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**Gay and Bisexual Men, Self-Perception and  
Identity in Scotland, 1940 to 1980**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of  
Philosophy**

**Economic and Social History  
School of Social and Political Sciences**

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## **Abstract**

Limited legal reforms took place in England and Wales in 1967 that partially decriminalised private, adult, consensual homosexual acts. These reforms were not implemented in Scotland until 1980. This thesis documents the reasons why Scotland had to wait until 1980 to achieve legal equity with England and Wales and suggests that the combination of cultural and institutional silences regarding legal reform and an immediate valorization of the independent Scots Law system in the post-Wolfenden era hindered any moves for the 1967 legislation to be applied to Scotland.

This thesis then examines the life experiences of 24 gay and bisexual males who had experience of living in Scotland during the period when all homosexual acts were outlawed. This thesis offers an examination of how continued criminalisation coupled with the influence of negative and stigmatising discourses influenced self-perception and identity formation amongst gay and bisexual men. The thesis finds that the operation and dominance of negative discourses regarding homosexuality, coupled with the limited public demand for legal reform had significant implications for the identity formation and attitudes among the gay and bisexual men who participated in this research.

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## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, this thesis is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

Jeff M. Meek

## **Definitions and Abbreviations**

CHE	Committee for Homosexual Equality
CNC	Church and Nation Committee
CSMWC	Church of Scotland Moral Welfare Committee
GBM	Gay or Bisexual Males
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HLRS	Homosexual Law Reform Society
ICD	International Classification of Diseases
LGBT	Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender
MP	Member of Parliament
MRG	Minorities Research Group
NWHLRC	North West Homosexual Law Reform Committee
RWC/RCHOP	Report on the Committee on Homosexual Offences & Prostitution
SHRG	Scottish Homosexual Rights Group
SMG	Scottish Minorities Group
SNP	Scottish National Party
SSIDI	Semi-structured in-depth interviews
Homosexual	a term used to denote individuals who are sexually attracted to members of their own gender. In the context of this thesis this term is usually framed within medical or legal discourses.
Gay	a less formal term for homosexuals.
Bisexual	an individual who is attracted to both genders
Homophobia	a term used to describe a wide range of hostile attitudes towards homosexuals

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

The passing of the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act 1980 brought an end to the prosecution of private homosexual acts between consenting male adults aged 21 or over in Scotland. Similar legislation had been applied to England and Wales in 1967 partly as a result of the findings of the Report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution (hereafter the Wolfenden Report) headed by Sir John Wolfenden. The Wolfenden Report, published in September 1957, recommended a limited change in the law to end the criminalisation of homosexual acts.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the legal moves that occurred in England and Wales nearly a decade after the publication of the Wolfenden Report were not applied to Scotland. This raises the question as to what was different about Scotland that prevented legal equity with England and Wales until 1980.

### ***Scotland and Homosexual Law Reform***

A number of publications have offered interpretations of how homosexuality was viewed historically in Britain and offered an insight into the processes of homosexual law reform in this country. Jeffrey Weeks has published a variety of works that have attempted to explain how British legislators, politicians, and medics have viewed homosexuality, and how the processes of law reform have developed over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, Matt Cook *et al* have offered their interpretations of British society's relationship with homosexuality since the Middle Ages, and in particular, the shifts in discourses about same-sex desire.<sup>3</sup> Stephen Jeffery-Poulter has documented the struggle for law reform regarding homosexual acts in Britain from the 1950s onwards, with particular emphasis on the gay rights movement and the political processes involved in the quest for change.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Home Office Scottish Home Department, *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution* (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1967) (hereafter *RWC*)

<sup>2</sup> For example see, Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1977); \_\_\_\_\_, *Sex, Politics and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1981); \_\_\_\_\_, *The World We Have Won: The Remaking of Erotic and Intimate Life* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Matt Cook (ed.), *A Gay History of Britain: Love and Sex Between Men since the Middle Ages* (Oxford; Westport, Conn: Greenwood World Pub., 2007).

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Jeffery-Poulter, Peers, *Queers & Commons: The Struggle for Gay Law Reform from 1950 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1991).

However, with perhaps the exception of Jeffery-Poulter the majority of works concerning homosexuality and Britain fail to offer a convincing account of the law reform process in Scotland. Many of the works focusing on Britain are in fact neglecting the Scottish dimension. Weeks devotes fewer than 10 pages of *Coming Out* to Scottish issues, and stops short of offering an explanation as to why the 1967 legislation by-passed Scotland. Matt Cook *et al* offer an even narrower discussion, and most books of this nature focussing on a British perspective are in fact focussing on England (and Wales).<sup>5</sup>

Discussions on the nature of the Scottish homosexual law reform movement and on how homosexuality has been viewed by Scottish social, medical and political institutions have been left to a small number of Scottish-based writers. Roger Davidson and Gayle Davis, who have focused on the post-1967 push for homosexual law reform in Scotland, argue that the delay in implementing legal reform regarding homosexual acts in Scotland was due to a combination of factors. Firstly, there appeared to be a lack of appetite for reform amongst Scottish politicians. Secondly, the body of opinion amongst institutions such as Scottish churches and Scottish media was apparently against decriminalisation. Thirdly, evidential requirements under Scottish criminal law made the prosecution of consensual homosexual acts in private difficult to enforce.<sup>6</sup>

Brian Dempsey has detailed the development of the homosexual law reform movement in Scotland with particular emphasis on the structure and development of the Scottish Minorities Group (SMG) and its later incarnation the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group (SHRG).<sup>7</sup> Robert Orr has examined the development and motivations of the SMG against the oppositional forces of religion, patriarchy, and capitalism within Scottish society.<sup>8</sup>

Additionally, a small number of publications have detailed the life experiences of gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender individuals who have lived in Scotland at least for part

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<sup>5</sup> For further examples see, Graham Robb, *Strangers: Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Picador, 2003); Hugh David, *On Queer Street: A Social History of British Homosexuality* (London: Harper Collins, 1997).

<sup>6</sup> Roger Davidson & Gayle Davis, 'Sexuality and the State: the Campaign for Scottish Homosexual Law Reform, 1967 to 1980', *Contemporary British History* 20 (2006), pp. 533-558; \_\_\_\_\_, "'A Field for Private Members': The Wolfenden Committee and Scottish Homosexual Law Reform, 1957 to 1967", *Twentieth Century British History* 15 (2004), pp. 174-201.

<sup>7</sup> Brian Dempsey, *Thon Wey: Aspects of Scottish Lesbian and Gay Activism, 1968 to 1992* (Edinburgh: USG, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Robert W. Orr, 'Capitalism, Patriarchy and Gay Oppression: A Study of the Scottish Minorities Group'. MA Dissertation, University of Edinburgh, 1980.

of their lives.<sup>9</sup> Oral history narratives such as these offer some subjective experiences of living in Scotland at a time when all homosexual acts were proscribed by law but by in large these publications are projects of remembering or discuss the politics of visibility rather than critical examinations of the impact continued criminalisation had on Scottish homosexuals.<sup>10</sup> Brian Dempsey has conducted some historical research into the legal treatment of sodomy offenders in nineteenth-century Scotland.<sup>11</sup> My own research has examined the treatment of sodomy offenders brought before the High Courts in Scotland during the period 1885 to 1930.<sup>12</sup>

Therefore, due the paucity of research that has focused on the processes of law reform in Scotland regarding homosexual acts, and the subjective experiences of homosexuals to what was happening within Scottish society during this time, it is important to examine in more detail several factors. Firstly, Davidson and Davis have argued that the body of opinion among Scottish legal, religious, and political institutions towards a change in the law regarding homosexual acts was largely unfavourable. Orr, who viewed the SMG's association with the Church of Scotland, in particular, as a hindrance to reform, has also forwarded this argument. Secondly, it is important to ascertain what social attitudes to homosexuality existed in Scotland, and whether these attitudes mirrored legal, religious and political opinions on homosexuality. Additionally, as the majority of research conducted in Scotland regarding homosexuality and law reform has focussed on institutions, it would be helpful to ascertain what impact potentially negative discourses had on male homosexuals.

### ***Homosexual Identity Formation***

The issue of identity formation among homosexuals has attracted a fair amount of research particularly since the issue of homosexual law reform came to the fore in the latter half of the twentieth century. The influence of negative discourses of homosexuality on this group has been the subject of most enquiries of this nature. R. R. Troiden has argued that experiencing homosexual impulses during adolescence can have a negative effect on self-

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<sup>9</sup> For example, Ellen Galford & Ken Wilson (eds.), *Rainbow City: Stories from Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Word Power Books, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> See page 9 for a description of some of the terms used in this thesis

<sup>11</sup> Brian Dempsey, "By the Law of This and Every Well Governed Realm; Investigating Accusations of Sodomy in Nineteenth Century Scotland", *Juridical Review* (2006), pp. 103-130

<sup>12</sup> Jeff M. Meek, 'The Legal and Social Construction of the Sodomite in Scotland, 1885-1930' (University of Glasgow, MSC Dissertation, 2006).

perception leading to feelings of isolation, apartness and inadequacy.<sup>13</sup> As adults homosexuals may, as a result of negative discourses on homosexuality, experience feelings of low self-esteem and have difficulty managing their sexual impulses to prevent disclosure of their homosexuality.<sup>14</sup> Henry Milton and Gary MacDonald have argued that identifying as a homosexual is a lifelong process subject to negotiation and compromise and an awareness of possible reactions to self-disclosure.<sup>15</sup> In an environment where homosexual acts were illegal, such as Scotland in the years before 1980, then a decision to self-disclose or to be identified by others as homosexual could have significant implications for the individual.

The majority of literature on homosexual identity formation suggests that there exist a number of stages in identity formation.<sup>16</sup> Generally speaking these models of homosexual identity formation follow a similar line of development from adolescence through to adulthood. However, these models tend to ignore specific historic and cultural factors that may affect the way in which patterns of identity formation are sculpted.<sup>17</sup> With reference to Scotland these factors may relate to specific religious, cultural and legal attitudes and practices, which may offer alternate discourses on homosexuality. Therefore, although models of identity development in homosexuals may be helpful in understanding how Scottish sexual minorities have developed individual identities, it is important also to examine these other factors, which may have a critical impact on self-perception and identity formation.

### **Research Questions and Aims**

With the issues noted above in mind, four research questions have been developed for the purposes of this thesis. This thesis will explore the reasons for the delay in bringing about

<sup>13</sup> R. R. Troiden, 'Becoming Homosexual: A Model of Gay Identity Acquisition', *Psychiatry* 4 (1979), pp. 362-373

<sup>14</sup> R. R. Troiden, 'The Formation of Homosexual Identities', *Journal of Homosexuality* 17 (1989), pp. 43-73

<sup>15</sup> Henry L Milton & Gary J. MacDonald, 'Homosexual Identity Formation as a Developmental Process', *Journal of Homosexuality* 9 (1984), pp. 91-104

<sup>16</sup> For example see, Troiden, 'Becoming Homosexual'; \_\_\_\_\_, 'The Formation of Homosexual Identities'; Milton & MacDonald, 'Homosexual Identity Formation'; Vivienne Cass, 'Homosexuality Identity Formation: Testing a Theoretical Model', *Journal of Sex Research* 20 (1984), pp. 143-167; E. Coleman, 'Developmental Stages in the Coming-Out Process', *American Behavioral Scientist* 24 (1982), pp. 469-482; Dana Rosenfeld, *The Changing of the Guard: Lesbian and Gay Elders, Identity, and Social Change* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003)

<sup>17</sup> For example of critiques of identity formation models see, Elizur, Yoel & Arlette Mintzer, 'A Framework for the Formation of Gay Male Identity: Processes Associated with Adult Attachment Style and Support from Family and Friends', *Archives of Sexual Behaviour* 30 (2001), pp. 143-167; Stephen Cox & Cynthia Gallois, 'Gay and Lesbian Identity Development', *Journal of Homosexuality* 30 (1996), pp. 1-30; M. J. Eliason, 'Identity Formation for Lesbian, Bisexual and Gay Persons: Beyond a "Minoritizing" View', *Journal of Homosexuality* 30 (1996), pp. 31-58.

homosexual law reform in Scotland, with particular focus on the Scottish legal system and cultural and religious factors peculiar to Scotland. Further, this research will examine what effects the criminalisation of homosexual acts had on the attitudes and experiences of gay and bisexual males (GBM) who lived in Scotland during that period. Additionally, this thesis will explore the discourses regarding homosexuality that were in operation during the period 1940 to 1980, and, what influence (if any) operational discourses regarding homosexuality had on the formation of identities amongst Scottish GBM.

One of the aims of this thesis is to widen understanding of why Scotland was not included in the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which offered limited decriminalisation of homosexual acts in England and Wales. Additionally, it will record the experiences of gay and bisexual men who lived in Scotland during a period when all homosexual acts were outlawed, and, will offer a critical examination of how the continued criminalisation of homosexual acts affected the sexual identity formation and self-perception of GBM.

### ***Chapter Outline***

This thesis is divided into 7 chapters. Chapter 2 examines the social, political, cultural, and legal treatment of homosexuality within Scotland during the period c.1930 to 1980. Further, this chapter examines the potential reasons as to why Scotland was not included in the 1967 legislation that offered the limited decriminalisation of homosexual acts in England and Wales. Additionally the activities of the Scottish Minorities Group (SMG), and its later incarnation the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group (SHRG) have been examined to offer an understanding of the homosexual law reform movement in Scotland, and how this movement interacted with the legal, social, religious, medical and political communities of the nation.

Chapter 3 details the theories and methodologies that have informed this thesis, with particular reference to the qualitative methods that have been employed to examine the self-perceptions of GBM in Scotland and the processes of identity formation among this group. Interviews were conducted with 24 GBM who have had experience of living in Scotland during the period when all homosexual acts were proscribed by law.

Chapter 4 details the early-life experiences of the interviewees and discusses how perceptions of their sexuality, and society's responses to their sexuality, shaped their interpretations of homosexuality and early identity formation. Dana Rosenfeld's model of

accrediting and discrediting discourse theory<sup>18</sup> has been developed to offer an understanding of identity formation among this group of GBM.

Chapter 5 examines how medical theories of homosexuality influenced self-perception and identity formation amongst GBM in Scotland. This chapter offers a general discussion of the impact of medical theories on the interviewees but also offers two case studies drawn from the interviews, where medical intervention was sought by these men to address unhappiness about their sexuality.

Chapter 6 examines how religious attitudes to homosexuality impacted upon identity formation among the interviewees. This chapter discusses how comfortable the interviewees felt about the potential conflict of their religious beliefs and their sexuality. A number of the interviewees made active attempts to negotiate an identity that recognised both their sexuality and their spirituality.

Chapter 7 returns to the themes identified in the introduction to the thesis and discusses some of the analysis conducted in the preceding chapters. These themes relate to the social, cultural, political, and legal attitudes to homosexuality in Scotland from the post-war period to 1980. Additionally, Chapter 7 will assess the impact of these attitudes on the self-perception and identity formation amongst this group of GBM in Scotland.

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<sup>18</sup> Rosenfeld, *The Changing of the Guard*



## **Chapter 2**

### **Homosexuality, Wolfenden, and the ‘Public Interest’ – A Scottish Perspective**

The publication of The Report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution (hereafter the Wolfenden Report) in 1957 followed three years of investigations into the habits, profiles, and legal attitudes to homosexuality and prostitution in Britain. It was the first major intervention by any national authority in Britain into homosexual behaviour and although much research subsequently has focused chiefly on England, Davidson and Davis state that it has ‘figured prominently in the historiography of homosexuality in later twentieth-century Britain’.<sup>19</sup> The recommendations of the report were recognised in the *Sexual Offences Act* in 1967 but only in England and Wales, and the debates ignited by the Wolfenden Report continued for over a further decade in relation to Scotland. In this chapter the reasons as to why the 1967 legislation did not cover Scotland will be examined by analysing debates held in the Houses of Parliament, newspaper discussions on homosexuality and the law in Scotland, and other factors which all may have played a part in the decision to delay, or prevent, similar legislation coming into effect in Scotland.

#### ***Scotland in Context***

Sir George MacKenzie, a Scottish lawyer and former Lord Advocate, writing in the late seventeenth century, stated that sodomy between males was a rare crime in Scotland.<sup>20</sup> Rather than suggesting that homosexuality did not exist in Scotland, it is more likely to reflect legal and social attitudes prevalent in Scotland at this time. However, whilst England’s ‘mollies’, ‘sodomites’ and ‘poofs’ have attracted much research and theorising<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Davidson and Davis, ‘A Field for Private Members’, p. 175

<sup>20</sup> Sir George Mackenzie, *The Laws and Customs of Scotland in Matters Criminal*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn with (as appendix) *A Treatise of Mutilation and Demembration and their Punishments*, by Sir Alexander Seton of Pitmedden Knight Baronet; Also a second Edition of the Observations upon the 18 Act, Parl. 23. K. James Sixth. *Against Dispositions Made in defraud of Creditors, &c. Corrected, and in several Paragraphs much Enlarged by the Author, the same Sir George Mackenzie himself, before his death* (Edinburgh, 1699), pp. 159-162

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Alan Bray, *Homosexuality in Renaissance England* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1982); Rictor Norton, *Mother Clap’s Molly House: The Gay Subculture in England 1700-1830* (London: Gay Men’s Press, 1992); Jeffrey Weeks, *Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality and Identity* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1992), pp. 46-67; Morris B. Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames: Sex, Love, and Scandal in Wilde Times* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Randolph Trumbach, ‘Sex, Gender, and Sexual Identity in Modern Culture: Male Sodomy and Female Prostitution in Enlightenment London’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 2 (1991), pp. 186-203, Mary McIntosh, ‘The Homosexual Role’, *Social Problems* 16 (1968), pp. 182-192.

their Scottish equivalents have attracted less interest<sup>22</sup> suggesting that much has to be uncovered about homosexual life in the last century.

There sometimes appears to have existed an assumption that gay men in Great Britain became largely free of legal intervention with the decriminalisation of gay sex acts conducted in private in England and Wales in 1967.<sup>23</sup> However, Scottish homosexuals, as will be discussed throughout this chapter, had to contend with a pejorative view of same-sex intimacy from the legal profession which appeared ignorant of developing socio-scientific explanations of homosexual behaviour that were by the first quarter of the twentieth century filtering into Britain from continental Europe.<sup>24</sup> Any suggestion that Scottish society was unconcerned with homosexuality would not sit comfortably with wider attitudes to ‘dangerous sexualities’ prevalent during the early twentieth century.<sup>25</sup>

Scottish homosexuals apparently faced the same problems as their English and Welsh counterparts during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. South of the border homosexual men were prohibited by law from sexual expression, initially by the 1533 anti-buggery legislation (applying to *all* forms of sodomy) enacted by Henry VIII, also applying to Scotland, and later Section 11 of the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* of 1885 (also known as the Labouchère Amendment) which widened the legal proscription to all acts short of sodomy whether conducted in public or private. This act also applied in Scotland. What is apparent from these legal sanctions is that almost every eventuality was covered: sex between males whether conducted in a public park, a private bedroom, or a public convenience was prohibited.

In England and Wales further legal sanctions were applied in 1898 with the *Vagrancy Act* and again in 1912 with the *Criminal Law Amendment Act*, which attempted to control both male and female prostitution. Notably, a similar legal move in Scotland with the 1902 *Immoral Traffic Act* did not mention male prostitution,<sup>26</sup> which may relate to an apparent

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<sup>22</sup> The few but notable exceptions are; Roger Davidson & Gayle Davis, “‘A Field for Private Members’: The Wolfenden Committee and Scottish Homosexual Law Reform, 1950-67”, *Twentieth Century British History* 15 (2004), pp. 174-201; Roger Davidson & Gayle Davis, ‘Sexuality and the State: the Campaign for Scottish Homosexual Law Reform, 1967-80’, *Contemporary British History* 20 (2006), pp. 533-558; Brian Dempsey, ‘Piecemeal to Equality’ in Lesley J. Moran et al (eds), *Legal Queeries: Lesbian, Gay and Transgender Legal Studies* (London: Cassell, 1998), pp. 155-166; \_\_\_\_\_, *Thon Wey: Aspects of Scottish Lesbian and Gay Activism, 1968 to 1992* (Edinburgh: USG, 1995). However, these texts are particularly concerned with developments post-Wolfenden.

<sup>23</sup> Dempsey, ‘Piecemeal to Equality’, p. 155

<sup>24</sup> Meek, ‘The Legal and Social Construction of the Sodomite in Scotland’, p. 81

<sup>25</sup> Roger Davidson, “‘This Pernicious Delusion’: Law, Medicine, and Child Sexual Abuse in Early-Twentieth-Century Scotland”, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 10 (2001), p. 65

<sup>26</sup> Weeks, *Coming*, p. 258

ignorance regarding the existence of ‘rent’ and ‘trade’<sup>27</sup> here, or may in fact relate to the different attitudes and procedures under Scots law. The issue of male prostitution in Britain had been brought to a head by the case involving Boulton and Park, two male cross-dressers who had been arrested in London and accused of shameless indecency and suspected of being male prostitutes, in 1870. There was a Scottish connection; Boulton had lived for a couple of years with a Post Office surveyor in Edinburgh.<sup>28</sup> The resultant trial saw various medical and legal ‘experts’ become steadily more and more confused over the connection between homosexuality and prostitution.<sup>29</sup> As Weeks has noted, this suggests that even as late as 1871 ‘concepts both of homosexuality and of male prostitution were extremely undeveloped in the Metropolitan police and in high medical and legal circles’.<sup>30</sup>

The level of ignorance and confusion evident from the Boulton and Park trial was not limited to events in England. My own research regarding the period 1885 to 1930 in Scotland suggests that medical and legal knowledge regarding homosexuality, and male prostitution, was at best muddled. In one particular case, police on Glasgow’s riverside street, the Broomielaw, uncovered a homosexual brothel. Much of the police evidence and witness statements regarding the male prostitute arrested concerned his feminine mannerisms, his use of make-up, and general effeminate appearance.<sup>31</sup> These particular individuals were well known to the police and were even discussed during a debate on blackmail in the House of Commons in 1925. George Buchanan, the Member of Parliament for Glasgow Gorbals from 1922 to 1948, noted that these men were:

well known to the police...They were without dress, or any male attire, but with tight fitting jackets; and all that; with their hands finely chiselled—far more finely chiselled than, say, the hands of my wife; who called each other by female names, used the scents common to women, and even painted.<sup>32</sup>

The majority of sodomy cases heard at High Court level in Scotland used medical reports as evidence to suggest whether or not anal penetration had occurred. The use of medical evidence for sodomy trials in Scotland was intermittently used throughout the nineteenth century and more regularly incorporated by the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>33</sup> This

<sup>27</sup> Terms related to homosexual prostitution.

<sup>28</sup> Rictor Norton, *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual: Queer History and the Search for Cultural Unity* (London: Cassell, 1997), p. 74

<sup>29</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality and Identity* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1991), pp. 50-51

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50

<sup>31</sup> Meek, ‘The Legal and Social Construction of the Sodomite in Scotland’, pp. 77-78

<sup>32</sup> Hansard, House of Commons (HC) 181, 10 March 1925, cols 1269-1270

<sup>33</sup> See, Meek, ‘The Legal and Social Construction of the Sodomite in Scotland’, pp. 31-43

is evidence of the differing legal requirements and practices that separated Scots and English Law as south of the border medical examinations were extremely rare.<sup>34</sup> Evidence exists that in England medical intervention in trials involving homosexual activities was actively discouraged. According to Sean Brady, to allow medical professionals to develop methods of proving anal penetration had occurred would equate to an explicit admission that such activities existed amongst English males.<sup>35</sup>

In Scotland the Labouchère Amendment was not the sole weapon used against homosexual men; the Scottish common law offence of ‘shameless indecency’ was a versatile tool that could be employed against any behaviour that offended common sensitivities.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, as Davidson and Davis note, whereas homosexual offences in England and Wales were prosecuted under statute law, Scottish homosexuals were more likely to find themselves before a Sheriff Court charged with a common law offence.<sup>37</sup> Common law was far more malleable than statute law and various Scottish Burghs instituted their own ‘anti-homosexual’ byelaws, including Edinburgh, which had introduced a cleansing byelaw that prevented loitering in a public convenience for purposes other than what was expected.<sup>38</sup> In effect this was a measure implemented as a method for tackling ‘cottaging’.<sup>39</sup> Offenders in Scotland finding themselves facing prosecution under common law, in a lower court, were less likely to see their misdemeanours in the pages of the local press. Sheriff Court cases would be unlikely to attract the same publicity as High Court cases and may have led to an assumption that crimes related to homosexual acts were infrequent.

It would be incorrect to suggest that homosexuality was not an issue in Scotland. However, the manner in which Scots Law dealt with homosexual offences was markedly different from the way in which this issue was dealt with south of the border. This difference in legal practice had a significant influence in the way in which the findings of the Wolfenden Report were interpreted by British legislators and had a significant effect on how homosexuality was to be treated in Scotland, and in England and Wales. In the next section the Wolfenden Report and its repercussions will be examined in more detail in attempt to understand just why the 1967 decriminalisation of homosexual offences came

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<sup>34</sup> Sean Brady, *Masculinity and Male Homosexuality in Britain, 1861-1913* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 132

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 134

<sup>36</sup> Dempsey, ‘Piecemeal to Equality’, p. 156

<sup>37</sup> Davidson & Davis ‘A Field for Private Members’, p. 177

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> The use of public conveniences for sexual encounters.

into effect only in England and Wales and seemed to ignore the issue in Scotland, and subjected homosexuals north of the border to a further 13 years of criminalisation.

