre in HIV Social Research, Sydney

Van de Ven, P., S. Kippax, J. Crawford, P. Rawstorne, G. Prestage, A, Grulich and D. Murphy (in press) 2002

‘In a minority of gay men, sexual risk practice indicates strategic positioning for perceived risk reduction rather than unbridled sex’, *AIDS Care*.

Vance, C. (ed) 1984:

Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston.

Warren, C. (ed) 1976:

Sexuality, Encounters, Identities and Relationships, Sage Publications, Beverley Hills.

Weatherburn, P., P. Davies, A. Hunt A. Coxon and T. McManus 1990:
'Heterosexual behaviour in a large cohort of homosexually active men in England and Wales', *AIDS Care*, 2 (4): 319-324.

Weatherburn, P. and P. Davies 1993:
'Behavioural bisexuality among men', in Sherr, 1993.

Weeks, J. 1980:

'Capitalism and the organisation of sex', in Gay Left Collective, 1980.

Weeks, J. 1981a:

Sex, Politics and Society, Longman Group Publications, London.

Weeks, J. 1981b:

'The problems of older homosexuals', in Hart and Richardson, 1981a.

Weeks, J. 1995:

'History, desire and identities', in Parker and Gagnon, 1995.

Weinberg, W. and C. Williams 1974:

Male Homosexuals, Oxford University Press, New York.

Weintraub, B. 2000:
'Hyacinthine love or some thoughts on cock-rubbing and the cultural tyranny of butt-fucking', *White Crane: A Journal of Gay Men's Spirituality*, 43, winter 1999/2000.

White, E. 1981:

States of Desire, Bantam Books, New York.

Wickham, G. 1991:

'Theorising sociology in the face of postmodernism', *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, 27 (3), November: 351-368.

Williams, R. 1981:

Culture, Fontana Paperbacks, Glasgow.

Wittman, C. 1970:

‘A gay manifesto’, in Jay and Young, 1972.

Worth, H., A. Reid, P. Saxton, T. Hughes, and R. Segedin 1997:

Male Call/Waea Mai Tane Ma: Report one: methodology and demographic characteristics, New Zealand AIDS Foundation, Auckland.

Wotherspoon, G. 1991:

City of the Plain. History of a gay subculture, Hale & Iremonger, Sydney.

Wright, L. (ed) 1997a:

The Bear Book: Readings in the History and Evolution of a Gay Male Subculture, The Haworth Press, New York

Wright, L. 1997b:

‘Introduction: Theoretical bears’, in Wright, 1997a.

Young, A. 1974:

‘On human identity and gay identity: a liberationist dilemma’, in Jay and Young, 1975.

Young, I. 1990:

‘The ideal of community and the politics of difference’, in Nicholson, 1990.