### ***Wolfenden and Scotland***

The publication of the Wolfenden Report has been seen by some as encouraging the birth of gay liberation movements in Britain.<sup>40</sup> The publication of the findings of the Wolfenden Committee heralded the type of media coverage of homosexuality not seen since the various scandalous trials of the late nineteenth century<sup>41</sup> and the trials during the early 1950s such as those of Lord Montagu, Peter Wildeblood and Michael Pitt-Rivers.<sup>42</sup> However, Weeks has suggested that during the period immediately before and after the publication of the Report's findings, the popular press in Britain was engaging in the objectification and dehumanisation of homosexuals.<sup>43</sup> Weeks highlights the series of articles published in the *Sunday Pictorial* in 1952 under the heading 'Evil Men' as one such example. In one article it is claimed that:

the chief danger of the perverts is the corrupting influence they have on youth. Most people know there are such things—'pansies'—mincing, effeminate young men who call themselves queers. But simple decent folk regard them as freaks and rarities...If homosexuality were tolerated here, Britain would rapidly become decadent.<sup>44</sup>

According to Weeks, popular opinion towards homosexuals was probably not as pejorative as the popular press suggested but the various scandals and trials that occurred during the early 1950s (especially in England) had underlined the problems with the current legal attitude to homosexuals: it had to be tightened even further and applied across the board – a move demanded by reactionary newspapers and conservative politicians - or reformed – a move favoured by liberal politicians, the Howard League for Penal Reform, and the Church of England.<sup>45</sup>

In Scotland, during the twentieth century, in the period preceding the publication of the Wolfenden Report, homosexuality took up few column inches in the Scottish press. This

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<sup>40</sup> Dempsey, *Thon Wey*, p. 3

<sup>41</sup> Bob Cant, *Footsteps and Witnesses: Lesbian and Gay Lifestories from Scotland* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1993), p. 2

<sup>42</sup> Norton, *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual*, p. 167

<sup>43</sup> Weeks, *Coming Out*, pp. 162-163

<sup>44</sup> 'Evil Men', *The Sunday Pictorial Review*, 1952, as quoted in Terry Sanderson, *Mediawatch: The Treatment of Male and Female Homosexuality in the British Media* (London: Cassell, 1995), p. 8

<sup>45</sup> Weeks, *Coming Out*, pp. 163-164

‘silence’ regarding homosexuality in Scotland can also be cited as a potential reason as to why reform was immediately hindered. According to Cant, public references to homosexuality in Scotland were rare and there was a significant lack of ‘sensationalism’ during the 1950s and 1960s that had accompanied numerous legal cases south of the border.<sup>46</sup> This meant that homosexuality was not something that was discussed within the Scottish social arena. Dempsey has noted that whilst prosecutions for homosexual offences had trebled between 1945 and 1955 in England, reaching a peak of 2504, the rate was actually declining in Scotland, reaching a low of 71 in 1956.<sup>47</sup> Lord Boothby, later revealed to have been bisexual,<sup>48</sup> and who had played an important role in the setting up of the Wolfenden Committee, speculated on the reasons for the low numbers of prosecutions:

There is no evidence that homosexuality is less prevalent in Scotland than in England; yet, in the words of the Wolfenden Report: ...the number of men prosecuted in Scotland for homosexual offences committed in private with consenting adult partners is infinitesimal in comparison with the number so prosecuted in England and Wales. Indeed, in Scotland, it is hardly a problem at all. Why is this, my Lords? Because they are prosecuted "in the public interest" by the Procurator-Fiscal, and only in the public interest...In every case the overriding consideration in Scotland is the public interest.<sup>49</sup>

The issue of ‘public interest’ is noteworthy. It could be suggested that it would not be in the public interest for the authorities in Scotland to seek out consenting adult homosexuals who engage in sexual relations in private, although the issue of corroboration under Scots Law - that there must be more than one source of evidence – plays its part too. Additionally, the majority of cases involving homosexual practices in Scotland was tried at Sheriff Court, a lower level court, and therefore did not attract the same amount of press attention that a High Court case would have attracted. This point was noted by Lord Balerno in the House of Lords who stated that:

all but the most serious of these offences may be dealt with summarily in the sheriff courts, with a limited maximum penalty, makes for greater uniformity of sentence than is apparent in England and Wales. That may account, in some measure, for the fact that one so seldom reads in the papers of Scotland about homosexual offences which have taken place in Scotland.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Cant, *Footsteps and Witnesses*, p. 3

<sup>47</sup> Dempsey, ‘Piecemeal to Equality’, p. 157

<sup>48</sup> Simon Heffer, ‘Why Gays become Politicians’, *New Statesman*, 13/11/1998, <http://www.newstatesman.com/199811130008>, accessed 20/05/2010

<sup>49</sup> Hansard, House of Lords (HL), 266, 24/05/1965, col. 668

<sup>50</sup> Hansard (HL), 266, 12/05/1965, cols. 146-147

Did the issue of public interest simply relate to legal practice, and the desire to prevent unnecessary, and expensive, investigations into offences likely only to offend common sensibilities? The M.P. George Buchanan had raised the issue of publicity regarding trials of a sexual nature in the House of Commons:

My own feeling is that I would go almost to the extent of suppressing accounts of such cases: No man who was brought up in the strict Presbyterian circles, in which most of us were brought up, wishes to see or read that sort of thing, or cares to think that his children or relatives, particularly the young folk...One sometimes sees young people in our public libraries reading reports of these cases. I know that anything bad of that kind, read when young, may have its effect in after life. My moral sense tells me that something ought to be done to suppress that information.<sup>51</sup>

For Buchanan the greater good would be benefitted not by pursuing such cases but by helping to prevent them in future by ‘preventing men from entering into criminal careers at all’.<sup>52</sup> It appears that Buchanan felt that one way to tackle crime was to suppress publicity about existing crimes. The suggestion that publicising these activities may propagate these crimes is one that crops up quite frequently when homosexual offences were discussed, particularly in relation to Scotland. Indeed, the Judicial Proceeding (Regulation of Reports) Act 1926 prevented the press from publishing details from judicial proceedings that ‘would be calculated to injure public morals’.<sup>53</sup> The legislation referred to ‘indecent medical, surgical or physiological details’.<sup>54</sup> The British Cabinet in 1954 discussed whether it was appropriate to tailor this legislation to explicitly include homosexual offences, but decided not to pursue this action;<sup>55</sup> therefore, it is difficult to measure whether this legislation actively prevented the discussion of homosexual offences in the printed press in Scotland after 1926. However, the wording of the legislation could certainly cover details related to homosexual offences.

Once the committee investigating homosexual offences was underway there was a limited discussion of homosexuality in Scotland. On the 12<sup>th</sup> of February 1955 the *Glasgow Herald* noted that a special sub-committee of magistrates had been set up in Glasgow with the express purpose of assessing whether or not the penalties for homosexual offences

<sup>51</sup> Hansard (HC), 181, 10 March 1925, col 1270

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, col 1272

<sup>53</sup> UK Legislation, *Judicial Proceeding (Regulation of Reports) Act 1926*, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo5/16-17/61/section/1/enacted>, accessed 21 March 2011

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> The National Archives, ‘Restrictions on Reporting of Proceedings for Homosexual Offences’, Cabinet Office Memorandum, <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-129-67-c-54-121-21.pdf>, accessed 21 March 2011

were ‘adequate’.<sup>56</sup> At no point in the article is the question of decriminalisation mentioned, indeed, the sub-committee suggested that ‘homosexuality did not appear to be a serious problem in Glasgow’.<sup>57</sup> It was already evident that in Scotland homosexuality was not viewed as a major social problem and was apparently the subject of limited discussion in legal or social circles.

The publication of Wolfenden Report on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1957 did lead to an increase in discussions of the issue of homosexuality in the Scottish Press. The *Daily Record*, under the heading ‘That Report’, sent its reporters out onto Scottish streets to hear the views of the public. The majority of individuals quoted were not in favour of a change in the law with regards to homosexual offences. Elsie Craigmyle, a canteen worker from Aberdeen stated ‘Nothing could be more degrading. A stiffer sentence should be imposed for this rather than prostitution, which is bad but not quite as detestable as homosexuality’.<sup>58</sup> An ex-Navy man, Thomas Stewart, held a similar attitude and stated that ‘homosexuality is a disgusting action that must be stamped out. NOT ENCOURAGED.’<sup>59</sup> Maureen Cook, a 24 year-old shop-assistant was equally as disgusted fearing that ‘Innocent people must be protected against these vile creatures’, and James Thomson of Glasgow was quoted as saying, ‘These homosexuals are a danger to society and the public must be protected’.<sup>60</sup> Of the individuals asked for their reaction to the findings of the report only one was in favour of decriminalisation and only because it would allow the majority of the population to identify whom the homosexuals were and thus safeguard the population.<sup>61</sup> It is difficult to ascertain whether such views were representative of Scottish society’s attitude to homosexuality but the *Daily Record* concluded that public opinion in Scotland was heavily against decriminalisation.

The *Daily Record* encouraged its readers to enter its poll on the findings of the Wolfenden Report, and reported back the results less than one week later. According to the report, ‘That VICE Report: HERE IS YOUR VERDICT’, 85% of respondents were against the recommendations that homosexual behaviour in private between consenting adults should no longer be a criminal offence.<sup>62</sup> In England and Wales, the *Daily Mirror* ran a similar

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<sup>56</sup> ‘Glasgow Vice Report: Proposals on Penalties’, *Glasgow Herald*, 12 February 1955, p. 7

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> *Daily Record* ‘That Report’, 6 September 1958, p.1

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> ‘That VICE Report: HERE IS YOUR VERDICT’, *Daily Record*, 10 September 1957, pp. 1, 16



poll, which reported that around 51% of respondents opposed decriminalisation.<sup>63</sup> Despite the column inches devoted to the subject in its immediate aftermath, the findings of Wolfenden Report dropped out of the headlines, certainly in the *Daily Record*, very soon afterwards. The poll run by the newspaper, and the results it established, are not enough to determine that Scotland was so solidly against the limited decriminalisation of homosexual offences but it is an indication that there was some reservations about any future legal moves to free Scottish homosexuals from the shadow of criminality.

In the event, the Wolfenden Report was to recommend the legalisation of homosexual acts conducted in private between consenting adults. The only strongly dissenting voice from the committee came from the committee's most prominent Scot: James Adair, a church elder and former procurator fiscal.<sup>64</sup> His reasoning for being unable to accept the overall findings was predictable. Adair took a stereotypical and morally-driven attitude to homosexuality claiming that these 'trends' and 'tendencies' elicited much 'concern and disgust' from the public.<sup>65</sup> Adair subscribed to the view that open homosexuality within communities was a very real risk to the young of those communities,<sup>66</sup> and, that young men employed within certain professions, the theatre for example, would be vulnerable to homosexual advances from older men. According to Adair, the theatrical profession was apparently 'rife' with predatory homosexuals.<sup>67</sup> Adair's strong moral standpoint was adopted by much of the Scottish press who viewed the former procurator fiscal as some sort of moral champion.<sup>68</sup> Adair's stance was also supported in the House of Lords by Lord Rowallan who argued that:

Mr. Adair is much nearer to the truth than the Wolfenden Committee. He knows the temptations of youth. He knows that in Scotland, at least, respect for the law is much more widely spread than the Wolfenden Committee seemed to imagine. He asked: In view of everything, is this the time to legitimise practices such as these, when the whole tendency is to remove the last vestige of personal responsibility for crime and other practices, and when the whole tendency is to destroy self-discipline among the citizens, and particularly among the young?<sup>69</sup>

<sup>63</sup> 'Mirror Public Poll backs Wolfenden Verdict that – HIDDEN VICE IS LESS SHAMEFUL', *Daily Mirror*, 10 September 1957, p. 1

<sup>64</sup> Dempsey, 'Piecemeal to Equality', p. 157

<sup>65</sup> *RWC*, p. 118

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Patrick Higgins, *Heterosexual Dictatorship: Male Homosexuality in Post-War Britain* (London: Fourth Estate, 1996), p. 117

<sup>69</sup> Hansard (HL), 266, 12 May 1965, col. 131

One of Adair's chief concerns regarding the legalisation of homosexual acts in private was the potential increase in homosexuality that legalisation may encourage. Indeed, Adair delivered a speech to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland on the 26<sup>th</sup> May 1958 in which he stated that within 5 weeks of the publication of the Wolfenden Report a homosexual club, offering information on meeting places (including public lavatories), in London had received 48 applications for membership, and, in an area of London of one square mile there were over 100 male prostitutes offering services known to the police<sup>70</sup> (Adair did not offer an explanation as to why he linked these two pieces of information). Adair warned the Assembly that to support the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report was to support the right for 'perverts to practice sinning for the sake of sinning'.<sup>71</sup>

Lord Ferrier, Victor Noel-Paton, another Scottish peer, also supported Adair's stance on the possible effects of homosexual law reform in Scotland. In a Lords debate in 1977 – twenty years after the publication of the Wolfenden Report – Ferrier presented a damning opinion on the types of homosexual to be found in society. They, Paton claimed, ranged 'from the mentally ill through the compulsive lecher to the decadent pervert'.<sup>72</sup> It would be difficult to argue that such opinions were limited only to Scottish peers and MPs, but their persistence amongst Scottish legislators is telling. Oppositional opinions to this kind of attitude are found much less regularly in debates regarding Scotland and homosexual law reform in the Houses of Parliament. When oppositional opinions were introduced they tended to reflect the belief that law reform was simply not necessary in Scotland.

According to Weeks, prejudice, ignorance and timidity all played a factor in delaying the legal implementation of the findings of the Wolfenden Committee for a decade in England and Wales.<sup>73</sup> Perhaps these attitudes existed north of the border too, but there were other reasons why Scotland delayed a further 13 years. Some of these reasons are related to the independence of Scots Law, which dealt with crimes such as homosexual acts differently from England. However, perhaps more significantly there appeared to be a valorising of the Scottish legal system over the English system, with reference to homosexuality, in the proceeding debates in the Houses of Parliament. In a House of Lords debate in May 1965 on the issue of homosexual offences Alick Buchanan-Smith, Lord Balerno, stated that 'In this matter [homosexual offences], Scotland has been for many years considerable more

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<sup>70</sup> 'Report of the Wolfenden Committee: Large Majority for Disapproval', *Glasgow Herald*, 27 May 1958, p. 3

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Hansard (HL), 383, 10/05/1977, col. 170

<sup>73</sup> Weeks, *Coming Out*, p. 167

civilised than England'.<sup>74</sup> In a House of Commons debate regarding the findings of the Wolfenden Report in November 1958 the Conservative MP for Epsom (and barrister) Peter Rawlinson suggested that the Home Secretary should give closer attention to the Scottish legal system in dealing with homosexual offences as:

when we have these debates in the House and we have the one balanced against the other [English law and Scots Law] the Scottish system of law always comes out very much to advantage... the Procurator Fiscal, who is responsible to the Lord Advocate, prosecutes and his overriding consideration is the public interest.<sup>75</sup>

Lord Boothby, the former Conservative MP for Aberdeenshire East also praised the Scottish approach to homosexual offences when he stated that:

The longer I live, the more convinced I become that Scotland is, in many respects, a much better and a much more sensible country than England. Above all, Scottish law, which is based on Roman law, is immeasurably superior to English law.<sup>76</sup>

In a House of Lords debate in December 1962, Viscount Hailsham, the Minister for Sport, joined in the support for the Scottish legal position on homosexual acts by stating that 'in some respects Scotland was rather in advance of English thought in this matter and therefore may be able to teach us something'.<sup>77</sup> From the outset of debates regarding the Wolfenden Report the Scottish legal system was viewed as in some ways superior to the English system. The relatively low levels of convictions for homosexual offences combined with the stricter legal practices, and perhaps most significantly, the consideration of 'public interest' seemed to propagate the belief that English Law needed to follow the example set by Scots Law. This could amount to a tacit acceptance at this early stage that the main focus of debates on how homosexuality was treated would be the legal system in England and Wales. The aforementioned views seemed to suggest that Scotland had its house in order regarding homosexual offences. This raises the question as to whether there would be an appetite from Scottish legislators to amend Scots Law so that it would fall into line with any future change in legislation south of the border.

Frank Mort has argued that the Wolfenden Report was not simply an investigation into the legal traditions regarding homosexuality and prostitution but played a significant role in

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<sup>74</sup> Hansard (HL), 266, 12/05/1965, col. 146

<sup>75</sup> Hansard (HC), 596, 26/11/1958, col. 475

<sup>76</sup> Hansard (HL), 266, 24/05/1965, col. 668

<sup>77</sup> Hansard (HL), 245, 20/12/1962, col. 1255

the creation, or re-creation of the public, and particularly, private realms within British society.<sup>78</sup> The report also offered the potential for a new system of regulation of the public sphere through a re-working of the issue of public morality, by shifting responsibility for sexual regulation to social services other than the police.<sup>79</sup> Such an issue was not limited just to homosexuality but included prostitution, another blight on post-war morality. However, it could be argued that in Scotland in the years preceding and following the publication of the Wolfenden Report Scots Law had been used to effectively concentrate on issues regarding public sexual morality. The issue of public interest and the procedural difficulties of the law in Scotland in securing convictions for private, consensual homosexual acts ensured that the focus of the law in Scotland regarding homosexuals acts had chiefly been the public demonstration of sexual deviance.

It appears that in the eyes of Scottish legislators legal change was not immediately necessary, as homosexuals in Scotland were not prevented from engaging in sexual acts in the privacy of their own homes. In 1976, Scottish Lord Advocate Reginald Murray stated that that in the preceding ten years there had not been a single prosecution for homosexual acts committed by adults in private in Scotland.<sup>80</sup> Lord McCluskey, who was the Solicitor-General for Scotland between 1974 and 1979, claimed that ‘four successive Lords Advocate have told Parliament that they will not prosecute in respect of such activities carried out by adult males in private and with the consent of those taking part.’<sup>81</sup> McCluskey, during a House of Lords debate on Robin Cook’s Amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill in 1980, again stated that ‘the Lord Advocate does not prosecute in the case of consenting male adults—that is to say, those over the age of 21—committing the activities in private’.<sup>82</sup>

However, the admission that private, consensual homosexual acts between males over the age of 21 would not be subject to legal intervention presented reformers with a legal anomaly where legal policy contradicted legal practice. For some, it seemed plainly wrong for a law, which was never enacted, to still theoretically criminalise homosexual men in Scotland. In 1978 Lord Boothby questioned this ‘legal anomaly’ in the House of Lords in response to the *Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act* of 1976 that had consolidated the legal

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<sup>78</sup> Frank Mort, ‘Sexuality: Regulation and Contestation’ in Gay Left Collective, *Homosexuality: Power and Politics* (London: Allison & Busby, 1980), pp. 42-44

<sup>79</sup> Weeks, *Sex, Politics and Society*, p. 244

<sup>80</sup> Hansard (HC), 917, 18/10/1976, col. 265W

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., col. 1842

<sup>82</sup> Hansard (HL), 413, 21/10/1980, col. 1843

position towards homosexual acts.<sup>83</sup> Lord Kirkhill, the Minister of State for the Scottish Office, responded by stating that ‘there have been no prosecutions in Scotland in recent years for homosexual acts committed in private between consenting adults’ and that this policy would not be altered.<sup>84</sup> Lord Kirkhill went on to state that ‘The Government have no plans to amend the law on homosexuality in Scotland.’<sup>85</sup> Lord Boothby was keen to underline the apparent contradiction of keeping on statute a law that was not enacted and suggested that it would ‘sooner or later...bring the law into disrepute’.<sup>86</sup> Lord Wilson of Langside, who had acted as Lord Advocate between 1967 and 1970 and who had followed the unwritten policy of not prosecuting consensual, adult, homosexual relations suggested that it should not be the responsibility of a Lord Advocate to determine whether or not to prosecute.

My Lords, does the noble Lord, Lord Kirkhill, not appreciate that the present Lord Advocate cannot bind his successor? Is he not aware that if a future Lord Advocate took a different view from the present one, he might wish to prosecute?<sup>87</sup>

In response to this, Lord Kirkhill reminded the Lords that under Scots Law there existed the practice of corroboration, which was a necessity in criminal cases, and which made the prosecution of private homosexual acts extremely difficult and therefore would safeguard the policy of non-intervention in such cases. For the law to be changed Lord Kirkhill suggested that any new legislation should be proposed by a Private Member in the ‘other place’.<sup>88</sup> This is exactly what was to occur in 1980 with the passage of Robin Cook’s amendment to the *Criminal Justice (Scotland) Bill* in 1980, which brought legal equity between Scotland, and England and Wales.

The questions regarding the delay in implementing the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report in Scotland are more complex than simply attributing blame at the feet of the Scottish churches or James Adair’s minority report, which heavily criticised attempts to decriminalise homosexual acts. That Scotland had an independent legal system, which differed from English legal practice, was a factor in this delay and there appeared to be reluctance to overturn historic legislation that was rarely enacted against private, consensual, homosexual relations. This created a legal anomaly, but it was an anomaly

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<sup>83</sup> Hansard (HL), 374, 08/10/1976, col. 1651

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., col. 1652

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

that could have been rectified sooner if there had been a little more will and agreement amongst Scottish legislators. Further, if the law in Scotland was never enacted against adult, private, consensual homosexual acts then its consolidation in 1976 seems curious. This would perhaps have been the perfect opportunity to dispense with a law, which had effectively been mothballed.

Davidson and Davies have identified three central reasons that law reform was hindered in Scotland. Firstly, they have argued that the role of the procurator fiscal in determining whether legal proceedings led to uniformity in prosecutions and sentencing was important. Secondly, contrary to practices in England and Wales stale offences of more than 6 months old could not normally be prosecuted, and effectively protected homosexuals who complained of crimes such as blackmail. Thirdly, Scots Law required a higher standard of proof to potentially secure convictions and therefore homosexual acts committed in private between adult males were rarely prosecuted.<sup>89</sup> However, as has been demonstrated the issue of silence and the apparent valorisation of Scots Law in the Houses of Parliament both played crucial roles in immediately hindering the drive for legal reform in Scotland. Concerns over the legal treatment of homosexuals in Scotland were effectively bypassed, and the position of Scots Law bolstered by being the subject of complimentary discourses in the Houses of Parliament. Therefore, in the debates that followed the publication of the Wolfenden Report the intricacies of Scottish legal practice in hindering reform played second fiddle to the apparent superiority of Scots Law as perceived by policy makers and parliamentarians in Whitehall.

The issue of public interest is also noteworthy. It appeared not to be in the public interest to prosecute homosexual acts committed in private, even if corroborating evidence existed, as it would serve little more purpose than exposing private and intimate details of the lives of Scottish homosexuals to public scrutiny. Linked to this was the consistent lack of desire to reveal the ubiquitous nature of homosexuality in Scottish society for the fear that it would encourage further deviation from any heterosexual ideal that was supported by legal institutions, religious institutions, and the popular press in Scotland.

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<sup>89</sup> Davidson & Davis, “A Field for Private Members”, pp. 174-201

## ***The Scottish Minorities Group and the Law***

Whether the apparent reluctance to change the law in Scotland regarding homosexual offences was the result of cultural factors, silence or legal procedure, what is apparent is that organised, homosexual rights groups did not appear north of the border until 1969, a decade after the Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) began its work in England. The Minorities Research Group (MRG) followed the HLRS a few years later, and across the Atlantic, North American activists had formed the Mattachine Society in 1951.<sup>90</sup> In 1969 in Scotland, a group of men came together to form the Scottish Minorities Group (SMG), which had as its aim a desire to bring gay men and women into the public eye and integrate into civil society.<sup>91</sup>

It is perhaps coincidental that the SMG came into being in the same year that the Stonewall Riots erupted on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, but there certainly existed a desire from its founding members to address the perceived second-class treatment of its kinfolk. Yet, confrontation and rebellion never lay at the heart of the SMG; reasoned debate, co-operation and reconciliation appeared to be the preferred means to achieving its goals. These goals were enshrined within the SMG's aims, set out early in its development:

1. to undertake a programme of education aimed at eliminating the prejudice and discrimination [sic] which are at the root of many of the problems of the homosexual.
2. to collect facts about the day-to-day life of the homosexual in order to provide a base-line to those engaged in psychiatric counselling – or indeed, any form of counselling.
3. to provide positive help where possible to homosexuals who are experiencing difficulty in adjusting to their orientation.
4. to disseminate information of practical value or interest to homosexuals in Scotland.
5. to encourage the setting up of centres where homosexuals can meet each other socially in a congenial atmosphere.<sup>92</sup>

It was the policy of assimilation that lay at the centre of the group's ethos. In many ways the SMG was a middle-class reformist organisation that attempted to change the law with regard to homosexual acts by adopting a 'soft' approach rather than being a gay liberation organisation, which engaged in confrontation and direct action. As Davidson and Davis note, the name chosen could be perceived as being 'closeted' as the term 'homosexual' is

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<sup>90</sup> Dempsey, *Thon Wey*, p. 3

<sup>91</sup> Robert Orr, 'Capitalism, Patriarchy and Gay Oppression: A Study of the Scottish Minorities Group' (University of Edinburgh, MA Dissertation, 1980), p. 16

<sup>92</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, Report on meeting, 09/03/1969

absent.<sup>93</sup> The ‘softly softly’ approach should not be conceived as a reluctance to engage and discuss as throughout the early years of its existence the SMG actively cultivated links with medical profession and religious groups,<sup>94</sup> which may not have been possible had they adopted a confrontational approach. This is perhaps an indication that the cultural temperature of Scotland was markedly different to the conditions being experienced in England.

However, progress for the SMG was painfully slow<sup>95</sup> and its initial association with the Scottish churches combined with its goal of assimilation left it open to accusations of, as Davidson and Davies have suggested, being complicit in the ‘sexual double standards of Scottish governance’.<sup>96</sup> Whereas homosexual law reform organisations had played their part in the legalisation of homosexual acts south of the border, the SMG had achieved little concrete success in pushing for legal equity. Membership of SMG grew steadily from its inception and by the beginning of 1970 there were over 20 full members, with a further 30 or so working in association with the group.<sup>97</sup> By this time, the group had set out its five main aims, which remained relatively unchanged throughout the first few years of its existence.

The main aim of the SMG was to encourage the legalisation of homosexual acts between consenting adults in private in Scotland. Dismantling oppressive regimes of patriarchy could be left to more militant organisations like the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) and its associates, whose goals encompassed a radical shift in thinking about society and its structures.<sup>98</sup> By 1971 the SMG had begun work on drafting a Sexual Offences Bill (Scotland), which would bring Scotland in line with England and Wales. However, the main sticking point was the desire to set the homosexual age of consent to 18, rather than 21, which was operational in England and Wales.<sup>99</sup> The original decision to set the age of consent at 21 was based on the age of legal majority in 1967, and as that had changed to 18 in the years since 1967, it had been argued that the age of consent should also be altered.<sup>100</sup> There also existed a common opinion that as prosecutions in Scotland for private,

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<sup>93</sup> Davidson and Davis, ‘Sexuality and the State’, p. 535

<sup>94</sup> Orr, ‘Capitalism, Patriarchy and Gay Oppression’, p. 19

<sup>95</sup> Alkarim Jivani, *It's Not Unusual: A History of Lesbian and Gay Britain in the Twentieth Century* (London: Michael O'Mara Books, 1997), p. 177

<sup>96</sup> Davidson and Davis, ‘Sexuality and the State’, p. 550

<sup>97</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/2, Meeting Report, 17/01/1970

<sup>98</sup> ‘Gay Liberation Front: Manifesto’, People With a Story, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/pwh/glf-london.html>, accessed 11 February 2010

<sup>99</sup> Dempsey, *Thon Wey*, p. 14

<sup>100</sup> Hansard (HC), 989, 22/07/1980, cols. 285-286



consensual homosexual acts were rare there was little need for a change in the law that would be unpopular amongst political parties conscious of how being associated with a sex bill may be viewed.<sup>101</sup> Therefore, SMG had to tackle the case of homosexual law reform from two angles: the legal and the cultural.

From the outset, the SMG were concerned about how the legal system in Scotland would treat homosexual offences in light of the changes that had occurred in England and Wales in 1967. Indeed, Ian Dunn, a central figure within the SMG, had written to the Secretary of the Scottish Law Society in December 1967, nearly five months to the day that the *Sexual Offences Act* (1967) had received Royal Assent. In his letter, Dunn remarked that he had received a query from an 'admitted homosexual' living in England wondering if it was 'all right' to visit Scotland.<sup>102</sup> It would appear that Dunn was querying whether or not the change in law in England and Wales would have any effect on the treatment of homosexuals in Scotland.

Dunn received an acknowledgement from the Law Society in January 1968 but as no further communication was forthcoming, Dunn wrote again on the 18<sup>th</sup> February asking for some form of comment on the Scottish situation. A reply was finally received on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February in which it was stated that the Law Society was 'endeavouring to ascertain the circumstances under which it was decided that the *Sexual Offences Act* 1967 should not be made applicable in Scotland'.<sup>103</sup> Dunn had also written to the Crown Office in Edinburgh querying as to whether it was legally 'a crime to be homosexual' in Scotland. A reply dated the 26<sup>th</sup> of December 1967 advised him to refer to the common law of sodomy and to Section 11 of the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* of 1885.<sup>104</sup> It appears that in the eyes of the country's legal elite the law was explicit on the issue of homosexual practices, and required no further comment. In 1980, in the House of Commons debate on Robin Cook's amendment, which aimed to bring Scottish law in line with the legal situation in England and Wales, three reasons were forwarded as to why the law did not change in Scotland in 1967. The first reason related to the apparent strength of public opinion north of the border against legalising homosexual acts;<sup>105</sup> the second related to the comparatively low numbers of men prosecuted for consensual homosexual relations;<sup>106</sup> and the third reason related to

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<sup>101</sup> Davidson and Davis, 'Sexuality and the State', p. 537

<sup>102</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, letter from Ian Dunn to Law Society, 29/12/1967

<sup>103</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, letter from the Law Society to Ian Dunn, 20/02/1968

<sup>104</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, letter from Crown Office to Ian Dunn, 26/12/1967

<sup>105</sup> Hansard (HC), 989, 22/07/1980, col. 308

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

the differing evidential requirements under Scots Law.<sup>107</sup> The primary focus for the SMG during its early years appears to have been to challenge the notion that as homosexuals were rarely, if ever, prosecuted for consensual, private, homosexual acts, no change in law was necessary.

Colin Harvey, another member of the new group and a veteran of homosexual law reform in England received a more comprehensive reply to a similar request regarding the legal status of homosexual in Scotland. In a letter dated the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 1969, James Wilson of the Crown Office stated that ‘it is not a policy of the Crown Office in Scotland to prosecute people for homosexual activity, therefore, such prosecutions are virtually unknown’.<sup>108</sup> Harvey received further communication from the Crown Office in July 1970 when Stanley Bowen, the Crown Agent, commented on ‘the only offences related to homosexual conduct’<sup>109</sup>. These offences were:

1. Sodomy, which is defined as the unnatural connection between male persons, and
2. Section 11 of the Criminal Law Amendment Act 1885 which provides that any male person who in public or private commits, or is party to the commission of, or procures or attempts to procure the commission by any male person of any act of gross indecency with another male person, shall be guilty of an offence.<sup>110</sup>

Bowen took a similar approach to that of Wilson regarding the frequency of such crimes and states that ‘the incident, by its very nature is not brought to the notice of the police or criminal authorities. Accordingly, in so far as consenting adults in private are concerned the question of prosecution seldom, if ever, arises’.<sup>111</sup> Lord Foot, the Liberal life peer, offered his own interpretation of events in Scotland when during a Lords debate on Robin Cook’s 1980 amendment to the Criminal Justice Bill, he stated that:

During that same 13 years while this public discussion has been going on and the debate has been going on, there has also been this continuing scandal that successive Lords Advocate have decided not to enforce the criminal law of Scotland as it has stood. Why have they failed to do it? Why have they refrained from enforcing the law which is their clear and constitutional duty? They have refrained from doing it because it would be near to obscene to have people sent into prison North of the Border

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, letter from James Wilson, Crown Office, to Colin Harvey, 18/08/1969

<sup>109</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/5, letter from Stanley Bowen, Crown Office to Colin Harvey, 09/07/1970

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

for doing something which people can do South of the Border with impunity.<sup>112</sup>

In a written answer to John Lee, Labour MP for Birmingham Handsworth, the Lord Advocate Ronald Murray stated that ‘there is no record of any prosecution in Scotland since 27 July 1967 for homosexual activities between consenting adults in private.’<sup>113</sup>

Yet to suggest that the legal authorities in Scotland were unconcerned with the sexual practices of adult males would be misleading. Indeed, the criminal authorities *were* interested when these acts took place in public:

There are prosecutions against consenting adults if they commit the crime in public or in such circumstances as to cause offence to members of the public.<sup>114</sup>

The two main concerns for the criminal authorities outlined by Bowen were the public displays of sexual behaviour by adults and ‘the seduction and debauchery of the young’.<sup>115</sup> On the issue of age of consent and lesbianism, Bowen comments that there ‘is no question of age limits in Scotland, and so far as female perverts are concerned, they have never been a problem to this Office’.<sup>116</sup> Ian Dunn examined the letter and made several notes about its content. He criticises the ‘glib talk about boys’ and ‘the young’ and suggests that the ‘Civil Liberty principle is that every individual should know where he stands in relation to the Law. This letter flies in the face of this principle [and] effectively disposes of the argument that there is no need for law reform in Scotland’.<sup>117</sup>

These letters would suggest that the criminal authorities had little interest in pursuing adult males who engaged in homosexual activities within the confines of their own homes. Yet Dunn picks up on a point made by Bowen in his letter to Harvey. Bowen had commented that ‘by reason of the furtive manner in which such offences are committed, the difficulty in proof has dictated the policy towards such prosecutions’,<sup>118</sup> the emphasis being on the difficulty in finding proof rather than any tolerance of homosexual activity being conducted in private by adults. This admission would have done nothing to alleviate the prime concerns of the SMG; instead it underlined the contradictory nature of legal policy

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<sup>112</sup> Hansard (HL), 413, 21/10/1980, col. 1856

<sup>113</sup> Hansard (HC), 964, 16/03/1979, col. 354W

<sup>114</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/5, letter from Stanley Bowen 09/07/1970

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/5, comments from Ian Dunn on letter from Stanley Bowen, Crown Office, to Colin Harvey, 09/07/1970

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

and legal practice in Scotland. The SMG were motivated to counteract the assumption held by many Scottish legislators that Scots Law was, and had always been, fair in its treatment of homosexuals. Many in the Houses of Parliament had forwarded such an argument. Lord Campbell of Croy, Gordon Campbell, had been Secretary of State for Scotland under Edward Heath. Campbell, in a Lords debate on a proposed Sexual Offences (Scotland) Bill in 1977 stated that he was confident that not one person had ‘suffered in any way as a result of the way in which the law [regarding homosexual offences] in practice is carried out.’<sup>119</sup>

As noted, the criminal authorities did take action against those deemed to have offended public decency by engaging in homosexual practices outside of private residences. Robert Orr produced a report for the SMG Executive Committee in September 1977 regarding a case from Dundee of three men charged with various offences related to homosexual acts in a public toilet in the city.<sup>120</sup> The offences had taken place in a public lavatory, positioned at street level with the rear of the building flush to an embankment. The police had positioned themselves on the embankment and with the assistance of a mirror on a pole were able to spy on the three men who had occupied one closet. The trial had taken place in July 1977 at Dundee Sheriff Court and resulted in guilty verdicts for two of the men in relation to sodomy and the submission to sodomy. The eldest man, in his fifties, was sentenced to one-year imprisonment, the other, a man in his thirties was convicted of sodomy and submission to sodomy and received the same sentence. The third man was charged with indecency but was found not guilty.<sup>121</sup>

The public reaction from SMG, certainly in its earlier years, to the monitoring of ‘cottaging’ was to suggest that the guilty parties were merely showing signs of social inadequacy or mental health problems.<sup>122</sup> However, the SMG’s criticisms were focussed on the legal reaction to such activities rather than the behaviour itself. If the courts were responsible for punishing the guilty then the first line of defence against immoral and illegal activity was the police force. Members of the SMG were in regular contact with Scotland’s police forces throughout the late sixties and seventies. Right from its inception in 1969 the SMG had been concerned about the attitudes and activities of the forces. In a letter from June 1969 to Jim Halcrow, the SMG Treasurer, Ian Dunn recounted the story of

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<sup>119</sup> Hansard (HL), 383, 10/05/1977, col. 181

<sup>120</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/5, ‘Important Legal Cases’, SMG report to the Executive Committee by Robert W. Orr, 01/09/1977

<sup>121</sup> Ibid.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 535

an acquaintance that had been arrested for cottaging on Glasgow's Pollokshaws Road.<sup>123</sup> After engaging in mutual masturbation the two men were adjusting their clothing when two police officers entered. Only Dunn's friend was arrested and was taken to a cell in the Craig Street Police Station where he was 'treated poorly'.<sup>124</sup>

The SMG were concerned at the tactics employed by the police when dealing with the men who used public conveniences for illicit sexual purposes. Angus Robbie, a member of SMG and Liberal Party election candidate, wrote to the editor of *The Scotsman* newspaper in August 1976 expressing his concern over the arrest of a Glasgow councillor for indecently assaulting a police officer.

Firstly, why was it necessary to detail two young policemen in plainclothes to keep surveillance on a public lavatory? Surely the occasional but regular presence of a uniformed police officer and/or a police car would have been a better deterrent to those who commit a nuisance. This, and the youth of the two plainclothes men would suggest that the police were using "agents provocateurs".<sup>125</sup>

Robbie notes that one of the police officers positioned himself in an adjoining cubicle to make observations of the councillor through a hole in the wall and posed the question, 'if that cubicle had been occupied by a perfectly law-abiding person would P. C. Shields have been committing an offence by taking observations?'.<sup>126</sup> Robbie was also concerned by a comment in the article, which had suggested that the toilet's proximity to a girls' school merely bolstered the bigotry that linked homosexuality with child molesting.<sup>127</sup>

Malcolm Crowe, president of the group, also took issue with the police tactic of using surveillance and agents provocateurs to catch homosexual men in the act of sexual behaviour in public conveniences. Crowe wrote to Glasgow District Council to express his concern at 'the considerable police surveillance of public toilets in Glasgow, including the use of cameras, the recording of car number plates and agents provocateurs. We have already written to the Chief Constable about these methods, but they continue'.<sup>128</sup> This activity, wrote Crowe, was itself a public nuisance when members of the public risked being surprised by a policeman whenever they made use of public facilities. Crowe

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<sup>123</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, letter from Ian Dunn to Jim Halcrow, 03/06/1969

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/8, 'Important Legal Cases', letter from Angus Robbie to The Scotsman, 06/08/1976

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/8, 'Police and Prisoners', letter from Malcolm Crowe to the Director of Administration of City of Glasgow District Council, 23/08, 1978

doubted the effectiveness of such tactics and stated that ‘whatever public complaints (if any) have led to this sort of behaviour it seems to me that the cure is worse than the disease’.<sup>129</sup> For Crowe the remedy was simple enough, and proposed that the council should ‘place notices in public toilets, especially those where problems have been reported, warning homosexual men of the danger of arrest’.<sup>130</sup> Crowe went as far as to suggest a format for these signs and stated that the ‘notices we envisage would be approximately 8” by 2” and would not damage to [sic] structure of the toilets’.<sup>131</sup> It is unclear how the council viewed this suggestion as no reply was on file, but the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group (the SMG morphed into the SHRG in late 1978 – reflecting its growing confidence) suggested the sign would read:

**BEWARE!** Homosexual men using this toilet are likely to be arrested.  
Contact Scottish Homosexual Rights Group 041-332 1725<sup>132</sup>

Such were the concerns of the SHRG over the tactics engaged by police when addressing the alleged public nuisance of indecency in public toilets that they issued a limited press release outlining their concerns in August 1979. The report highlighted the ‘new wave of arrests’ that took place in public toilets throughout Glasgow. The report stated that in one afternoon six people were arrested in Queen’s Park and claims that the police were actively using agents provocateurs:

Their technique is to station one attractive-looking policeman in plain clothes in the toilet. Then a few minutes later after someone goes into the toilet, another policeman bursts in. What happens during those few minutes may be anything or nothing, but the unsuspecting member of the public may well be charged with masturbating himself, or with indecent assault, or some other charge. The policeman may well have incited the offence...<sup>133</sup>

The report condemned the use of agents provocateurs and alleged that ‘no-one, gay or straight, is safe when the police use tactics like these, and we want to put a stop to it’.<sup>134</sup>

In March 1976, Sheila MacAskill, National Chairwoman of the then SMG wrote to the chief constables of Scotland’s police forces in an attempt to acquire reassurances that

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/8, news release regarding the Police, the Law and Cottaging, 23/08/1979

<sup>133</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/8, ‘Police and Prisoners’, news release regarding the Police, The Law and Cottaging, 23/08/1979

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

homosexual members of Scottish society would receive equally sympathetic treatment from the police should they be the victims of crime. SMG had been concerned that homosexuals were being poorly treated by the police, and had received a number of letters from homosexual men who had been arrested, mainly for cottaging, who had intimated that they had been treated badly whilst in custody.<sup>135</sup> The suggestion being forwarded by SMG members was that the legal situation in Scotland regarding homosexual acts would taint the police's attitude towards homosexual victims of crime:

There is a myth among homosexuals that there is no point expecting help from the police if they are robbed or mugged, and one or two unsubstantiated stories being passed around appear to support this view. We would welcome your help in trying to dispel this myth...The situation is complicated by the state of the law on homosexual conduct in Scotland, but we expect that, for example, a burglary of a homosexual's home would be investigated as thoroughly as any other burglary.<sup>136</sup>

There also existed a deeper concern that homosexuals who reported crimes including harassment and blackmail may themselves be the subjects of investigations. Arthur Gore, the 8<sup>th</sup> Earl of Arran (and original sponsor of Leo Abse's private member's bill of 1967 which saw the decriminalisation of consensual homosexual acts in England and Wales) stated in 1965 in a House of Lords debate that 'there have been cases quite recently of men going to the police to complain that they have been robbed or threatened, only to find themselves in trouble.'<sup>137</sup> However, Captain Henry Scrymgeour Wedderburn, Earl of Dundee, responded to such a suggestion by stating that 'in Scotland there has not been a single case of prosecution for homosexual offences which have come to light as a result of blackmail investigations.'<sup>138</sup> The issue of blackmail was apparently viewed by some members of the Houses of Parliament as the most serious threat that homosexuals faced due to the continued criminalisation of same-sex relations. However, again Scottish legal practice was being forwarded as a benchmark against which English law should be measured. Under Scots Law secondary offences uncovered as a result of an investigation into, in this instance, blackmail would only be pursued if they were in the public interest.

Amongst the filed responses to the MacAskill letter the first recorded was from John Little, the Chief Constable of Tayside Police, who stated:

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<sup>135</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, letter from Ian Dunn to Jim Halcrow, 03/06/1969

<sup>136</sup> NAS, GD4671/2/8, letter from Sheila MacAskill to Scotland's Chief Constables, 07/03/1978

<sup>137</sup> Hansard (HL) 266, 12/05/1965, cols. 75-76

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., col. 90

I am unable to follow the comments in the first paragraph of your letter of 14<sup>th</sup> March. It is not a matter of official policy that every member of the public is entitled to the same protection from the police – it is basic police duty. Contrary to what you state the law in Scotland is not complicated: theft is theft and the victim will always receive the same attention regardless of the moral aspect of the case.

With regret I feel that the tone of your letter shows that the prejudices with which you appear to be obsessed seem to emanate from yourself. I reiterate, the moral aspect of homosexuality or indeed the moral aspect of any other human activity is no concern of the police.<sup>139</sup>

The replies she received from E. M. Dalglish of Glasgow police, Alexander Morrison from Dumfries and Galloway, and Robert F. Murison of Fife were arguably less confrontational but assured MacAskill that the police did not make any discrimination between the various sections of society. Indeed Edward Frizzell of Central Scotland Police expressed surprise that this myth existed and assured MacAskill that ‘all members of society are dealt with equally by the police’.<sup>140</sup>

In March 1979 Ian Dunn wrote to Gay Switchboard to share his concerns that the police were unfairly targeting members of Glasgow’s gay community.

The Scottish Homosexual Rights Group has been distressed to observe a rash of arrests in Glasgow. We have some evidence to convince us that this is part of a concerted Police campaign ‘to close down the gay scene’ there. The Executive Committee has decided to take all necessary action to protect gay people from the effects of this crackdown. We, ourselves, have found it impossible to obtain a liquor licence for our discos in Glasgow...(not, we hope, a police-inspired action)...<sup>141</sup>

Dunn also suggested that an arrangement could be initiated between SHRG and Gay Switchboard where any homosexual arrested on homosexual conduct charges could be supplied with a Gay Switchboard contact number so that they could then both contact a local solicitor and advise the SHRG.<sup>142</sup> This letter-writing campaign continued throughout 1979 with Malcolm Crowe writing to Kay Carmichael of the University of Glasgow, an academic and social activist and a strong supporter of the Scottish ‘gay rights’ movement, to advise that he had written to chief constables to ask for a meeting regarding ‘a number of things’.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/8, ‘Police and Prisoners’, letter from John Little to Sheila MacAskill, 17/03/1978

<sup>140</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/8, ‘Police and Prisoners’, letter from Edward Frizzell to Sheila MacAskill, 17/03/1976

<sup>141</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/8, ‘Police and Prisoners’, letter from Ian Dunn to Gay Switchboard, 05/03/1979

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> NAS, GD467/1/2/8, ‘Police and Prisoners’, letter from Malcolm Crowe to Kay Carmichael, 07/03/1979



Crowe's attempts to arrange a meeting with Scotland's chief constables to discuss the group's mounting concerns met with no success with John Orr, the Chief Constable of Lothian and Borders Police, stating that 'no useful purpose would be served in meeting to discuss this matter....every minority group [is] entitled to the same consideration as every other member of the community'.<sup>144</sup> Robert Fraser, Chief Superintendent of Strathclyde Police, was equally unenthusiastic stating that 'I believe the police are well aware of the rights of all sections of the public...I do not feel that any useful purpose would be served in arranging a meeting to discuss this further'.<sup>145</sup> In a letter dated the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1979 the Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police had written to Crowe in response to 'rumours' regarding the targeting of the gay community in Glasgow and stated that:

I have made inquiry into these matters and can inform you that these are, as you have said, only rumours...The facts are that for the months of January and February 1979 the numbers of persons reported under Section 7 of the Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act 1976 – 'indecent with males' – for the whole of Strathclyde was 14, of whom 8 were detected in Glasgow.

For the whole of 1978 the comparative figures were 25 cases for Strathclyde, 20 of whom arose in Glasgow.

In these circumstances it can hardly be said that any undue pressure upon the homosexual people is taking place either in attending a meeting to discuss rumours which do not appear to have any foundation in fact.<sup>146</sup>

This statement from the Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police is another suggestion from the Scottish legal authorities that homosexual crimes were not taking up much police time and that any suggestion that homosexuals were being victimised by the law was wide of the mark.

The murder of Peter Calley, a 38 year-old gay man from Springburn and the resultant investigation into his death appeared to cause the SMG further concerns regarding the attitude of Glasgow's police force towards the gay community. *The Scotsman* reported police concerns over the progress of the case:

Police investigating the murder of Peter Calley, who was stabbed in Glasgow early on Thursday, appealed last night to homosexuals in the city

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<sup>144</sup> GD467/1/2/8, 'Police and Prisoners', letter from John Orr to Malcolm Crowe, 27/04/1979

<sup>145</sup> GD467/1/2/8, 'Police and Prisoners', letter from Robert Fraser to Malcolm Crowe, 27/04/1979

<sup>146</sup> GD467/1/2/8, 'Police and Prisoners', letter from Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police to Malcolm Crowe, 19/03/1979

who have been the victims of attacks by thugs to help the murder inquiry. Mr Calley (38), a petrol-pump attendant, left his home in Laverockhall Street, Springburn, Glasgow, late on Wednesday and was later found dying in Cathedral Street. Detective Superintendent Alex Salmon, who is heading the investigation, said last night that it was known that Mr Calley frequented the homosexual scene in the city. Mr Salmon said:- “He was a gentle non-violent, law abiding citizen, and that type of person is sometimes the victim of brutal attacks by thugs who indulge in what is known as ‘poof-bashing’. The police are concerned by the failure of people in the area to assist in their enquiries.”<sup>147</sup>

Malcolm Crowe found it necessary to write to D.C.I. Grant of Pitt Street Police with concerns over the progress of the murder investigation stating that:

First, there has in the last week or so been some evidence of excess zeal by members of the police force claiming to be investigating the murder, involving for example (a) raids on gay pubs to question “any person wearing a check shirt”, (b) visits to neighbours, parents, and places of work of homosexual people whose names arose spuriously in this investigation, (c) somewhat heavy-handed requests for addresses etc of friends of these people apparently in preparation for similar careless exposure of these people to social hostility.<sup>148</sup>

The reply from the Assistant Chief constable attempted to assure Crowe that ‘members of the Scottish Minorities Group’ would receive the same treatment as ‘all other members of society’.<sup>149</sup>

A report appeared in *The Scotsman* newspaper on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 1980 which caused members of the SHRG some concern that Grampian Police were encouraging their officers to pursue homosexual men as they were not only law breakers but also moral degenerates.<sup>150</sup> The text that caused offence appeared in the publication by Grampian Police of ‘Scottish Criminal Law, Police Duties and Procedure’ (the police handbook):

It is a sad reflection on modern society that there are still to be found in our midst, persons who are so lewdly disposed that they will stoop to the most revolting and almost unbelievable acts of indecency. The terms ‘sodomy’, ‘lewd and libidinous practices’ etc. where used in law give little indication of the nature of these offences, the manner in which they are usually committed, and the evils they are liable to bring in their train. It is perhaps

<sup>147</sup> GD467/1/2/8, ‘Police and Prisoners’, cutting from *The Scotsman* newspaper regarding the murder of Peter Calley, 22/07/1978

<sup>148</sup> GD467/1/2/8, ‘Police and Prisoners’, letter from Malcolm Crowe to D.C.I. Grant, 06/08/1978

<sup>149</sup> GD467/1/2/8, ‘Police and Prisoners’, letter from Assistant Chief Constable to Malcolm Crowe, 08/08/1978

<sup>150</sup> Alan Forbes, ‘Police book angers homosexual group – Handbook for police a “smear” on homosexuals’, *The Scotsman*, 20/09/1980, pp. 1-5

no exaggeration to say that many innocent children fall victims of the foul activity of moral degenerates to the detriment of integrity of mind and health of body. Consequently no effort is ever spared by the police to suppress this insidious form of evil whenever and wherever it may occur...Apart from actually detecting an act of indecency, the constable will play his part best by giving special attention to those parts of his beat, such as public parks and secluded public lavatories, which lend themselves to the activities of the morally degenerate. The movements of persons of manifestly lewd disposition should always be closely watched as many and varied are the artifices employed by these persons to achieve their evil objects.<sup>151</sup>

In the report, Derek Ogg (a solicitor and Convenor of the SHRG) stated that this section of text was encouraging police officers to ‘treat a huge minority of Scottish citizens as alien, evil and morally inferior’.<sup>152</sup> In an attempt to justify the inclusion of the offending section, Chief Inspector George Esson of Grampian Police stated that this covered crimes that were still crimes when the book was published as Robin Cook’s amendment to the Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act had not yet come into law.<sup>153</sup> However, the language used to refer to homosexuals seems to indicate a firm disapproval of homosexual acts, which are viewed as an evil threat to society.

Despite the 1980 legislation, which brought Scotland into line with England and Wales, the SHRG appeared convinced that Scotland’s police forces were actively seeking out homosexuals as part of a campaign to control public decency. In a SHRG draft report from February 1984 it is stated the group was aware that Lothian and Borders Police were keeping files on homosexuals and that they were also keeping them under surveillance.<sup>154</sup> A letter expressing concern must have been sent to Lothian and Borders Police as a reply from Chief Constable W. G. M. Sutherland contains a denial that these practices were police policy. The story appeared to have been triggered by a report in the Scottish press that information regarding the surveillance of homosexuals had been retrieved from police files found on a rubbish tip.<sup>155</sup> A further undated letter from Ian Dunn to Robin Cook alleges that homosexuals and transvestites had been followed and recorded, presumably in Edinburgh.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p.1

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 5

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> NAS, GD467, 1/2/8, ‘Police and Prisoners’, draft report by SHRG, 19/02/1984

<sup>155</sup> NAS, GD467, 1/2/8, ‘Police and Prisoners’, letter from W. G. M. Sutherland to SHRG, 24/02/1984

<sup>156</sup> NAS, GD467, 1/2/8, ‘Police and Prisoners’, undated letter from Ian Dunn to Robin Cook, c. February 1984

What is apparent from the activities of the SMG/SHRG during the period from its formation until the change in law in Scotland in 1980 was that its main concerns related to the contradictory nature of Scots Law regarding homosexual acts and the unwritten policy followed by successive Lords Advocate that the laws governing homosexual acts in private would not be applied to Scotland. Secondly, it appears that SMG members felt that the full force of the law was now being concentrated on preserving public moral decency on the streets of Scotland and that any form of homosexual activity in public would be severely penalised. Such a postulation might suggest that there existed a much more deep-rooted antipathy towards homosexuality in Scotland than had existed south of the border, and that this had an effect on attitudes towards homosexual law reform. Considering that the Church of Scotland had been the only major church in Great Britain that had opposed the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report, there might be grounds for concluding this.

### ***Scottish Churches and Homosexual Law Reform***

Debates regarding religion and homosexuality have raged for much of the twentieth century. The Wolfenden Committee had originally included two members of the clergy, the Reverend Canon V. A. Demant, an Anglo-Catholic, and the Reverend R. F. V. Scott of the Church of Scotland.<sup>157</sup> A number of witnesses to the Wolfenden Committee were also drawn from religious organisations in Great Britain, which demonstrated the belief that religious organisations should be part of any discussions regarding legal reform related to homosexual acts and prostitution. Scotland's main churches were to play their role in the processes of law reform with regards to homosexual acts.

For gay and bisexual men in Scotland living during this period the public attitudes of Scotland's main churches towards non-heterosexuality would have appeared bleak and unforgiving. The Church of Scotland, for example, stood rather isolated as one of the only major churches in Britain to oppose the findings of the Wolfenden Report.<sup>158</sup> This church, Scotland's largest, had for some time maintained 'that the only legitimate context for sexual activity was through life-long marriage between a man and a woman'.<sup>159</sup> The Church and Nation Committee (CNC) of the Church of Scotland had examined the issue of homosexuality in 1956 in direct response to the enquiries being undertaken by the Wolfenden Committee, and had reported that they shared the 'grave misgivings about

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<sup>157</sup> RWC, p. 2, Scott resigned from the committee in March 1956.

<sup>158</sup> Finlay A. J. MacDonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church* (Edinburgh: St Andrew Press, 2004), p. 149.

<sup>159</sup> MacDonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church*, p. 146

removing from the realm of law homosexual acts...and support Mr James Adair's reservations...and that relaxation of the law might lead to further and greater depravities'.<sup>160</sup>

During this period the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland offered little comment, despite the church south of the border being in favour of the limited decriminalisation suggested by the Wolfenden report, commenting that its findings were 'only acceptance of the fact that the community should not, in general, pry into a citizen's private deeds – even when they are misdeeds'.<sup>161</sup> Minor churches such as the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland held a rigid and unforgiving attitude towards homosexuality,<sup>162</sup> warning that 'the fire of unnatural lust [would], if unrepented...be met with the fire of Divine judgement and retribution'.<sup>163</sup>

However, such proclamations disguise the considerable contradictions at work within some of these churches. In 1958, when the CNC reported back to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland there was a deep division within the committee. The investigating sub-committee was actually in favour of partial decriminalisation while the main committee viewed a change in law as 'calculated to increase, rather than decrease this grave evil'.<sup>164</sup> Despite the CNC ultimately favouring no change to the law regarding homosexual acts in Scotland, they were aware of the potential ill effects of continued criminalisation including the threat of blackmail and social isolation.<sup>165</sup> There was also the acceptance that there existed 'convincing evidence that indulgence in homosexual practices [was] much more prevalent in Scotland than [had] generally been realised'.<sup>166</sup>

According to the Church of Scotland Assembly Report of 1967 the CSMWC was attempting to encourage 'a more sympathetic understanding of the difficulties and handicaps of those suffering from homosexual tendencies' and felt regret that there was 'a lack of psychiatric and medical treatment available'.<sup>167</sup> The Assembly decided to reject

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<sup>160</sup> 'Church and Nation', *Glasgow Herald*, 7 May 1958, p. 6

<sup>161</sup> *Time*, 'GREAT BRITAIN: The Wolfenden Report', 16/09/1957, available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,809883,00.html>, last accessed 12/08/2010

<sup>162</sup> 'Report on Church Relations: Signatories Not a Band of Conspirators', *Glasgow Herald*, 10 April 1958, p. 5

<sup>163</sup> NAS, HH60/876, Resolution of Synod, 23 May 1973 as quoted in Davidson & Davis, 'Sexuality and the State', p. 538

<sup>164</sup> MacDonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church*, p. 149

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 149-149.

<sup>166</sup> Church of Scotland, 'Assembly Reports, 1956', p. 373, as quoted in MacDonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church*, pp. 147-148

<sup>167</sup> Church of Scotland, *Assembly Report 1967*, as quoted in MacDonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church*, p. 150

this sentiment and adopted a less sympathetic approach by stating that it ‘deplored the prevalence of homosexual practices as a source of uncleanness and deterioration in human character, and of weakness and decadence in the nation's life’.<sup>168</sup>

However, by the time that the first meeting of the SMG was held, contact had already been established between Ian Dunn (who could be labelled the group’s instigator) and Reverend Ean Simpson, an Argyllshire Church of Scotland minister and member of the church’s moral welfare committee. Simpson was also associated with the charitable wing of the HLRS, the Albany Trust.<sup>169</sup> From the outset, Simpson was keen to act as a representative to the SMG on behalf of the Church of Scotland’s Moral Welfare Committee (CSMWC), and to encourage the SMG to adopt a policy of counselling and welfare towards Scotland’s homosexual population:

If the homosexual is homosexual (and only a long conversation elicits this information) then I urge him to be the best kind of homosexual possible; i.e. – to be discriminating, but wholehearted about his homosexual proclivities, on the other hand, I try to ensure that he does not commit the cardinal error of ‘thinking himself into being a homosexual’.<sup>170</sup>

What is noteworthy from the above quote is the lack of moral judgement imposed upon the homosexual by this Church of Scotland representative: there is no mention of perversions, immorality, or sin. Fostering a close relationship with Scottish churches had been an early desire of the SMG. Indeed, many early meetings of the organisation were held within church properties and members of the religious institutions were keen to offer pastoral care and counselling to homosexuals. The relationship between the SMG and Scotland’s main two churches, the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church, was initially supportive. Father Anthony Ross, the Catholic Chaplain to the University of Edinburgh had offered SMG the use of a meeting room from the end of 1970 after the relationship between the group and the Church of Scotland had stuttered over membership policies.<sup>171</sup> Whereas the CSMWC committee saw the responsibility of the SMG to lie in counselling and pastoral care, SMG were promoting a ‘social’ side to their activities. In a discussion document written by SMG Secretary Ian Dunn, it is suggested that ‘clubs, coffee and licensed bars should be considered...to enable...escape from...social isolation’<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 150

<sup>169</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, letter from the Albany Trust to Ian Dunn, 14/02/1969

<sup>170</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, letter from Ean Simpson to Ian Dunn, 23/02/1969

<sup>171</sup> Orr, ‘Capitalism, Patriarchy and Gay Oppression’, p. 19

<sup>172</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/3, Discussion Document, 28/06/1970

Ean Simpson and the CSMWC had hoped that the SMG would offer support and counselling for homosexuals rather than seeing themselves as an organisation pushing for legal equity and the recognition of the human rights of gay men and women. When it became clear that SMG wanted to offer more than pastoral care and counselling their relationship with SMG was profoundly affected. Simpson withdrew from his role as the point of liaison between the CSMWC and SMG in 1970 citing the SMG's willingness to offer an 'open door' policy which would inevitably lead to the 'infiltration into the group of predator-type troublemakers' as his reasons.<sup>173</sup> This breakdown effectively ended the close co-operation between SMG and the CSMWC. Ironically, however, just as the relationship between the SMG and the CSMWC was breaking down the Church of Scotland had already softened its stance towards homosexuality and finally accepted the CSMWC's 1967 advice.<sup>174</sup> The CSMWC's prior failure to influence the public position of the Church of Scotland combined with the increasingly meddling position of Simpson had already seriously impeded any further close association. Whilst the SMG continued its policy of questioning the contradictions in Scots Law policy and practice and the lack of legal equity between Scotland and its southern neighbours, its relationship with the Church of Scotland did not progress.

For gay and bisexual men in Scotland during this period who had no contact with or knowledge of SMG and its relationship with both major churches, the public attitudes of these churches towards non-heterosexuality would have appeared overtly hostile. These men would also potentially have been unaware that despite the moralising discourses on homosexuality publicly espoused by the main churches, these attitudes were by no means universal.

The issue of medical intervention into homosexuality had been the focus of much discussion within the Wolfenden Report, the Church of Scotland, and to some extent the press since 1957. It is therefore appropriate to examine how influential medical discourses on homosexuality were on legislators and what degree they influenced the work of groups such as SMG.

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<sup>173</sup>Letter from Ean Simpson to Ian Dunn, 20/07/70 as quoted in Orr, 'Capitalism, Patriarchy and Gay Oppression', p. 48

<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 151

### **‘Sexual Delinquents’: A Scottish Perspective**

Within the Wolfenden Report published on the 4<sup>th</sup> September 1957 there is a section of Chapter VI devoted to discussions on the medical treatment possibilities for homosexual offenders.<sup>175</sup> This limited discussion might suggest that members of the Wolfenden Committee were not entirely convinced of the merits of medical intervention into human sexuality. However, discussions from within and outwith the medical community on treating homosexuality as a medical concern were not limited by the relatively unconvinced reaction of the committee members. This raises the question as to how the various disciplines of medicine viewed the homosexual, and, how successful were they in removing homosexuality from the legal/moral domain? With reference to Scotland, how did Scottish medics view homosexuality and did their attitudes in any way affect the decision to delay bringing legal equity between Scotland, and England and Wales?

In Scotland during the first half of the twentieth century homosexual conduct was viewed primarily as a legal-moral issue dealt with by the courts of the land with sodomy a particularly serious charge that could result in a jail term. Prior to the 1950s the influence of medical theories of homosexuality on the way in which the courts treated sexual offenders in Scotland appeared minimal. Indeed, on giving evidence to the Wolfenden Committee during the late 1950s, James Adair the former procurator fiscal had noted the predatory nature of older homosexuals, focussing much more on their perceived immorality than any suggestion of psychological irregularities.<sup>176</sup> The dominant opinions on homosexuality for the post-Second World War period in Scotland were still influenced by fears regarding the dysgenic effects of non-procreative sexual behaviour; the alleged predatory and paedophilic nature of homosexuals; and the requirement for homosexuals to ‘recruit’ to maintain their numbers.<sup>177</sup>

The issue of the medicalisation of homosexuality within a Scottish context has attracted little discussion. Roger Davidson has recently begun to explore this issue.<sup>178</sup> As far as popular discussion of homosexuality as a medical concern, the Wolfenden Report offered a

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<sup>175</sup> *RWC*, pp. 61-72

<sup>176</sup> Home Office Scottish Home Department, *Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1967), p. 118 (Hereafter *RWC*)

<sup>177</sup> Davidson, “‘The Sexual State’”, pp. 509-511; *RWC*, P. 118.

<sup>178</sup> See, Roger Davidson, “‘The Cautionary Tale of Tom’: The Male Homosexual Experience of Scottish Medicine in the 1970s and early 1980s”, *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 28 (2008), pp. 122-138; ‘Psychiatry and Homosexuality in mid-Twentieth-Century Edinburgh: the View from Jordanburn Nerve Hospital’, *History of Psychiatry* 20 (2009), pp. 403-424; ‘Law, Medicine and the Treatment of Homosexual Offenders in Scotland 1950-80’, in I. Goold and C. Kelly (eds), *Lawyers’ Medicine* (Oxford, Hart Publishing, 2009).



brief discussion about the possible curative potential of medical and psychiatric intervention. Indeed, as Davidson has noted, in Scotland a number of male homosexuals were voluntarily admitted to Jordanburn Nerve Hospital in Edinburgh as a direct result of criminal charges relating to homosexual offences.<sup>179</sup>

In an article published in the *Glasgow Herald* in December 1956, the British Medical Association (BMA) recommended the ‘establishment of special teams of workers to provide treatment for prisoners convicted of homosexual offences’.<sup>180</sup> The article offers an interpretation of just how the BMA viewed homosexuality:

A distinction is drawn between essential homosexuality, which is genetically determined or is acquired in very early life, and acquired homosexuality, which is determined by factors in later childhood, adolescence, or adult life. The committee believe that reorientation of the first group of inverts is impossible, although they may be helped to make a satisfactory social adjustment, but that the tendencies of the second group may be reversed.<sup>181</sup>

The use of the term ‘inverts,’ more commonly associated with the work of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century sexologists such as Havelock Ellis, Julian Chevalier, and Richard Freiherr von Krafft-Ebing, is telling. Sexual Inversion relates to theories that suggest that homosexuality may be related to some form of gender anomaly.<sup>182</sup> There is also a differentiation made between different ‘types’ of homosexuals, which mirrors the comments made by the then Home Secretary Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, a Scot, who in December 1953 was contemplating setting up a Royal Commission to investigate existing legislation on homosexual offences.<sup>183</sup> Fyfe was responding to a question posed by Sir Robert Boothby in the House of Commons, and commented that ‘one element in this matter was the protective element in punishment, because homosexuals...were proselytisers, and a danger to others, especially the young.’<sup>184</sup> Fyfe added that there existed two types of homosexual: the invert, and the pseudo-homosexual.<sup>185</sup> These attitudes to homosexuals were not limited to Scottish legislators, indeed, Lord Stamp, during a 1977 debate on the Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill (an attempt to lower the homosexual age of consent to 18) suggested that 3 types of homosexual ‘sexual deviants’ existed: the

<sup>179</sup> Davidson, ‘Psychiatry and Homosexuality in mid-Twentieth-Century Edinburgh’, p. 405

<sup>180</sup> ‘Problem of Perverts: BMA Suggestions’, *Glasgow Herald*, 16 December 1956, p. 3

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (London & Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 387, 341

<sup>183</sup> ‘Psychiatry in Sexual Delinquency’, *Glasgow Herald*, 4 December 1953, p. 9

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid.

‘unwilling homosexual’ who was deeply resistant to his sexual drive; the ‘gay liberationist’ who ‘glory in their proclivities and are out to proselytise and convert others to their way of life by every means in their power’; and the paedophile ‘whose increasing proselytising activities are closely related to the gay liberation movement’.<sup>186</sup> These may not have been purely medical categories (the influence of ‘morality’ looms large throughout) but suggests that some form of classification always existed in such debates.

Discussions on the nature of homosexuality during the period preceding and following the publication of the Wolfenden Report fell broadly into two categories: the homosexual as a moral degenerate, and the homosexual as suffering from a medical or psychiatric condition. James Adair, the outspoken former procurator fiscal, favoured the former category and intimated that he feared that homosexuality would spread if laws governing acceptable behaviour were to be relaxed.<sup>187</sup> Adair, in his dissenting minority report included within the published Wolfenden Report, remained unconvinced that medicine could provide answers to the homosexual problem, and that such arguments were governed by sentimentalism.<sup>188</sup> There was, however, a body of opinion that believed that medical and psychiatric intervention could address the homosexual problem.

In an article from the *Glasgow Herald* in January 1955, subtitled ‘Treatment of Psychoneurotics’, the virtues of the Davidson Clinic in Edinburgh are extolled.<sup>189</sup> According to the article the clinic’s successes are down to the psychotherapeutic approach employed under the tutelage of the clinic’s honorary medical director Dr Winifred Rushforth and ‘patients are never asked to “pull themselves together”, they are encouraged to face the reality of their neurosis and, through understanding of their difficulties, to expect recovery.’<sup>190</sup> The article goes on to state that one of the major problems faced by the clinic is homosexuality, but that the clinic aims to help homosexuals ‘get over their difficulties’.<sup>191</sup>

The notion that homosexuals were individuals suffering from some form of neurosis or psychological difficulty appeared to gain currency during the 1950s, as a result of the issue being discussed more widely following the Wolfenden Committee’s activities and report.

<sup>186</sup> Hansard (HL), 384, 14 June 1977, col. 50

<sup>187</sup> ‘Day of Big Issues at Assembly: Committee Upheld on H-Bomb and Wolfenden Report’, *Glasgow Herald*, 27 May 1958, p. 7

<sup>188</sup> RWC, p. 118

<sup>189</sup> ‘Pioneering Scottish Clinic’s Success: Treatment of Psychoneurotics’, *Glasgow Herald*, 8 January 1955, p. 2

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

In late 1961 the Church of Scotland opened premises in Elmbank Street, Glasgow which aimed to ‘help street women and delinquents of all kinds, and also alcoholics and other people with psychological or neurotic difficulties, including homosexuals’.<sup>192</sup>

In institutions such as the Jordanburn Nerve Hospital a combination of psychiatric and chemical treatments were used in an effort to readjust or treat the secondary symptoms of homosexuality (such as stress or anxiety).<sup>193</sup> It should be noted that many of the patients at institutions such as Jordanburn were not given treatments aimed at curing their condition, but were mainly used to allow the patient to accept their sexual orientation and to adjust their lifestyle to fit in with societal norms.<sup>194</sup> However, this was not an attempt to legitimise homosexuality; the condition was still viewed as evidence of interrupted sexual development or other deep-rooted dysfunctions.<sup>195</sup>

Outside of the medical community there was evident uncertainty about whether or not to treat homosexuality as a medical concern or as a symptom of social breakdown. Robert Boothby, MP for Aberdeenshire East, and who had been instrumental in encouraging a review of homosexuality laws in Britain, spoke in a House of Commons debate in 1954 regarding the potential medical treatments for homosexuality.<sup>196</sup> Boothby’s opinion of homosexuality veers towards viewing it as a potentially infectious moral condition with the young particularly vulnerable:

I think that homosexuality in this country is more prevalent than we are apt to admit and that it is tending to increase at the present time. In most of our great cities, there is a homosexual underground which is a constant menace to youth...The law must make adequate provision for the appropriate punishment of seduction or attempted seduction of youth.<sup>197</sup>

In a debate about medical treatments for homosexuality there is little reference to medicine at all. The main reference to medical treatment concerns the rehabilitation of offenders within penal institutions where, according to Sir Hugh Lucas-Tooth the Under-Secretary of State for the Home Department, adequate provisions are already being made with a view to

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<sup>192</sup> ‘Reclaiming Misfits and Delinquents: Glasgow Centre to Cost £6300 a Year’, *Glasgow Herald*, 4 October 1961, p. 22

<sup>193</sup> Davidson, ‘Psychiatry and Homosexuality in mid-Twentieth-Century Edinburgh’, p. 410

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 412

<sup>195</sup> Davidson, ‘The Cautionary Tale of Tom’, pp. 126-127

<sup>196</sup> Hansard (HC), 526, 28/04/1954, cols. 1745-1756

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*, cols. 1749-1751

the building of ‘a special establishment for mentally abnormal prisoners, and sexual cases and homosexual cases would certainly be included among those.’<sup>198</sup>

In the event, the Wolfenden Report was not convinced that handing over homosexuals to the medical community for treatment was a justifiable move.<sup>199</sup> Indeed there were strong reservations about the possibility of ‘curing’ homosexual impulses and the main discussion focused on the available treatments that could combat the ‘strengths of these desires by physical means’.<sup>200</sup> Castration was dismissed by the report, but the use of oestrogen treatments as a tool to reduce the sexual drive was favoured, although such treatment was not used in Scotland<sup>201</sup> due to its apparent risks.<sup>202</sup>

Dr Desmond Curran, a noted psychiatrist,<sup>203</sup> was a member of the Wolfenden Committee and along with Dr Joseph Whitby, a general practitioner, offered an interpretation of the clinical varieties of homosexual ranging from the ‘adolescent and mentally immature adult’, to the ‘severely damaged personalities’, the ‘relatively intact personalities’, the ‘latent and relatively well-compensated homosexual’ through to the individuals with a ‘homosexual disposition co-existing with serious mental disability’.<sup>204</sup> These were only a few of the possible variations, which hinted at the problematic nature of discovering a cover-all treatment for the homosexual condition. However, Curran and Whitby were hopeful that at least some of the homosexuals who entered the penal system would benefit from medical and psychiatric evaluation and therapy.<sup>205</sup>

With reference to Scotland, it is important to ascertain whether medical theories of homosexuality played any part in the decision not to apply the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report to Scotland. Scottish members of the Houses of Parliament were not unified by one single attitude towards homosexuality, medical or moral. Lord Mathers, a Labour peer and former MP for West Lothian, Linlithgowshire, and Edinburgh West, and former Lord High Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, on one hand supported psychiatric intervention in homosexuality, but on the other hoped that

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<sup>198</sup> Ibid., col. 1755

<sup>199</sup> *RWC*, p. 70

<sup>200</sup> Ibid., p. 71

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 71

<sup>202</sup> Davidson, ‘Psychiatry and Homosexuality in mid-Twentieth-Century Edinburgh’, p. 407

<sup>203</sup> Prior to the publication of the Wolfenden Report Curran was co-author of: Desmond Curran & Denis Parr, ‘Homosexuality: An Analysis of 100 Male Cases Seen in Private Practice’, *British Medical Journal* 1 (5022) (1958), pp. 797-801

<sup>204</sup> *RWC*, p. 73

<sup>205</sup> Ibid., p. 76

homosexuals would 'strive their utmost against all that separates them from normal companionship and sympathy' and saw it as a Christian duty to pray that they 'set before them, steadfastly and prayerfully, a truly Christian life as their goal' and in doing so 'they are certain to raise themselves in their own estimation and also in that of their fellow-men, and they will rid themselves of the bonds that have hitherto held them in thrall'.<sup>206</sup>

One could suggest that it was a failing amongst opponents of homosexual law reform in Scotland that there was a lack of unity of opposition. If opponents were to view homosexuality as a psychological condition then there was little point in the continued criminalisation of the behaviour, unless they also viewed other psychological conditions in the same light. If opponents viewed homosexuality as a serious moral failing, which threatened society, then they would be reliant on the major Scottish churches supporting such a position. The problem opponents of law reform in Scotland faced was that the Church of Scotland had considerably softened its stance towards homosexuality by the 1970s.<sup>207</sup> The contradiction in legal practices towards homosexual offences between Scotland, and England and Wales, and the decision by successive Lords Advocate not to prosecute consensual, adult, homosexual acts conducted in private, offered a suggestion that resistance to change amongst Scottish MPs and Lords may have dissipated during the same period. However, it had not disappeared.

Scottish MPs played a significant part in preventing the repeal of Section 11 of the *Criminal Law Amendment Act* (1885) in the *Sexual Offences (Scotland) Act* 1976, a consolidation measure, by voting 37-27 to keep the 1885 legislation.<sup>208</sup> Scottish peers were vocal in their opposition to Lord Arran's *Sexual Offences (Amendment) Bill* of 1977, which argued for the reduction in the age of consent for homosexuals in England and Wales from 21 to 18.<sup>209</sup> Opposition rested on a combination of medical theory, degeneracy theory, and considerations of public order. The Marquess of Lothian, Peter Kerr, a member of the original Wolfenden Committee, stated that 'I fear there is little doubt that homosexuality is on the increase. This was certainly not what the members of the Wolfenden Committee intended, and I suppose to that extent we have failed' and that:

a strong body of medical opinion which holds that many young men...do not establish what is called a definite gender role until they are between

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<sup>206</sup> Hansard (HL), 206, 4 December 1957, cols. 821-823

<sup>207</sup> MacDonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church*, pp. 150-151

<sup>208</sup> Davidson & Davis, 'Sexuality and the State', pp. 541-542

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p.543

the ages of 18 and 21. These are the people who, in my view, are particularly susceptible to outside pressures and influence and subtle forms of corruption and persuasion.<sup>210</sup>

The Countess of Loudoun, Barbara Huddleston Abney-Hastings, appears to have viewed homosexuality as a medical issue and alludes to its psychological basis, but describes something rather more pathological:

Are we to encourage the infectious growth of this filthy disease by giving the authority of Parliament to the spreading of corruption and perversion among a new generation of young men and the younger boys in contact with them? The psychologists have explained the reasons for homosexual behaviour, and no blame can be attached to those who suffer this handicap. But you cannot be a homosexual alone, which inevitably leads to the corruption and perversion of others, which is a symptom of the disease. So although it would be wrong to condemn, just as it would be wrong to condemn the victim of an attack of cholera, such an outbreak must be contained and isolated, not given a licence to multiply.<sup>211</sup>

This conflation of illness with morality appears to have lain at the heart of continued objections to legal equity between Scotland, and England and Wales. In the House of Lords debate on Robin Cook's amendment to the *Criminal Justice (Scotland) Act* that would bring Scots Law in line with English law regarding homosexual acts, Lord Galpern, a former Labour MP for Glasgow Shettleston, remarked that:

When we come to consider the matter from the angle of what we are doing should we not turn our attention, as we have done with alcoholics, to engaging in more research into the causation of homosexual practices or homosexual indulgence. Surely research, which I think is grossly inadequate if there is any going on at the present time, should be directed, as we have spent millions of pounds on trying to help alcoholics, to some medical effort to relieve these people of what their indulgences are and what their practices are.<sup>212</sup>

Objections to reforming the law in Scotland appear to follow a medico-moral path, and there does appear to have been particularly strong objections from Scottish peers. However, this opposition was not enough to prevent Robin Cook's amendment bringing Scots Law into line with the law of England and Wales regarding homosexual acts in 1980. What part the medical community played in this development is difficult to ascertain, as their influence on legislators appears to have been patchy at best.

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<sup>210</sup> Hansard (HL), 384, 14 June 1977, col. 36

<sup>211</sup> Ibid., cols. 45-46

<sup>212</sup> Hansard (HL), 413, 21 October 1980, col. 1839

### ***The Medical Community and the SMG***

From its inception in 1969 the SMG had been attempting to gather professional advice on the issue of homosexuality and law reform. A part of this process was contacting the various social institutions whose influence would have most effect on potentially challenging, and indeed changing, the law in Scotland with regards to homosexual practices. Ian Dunn and Colin Harvey had not only contacted the legal and criminal authorities but also medical experts in the field of psychiatry. A report on the SMG meeting held on the 17<sup>th</sup> of April 1970 outlined this aim:

It was thought essential to have access to a panel of experts of different kinds to whom references could be submitted, and especially lawyers and psychiatrists known to be sympathetically interested in homosexuality and its legal and medical complications...<sup>213</sup>

However, it appears that this endeavour had begun the preceding year as Ian Dunn and Colin Harvey had received several letters from psychiatrists who had some experience of dealing with issues related to homosexuality. In a letter dated June 1969, Professor W. Malcolm Miller of the University of Aberdeen stated:

I have had a certain amount of homosexual patients referred for psychiatric treatment but on the whole these have been few in number and I have no doubt at all do not constitute a representative sample of the homosexual population. As with other psychiatrists who have adopted an intensive psychotherapeutic approach to such problems, I have met with only limited success, at any rate so far as altering the basic sexual attitudes are concerned. On the other hand I have felt that few patients have really expressed any wish for such a change in their attitudes. I have always felt that that the motives of homosexuals in approaching psychiatrists such as myself have not been entirely satisfactory. Too frequently the referral is brought about by a crisis either involving the Courts or the breakdown of a serious love affair with possible a suicide attempt.<sup>214</sup>

The initial responses received by SMG were indeed sympathetic and encouraging and Professor Miller was not alone in expressing interest in SMG's objectives. In a letter to Colin Harvey, Professor G. M. Carstairs of the University of Edinburgh felt that social isolation was a chief concern for homosexuals and that a policy of educating public opinion would be worthwhile, stating that 'it seems to me that two groups in the

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<sup>213</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/2, SMG report dated 17/04/1970

<sup>214</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, letter from W. Malcolm Miller to Ian Dunn, 17/06/1969

community where this kind of discussion could probably be encouraged would be the clergy and the police'.<sup>215</sup>

The psychiatrists contacted by SMG members appeared to have little belief that sexual preference reassignment was possible. G. C. Tinbury of Gartnavel Royal, although admitting that he had little experience of homosexuality, suggested that in some cases outpatient psychotherapy could be arranged but stated that 'the success of this will depend very much on the patient's motivation for treatment.'<sup>216</sup> Tinbury suggested that many of the homosexuals who attended hospital for treatment only did so because of pressure from relatives or social agencies and in most cases issues related to the individual 'coming to terms with this particular orientation.'<sup>217</sup> Dr Keith Waldrop of the Douglas Inch Centre in Glasgow told the SMG that the homosexual was not sick and neither should homosexuality be considered a disease. Indeed, Waldrop felt that the social ostracism experienced by many homosexuals was the main cause of any mental health difficulties experienced by homosexuals.<sup>218</sup>

The SMG's report of April 1970 had suggested that they would only make contact with sympathetic practitioners, and the responses they received did suggest that these psychiatrists did not place much merit in any efforts to reassign sexual orientation. The opinions voiced through the SMG were not necessarily representative of the opinions held by all medical specialists in Scotland but the fact that these were notable medical professionals, with national and international reputations, undoubtedly added weight to SMG's desire to see homosexuals viewed as normal.

Despite the efforts of SMG members to underline the normality of homosexuality in the face of what was apparently widespread opposition to legal reform from several quarters, SMG members were still tempted to assign a cause for homosexuality. In a letter dated September 1970 to Barbara Jackson, a senior caseworker at Simpson House, Edinburgh, Ian Dunn comments on a booklet that suggested a link between an absent or inadequate father and homosexuality.<sup>219</sup> Dunn comments that several members of the group stated that the absence of a father during childhood had affected them, and may have made them

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<sup>215</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, letter from G. M. Carstairs to Colin Harvey, 18/06/1969

<sup>216</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/1, letter from G. C. Tinbury to Colin Harvey, 20/06/1969

<sup>217</sup> Ibid.

<sup>218</sup> Davidson, 'The Cautionary Tale of Tom', p. 127

<sup>219</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/2, letter from Ian Dunn to Barbara Jackson, 03/09/1970



more susceptible to homosexual inclinations.<sup>220</sup> Theories regarding homosexuals and their fathers were popular fodder for the newspapers during the late 1960s, with one *Daily Mirror* article suggesting that 6 out of 10 homosexuals had either lost their fathers during early childhood or had a poor relationship with them.<sup>221</sup>

The absence of a father during a child's adolescence had been viewed as a potential contributory factor in the development of sexual deviations. A research paper published by Eva Bene in 1965 concluded that homosexuals tended to have a closer relationship with their mother during childhood, and that 'a lack of good relations between sons and fathers fostered the development of homosexuality'.<sup>222</sup> P. A. P. Moran and K. Abe conducted a study to examine the links between the premature death of fathers during children's adolescence and the development of pathological personalities, sexual deviations and homosexuality.<sup>223</sup> In the event, the research published in 1969, found no distinct relationship between the absence of a father through death in a child's propensity to become homosexual.<sup>224</sup> The discussions of SMG members regarding the potential influence of poor relationships with fathers suggests that medical and psychiatric discourses on homosexuality had some influence on them, despite the organisation's attempts to encourage a less restrictive view of homosexual desire.

The sympathetic opinions gathered by SMG in the late 1960s and early 1970s appear to have sat uncomfortably alongside the thoughts of many psychiatrists and general practitioners during this same period. According to Davidson, an unsympathetic response from a GP may have had something to do with a general lack of training regarding human sexuality for doctors during this period.<sup>225</sup> Indeed, the textbook, *General Practice Medicine* was listing homosexuality as a behavioural disorder, akin to alcoholism and drug addiction as late as 1975.<sup>226</sup> Indeed, many homosexuals when visiting their G.P. were met with discomfort and an apparent ignorance of what treatments were available for homosexuals unhappy with their sexual orientation, and, whether treatments were in fact

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<sup>220</sup> Ibid.

<sup>221</sup> Quentin Crewe, 'The boy who sat by me in the cinema', *Daily Mirror*, 15/04/1969, p. 9

<sup>222</sup> Eva Bene, 'On the Genesis of Male Homosexuality: An Attempt at Clarifying the Role of Parents', *British Journal of Psychiatry* 111 (1965), p. 812

<sup>223</sup> P. A. P. Moran & K. Abe, 'Parental Loss in Homosexuals', *British Journal of Psychiatry* 115 (1969), pp. 319-320

<sup>224</sup> Ibid., p. 320

<sup>225</sup> Roger Davidson, "'The Cautionary Tale of Tom': The Male Homosexual Experience of Scottish Medicine in the 1970s and early 1980s", *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 28 (2008), p. 125

<sup>226</sup> Ibid.

necessary.<sup>227</sup> However, it would appear that well into the late 1970s there still existed medical practitioners who held a belief that homosexuality was an ‘illness’ that could be ‘cured’.<sup>228</sup> At a meeting with the Socialist Medical Group in Edinburgh in February 1973, the SMG were treated to a talk from Dr David Whitelaw, a clinical psychologist, on ‘aversion therapy’ and its uses in the treatment of homosexuals.<sup>229</sup> However, as Davidson has noted, it is difficult to ascertain to what extent aversion therapy was used in Scotland during the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>230</sup>

The difficulty that the SMG encountered was that very few of the medical explanations regarding homosexuality during the 1960s and 1970s were purely medical. As Davidson has noted, many of the psychiatric explanations of homosexuality viewed it as standing in opposition to monogamous, restrictive, heterosexuality, which are effectively more related to morality than to any scientific explanations.<sup>231</sup>

Just as sceptical Scottish legislators had struggled to find a unitary point of opposition to law reform within medicine, medics themselves had failed to reach agreement on a purely medical interpretation of homosexuality. Issues of morality appeared still central to explanations of sexual behaviour. The SMG’s enquiry into medicine, psychiatry, and homosexuality resulted in the fostering of some favourable relationships with psychiatrists such as Dr Keith Waldrop, the founder of a Glasgow-based psychiatry clinic, and Professor G. M. Carstairs, a professor of psychiatry at Edinburgh University, but medicine did not offer homosexuals in Scotland freedom from the socially conservative forces of morality.

## **Summary**

This chapter has aimed to assess what factors lay at the root of the decision not to implement the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report in Scotland regarding homosexual acts. What is clear is that there existed no single reason for this decision. There were legal barriers to legal equity, primarily the relative independence of Scots Law but there were also cultural and religious factors at play, the latter being particularly relevant during the period 1957-1969. There were also political factors fashioned around a

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<sup>227</sup> Glenn Smith, Annie Bartlett & Michael King, ‘Treatments of Homosexuality in Britain since the 1950s: An Oral History: the Experience of Patients’, *British Medical Journal* (2004), available at: <http://www.bmj.com/cgi/content/full/328/7437/427>, accessed 09/11/2006

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

<sup>229</sup> NAS, GD467/6/1/2, notes on meeting between SMG and the Socialist Medical Group, 02/1973

<sup>230</sup> Davidson, “‘The Cautionary Tale of Tom’”, p. 130

<sup>231</sup> Ibid., p. 127

resistance to change amongst Scottish legislators, and potentially the lack of will exhibited in the Houses of Parliament to bring forward potential legislation to bring legal equity between Scotland, and England and Wales. The suggestions that Scotland had its legal house in order regarding the prosecution of public homosexual acts coupled with the valorisation of Scots legal practice effectively stunted any efforts to reform Scots Law. This valorisation coupled with recognition in the Wolfenden Report that Scotland treated homosexual offences differently meant that the subsequent focus of law reform debates was England and Wales.

Culturally, the Scottish press played some role in presenting Scottish society as resistant to change of this nature, and Scottish representatives at Westminster seemed to support such a position for a considerable time. The prosecution of the vast majority of public homosexual offences in lower courts attracted little press attention and this may have been assisted by reluctance to advertise the ubiquitous nature of homosexuality within Scottish society. By accident, and perhaps by design, Scots Law was chiefly concerned with protecting the moral fibre of the nation even if it meant turning a blind eye to homosexuals who conducted their sex lives behind closed doors

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methods, Methodologies, and Theories**

As identity and identity formation amongst GBM is central to this thesis, then it is important to discuss what is meant by identity and identity formation among human subjects. It is also important to discuss how the use of qualitative research methods, in particular oral histories, can further our knowledge about how individuals negotiate identities and how, if at all, this process of identity formation has changed over time, and whether identity formation among GBM is subject to particular pressures associated with minority groups.

One theorist who has explored identity in some depth has been Anthony Giddens.<sup>232</sup> For Giddens self-identity is not the result of imagination but the result of an ongoing process whereby the individual integrates events from the outside world and uses them to construct a story about the self.<sup>233</sup> This concept, Giddens argues, has changed through history from an identity shaped by the external forces of tradition and habit to the post-traditional where doubt, a central feature of modernity, permeates everyday life and ‘forms a general existential dimension of the contemporary social world’.<sup>234</sup> What is central to the self in modernity is the concept of reflexivity, which Giddens argues is incorporated by both individuals and by institutions and results in reorganisation or reconstitution.<sup>235</sup> Reflexivity refers to an ability, held by an individual or organisation, to constantly examine their behaviour and practices through self-examination and through reference to their social world. Reflexivity plays a key role in the process of telling stories about our lives. Our ability to negotiate, adapt, and maintain aspects of our own ‘history’ is central to both identity theory and theories regarding oral history. Oral history interviews offer the opportunity to examine the processes of reflexivity.

Defining oneself as being gay or bisexual, therefore, is not as simple as ticking the relevant box but involves processes of negotiation, acceptance or rejection, and other emotional and psychological factors, which would not be identified during quantitative research. A

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<sup>232</sup> See, Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991); Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992).

<sup>233</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity*, p. 54

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3

<sup>235</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Consequences of Modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), pp. 36-38.

qualitative approach lends itself more appropriately to examining complex phenomena in which the presence of subjectivities is easier to identify, than a quantitative approach. More simply put, qualitative researchers 'are interested in understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences'.<sup>236</sup> The methodology used in this research project has been informed by wider theoretical discussion on the nature of identity, and on identity formation.

### Identity and Identity Formation

Roy Baumeister and Mark Muraven have argued that identity relates to 'a composite definition of the self'.<sup>237</sup> Further, identity is composed of a set of definitions that are either attached or ascribed to the self, which includes reputations, social roles, values and priorities, and conceptions about one's potentialities.<sup>238</sup>

It has been argued that one of the main features of self-identity in modernity is the fluid nature of identity, no longer constrained by pre-modern 'sureties of tradition and habit'<sup>239</sup> but still subject to doubt and the ongoing process of reflexivity. Baumeister and Muraven's theory of identity is the result of these changes, which have seen the loosening of restrictions, pressures and guidelines that historically saw identity as a much more inflexible structure of the self. Jeffrey Weeks has underlined the importance of external factors in the construction of identities by stating that 'social regulation provides the conditions within which those defined can begin to develop their own consciousness and identity'.<sup>240</sup> Yet, Weeks also recognises that identities are not fixed; they can be fluid, multiple, invented and contingent.<sup>241</sup> A gay man's identity may not simply be determined by his sexual attraction to other men, there may be other factors at work, such as a political identity, or a particular sexual proclivity. A man may define himself as a heterosexual, be married with children, but choose to occasionally have sex with other men. These identities, imposed *and* negotiated may change over time.

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<sup>236</sup> Sharran B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: a Guide to Design and Implementation*, Revised Edition (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), p. 5

<sup>237</sup> Roy F. Baumeister & Mark Muraven, 'Identity as Adaptation to Social, Cultural, and Historical Context', *Journal of Adolescence* 19 (1996), p. 406

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.

<sup>239</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity*, p. 3.

<sup>240</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics & Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London: Longman, 1989)

<sup>241</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *The World We Have Won: The Remaking of Erotic and Intimate Life* (London; New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 112

Stuart Hall has stated the importance of recognising that identities are produced within 'specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies'.<sup>242</sup> This position would suggest that subjects play a role in identity formation but that development is influenced by the identification options available during a specific historical and discursive context. For example, Harry Triandis has argued that identity options available to individuals can be restricted when cultures are deemed 'tight',<sup>243</sup> and the adoption of alternative identities can lead to exclusion.<sup>244</sup> Baumeister and Muraven have expanded on Triandis's theory of loose and tight cultures to suggest that within Western society cultures have changed from tight to loose<sup>245</sup> due to the changes in society, which saw traditional forms of identity categories become subject to doubt and reflexivity. It could be argued that the emergence of sexual identities within Western societies was directly related to the loosening of Western cultures. As the constraints of pre-modern societies diminished during modernity the options for new self-identity schemas widened.

### ***The Emergence of Sexual Identities***

Michel Foucault claimed that before the nineteenth century and the emergence of scientific discourses that gave us sexual identities, and gave us the 'homosexual', it would be misleading and wholly inaccurate to speak of homosexuals or indeed wider sexual identities.<sup>246</sup> Foucault goes on to claim that it was only through the systematic regulation of sexualities that the homosexual was created. What once had been understood as a collection of sexual acts that could be committed by anyone was now understood as defining a personage to be separated from 'normal' society and regulated; this was an emerging sexual identity.<sup>247</sup>

Foucault could be criticised for underplaying the role of individual agency in identity formation. It could be suggested that identity may be more accurately described as a combination of individual agency and external influence, which combine to produce the multifaceted self. How we enact our identity is also subject to our environment; on

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<sup>242</sup> Stuart Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs Identity?' in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, edited by Paul Du Gay & Stuart Hall (London: Sage, 1996), p. 4

<sup>243</sup> Harry C. Triandis, 'The Self and Social Behaviour in Differing Cultural Contexts', *Psychological Review* 96 (1989), p. 510

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 511

<sup>245</sup> Baumeister & Muraven, 'Identity as Adaptation to Social, Cultural, and Historical Context', p. 406

<sup>246</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge: The History of Sexuality I*, translated by Robert Hurley (London: Penguin Books, 1990)

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

different occasions, we may choose to centralise one aspect of our identity, be it related to our social class, our gender, our ethnicity, our sexuality, and so on.

This conception of the self in modernity and late modernity and its relation to self-identity can, as has already been indicated, be applied to issues of sexuality. According to Lynne Segal, during the pre-modern era the regulation of sexual behaviour was almost wholly conducted within the ‘spiritual paradigm’<sup>248</sup>; religion and morality dictated the direction and acceptability of sexual behaviour.<sup>249</sup> This obviously ties with Giddens’ argument that during pre-modern society the concept of a reflexive self-identity was absent and identity was largely shaped by tradition and habit. There appear to be two main strands of thought on the issue of sexual identity: a social constructionist approach, which posits the emergence of sexual identity categories somewhere between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, and, an essentialist approach, which claims a continuity of sexual identities through history.

The dominant discourse on sexual behaviour during pre-modern society, as Segal has argued, was one linked to theology. Historically, according to monotheist religions, deviation from the accepted norm whether related to sexual behaviour or to gender behaviour was an abomination.<sup>250</sup> Thus, sexual identity as a categorising tool in historical societies (and some modern societies) directed by religious doctrine was absent due to the limited conception of sexuality. The restrictions embedded within Judeo-Christian religious texts not only applied to reproductive behaviour but also applied to same-sex sexual behaviour<sup>251</sup> and to behaviour we now classify as transvestism.<sup>252</sup> As Weeks has noted, condemnation directed towards men who engaged in sodomy related not to a type of person they were but to a collection of sexual acts.<sup>253</sup> ‘Sexuality’ within pre-modern societies, it has been argued, was an ascribed phenomenon and discussions regarding sexuality during pre-modern times related to reproduction<sup>254</sup> and followed what we would now term as heterosexual lines. The concepts of diverse sexualities and sexual identities are therefore viewed by some as a thoroughly ‘modern’ development.

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<sup>248</sup> Lynne Segal, *Straight Sex: The Politics of Pleasure* (London: Virago Press, 1994), p. 72

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Richard J. Hoffman, ‘Vices, Gods, and Virtues: Cosmology as a Mediating Factor in Attitudes toward Male Homosexuality’, in *Bisexual and Homosexual Identities: Critical Theoretical Issues* (New York: The Haworth Press, 1984), p. 38

<sup>251</sup> Leviticus 18.22

<sup>252</sup> Deuteronomy 22.5

<sup>253</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out*, p. 12.

<sup>254</sup> Steven Epstein, ‘A Queer Encounter: Sociology and the Study of Sexuality’, *Sociological Theory* 12 (1994), p. 190.

Indeed, Bruce Smith has suggested that sexuality (and thus sexual identity) is a culturally-specific phenomenon, which exemplifies most strongly the intersection of society and the individual.<sup>255</sup> What seems to be one of the most natural and universal functions of humanity is in fact, as Smith argues, a social construction.<sup>256</sup> David Halperin goes further when he states that ‘sexuality is a cultural production: it represents the *appropriation* of the human body and of its physiological capacities by an ideological discourse’.<sup>257</sup>

However, Giddens has suggested that sexual identity has been moulded by our own potential for reflexivity into a ‘malleable feature of the self, a prime connecting point between body, self-identity and social norms’. This potential for reflexivity underlines the role we, as individuals, have in the formation of identities. Yet, as Hall has argued with reference to race, the individual’s ability to be truly reflexive, to be truly self-determining, is hindered by social and political processes: ‘Black’ is only a recognisable identity category because of the social and historical forces that have created it.<sup>258</sup> The same can apply to ‘homosexual’.

Yet it would be misleading to present only a social constructionist perspective on sexual identity. The theoretical standpoints outlined already fall roughly into the social constructionist camp, which argues that social forces play a significant role in the formation of identity categories. There are other approaches, which disagree fundamentally with this position.

### Essentialism and Sexual Identity

Jennifer Harding states that essentialist theories on sexuality have at their core the assertion that ‘cultures and societies were seen as responding to, rather than shaping, the sexual impulse’.<sup>259</sup> In effect, the sexual impulse and therefore the sexual being, however diverse, existed within societies and was recognised by them long before the ‘homosexual’, ‘bisexual’, ‘transgender’ and so on were categorised by the medical profession during the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>255</sup> Bruce R. Smith, ‘Premodern Sexualities’, *PMLA* 115 (2000), p. 319.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid.

<sup>257</sup> David M. Halperin, ‘Is There a History of Sexuality?’, *History and Theory* 28 (1989), p. 257.

<sup>258</sup> Stuart Hall, ‘What is this ‘Black’ in Black Popular Culture?’ in *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*, edited by David Morley & Kuan Hsing Chen (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 473

<sup>259</sup> Jennifer Harding, *Sex Acts: Practices of Femininity and Masculinity* (London: Sage, 1998), p. 11.



Those following an essentialist perspective of homosexual identity would reject the assertion that social and historical contexts play a significant part in the creation of sexual categories; they would argue that there has existed a consistent 'homosexual' identity throughout history. Indeed, historians of gay culture such as Rictor Norton claim to be able to trace a common homosexual identity through most historical eras.<sup>260</sup> Not only that, Norton claims that a self-identity was in existence long before the term 'homosexual' appeared in the late nineteenth century,<sup>261</sup> and suggests that it can be traced back to the medieval period.<sup>262</sup> The argument that a gay self-identity had begun to appear at least two centuries before the beginning of the 'modern' period also challenges Giddens' argument that reflexivity was a product of modernity.

Questions regarding the nature and presence of identities are key to establishing whether or not homosexuality has existed throughout history. Historians, such as Norton, have argued that the social constructionist argument that homosexuality did not exist as a category, personage or identity until the 'role' was invented can be easily dismissed by locating men (or women) who could be readily described as gay, queer or homosexual from the pages of history. Norton has offered us numerous examples of men he would describe as 'gay' or 'queer' and suggests that within French society the homosexual as a distinct type of person had been identified during the early eighteenth century.<sup>263</sup>

The existence of French 'pederasts', a seemingly distinct and identifiable group of homosexual men in eighteenth-century Paris, has been used to challenge claims that a gay identity and self-identity did not exist prior to the socio-medical developments of the late nineteenth century. Jeffrey Merrick's study of sodomy in early eighteenth-century Paris<sup>264</sup> suggests that the French authorities at this time viewed men who engaged in homosexual activity as not merely engaging in proscribed acts, but also viewed them as having specific 'inclinations'.<sup>265</sup> For Merrick, this discovery does not necessarily invalidate social constructionist arguments but should influence the manner in which they are interpreted.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Rictor Norton, *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual: Queer History and the Search for Cultural Unity* (London: Cassell, 1998), p.7.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>263</sup> Norton, *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual*, p. 42

<sup>264</sup> Jeffrey Merrick, 'Sodomitical Inclinations in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 30 (1997), pp. 289-295

<sup>265</sup> Merrick, 'Sodomitical Intentions', p. 292-293

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 293

The suggestion that a 'homosexual' identity appeared in Western society long before theorists such as Foucault posited its appearance has been supported by research that has allegedly uncovered organised homosexual subcultures within English society, dating as far back as the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. According to Randolph Trumbach these subcultures displayed evidence that the men who engaged in homosexual relations actively constructed their own identities<sup>267</sup>, which suggests a reflexive approach to identity formation. Louis Crompton has argued that this process of identity formation was an ongoing process that had developed in conjunction with the appearance of homosexual brothels in Britain's largest cities.<sup>268</sup> These identities were not created simply by outside forces, it is argued, but were negotiated by the men themselves.

However, men accused of sodomy were not singled out as a result of their identified sexualities but as a result of their failure to resist sin and immorality whether it be with a man, woman or beast. Norton has suggested that just because sexual identity categories were not used by social institutions, or discussed freely within civil society, does not mean that individually and collectively negotiated categories did not exist within the homosexual subcultures of the 16<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. Norton suggests that the law has always fixated on criminal acts rather than criminal personages, therefore, it is unsurprising that laws such as the Act of Henry VIII in 1533 outlawed buggery rather than the 'bugger-er'.<sup>269</sup>

To counter suggestions that the early-modern homosexual was unformed and lacked a recognisable identity, Norton has gone to considerable length to hand pick examples that he states invalidate social constructionist arguments. It could be suggested that, in doing so, Norton himself could be guilty of selective history and the application of modern terminology to pre- and early-modern periods. For example, while admitting that 'homosexualities' is a more accurate term for addressing same-sex sexual behaviour over time he still argues that Greek pederasty is an example of homosexuality and thus a homosexual identity. The inherent weakness of such a claim is that it ignores the cultural and social meanings attached to 'boy-love' peculiar to Ancient Greece.<sup>270</sup> Essentialist historians of sexuality have time and time again stated that sexual orientation is both

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<sup>267</sup> See, Randolph Trumbach, 'London's Sodomites: Homosexual Behaviour and Western Culture in the 18th Century', *Journal of Social History* 11 (1977), pp. 1-33.

<sup>268</sup> Louis Crompton, *Homosexuality and Civilisation* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2003), pp. 453-455

<sup>269</sup> Norton, *The Myth of the Modern Homosexual*, p. 136

<sup>270</sup> David Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (London & Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988), pp. 146-147.

culturally-independent and intrinsic,<sup>271</sup> yet this ignores the social and cultural conditions of existence peculiar to historically-situated societies.

Some historians question the heavily theoretical approach employed by historians and sociologists who see value in the social constructionist approach. Wayne Dynes has argued that Foucault, a name regularly associated with social constructionism, had a tendency to only select historical data that fitted his theoretical model, and was perhaps also guilty of concentrating solely on theory without supplying verifiable historical examples.<sup>272</sup> Like Norton, Dynes has claimed that social constructionists have overplayed the role of society in the development of sexual identity.<sup>273</sup>

This assertion by Dynes that homosexual men, ‘pre-construction’, were able to form an identity based on an innate sexual feeling whilst in apparent isolation from social forces would suggest that social constructionists have significantly overplayed the influence of social forces. Central to social constructionist and wider sociological approaches to identity has been the assumption, largely influenced by symbolic interactionism, that there is a reciprocal relationship between the self and society.<sup>274</sup> Again, reflexivity and social interaction play a crucial role in identity formation under these conditions, with society influencing the self through meanings and a shared language while the self is able to influence society by forming groups, networks and institutions.<sup>275</sup>

The main criticism levelled at Foucault’s reading of the emergence of the homosexual is that it lacks verifiability in the sense that at times it appears if he is making bold statements at the expense of basic historical research. Giddens notes that Foucault claimed that sexuality during the Victorian era was an ‘open secret’; that it was discussed ceaselessly throughout various texts. However, Giddens asserts that such an argument is fatally flawed, as the very texts he speaks of were hardly ‘open’; they were only accessible to the privileged few.<sup>276</sup>

However, Halperin has argued that Foucault was actually suggesting that the invention of the homosexual was the result of a differing style of *disqualification* directed towards

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<sup>271</sup> Edward Stein, ‘The Essentials of Constructionism and the Construction of Essentialism’, in Edward Stein ed. *Forms of Desire: Sexual Orientation and the Social Constructionist Controversy* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 325

<sup>272</sup> Wayne R. Dynes, ‘Wrestling with the Social Boa Constructor’, in Edward Stein ed.. *Forms of Desire*, p. 228-229.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid.

<sup>274</sup> Jan E. Stets & Peter J. Burke, ‘A Sociological Approach to Self and Identity’ in Mark R. Leary & June Price Tangney, eds., *Handbook of Self and Identity* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2003), p. 128.

<sup>275</sup> Ibid.

<sup>276</sup> Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*, p. 24.

same-sex desire by pre-modern legal institutions and nineteenth-century psychiatric conceptions of homosexual relations.<sup>277</sup> This, Halperin stresses, was not meant to relate to what sexual acts people committed nor was it related to any definitive sense of self-perception of the men involved.<sup>278</sup> With this in mind, it is possible to suggest that 'pre-homosexuality' there had been men who would have seen themselves as 'queer', 'gay' or just plain different. The major change, which Foucault alludes to, relates to the manner in which sexual perversions were apparently 'invented' during the nineteenth century. Foucault stresses that the law prohibited acts that were deemed to be against nature, such as sodomy, and that these acts were viewed as being contrary to the law in much the same way that other infringements were penalised.<sup>279</sup> This would suggest that perpetrators of sodomy would be punished for the acts that they had committed rather than being separated from normal society by virtue of their sexual proclivity. This measure, according to Foucault, was not adopted until the categorisation of sexual perversities took place when socio-medical theories labelled the acts as pathological, committed by 'a deviant form of life, a perverse personality, an anomalous species'.<sup>280</sup>

The appearance of the homosexual as an object of scrutiny, punishment and scientific analysis could be viewed as instrumental in the forging of a modern homosexual identity. There is an argument, as previously indicated, that suggests that late-Victorian and Edwardian British homosexuals would have had little access to material so important to the development of a 'homosexual identity',<sup>281</sup> but it is likely that their day to day contact with others of a similar proclivity would have resulted in the dissemination of information. The categorisation of the homosexual as the 'other' of normal, healthy sexuality would arguably have led to others with the same sexual desires being made aware that a subculture existed, composed of like-minded individuals.

With an emphasis on subculture and the coming together of like-minded individuals, theorists such as Foucault view the socio-medical occurrences of the nineteenth century as both freeing and restricting in almost equal measures. Without the 'label', identity formation amongst marginal groups becomes more complex. Giddens has suggested that sexual identity formation is a reflexive process that requires external and internal

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<sup>277</sup> David M. Halperin, 'Forgetting Foucault: Acts, Identities, and the History of Sexuality', *Representations* 63 (1998), p. 97.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Foucault, *The History of Sexuality I*, p. 53.

<sup>280</sup> Halperin, 'Forgetting Foucault', p. 98.

<sup>281</sup> Weeks, *Coming Out*, pp. 117-118. Weeks notes the difficulties that Carpenter faced in attempting to have his publications placed in the public reading rooms of public libraries.

references.<sup>282</sup> As Foucault has noted, not only did the relentless categorisation of sexuality, that he alleges occurred during the nineteenth century, create the homosexual as an object of scrutiny and control, it also created a sub-group united by their deviance.

The late twentieth century has seen, theoretically, a gradual move away from single unifying features of identity, whether gender, race, social class, or sexuality. When we talk about homosexuals we are talking about a group for whom a public identity has been a relatively recent phenomenon. Incorporating aspects of sexuality into an identity, whether public or personal, has been somewhat problematic for a generation of homosexuals who have experienced a period when law proscribed all homosexual acts and, therefore, identifying as a homosexual would lead to being identified as a criminal, at least. Therefore, homosexuals have been involved in narratives of ‘self-invention’, where they have drawn upon certain communities of meaning, rejected assumptions regarding their sexuality, and generally attempted to negotiate and shape their identities, often in the face of hostility and further marginalisation.<sup>283</sup>

But what exactly does the statement ‘I am gay (or homosexual)’ mean? It has given privilege, as Weeks has pointed out, to sexual identity over ethnicity, social class, gender and others – within particular socio-historical contexts.<sup>284</sup> Such a proclamation might lead some to interpret that sexual identity is a natural identity category inscribed upon the individual from birth rather than a category socially constructed and adopted through negotiation. It could be argued that to identify as gay or homosexual publicly was a product of sexual liberation and a time when homosexuals were fighting (literally, in some cases) for equality and recognition. This underlines the historical and social contingency of sexual identity. How does an individual prioritise their axes of identity? Is being gay more important than being black, or is being a woman more important than being working class?

Oral history interviews offer the researcher an opportunity to examine how respondents have constructed their identities, or at least how they perceive that they have constructed their identities. Oral histories offer us an opportunity to see reflexivity in action and to see how socially and historically contingent attitudes have played a role in identity formation

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<sup>282</sup> Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*, p. 30, 147.

<sup>283</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, Brian Heaphy & Catherine Donovan, *Same Sex Intimacies: Families of Choice and other Life Experiments* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 43

<sup>284</sup> Jeffrey Weeks, *Against Nature: Essays on History, Sexuality and Diversity* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1991), p. 68

and how, if at all, changes within society have altered attitudes among homosexuals themselves to sexual identity. With this in mind, it is therefore necessary to examine how the oral history interview can offer an understanding of how individuals negotiate aspects of their identity.

### ***Culture, Subjectivities and Composure in Narratives of Identity***

The question as to how much impact dominant cultures can have on personal narratives has been the focus of discussions regarding oral histories. Daniel James has argued that the relationship between personal narratives and history is problematic in that such stories are cultural constructs that inevitably draw upon public discourses.<sup>285</sup> Each group or individual consulted during an oral history project may draw upon wider discourses, as Robert Cant explains, with reference to homosexuals:

While the stories are (as far as anyone can gather and subject to the vagaries of memory) accounted honestly, they have to be understood in relation to the fact that they are based upon the memories and the aspirations of individual members of a homosexual minority within a society where particular patterns of heterosexuality are privileged.<sup>286</sup>

Luisa Passerini has argued, along with other socialist historians,<sup>287</sup> that some oral history projects have the tendency to ‘replace certain of the essential tenets of scholarship with facile democratisation, and an open mind with demagogy’.<sup>288</sup> In effect, these groups were failing to appreciate that memories could be influenced by dominant histories and discourses.<sup>289</sup> The example of a homosexual minority underlines the potential importance of culture to projects of remembering. It has been argued that tellers of life stories draw upon dominant cultures and discourses in an effort to construct personal accounts.<sup>290</sup> However, when an individual who does not, or did not, belong to the dominant culture, or whose experiences do not relate to dominant discourses, their attempts to tell their story can be problematic. Thus, both the availability and the absence of cultural factors to draw upon when constructing or reconstructing a narrative can have an effect on an individual’s sense of composure.

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<sup>285</sup> Daniel James, *Doña María’s Story: Life History, Memory, and Political Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), p. 124

<sup>286</sup> Robert A. Cant, ‘Exploring Gay Men’s Narratives, Social Networks and Experiences of Health Services Targeted at Them: A London Study’ (PhD Thesis, London South Bank University, 2004), p. 35

<sup>287</sup> Thomson, ‘Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History’, pp. 55-56

<sup>288</sup> Passerini, ‘Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism’, p. 84

<sup>289</sup> Thomson, ‘Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History’, p. 56

<sup>290</sup> Penny Summerfield, ‘Culture and Composure: Creating Narratives of the Gendered Self in Oral History Interviews’, *Cultural and Social History* 1 (2004), p. 69

## Composure in Oral History Narratives

During an oral history interview the narrator may attempt to construct their story to suit the type of audience present (see section on intersubjectivity) but also in an effort to make the story more comfortable to tell, a process Graham Dawson terms 'subjective composure'.<sup>291</sup> Thomson describes composure as an 'aptly ambiguous term'<sup>292</sup> describing a dual process whereby we construct our story, or memories, using the meanings and public language of our culture, and, we compose the memories which assist us to feel comfortable about our lives.<sup>293</sup> Michael Roper has described composure as:

the process of creating an account of the past, of drawing generalized images or 'cultural imaginaries' together in the process of telling a life story. At another level, 'composure' has a more psychological sense. It refers to the use of narrative in order to create a past which can be lived with 'in relative psychic comfort'.<sup>294</sup>

Dawson has argued that subjective composure is intrinsically linked to social recognition 'with its power to confirm that the versions of the self and world figured in a narrative correspond to those of other people'.<sup>295</sup> The alliance of subjective composure and social recognition should ensure that the personal narrative created in an interview relates to shared experiences and collective identities.<sup>296</sup> As Trevor Lummis has argued, the oral history interview should not be viewed as an inferior methodology as 'it is interactive and one is not left alone, as with documentary evidence, to divine its significance; the 'source' can reflect upon the content and offer interpretation as well as facts'.<sup>297</sup> How the 'source' chooses to interpret their experience is also a significant part of oral history testimony.

Subjective composure and social recognition can thus be linked to the construction of identities in that they are part of an ongoing process whereby the individual integrates events from the outside world and uses them to construct a story about the self, as Giddens

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<sup>291</sup> Graham Dawson, *Soldier Heroes: British Adventure, Empire and the Imagining of Masculinities* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 23

<sup>292</sup> Alistair Thomson, 'Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia' in *The Oral History Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by Robert Perks & Alistair Thompson (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 245

<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Michael Roper, 'Re-Remembering the Soldier Hero: the Psychic and Social Construction of Memory in Personal Narratives of the Great War', *History Workshop Journal* 50 (2000), p. 183

<sup>295</sup> Dawson, *Soldier Heroes*, p. 23

<sup>296</sup> Ibid.

<sup>297</sup> Trevor Lummis, *Listening to History: The Authenticity of Oral Evidence* (London: Hutchison, 1987), p.43

has argued.<sup>298</sup> This concept, Giddens suggests, has changed through history from an identity shaped by the external forces of tradition and habit to the post-traditional where doubt, a feature of modernity, permeates everyday life and ‘forms a general existential dimension of the contemporary social world’.<sup>299</sup> People no longer see their identities as being created by external factors alone; indeed, there are many aspects influencing the creation of identities. As an example, Michael Roper has claimed with reference to masculinity, that social and cultural approaches have tended to regard masculinity ‘only in terms of external codes and structures’.<sup>300</sup> According to Roper, the majority of studies appear to view masculinity in terms of ideological codes, which are written into individual subjectivity ‘as if the subject was a blank page onto which cultural processes are then inscribed’.<sup>301</sup> The individual plays a role by accepting, rejecting or adapting cultural processes. Cultural factors are not sole contributors to identity formation but they do play a part in both identity formation and in biographies of the self.

Graham Smith has argued that whilst projects of remembering can reinforce existing beliefs and understandings about the past, this does not equate to giving privilege to cultural discourses.<sup>302</sup> Individual memories, Smith argues, are not always framed by cultural discourses. The absence of cultural discourses does not necessarily mean that silence will follow as individuals may even reject existing accounts or develop oppositional accounts.<sup>303</sup> In suggesting that ‘simplistic theories of cultural framing often fail to take into consideration the social processes and cognitive ways in which individuals engage in memory work’<sup>304</sup> Smith is arguing that ‘remembering as process can offer opportunities for new discourses as well as reinforcing established stories’.<sup>305</sup>

Penny Summerfield has used the examples of the Home Guard in Britain and women in the Home Guard to show the way in which public discourses of the war (or lack of) influenced the way in which men and women spoke of their experiences. Men who joined the Home Guard, many of whom were members of privileged occupations (and were therefore exempt from fighting in the ‘regular’ army), did not see themselves as being

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<sup>298</sup> Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity: Self and Society in the late Modern Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 54

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3

<sup>300</sup> Michael Roper, ‘Slipping Out of View: Subjectivity and Emotion in Gender History’, *History Workshop Journal* 59 (2005), p. 57

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58

<sup>302</sup> Graham Smith, ‘Beyond Individual/Collective Memory: Women’s Transactive Memories of Food, Family and Conflict’, *Oral History* 35 (2007), p. 88

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*



‘proper soldiers’ and thus did not conform to the public discourse of the ‘fighting man’. Instead they would indulge in pretence, for example by removing the Home Guard badges from their uniforms whilst on leave, in an attempt to live up to the public image of the soldier. It was important to their sense of composure as wartime men to align themselves with the ‘manliness and military patriotism’ at work during that period.<sup>306</sup> Home Guards were not viewed as being ‘proper soldiers’ and therefore being identified as such left these men feeling somewhat impotent in comparison to the ‘male military archetype’ of the fighting soldier.<sup>307</sup>

Women’s experiences in the Home Guard were somewhat more problematic as discourses of femininity operate within ‘male norms of action and control’.<sup>308</sup> When women recounted their experiences they frequently spoke of the frustration that their wartime experiences were more often than not excluded from public discourses regarding the war. Often, according to Summerfield, when they were given the opportunity to account for their involvement in the war effort their stories were met with incredulity and laughter.<sup>309</sup> This is an example of how cultural silences affect composure in storytelling and can lead to ‘discomposure’, which according to Summerfield can lead to ‘confusion, anger, self-contradiction, discomfort and difficulties of sustaining a narrative’.<sup>310</sup>

This apparent discrepancy between public discourse and private experience can be seen frequently within women’s studies. In her research regarding women’s experiences of motherhood in an English county,<sup>311</sup> Angela Davis discovered that interviewees had occasion to describe incidences where public discourses of motherhood diverged from their own experiences, which resulted in some difficulty in reconciling their own experiences with the public discourse of motherhood.<sup>312</sup> This again links neatly to theories regarding composure. Dawson has argued that composure is linked to social recognition and in this case the mothers interviewed were keen to discover if their experiences resembled the narratives of other interviewees.<sup>313</sup>

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<sup>306</sup> Summerfield, ‘Culture and Composure’, pp. 71-74

<sup>307</sup> Ibid. p. 73

<sup>308</sup> Ibid., p. 74

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., p. 70

<sup>311</sup> Angela Davis, ‘Oral History and the Creation of Collective Memories: Women’s Experiences of Motherhood in Oxfordshire c.1945-1970’, *The University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History* 10 (2006), pp. 1-10, available at <[http://www.sussex.ac.uk/history/documents/10\\_a\\_davis\\_motherhood.pdf](http://www.sussex.ac.uk/history/documents/10_a_davis_motherhood.pdf)>, [accessed 7/04/08].

<sup>312</sup> Ibid. p. 8

<sup>313</sup> Ibid. p. 9

The absence of a strong and positive cultural discourse on non-heterosexuality can also be problematic. Rebecca Jennings, when analysing lesbian oral histories from the Hall Carpenter archives, notes that episodes of both composure and discomposure occur frequently within lesbian testimonies.<sup>314</sup> In some of the interviews discomposure was evident through contradiction, emotion and silence when individual women's experiences did not fit neatly into the public discourses of a 'heroic quest for liberation' or a 'narrative of struggle against oppression'.<sup>315</sup> Plummer has suggested that there exists 'an ongoing dynamic or dialectic of communities, politics, identities or stories' and 'for narratives to flourish there must be a community to hear, there must be stories that weave together their history, their identity, their politics'.<sup>316</sup> Thus, the creation of narratives within communities can help shape identities within that community, and future communities. Each individual endeavour to seek composure and meaning, it could be argued, can lead to a strengthening of a shared identity, as Plummer suggests: 'small sufferings seek solutions, both on a personal and social scale; successful solutions generate stories, cultural resources, that can be drawn upon by successive generations facing similar sufferings'.<sup>317</sup> This suggests that when there is a cultural silence on an aspect of identity, new discourses can be negotiated and created.

As Peter Davies argued, the homosexual occupies a 'social matrix' whereby he/she inhabits a society that is heteronormative (a society that sees heterosexuality as normal and marginalises or ignores other sexualities) and where there is an absence of public discourses on non-heterosexuality, other than in a pejorative context. Thus, the homosexual is faced with a 'psychic dilemma' where there exists a contradiction between social expectations and personal experience,<sup>318</sup> and this has implications for identity formation, and for achieving composure in oral history narratives.

This dilemma that Davies speaks of is evident in oral histories undertaken with non-heterosexuals and can be linked to the theory of composure. Faced with the contradiction between the expectations of a heteronormative society and recognising his/her own non-heterosexuality the gay man or lesbian woman may find achieving composure difficult. Thomson states that we repress or remake memories which are unsafe or painful because

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<sup>314</sup> Rebecca Jennings, 'Lesbian Voices: The Hall Carpenter Oral History Archive and Post-war British Lesbian History', *Sexualities* 7 (2004), p. 437

<sup>315</sup> Ibid.

<sup>316</sup> Kenneth Plummer, *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change, and Social Worlds* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 87

<sup>317</sup> Ibid., pp. 87-88

<sup>318</sup> Ibid.

they may not sit comfortably with our current identity, or because inherent tensions may not yet be resolved.<sup>319</sup>

Mark Roseman's experience of using oral history to examine individual experiences of the Holocaust<sup>320</sup> demonstrates how unresolved tensions can impact on narratives of identity, and on the interviewee's sense of composure. Roseman discovered that his interviewee Marianne Ellenbogen's account of her experiences in Germany as a Jew during the Third Reich were at times inconsistent with her own diaries and letters from the period. Ellenbogen exaggerated certain events and imposed her own presence on other events that she could not have been witness to. Roseman found himself in a position where he was concerned that his discoveries would undermine the veracity of Holocaust survivor testimony.<sup>321</sup>

However, Roseman discovered that these inaccuracies were all related to moments of great trauma that eventually led to guilt on Ellenbogen's part,<sup>322</sup> and ultimately discomposure. These feelings of guilt were related to Ellenbogen's regrets coupled with her experiences, which were less traumatic than many other Holocaust survivors and therefore did not fit into accepted narratives related to Holocaust survivors' experiences. This example directly relates to Dawson's theory regarding subjective composure and social recognition: by augmenting her own experiences, Ellenbogen was finding composure in a version of events that mirrored the experiences of many other Jews in Nazi Germany and at the same time dealt with her own internalised guilt.

### ***Subjectivity, Intersubjectivity, and Oral History***

From its earliest uses in historical research criticisms have been levelled at oral history, which led to significant developments in its application. Some of these developments, such as the recognition of intersubjectivity and composure have particular relevance to this thesis. The collection and analysis of oral histories has the potential to offer considerable understanding of sexual identity formation among sexual minorities and can be used to demonstrate how individuals negotiate both external and internal influences to construct an identity.

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<sup>319</sup> Thomson, 'Anzac Memories', p. 245

<sup>320</sup> Mark Roseman, 'Surviving Memory: Truth and Inaccuracy in Holocaust Testimony', in *The Oral History Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by Robert Perks & Alistair Thompson (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 230-243

<sup>321</sup> Ibid., p. 236

<sup>322</sup> Ibid., p. 238

The use of oral history within the social sciences and history may be a relatively recent phenomenon, but the oral tradition is, as Paul Thompson has noted, as old as history itself.<sup>323</sup> According to Alistair Thomson, the first major organised oral history project appeared in 1948 under the stewardship of Allan Nevins of Columbia University, New York<sup>324</sup> and this appeared to spark an interest in using oral testimonies as a historical research tool.<sup>325</sup> It wasn't until the 1960s that this methodology was used more widely,<sup>326</sup> but its use was primarily as an alternative method of establishing factual evidence.<sup>327</sup> Of course the rapid improvement of recording technology has played a significant part in the growth of oral history projects<sup>328</sup> and collections but this alone could not account for the increasing popularity of the use of oral testimony.

The reliance on the spoken word, dependent on memory rather than documented sources, has been the subject of criticism over the past few decades. These criticisms have focused on this apparent weakness inherent in relying on personal, subjective accounts of the past. Patrick O'Farrell suggested that the emergence of oral history would eventually lead us away from history into the realm of myth.<sup>329</sup> These accusations are essentially two-fold in their approach dealing not only with the fallibility of memory and subjectivity of the interviewee but also the possibility that the interviewer may impose their own subjectivity of meaning on oral accounts. Further, there are suggestions that the interviewer, however diligent, may distort or manipulate oral history.<sup>330</sup>

The criticism that oral history is subjective can be viewed as an observation rather than a criticism: an observation that can be applied to all historical research, as Valerie Yow comments:

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<sup>323</sup> Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 19.

<sup>324</sup> Alistair Thomson, 'Four Paradigm Transformations in Oral History', *Oral History Review* 34 (2007), p. 51.

<sup>325</sup> Robert Perks & Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.

<sup>326</sup> Anna Green & Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 230.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid, p. 231.

<sup>328</sup> Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Walnut Creek, Calif. ; Oxford : AltaMira Press, 2005), p. 3.

<sup>329</sup> Patrick O'Farrell, 'Oral History: Facts and Fiction', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal* 5 (1982-83), pp. 3-9, as quoted in, *The Oral History Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by Robert Perks & Alastair Thompson (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 3.

<sup>330</sup> For examples see, William Cutler, 'Accuracy in Oral History Interviewing', *Historical Methods Newsletter* 3 (1970), pp. 3-7; William L. Lang & Laurie K. Mercier, 'Getting it Down Right: Oral History's Reliability in Local History Research', *Oral History Review* 12 (1984), pp. 81-99; E. Culpepper Clark *et al*, 'Communicating in the Oral History Interview: Investigating Problems of Interpreting Oral Data', *International Journal of Oral History* 1 (1980), pp. 28-40; Neal R. Norrick, 'Talking about Remembering and Forgetfulness in Oral History Interviews', *Oral History Review* 32 (2005), pp. 1-20; Sandy Polishuk, 'Secrets, Lies, and Misremembering: Take II', *Oral History Review* 32 (2005), pp. 51-58.

all research is biased in its subjectivity, simply because the research begins, progresses, and ends with the researcher, who, no matter how many controls she may put on it, will nonetheless be creating a document reflecting her own assumptions.<sup>331</sup>

According to Peter Novick the focus on objectivity and subjectivity reached a peak by the 1980s and although historians were still attempting to follow ‘an antitheoretical and antiphilosophical objectivist empiricism’<sup>332</sup> there did appear to be many historians more willing to give attention to their ‘hidden ideological agendas’.<sup>333</sup> Thus, the concerns regarding the objective/subjective debate which was central to the critical development of oral history throughout the 1970s and 1980s was a reflection of the debates occurring within the realm of wider, documentary history. The view of history as espoused by the likes of Geoffrey Elton, that empiricism lay at the root of good historical enquiry,<sup>334</sup> had been challenged by the likes of E. H. Carr, amongst others, who argued that history is made by historians for whom ‘facts’ are only significant once they make use of them in a wider thesis.<sup>335</sup> The challenges to empirical history, and importantly its alleged objectivity, were furthered by the discussion and engagement of post-structuralist and post-modern approaches, which can be viewed as a transformation in the way historians approached their subject. Changes were not just occurring within oral history but within the whole history discipline itself.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, history was introduced to the twin challenges of post-structuralist and post-modern approaches to history. Central to these approaches was the challenge to the accepted methods of historical enquiry, in particular the ideal of historical objectivity.<sup>336</sup> One of the chief exponents of a post-structuralist approach to history was Foucault. Foucault rejected the structuralist approach to history that there were underlying structures, such as Marxist theories of economic structures and their effect on society, which influenced human development.<sup>337</sup> Instead, Foucault linked the creation of

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<sup>331</sup> Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Walnut Creek, California; Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2005), p. 7

<sup>332</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The ‘Objectivity Question’ and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 593, 595-596 as quoted in “‘Do I Like Them Too Much?’: Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa”, by Valerie Yow, *Oral History Review* 24 (1997), p. 60

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

<sup>334</sup> Anne Green & Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History: A Critical Reader in Twentieth-Century History and Theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 3-4

<sup>335</sup> Callum Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians* (Harlow: Pearson Education/Longman, 2005), pp. 25-26

<sup>336</sup> Patrick Joyce, ‘The Return of History: Postmodernism and the Politics of Academic History in Britain’, *Past and Present* 158 (1998), p. 208

<sup>337</sup> Green & Troup, *The Houses of History*, pp. 301-303

knowledge to the mechanisms of power, which suggested that all written history was the product of dominant discourses, and therefore, true historical objectivity was impossible, as the historian himself operates within these discourses.<sup>338</sup>

At first glance, the experiences of oral historians Alessandro Portelli and Sandy Polishuk appear to support claims that oral history testimonies are neither reliable nor objective. Portelli, whilst conducting oral history interviews about working-class life in Terni, central Italy, stumbled upon a glaring example of what appeared to be proof of the vulnerability of memory and thus the vulnerability of oral history as an historical research tool. A number of Portelli's interviewees misremembered the death of worker Luigi Trastulli as occurring in 1953 during street fighting that followed the dismissal of two thousand workers from the local steel factory. Trastulli had in fact died four years earlier at an anti-NATO rally.<sup>339</sup>

However, Portelli was not content to dismiss this occurrence as evidence of failing memories, rather, Portelli claimed that the misremembered account tells us much more than a simple, factual account of the death of a worker could ever tell us. The discrepancy between the interviewees' accounts of Trastulli's death and the official account of his death should not be dismissed as faulty recollections, Portelli claims, but should be valued as an oral source 'generated by memory and imagination in an effort to make sense of crucial events and of history in general'.<sup>340</sup> This is apparently what makes oral history different from documentary history: it tells us less about events and more about what they mean.<sup>341</sup> At work within these oral history narratives are multiple subjectivities that can be influenced by collective and individual knowledge as well as cultural discourses. Narrators attempt to make sense of their lives and experiences and may attempt to fit their memories of an event with a discourse that they can relate to. This subjective process of remembering, as Edward Casey has argued, 'is a commitment to truth concerning the past, a truth that reflects the specificity of this past even if it need not offer an exact likeness of it'.<sup>342</sup> With regards to Trastulli's comrades in the Italian labour movement this can be viewed as an attempt to recapture 'the brute being of an original scene' even if what is recaptured 'is in a format considerably altered from its original configuration'.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>338</sup> Ibid.

<sup>339</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), pp. 1-3.

<sup>340</sup> Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*, p. 26

<sup>341</sup> Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', in *The Oral History Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by Robert Perks & Alistair Thompson (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 36

<sup>342</sup> Edward S. Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 283

<sup>343</sup> Ibid.

Sandy Polishuk's interviews with Julia Ruuttila, a former political activist in Oregon<sup>344</sup> demonstrates intersubjectivity in action. Despite agreeing that her participation in the oral history interview should cover aspects of her personal life as well as her political life, Ruuttila framed any mention of her personal life within wider ruminations concerning what was occurring in the political world around her. When Ruuttila died Polishuk discovered major discrepancies between Ruuttila's accounts of her life and those verified by further documentary research or by interviewing third parties with knowledge of her life and times.<sup>345</sup> Polishuk, on this occasion, was to decide to include all of Ruuttila's stories, verifiable or not, as she felt it was her responsibility to 'portray her life as *she* saw it'.<sup>346</sup>

The discrepancies discovered related to Ruuttila's genealogy, religious background, ethnicity, and marital history, all key components of her identity. It would appear that Ruuttila, always for the underdog, augmented her own story so that she could claim a greater appreciation and understanding of those members of society most likely to suffer some form of discrimination.<sup>347</sup> It is important to acknowledge that an interviewee's own remembrances are not entirely uncomposed and value-free and thus it is the responsibility of the oral historian to recognise this, and to give proper consideration to how subjectivities have influenced narratives. Oral testimonies may not present the researcher with verifiable facts but when and if they depart from perceived knowledge this presents the researcher with knowledge about the interviewee's perception and personal experience of an event.<sup>348</sup> Oral testimonies are narratives of identity in which interviewees offer their representations of reality, what has influenced this representation, as well as how they view themselves and how they wish to be viewed.<sup>349</sup>

As Micaela Di Leonardo has argued, individuals make different decisions about how he/she perceive his/herself and their social reality, dependent on their social context at the time.<sup>350</sup> In Ruuttila's case, her narratives about her past political activism had been shaped by knowledge she had acquired later about politics and discrimination in America. As a

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<sup>344</sup> Sandy Polishuk, 'Secrets, Lies, and Misremembering: The Perils of Oral History Interviewing', *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 19 (1998), pp. 14-23.

<sup>345</sup> Sandy Polishuk, 'Secrets, Lies, and Misremembering', p. 17

<sup>346</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 22

<sup>347</sup> Polishuk, 'Secrets, Lies, and Misremembering: Take II', pp. 55-56

<sup>348</sup> Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', p. 37

<sup>349</sup> Antoinette Errante, 'But Sometimes You're Not Part of the Story: Oral Histories and Ways of Remembering and Telling', *Educational Researcher* 29 (2000), p. 16

<sup>350</sup> Micaela Di Leonardo, 'Oral History as Ethnographic Encounter', *Oral History Review* 15 (1987), p. 12

result Ruuttila had painted an image of herself that she felt more comfortable with, even if it departed from verifiable knowledge of her history and background.

It has been argued that ‘all human perspectives are both subjective and intersubjective’.<sup>351</sup> Following this argument would mean recognising that a historian’s interpretations would be subjective as would the ‘historical subject’s...evaluation of his or her life’.<sup>352</sup> Intersubjectivity, in effect, refers to recognising all subjectivities at work during historical enquiry.

As Summerfield has discussed, the oral history interview is conducted between a narrator and an audience who establish one form of intersubjective relationship.<sup>353</sup> This form of relationship is affected by its nature, for instance, whether the audience is composed of family members, peers, or of a more formal nature as in oral history interviews.<sup>354</sup> According to Callum Brown, intersubjectivity can refer to the principle that in an interview there exists two subjectivities, that of the interviewer and that of the interviewee. The interviewer presents one subjectivity relating to his/her age, sex, dress and other mannerisms, which ‘constitutes a culture of signs and discourses that is understood by the interviewee’.<sup>355</sup> How the interviewee responds to these ‘signs and discourses’ will be presented in their testimony. Brown uses the example of how, in some instances, younger female interviewers obtain better accounts from older men regarding the use of machinery as the interviewee may expect less knowledge of such apparatus than if the interviewer was male.<sup>356</sup> Conversely, Adrian Lee, after conducting research with older gay men in England, suggests that female or heterosexual interviewers may not have elicited as much information through the interview process as he, a gay man, did.<sup>357</sup>

The intersubjective relationship has been put to use by oral history projects examining apparently divergent cultural identities. In her study of Glaswegian masculinities Hilary Young used intersubjectivity ‘as a device to bring contemporary feminism (myself) and its

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<sup>351</sup> R. Kenneth Kirby, ‘Phenomenology and the Problems of Oral History’, *Oral History Review* 35 (2008), p.31

<sup>352</sup> Ibid.

<sup>353</sup> Summerfield, ‘Culture and Composure’, p. 68

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians*, p. 131

<sup>356</sup> Ibid.

<sup>357</sup> Adrian Lee, ‘Finding the Way to the End of the Rainbow: a Researcher’s Insight Investigating British Older Gay Men’s Lives’, *Sociological Research Online* 13 (2008), <<http://www.socsresonline.org.uk/13/1/6.html>>, accessed 28/03/08, para. 3.17



implied parallel construction ('new man'), to the interview'.<sup>358</sup> Young attempted to deconstruct the way in which men remembered and retold their masculinity to an interviewer who was aware of discourses regarding the 'new man' and feminism: 'Personal subjectivities of the narrator, interviewer and whoever else may be present can shape any particular interview'.<sup>359</sup> In effect, the nature of the interviewer/interviewee relationship affects the way stories are remembered and told.<sup>360</sup> This suggests that at the very least recognition of the intersubjective relationship at work during an oral history interview is necessary. Ronald Grele has suggested that the 'interactive nature of the oral history interview becomes a cooperative effort to interpret the past through the recognition of the role of the historicity of both parties of that interview'.<sup>361</sup>

Whereas oral history practitioners were freely discussing issues of objectivity and subjectivity by the late 1970s, these discussions tended to focus on the interviewee's role in storytelling. As Yow has suggested, there was little acknowledgement that the interview process could also affect the interviewer<sup>362</sup> and vice-versa. If the oral historian desires to be truly reflexive then he/she should recognise that their involvement raises theoretical concerns whether they are related to difference in dress, speech, class or mannerisms.<sup>363</sup> As Ronald Grele has pointed out, critical researchers should recognise that each recorded interview is the product of a conversation between an interviewee and an interviewer whose research motivations will necessarily impact on the course and content of an interview.<sup>364</sup> Thus, researchers using previously recorded interviews as a research tool may find they are asking why certain questions have been asked, or indeed, not asked.<sup>365</sup>

Yow uses her own experience of interviewing as an example of the theoretical problems raised by the interviewer-interviewee relationship. When asked by a colleague why she had not raised the issue of the interviewee's racial prejudices, Yow replied that it hadn't even crossed her mind, which led her to ask herself whether her liking for the interviewee had

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<sup>358</sup> Hilary Young, 'Hard Man, New Man: Re/Composing Masculinities in Glasgow, c.1950-2000', *Oral History* 35 (2007), p. 71

<sup>359</sup> Ibid., p. 80

<sup>360</sup> Ibid.

<sup>361</sup> Ronald J. Grele, 'Oral History as Evidence' in *Handbook of Oral History* ed. by Thomas L. Charlton, Lois E. Myers & Rebecca Sharpless (Lanham, MD: Altamira, 2006), p. 74

<sup>362</sup> Valerie Yow, "'Do I Like Them Too Much?': Effects of the Oral History Interview on the Interviewer and Vice-Versa', *Oral History Review* 24 (1997), p. 56

<sup>363</sup> Ibid.

<sup>364</sup> Ronald J. Grele, 'On Using Oral History Collections: An Introduction', *The Journal of American History* 74 (1987), p. 570-571

<sup>365</sup> Yow, , "'Do I Like Them Too Much?'," pp. 55, 57

clouded her judgement.<sup>366</sup> Initial reactions from within the oral history ‘community’ to episodes of this type tended to be negative, suggesting that the first rule of research, objectivity, had been broken.<sup>367</sup> However, as Portelli, Passerini and others have argued, we should refrain from making excuses for the lack of objectivity within the methodology and embrace ‘subjective reality, which enables us to write history from a novel dimension’.<sup>368</sup> Yow suggests - in line with Passerini’s arguments - that we should become more willing to discuss the ways in which an interviewer’s influence impacts on both the research and the analysis.<sup>369</sup> Here again is the recognition that there is more than a single subjectivity at work.

As Antoinette Errante has discussed, how much does our own point of view or perception of the narrator in oral histories influence the direction of the interview? As researchers, we make choices about the work we engage in so what does that tell us about ourselves? How much of ourselves do we invest in the interview and how does that affect the interview?<sup>370</sup> Yow argues that to be an effective researcher we must recognise the role we play in oral history and that includes identifying our own motivations, our own experiences, which could influence the direction of interviews:

What I am suggesting is that when we pretend there is nothing going on inside of us that is influencing the research and interpretation, we prevent ourselves from using an essential research tool. And in some cases, the reader needs to know what influenced the research and interpretation.<sup>371</sup>

In her study of pre-Stonewall lesbian history, Elizabeth Kennedy explains that her initial interviews were conducted with working-class lesbians who painted a colourful portrait of resistance and survival.<sup>372</sup> Due to her ‘proletarian bias’ Kennedy assumed that this picture of resistance and survival was because of the women’s class background but on conducting further interviews with middle- and upper-class lesbians she heard similar stories.<sup>373</sup> Kennedy’s initial assumptions are reflected in her judgement that class played a significant role in the experiences of lesbians during this era. However, evidence to the

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<sup>366</sup> Ibid., p. 55

<sup>367</sup> See, Ronald J. Grele *et al.*, *Envelopes of Sound: The Art of Oral History* (New York; London: Praeger, 1991), pp. 10-49

<sup>368</sup> Passerini, ‘Work Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism’, p. 86

<sup>369</sup> Yow, , “‘Do I Like Them Too Much?’”, p. 55

<sup>370</sup> Errante, ‘But Sometimes You’re Not Part of the Story’, p. 25

<sup>371</sup> Yow, , “‘Do I Like Them Too Much?’”, p. 70

<sup>372</sup> Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy, ‘Telling Tales: Oral History and the Construction of pre-Stonewall Lesbian History’, in *The Oral History Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by Robert Perks & Alistair Thompson (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 271- 282

<sup>373</sup> Ibid., p. 273

contrary enabled her to reassess her own subjectivity. Oral historians can endeavour to be objective but, as in the case of Kennedy amongst others, the ability to recognise subjectivities is important.

Recognising the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is an integral part of the oral history interview. As Portelli notes, many oral history interviews have been published with only the interviewee's responses listed, which is a distortion, giving the impression that the speaking person 'is as stable and repetitive as a written document'.<sup>374</sup> By disconnecting the interviewer's speech from the context of a two-way interview, some of the value of the interview has been lost. It would be impossible to interpret the motivations or the influences of the researcher if their voice had been trimmed out of the relationship. Portelli claims that in oral history interviews the historian may be attempting to validate their own discourse by 'ventriloquizing' it through the narrator's testimony.<sup>375</sup> Thus, if that voice is omitted then we have a rather skewed interpretation of the interview. No only that but the leading nature of any questions may be lost and as a result meaning may be distorted.

As Yow has commented, issues regarding the nature of the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee had been discussed infrequently until quite recently, but as long ago as 1969, discerning social scientists had been pondering over the issue.<sup>376</sup> Raymond Gorden, writing in that year described the 'triadic relationship', which was composed of 'the interrelationships between the nature of the information sought, the nature of the respondent, and the nature of the interviewer'.<sup>377</sup> It could be argued that the oral historian ought to be, or attempt to be, aware of our own subjectivities and not allow our own expectations and 'self-schemas' to impose upon the narratives offered by the interviewee.<sup>378</sup>

Issues such as subjectivity, intersubjectivity, composure, and culture are all relevant to projects of remembering. But, as has been demonstrated, these factors are also present when people talk about identity. As with oral history narratives, the processes of identity formation involve negotiation and compromise. As this thesis concentrates on the formation of identities among GBM in Scotland some consideration has to be given to

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<sup>374</sup> Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', p. 39

<sup>375</sup> Ibid., p. 40

<sup>376</sup> Yow, "Do I Like Them Too Much?", p. 62

<sup>377</sup> Raymond Gorden, *Interviewing: Strategy, Techniques and Tactics* (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1969), as quoted in "Do I Like Them Too Much?", by Yow, p. 62

<sup>378</sup> Yow, "Do I Like Them Too Much?", p. 73

theories regarding the processes of negotiation and compromise within this particular sphere.

### ***Oral history and Sexual Identity***

Identities do not appear from the ether, nor are they inscribed upon the individual without some form of negotiation, consent and adjustment. The same approach can be applied to memories, which are not instantly recalled without some form of negotiation and adjustment. As discussed, the interplay between culture (and cultural silences) and the self has never been more apparent than when non-heterosexuals discuss their experiences. There has been a considerable volume of oral histories published which deal with non-heterosexual experiences.<sup>379</sup> Homosexuality is an example of an identity category that has arguably been successful in navigating between the body, the self, and social and cultural norms.<sup>380</sup>

Non-heterosexuals' experiences can also challenge the assumed privileged position of cultural influences on identity formation. Giddens has argued that sexual identity has been moulded by the individual's potential for reflexivity into a 'malleable feature of the self, a prime connecting point between body, self-identity and social norms'.<sup>381</sup> As Brian Heaphy has noted, narrative accounts of gay and lesbian 'coming out' emphasise self-fashioning amidst the absence of cultural guidelines for non-heterosexual identities.<sup>382</sup>

As we can see, various factors have influenced both the construction of identities and the composure of life stories. With reference to homosexuals, the telling of their stories may be influenced by cultural silences, by prejudice, and by how they wish to tell them. Subjective composure undoubtedly plays a part in the construction of identities too as we present the world with an identity we are comfortable to show. Oral histories can offer some insight into what Giddens' has termed 'the reflexive project of the self'<sup>383</sup>, whereby an individual creates a biography that they continually work on and revise. Self-identity is

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<sup>379</sup> See, for example: Brighton Our Story Project, *Daring Hearts: Lesbian and Gay Lives of 50s and 60s Brighton* (Brighton: QueenSpark Books, 1992); Hall Carpenter Archives, *Walking after Midnight : Gay Men's Life Stories* (London: Routledge, 1989); Bob Cant, *Footsteps and Witnesses : Lesbian and Gay Lifestories from Scotland* (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1993); Kevin Porter & Jeffrey Weeks, *Between the Acts : Lives of Homosexual Men 1885-1967* (London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>380</sup> Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love & Eroticism in Modern Societies* (Cambridge: Polity, 1992), p. 15

<sup>381</sup> Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy*, p. 15

<sup>382</sup> Heaphy, 'The Sociology of Lesbian and Gay Reflexivity or Reflexive Sociology?', para. 2.3

<sup>383</sup> Giddens, *Modernity and Self Identity*, p. 215

not something we, as reflexive beings, simply pluck from our social and cultural surroundings but is something we compose, adjust, and maintain throughout our lives. Oral history offers an opportunity for an individual to examine their identification process and analyse what has had an effect on that process. The biographical narrative is affected by subjectivity, intersubjectivity, and the desire for composure but so too is our process of self-identification. Our identities, like our memories are negotiated and renegotiated throughout our lives.

### Oral History and Sexual Identity in Action

As this thesis is concerned with the formation of sexual identities among gay and bisexual men in Scotland during the period 1940 to 1980 it is helpful to examine how such research can use both aspects of identity theory and oral history to achieve these aims. As mentioned previously, homosexuals who 'came of age' prior to the limited legalisation of homosexuals acts had to contend with prejudicial cultural attitudes to same-sex desire or in some cases cultural silences. Identity formation in such an environment was a predictably difficult procedure for many. Dana Rosenfeld's accrediting/discrediting theory assesses the impact upon homosexual identity formation among homosexuals born prior to the processes of sexual liberation and among homosexuals born after these events. Rosenfeld used oral history interviews in an effort to elicit information regarding how older lesbians and gay men formed identities during a period marked by the criminalisation of some non-heterosexual identities, and wider negative social depictions of lesbians and gay men.

According to Rosenfeld, homosexuals who came of age during the 1940s and 1950s were exposed to 'shameful, pathological' cultural depictions of their sexuality, which had the potential to lead to 'isolation and misery',<sup>384</sup> and arguably to cause discomposure. However, Rosenfeld suggests that some protection from these extreme depictions could be found amongst larger, urban environments where some form of subcultural support was available.<sup>385</sup> Yet, we should be careful when assessing the long-term impact of negative cultural depictions. The stereotypical image of the ageing homosexual man as a lonely and unfulfilled 'old queen...disengaged from the gay world'<sup>386</sup> is not fully representative of many GBM who were exposed to the negative cultural representations of the 1940s and 1950s. Indeed, Jim Kelly claimed that there was no evidence to suggest that being

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<sup>384</sup> Rosenfeld, *The Changing of the Guard*, p. 1

<sup>385</sup> Ibid.

<sup>386</sup> Jim Kelly, 'The Aging Male Homosexual: Myth and Reality', *Gerontologist* 17 (1977), p. 329

homosexual would result in problems during old age, yet, there exists evidence that 'societal stigma may cause problems for aging gays'.<sup>387</sup>

Richard Friend has suggested that internalised homophobia born out of exposure to stigmatised homosexual identities has caused considerable problems for many GBM.<sup>388</sup> Just as the individual has the ability to reject dominant cultural attitudes these can also be internalised by the individual. According to James Lock, internalised homophobia can be described as 'the self-hatred that occurs as a result of being a socially stigmatized person'.<sup>389</sup> Cultural factors can be influential in the formation of identities but, equally, we must examine just how an individual reacts to cultural factors and just how actively the individual internalises them.

### Accredited and Discredited Discourses

The influence that cultural discourses regarding homosexuality have on the formation of identities has been the subject of some recent research. Rosenfeld's research (narrowed by her focus on gays and lesbians in the United States of America) involved interviewing older gay men and lesbian women and led her to identify two dominant discourses which were reflected in the recollections of her interviewees; an accredited and discredited discourse linked to the historical era during which her interviewees had identified as homosexual.<sup>390</sup> Rosenfeld posits the emergence of an accrediting discourse during the era of sexual liberation, confrontation and radicalism that was witnessed during the late 1960s with particular emphasis on the post-Stonewall<sup>391</sup> era.<sup>392</sup> Lee has questioned whether Rosenfeld's thesis on identity cohorts, accredited and discredited, can be applied to other groups, including geographical groups. Lee suggests that the limited decriminalisation of homosexual acts as a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the Wolfenden Report in England and Wales could be viewed in a similar vein to the emergence of the gay liberation movement in the United States of America after

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<sup>387</sup> Ibid., 328

<sup>388</sup> Richard A. Friend, 'Older Lesbian and Gay People: Responding to Homophobia', in Frederick W. Bozett & Marvin B. Sussman (eds.), *Homosexuality and Family Relations* (New York; London: Haworth Press, 1990), p. 244

<sup>389</sup> James Lock, 'Treatment of Homophobia In a Gay Male Adolescent', *American Journal of Psychotherapy* 52 (2) (1998), p. 202

<sup>390</sup> Rosenfeld, *The Changing of the Guard*, p. 10

<sup>391</sup> 'Stonewall' refers to the riot and the social movement born out of its aftermath. The riot itself occurred in New York's Greenwich Village when patrons of a gay bar and members of the local community rioted after the police had raided a bar in June 1968. This event is viewed by many as the beginning of a new militancy amongst homosexuals, which spawned a number of gay liberation movements. For further information see, for example; Martin B. Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Plume, 1994).

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

Stonewall.<sup>393</sup> In respect to Scotland, establishing a pivotal period may be more problematic: Scotland was included in the Wolfenden report but decriminalisation did not occur until 1980.

Rosenfeld's approach places significant emphasis on sexuality as a key factor in the formation of identities. As Lee has suggested, this has been one at the expense of geographically-specific factors, such as whether or not accrediting discourses emerged in all countries, and if they did, when they did. Other factors need to be taken into consideration: social class, religion and the availability of support may well play a role in the formation of identities, homosexual or otherwise.

According to Rosenfeld, the discrediting discourse on homosexuality dominated the period before the alleged sexual 'revolution'. Members of this cohort had adopted a homosexual identity prior to the events that unfolded during the 1960s and this was dominated by a stigmatising discourse.<sup>394</sup> The law viewed sexually-active male homosexuals as potential criminals; and, as has been indicated above, the media largely viewed homosexuals as either sinister, or conversely, figures of fun and ridicule; the medical community appeared to view them as objects for medical scrutiny; organised religions appeared to view homosexuals as morally subversive.

With this mixture of condemnation, criminalisation and ambivalence towards the concerns of the homosexual it could be argued that it was an understandable tactic employed by many GBM to attempt to hide their sexuality from wider society. As a result of her own research Rosenfeld has created a table detailing the motivations and responses of individuals identifying with either the discrediting discourse or the accrediting discourse. By analysing the responses of my own interviewees I will be able to gauge whether they fit Rosenfeld's thesis of distinct cohorts.

Table 3.1 details the actions and reactions of those influenced by the discrediting discourse and the accrediting discourse on homosexuality. Rosenfeld has argued that those subject to a discrediting discourse would have matured during the period 1920 to 1970 and therefore would have viewed their homosexuality as something needing to be assimilated into their private world. Assimilation, passing and non-disclosure would be viewed as a

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<sup>393</sup> Adrian Lee, 'Exploring the Identities, Welfare Needs, and Service use Experiences of Gay Men in Later Life' (University of York: PhD Thesis, 2006), p. 161

<sup>394</sup> Rosenfeld, *The Changing of the Guard*, pp. 10-12

reasonable tactic to avoid being viewed as a stigmatised identity. Those influenced by a later accrediting discourse appeared more willing to engage with their sexuality and viewed it as a central feature of their identity, and as such, would be more willing to disclose. These men would also have viewed attempts to pass as heterosexual as a failed tactic epitomising their acceptance of stigmatisation.

### Stigmatised Identities, Passing and the Effeminate Homosexual

One tactic employed by many GBM was to attempt to ‘pass’ as heterosexual. Passing has been described as ‘generating a social image as a heterosexual’.<sup>395</sup> Erving Goffman, a symbolic interactionist, maintained that the homosexual might recognise his own homosexuality but be able to maintain a façade of respectability by presenting a public face of heterosexuality.

**Table 3.1 Discourses of Homosexuality, Final Version**

	<i>Homosexuality Stigma</i>	<i>as Homosexuality Status</i>
Prevailing Era	1920s-1970s	1970s-Present
Relation to Self	Aspect	Essential
Implications for Self	Discreditable	Accrediting
Appropriately Enacted in	Private	Private and Public
Heterosexual Threat	to Person	to Self
Relation of Heterosexual to Self	Oppressor	Moral Seducer
Desired Goal	Social Integration	Moral Status
Required Action	Pass	Disclosing
Homosexual Competence	Passing	Disclosing when Relevant
Homosexual Incompetence	Disclosing	Commitment to Passing

Reproduced from Rosenfeld, *The Changing of the Guard*, p. 182; Rosenfeld, ‘Identity Work Among Lesbian and Gay Elderly’, p. 127

<sup>395</sup> Mary Jane Rotheram-Borus & Kris A. Langabeer, ‘Developmental Trajectories of Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youths’, in Anthony R. D’Augelli & Charlotte J. Patterson (eds.), *Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identities and Youth: Psychological Perspectives* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 102



However, the prevalent danger was that a lapse in this façade could result in his discreditable self - acknowledged by the individual but hidden - becoming a discredited personage - recognised and thus labelled by society.<sup>396</sup> As George Chauncey has commented in the context of New York City, ‘Most men regarded the double life as a reasonable tactical response to the dangers posed by the revelation of their homosexuality to straight people.’<sup>397</sup>

According to Martin Levine and Michael Kimmel, gay men living in a period of criminalisation had three survival techniques; passing, minstrelization and capitulation.<sup>398</sup> A brief explanation of ‘passing’ has already been offered. Minstrelization, according to Levine and Kimmel, was the process whereby homosexual men adopted feminine demeanour, dress and speech.<sup>399</sup> Capitulation, according to Levine and Kimmel, is when homosexual men experienced strong feelings of shame, guilt and self-hatred, which resulted from a belief that homosexuality was a form of gender deviance.<sup>400</sup> This largely fits the most extreme version of Rosenfeld’s discrediting discourse. Capitulating homosexuals would therefore have limited contact with urban homosexual subcultures and any sexual contact with other men would bring about strongly negative reactions.

Would we expect therefore to find discomposure among the testimonies of those who were most heavily influenced by a discrediting discourse (their sexual activity being viewed as both illegal and immoral)? We can see the heavy influence of cultural factors regarding homosexuality in the way in which some GBM viewed themselves in relation to the heterosexual ideal. Identity formation is not neutral and oral history conducted with GBM can offer an insight into the ways in which reflexivity, intersubjectivity and composure have played a part in identity formation in the face of an apparently hostile social and cultural milieu.

These examples of passing as heterosexual all appear to be linked to the influence of a discrediting discourse regarding homosexuality, or, the absence of an accrediting discourse. The vilification of the effeminate homosexual came from wider society,

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<sup>396</sup> Kenneth Plummer, ‘The Conditions of Categorizations: Homosexual Careers and Homosexual Identities’, in Peter M. Nardi & Beth E. Schneider (eds.), *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 95

<sup>397</sup> George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Makings of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), p. 273

<sup>398</sup> Martin P. Levine & Michael S. Kimmel, *Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone* (New York: New York University Press, 1998), p. 21

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> Ibid.

whether through the mass media or other sources, but also from other GBM. The 'screaming queen' was an image of the wildest excesses of homosexuality. Yet this was an identity that some GBM fitted and as a result were subjected to scorn from heterosexual society and other homosexuals.

By examining the experiences and reasoning employed by my interviewees we can attempt to establish why different individuals approached the question of their private and public representations of their sexuality in different ways. Why have some GBM remained quite secretive about their sexuality whilst others are able to publicly identify as gay or bisexual?

## **Methods**

Oral history offers us the opportunity to examine the processes of identity formation amongst homosexuals, specifically GBM in the case of this thesis. By examining the narratives of GBM in Scotland through oral history interviews, this thesis will hope to achieve some understanding of the motivations, influences, and decisions these men have made in the journey to establishing some form of sexual identity. Some background to debates concerning identity and identity formation has already been offered, as has the thinking behind approaching this research from a qualitative perspective, specifically through oral history interviews. Before commencing data collection the specific research design of these interviews had to be considered. Additionally, as this research would be covering potentially sensitive areas, proper consideration had to be given to the ethical issues that may be raised.

### **The Semi-Structured Interview**

Conducting face-to-face interviews with participants was considered to be the most effective medium through which to collect data regarding this research project, with particular emphasis on drawing out aspects of identity formation among GBM. The decision to employ semi-structured in-depth interviews (SSIDI) was taken as the method that allows a researcher the opportunity to discover most about an individual's general life experiences as well as offering an opportunity to explore more intimate details. This approach would also offer the researcher an opportunity to identify issues related to subjectivities at play in the construction of narratives, and to potentially identify the influence of composure and discomposure on narratives of identity.

John Johnson has argued that the nature of the research question central to any research undertaken should direct the researcher to the form of interviewing most suitable.<sup>401</sup> In this case, the experiences of GBM in Scotland lends itself better to a SSIDI format as although questions are outlined in a schedule (Appendix 1) it still offers the interviewee some leeway in how to reply.<sup>402</sup> This leeway is also afforded to the interviewer who can choose to elaborate on points raised during the interview even if this means departing from the initial schedule.<sup>403</sup> This element of freedom proved most useful during the interview process.

The semi-structured nature of the interviews undertaken reflects the intended goals of this research. A more open life history interview, lacking in structure, could potentially have resulted in the collection of a vast quantity of data some of which would have been superfluous. This less structured approach to interviewing is a highly ambitious undertaking<sup>404</sup> and would potentially have resulted in a loss of focus. A more structured interview, with a pre-determined and rigid structure of questions would effectively prevent participants from elaboration and require them to follow a set order, limiting the depth of data collected.<sup>405</sup>

There are, of course, more general reasons for conducting in-depth interviews and these relate to the recording of 'ordinary' histories. As Valerie Yow has suggested, they offer future researchers a picture of 'total society' rather than the views of the lives of elite, for whom biographers record their experiences, thoughts, and actions.<sup>406</sup> This is particularly relevant for hard-to-reach groups such as GBM.

### The Potential Participants

The decision was taken to include only men who have had experience of living in Scotland (not necessarily having been born here) at any time during the period 1940 to 1980. It is central to the research that respondents had some knowledge of Scottish society and of attitudes to homosexuality. The approximated ages of the men who would be involved in

<sup>401</sup> John M. Johnson, 'In-Depth Interviewing' in Jaber F. Gubrium & James A. Holstein (eds.) *Handbook of Interview Research: Context and Method* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 105

<sup>402</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 314

<sup>403</sup> Ibid.

<sup>404</sup> Kenneth Plummer, *Documents of Life 2: An Invitation to A Critical Humanism* (London: Sage Publications, 2001), p. 158

<sup>405</sup> Merriam, *Qualitative Research*, p. 90

<sup>406</sup> Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: a Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition (Walnut Creek, Calif.; Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2005), p. 11

this research would range from late-40s to 75+ years of age. An individual aged 47 at the outset of this research would therefore have been born in 1960 and would have been 20 years of age when the law giving limited decriminalisation was brought into existence in Scotland in 1980. At this age, it could be assumed that he would have had some experience of growing up in Scottish society and therefore would be able to offer valuable insights into the areas covered by the initial research questions.

The decision was taken only to recruit men who self-identified as gay or bisexual.<sup>407</sup> There might have been other men who did not identify as either gay or bisexual, who might even have identified as heterosexual (but chose to have sex with men), but it was perceived that including them would be including individuals who had only limited contact and experience of homosexuality - and all of the social, cultural, and legal ramifications involved - in Scotland during that period.

The geographical location of participants was also important for this research. As Glasgow and Edinburgh are by far Scotland's largest urban centres and boast the vast majority of leisure platforms for homosexuals I assumed that the majority of responses would come from these locations. It was always my intention to endeavour to seek individuals who were resident in other Scottish towns and cities to ensure some form of geographical representation.

Once the potential profiles of participants had been established it was then important to assess how to approach this. The research aims of this enquiry firmly supported approaching the research qualitatively as this would provide a significant amount of appropriate data for analysis, organisation, extrapolation, and theory construction.

Qualitative research, according to Catherine Marshall and Gretchen Rossman, 'draws on multiple methods that respect the humanity of the participants...focuses on context' and 'is fundamentally interpretive'.<sup>408</sup> Therefore, qualitative research is more likely to reflect the social context in which data is produced by the participant and interpreted by the researcher. Additionally, qualitative research allows the researcher to reflect on his or her role in the research and how social context influences his/her interpretation of the data

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<sup>407</sup> This included those who may describe themselves as 'queer' or 'homosexual'.

<sup>408</sup> Catherine Marshall & Gretchen B. Rossman, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (London; Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2006), p.3

collected.<sup>409</sup> J. A. Maxwell has argued that qualitative research enables the researcher to identify unanticipated influences upon participants, which enables the creation of new, grounded theories to offer explanations.<sup>410</sup> Maxwell also argues that qualitative research can lead to the development of causal explanations of specific outcomes.<sup>411</sup> This latter point is a good example of how a grounded approach to data can lead to the development of theory.

Grounded theory is the production of theory from the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data. A researcher may well begin his research with question for which he requires answers, but these answers will be drawn from the data analysed rather than being fitted into existing theoretical framework. Kathy Charmaz has described grounded theory as ‘a set of flexible analytical guidelines that enable researchers to focus their data collection and to build inductive middle-range theories through successive levels of data analysis and conceptual development’.<sup>412</sup> Charmaz has suggested that ‘grounded theorists build in special data-gathering questions based on their assumptions and substantive interests’.<sup>413</sup> Pre-existing knowledge may also inform a researcher’s questions, but, it is only when data analysis is complete that the researcher may compare emerging theory to existing theory.<sup>414</sup>

A qualitative approach to this research was chosen as this approach offers the scope and adaptability necessary for examining what may be termed as ‘hidden’ populations,<sup>415</sup> groups of people who have had reason to hide aspects of their lives from public scrutiny. A quantitative survey would not be able to reflect the nature of homosexual identities and would not offer the researcher and the respondent the opportunity to be reflexive about their experiences.

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<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

<sup>410</sup> J. A. Maxwell, *Qualitative Research Design: An Interactive Approach* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 22

<sup>411</sup> Ibid., p. 23

<sup>412</sup> K. Charmaz, ‘Grounded Theory in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Applications for advancing Social Justice Studies’ in N. K. Denzin & Y. E. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: Sage, 2000), p. 507

<sup>413</sup> K. Charmaz, “‘Discovering’ Chronic Illness: Using Grounded Theory’, *Social Science and Medicine* 30 (1990), p.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid.

<sup>415</sup> Brian Heaphy, Jeffrey Weeks & Catherine Donovan, “‘That’s Like My Life’: Researching Stories of Non-heterosexual Relationships’, *Sexualities* 1 (1998), p. 454

## Recruitment

Having established a general recruitment profile for the research, relating to age, geography, and sexuality, and, having decided on an interview structure, recruitment for the research began. According to Lee, ‘sampling becomes more difficult the more sensitive the topic under consideration, since potential informants will have more incentive to conceal their activities’.<sup>416</sup> Gaining access to a population, which has historically been relatively hidden, was one of the challenges faced during this research. Snowball or network sampling was identified as being of particular benefit when dealing with hidden populations.<sup>417</sup> This method has been used successfully in research focussing on other hard to reach groups: Jean Faugier’s study of prostitution, HIV, and drug use;<sup>418</sup> Weston’s study of lesbians and gays in the United States of America;<sup>419</sup> and to some effect in Weeks, Donovan, and Heaphy’s research into patterns of non-heterosexual families.<sup>420</sup>

The first 5 interviewees were recruited through personal and academic contacts and in turn these contacts snowballed a further 2 interviewees. The next recruitment strategy involved contacting a number of gay men’s social and health organisations that forwarded details of the research to their members. Assistance was kindly provided by the Equality Network,<sup>421</sup> the Gay Outdoor Club,<sup>422</sup> Primetime (a social organisation for gay and bisexual men aged 40 and over),<sup>423</sup> and the Equality Networks Forum<sup>424</sup> (a Glasgow-based equalities website). Advertising through these channels resulted in a further 10 interviewees for this research. The remaining 7 interviewees were recruited as a result of snowballing arising from contacts established via the aforementioned advertising strategies. Consideration was given to placing advertisements in the wider gay press, but the vast majority of these publications appear to focus on a younger gay readership.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> Raymond M. Lee, *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics* (London; Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1993), p. 60

<sup>417</sup> Ibid., p. 65

<sup>418</sup> J. Faugier, *Looking for Business: a Descriptive Study of Drug Using Female Prostitutes and their Clients*, unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Manchester (1996)

<sup>419</sup> K. Weston, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991)

<sup>420</sup> J. Weeks, C. Donovan, & B. Heaphy, *Same Sex Intimacies: Families of Choice and other Life Experiments* (London: Routledge, 2001)

<sup>421</sup> Equality Network, <http://www.equality-network.org>, last accessed 14/06/2010

<sup>422</sup> Gay Outdoor Club, <http://www.goc.org.uk>, last accessed 14/06/2010

<sup>423</sup> Primetime, <http://www.primetime.uk.net>, last accessed 14/06/2010

<sup>424</sup> Equality Networks Forum, <http://enf.org.uk>, last accessed 14/06/2010

<sup>425</sup> R. A. Cant, *Exploring Gay Men’s Narratives, Social Networks and Experiences of Health Services Targeted at them: A London Study*, unpublished PhD Thesis, London South Bank University (2004), p.

Existing literature has underlined some of the potential problems of conducting qualitative research with hard-to-reach groups. Recruitment for this research was ongoing between March 2007 and July 2008 and attracted 24 participants. The initial recruitment strategy, which relied on professional contacts and the resulting snowball effect, attracted a modest response, but it became apparent that a wider approach to recruitment should be attempted. At this point internet recruitment was attempted and this was reasonably successful, accounting for just under half the total sample. One of the benefits of internet-based recruitment is its potential to reach out geographically. Recent research has demonstrated that internet recruitment for research projects enables researchers to locate difficult to reach groups, such as gay men, located within less urban environments.<sup>426</sup> Naturally, using a purely internet-based recruitment strategy would potentially ignore older GBM without internet access, so using this in tandem with more traditional methods of recruitment, including snowballing, was an attempt to recruit from the wider population. According to government statistics, in 2008, 44.5% of UK citizens over the age of 55 were internet users.<sup>427</sup>

Snowball sampling was a successful method of attracting interviewees, and in this research accounted for 42% of the respondents (see Appendix 2). Every interviewee was asked if they could introduce further individuals to the research. There are potential confidentiality problems arising from this approach and interviewees were asked not to divulge any personal details of individuals they thought might be interested, but instead were to contact them directly and give them the information sheet concerning the research (see Appendix 3). It was then the responsibility of interested parties to make contact by telephoning an assigned number or by emailing. Once individuals made contact they were informed of the nature of the research, its academic grounding, and reassurance was offered for any concerns they might have had with regards to confidentiality and the secure storage of material from any resulting interviews.

Snowball sampling does have its weaknesses. In many cases participants recruited through snowball sampling may not be fully representative of a larger population due to the

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<sup>426</sup> For example see; A Bowen, M. Williams, & K. Horvath, 'Using the Internet to Recruit Rural MSM for HIV Risk Assessment: Sampling Issues', *AIDS and Behaviour* 8 (2004), pp. 311-319; M. Ross, M. Tikkanen, & S. Mansson, 'Differences between Internet Samples and Conventional Samples of Men who have Sex with Men: Implications for Research and HIV Interventions', *Social Science and Medicine* 47 (2000), pp. 749-758

<sup>427</sup> Office for National Statistics, 'Internet Access: Households and Individuals, 2009', Statistical Bulletin (Cardiff: Office for National Statistics, 2009), p. 12

‘subjective choices of the respondents first accessed’.<sup>428</sup> However, the combination of snowball sampling with internet recruitment was an attempt to actively address such concerns. Additionally, using snowball sampling is an effective and successful research sampling method for locating members of hidden or hard-to-reach populations. A full list of all the interviewees who participated in this research can be found in Appendix 6.

### Ethical Considerations

Prior to the commencement of this research, considerable efforts were undertaken to ensure that ethical considerations were addressed sufficiently. The research received ethical approval from the University of Glasgow, Faculty of Law, Business, and Social Science. The fact that the research would be concerned with sensitive data ensured that proper practice was followed with reference to recruitment, fieldwork, confidentiality, security, and interview conduct.

Individuals who showed an interest in participating in the research were given a full account of its purpose, and how it would be used. Information sheets were produced to offer information regarding the research and potential participants were encouraged to seek elaboration on points, should they wish further information.

Prior to the commencement of interviews participants were given a consent sheet (Appendix 4) to read, which detailed matters concerning confidentiality and security. The participants were reminded that the interview would be audio-recorded and that all information would be anonymised, and that they would be given a pseudonym when the interviews were transcribed. Consent was also sought for the recorded material to be stored on secure servers at the University of Glasgow. Participant consent was also sought for the interview material, on completion of the research, to be stored securely in the Economic and Social Data Service and to be accessed only by authorised researchers. Participants were also advised that they could withdraw from the research at any time prior to the submission of the PhD thesis. If the participant was then happy to continue, the interview would begin.

It was important when discussing matters of confidentiality and security that such information was supplied clearly and in plain English. An active attempt was made to

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<sup>428</sup> R. Atkinson & J. Flint. ‘Accessing Hidden and Hard-to-Reach Populations: Snowball Research Strategies’, *Social Research Update* 33 (2001), p. 2



ensure that participants were comfortable in the interview environment, and that any questions they had about the nature of the research, and about the researcher, would be answered. Participants were also offered the opportunity to view the transcripts of their interviews, something which most appreciated. If participants were unhappy about any of the content of the interview they were offered the opportunity to amend such information, although only a minority did this.

### The Interview

A general topic guide was produced for the interviews, but as they were semi-structure in-depth interviews, deviation from the guide was common as interviewees talked freely and openly about their lives. The structure of the interviews was not rigid although interviewees were encouraged to discuss the areas of chief concern to the research. Only occasionally did interviews begin to discuss issues not relevant to the research, and they were politely encouraged to return to relevant topics. The majority of interviewees were comfortable and confident about discussing even the most intimate details of their lives. Interviewees were encouraged to expand on issues raised during the interview, particularly if they were central to the research, but on occasion when it was clear that further probing may result in any discomfort to the interviewee, I resisted probing any further.

Interviewing in the participants' own homes offered the opportunity for the participants to introduce material (such as photographs or newspaper cuttings) into the interview environment, and interviewees were encouraged to do this, but only two interviewees were able to do this. On some occasions interviewing in the interviewees' own homes brought with it additional interference, once from a pet cat, and another occasion from telephone calls. It was important on these occasions that I was able to remind the interviewee what was being discussed prior to the interruption. The interviews with Alastair and Theo were conducted in their joint abode, as they are a couple. It was important to ensure that interviews were conducted separately and in confidence and this was successful. The interviews were conducted a week apart and the size of their house ensured privacy. The interview with Morris was held in Dumfries LGBT Centre, which due to structure had poor acoustics, which presented a slight problem come transcribing.

Ten of the interviews were conducted in the interviewees' own homes, one conducted in the interviewee's work office, nine were conducted within University of Glasgow

premises, one was conducted at Dumfries LGBT Centre, and three were conducted at the premises of Edinburgh's LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing.

On several occasions interviewees revealed details of personal trauma. It was important when hearing these stories not to appear shocked, or outraged, or indeed, unsympathetic. Several interviewees recalled incidents including sexual abuse, physical abuse, loss, and homophobic abuse. All of these interviewees later revealed that the interview had been cathartic as in most cases this had been the first time they had discussed this information with a stranger. Bearing the potential for such instances in mind, I had prepared a 'support sheet' (see Appendix 5) detailing the contact numbers of support groups, however, in these instances they were not taken up. The face-to-face nature of these interviewees allowed me as a researcher to recognise social cues with regards to the composure of interviewees, and to recognise if a particular line of questioning had the potential to cause distress.

Throughout the interview process, there were periods of reflection. Questions were considered about how probing the interview had been, how successful they were, and more generally if there had been any weaknesses. Only on one occasion had there been a brief moment of potential conflict when an interviewee objected to the chronology of my questions. This was quickly remedied by allowing the interviewee to talk about the adolescent revelation of his sexuality before he discussed his family background. This interviewee appeared to appreciate the flexibility I was able to offer.

I found that the option for interviewees to view their transcripts was on occasion helpful, although as mentioned, few returned the transcripts with amendments. However, it was helpful in one instance when the recorded interview was problematic as several details were obscured through poor sound. The interviewee was able to fill the missing words.

### Reflections on the Intersubjective Relationship

Prior research amongst gay men and lesbian women has suggested that researcher openness about their own sexuality was an aid to successful interviewing.<sup>429</sup> During this

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<sup>429</sup> For example see: B. Heaphy, J. Weeks & C. Donovan, "'That's Like my Life': Researching Stories of Non-Heterosexual Relationships', *Sexualities* 1 (1998), pp. 453-470; M. C. LaSala, 'When Interviewing "Family": Maximizing the Insider Advantage in the Qualitative Study of Lesbians and Gay Men', *Journal of Lesbian and Gay Social Services* 15 (2003), pp. 15-30; A. M. Lee, 'Exploring the Identities, Welfare Needs, and Service Use Experiences of Gay Men in Later Life', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of York (2006); R. A. Cant, 'Exploring Gay Men's Narratives, Social Networks and

research I had made the decision only to reveal my own non-heterosexual identity if asked specifically. Only a quarter of the respondents specifically asked this question, and only one respondent indicated that my sexuality would have a bearing on the answers he gave to my question. It is my impression that my sexuality had been assumed due to the nature of the research. Two participants indicated that they would not have been comfortable had a female conducted the interviews. Based on these reflections it is impossible to ascertain whether my decision to disclose my own non-heterosexuality only when asked had any bearing on the interview dynamics. Such a feature underlines the necessity of recognising all subjectivities at work in the interview, and how these might affect the interview.

There were other relationship dynamics operating too. One factor may have been the age difference between the interviewees and myself. It was apparent that some of the interviewees assumed either that I had no knowledge of the history of homosexuality in twentieth-century Scotland, or, conversely, that I was fully aware of this history. In instances where the assumption had been negative, my ability to relate and to understand some of the opinions, experiences, and knowledge of the interviewees was of benefit to the relationship dynamic.

Ethnicity and social class are other possible factors in the intersubjective relationship. The fact that the interviewees and myself shared an ethnicity and, in the most part, a national identity, perhaps led to a freer exchange of information. There were some assumptions on the part of the interviewees as to my knowledge of historical and cultural aspects peculiar to Scotland. When interviewees referred to historical figures and developments during their narratives I was able to recognise what they were referring to, and, when a situation arose where I was ignorant of the figures and concepts being discussed I asked for elaboration. Social class is a more problematic area, as due to my status as a researcher, my speech, and my mannerisms interviewees may have assumed what my social class was. However, at no time did I feel that any perceived social class barriers impacted upon the intersubjective relationship. Those interviewees from a differing socio-economic background to myself appeared relaxed and composed when discussing aspects of their lives.<sup>430</sup>

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Experiences of Health Services Targeted at them: A London Study', unpublished PhD Thesis, London South Bank University (2004)

<sup>430</sup> See Appendix 7 for a breakdown of the ethnicity and social class of the interviewees.

## Field Notes

Before and after every interview I completed a field note diary. The field notes consisted of observations prior to and after interviews. Information such as details of the interviewees' appearance and conduct were noted, as were other details such as the location and general conditions of the interviewees' homes. These notes offered some context to the transcribed interviews and helped to remind me of the individual interviewees. The field notes have not been included in this thesis.

## Personal Safety

Over half of the interviews conducted for this research were conducted in the interviewees' own homes. This coupled with the need for extensive travel meant that safety was an issue given due consideration before the research began. Articles on researcher safety by Paterson, Gregory & Thorn, Kenyon and Hawker, and Craig, Corden & Thornton were consulted to offer an insight into correct procedure.<sup>431</sup> The British Sociological Association's Statement of Ethical Practice was also consulted.<sup>432</sup> During the design of this research advice was also received from the Glasgow University's Faculty Ethical Committee.

The remaining interviews were either conducted within Glasgow University or at the LGBT Centre for Health and Wellbeing in Edinburgh (3), and the LGBT Centre in Dumfries (1). A third party held details of when and where the interviews would take place, and also contact details in case of emergency. I carried a mobile phone with me at all times during the research.

## **Data Analysis**

All transcribed interviews were coded manually to recognise phenomena, to categorise phenomena, and to describe phenomena. This coding was central to the analysis of the

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<sup>431</sup> B. Paterson, D. Gregory & S.Thorne, 'A Protocol for Researcher Safety', *Qualitative Health Research* 9 (1999), pp. 259-69; E. Kenyon & S.Hawker, "'Once Would be Enough": Some Reflections on the Issue of Safety for Lone Researchers', *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 2 (2000), pp. 313-327; C. Gary, A. Corden & P. Thornton, 'Safety in Social Research', *Social Research Update* 29 (2000), <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU29.html>, accessed 14/07/2007

<sup>432</sup> British Sociological Association, Statement of Ethical Practice for the British Sociological Association, BSA <http://www.britisoc.co.uk/equality/Statement+Ethical+Practice.htm> (revised edition 2004), last accessed 12/10/2009

data, which was informed by a grounded theory approach to analysis.<sup>433</sup> According to A. Coffey and P. Atkinson ‘coding is about asking oneself questions about the data’ and these questions ‘help to develop lines of speculation and hypothesis formation’.<sup>434</sup>

All 24 interviews were transcribed verbatim from the audio recordings. I not only transcribed the spoken word but also added references to pauses, to noticeable facial reactions, through to laughter or other vocal cues. The names of the interviewees were changed at this stage in line with assurance previously given regarding anonymity. The pseudonyms were chosen from the among the top 100 boys’ names of the 1950s<sup>435</sup> to offer some historical context. The names of specific geographical location that may have led to interviewees being identified were also changed.

The transcribing of audio-recordings resulted in a large amount of data. This data was manually coded and organised by topic (including key words, quotations, subject etc.). There exists software for this form of analysis, such as Atlas Ti, but manually coding and sorting resulted in me having a strong knowledge and familiarity with the data. Coding and organising the data is central when employing a grounded approach to data analysis.

Once coding and analysis of the transcribed interviews was complete, the resulting data was thoroughly examined to identify commonality of experience. I was then able to formulate theory on the basis of the experiences of the participants of this research and then compare my findings with those already published - for example Rosenfeld’s accrediting and discrediting discourse relating to homosexual identity and self-perception, which is discussed in Chapter 4. Immersing myself in the data (grounding) enabled a thorough evaluation and interpretation of the participants’ lived experiences, and enabled the development of data-led theory, which in turn can be compared and contrasted with existing theories about homosexual identity.

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<sup>433</sup> A. Coffey & P. Atkinson, *Making Sense of Qualitative Data: Complimentary Research Strategies* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.; London: Sage 1996), p. 26

<sup>434</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49

<sup>435</sup> Baby Planners, ‘Namebrain Data for Boys in 1954’, <http://www.babyplanners.co.uk/namebraindata.php?s=m&y=1954>, last accessed 13/04/2010

## **Chapter 4**

### **From Adolescence to Adulthood: Sex Education, Sex, and Public Discourse**

Central to this thesis is the examination of factors that may have influenced identity formation amongst gay and bisexual men (GBM) in Scotland who have had experience of living in the country during a period when all homosexual acts were proscribed by law. To examine how patterns of identity formation have developed over a period of time it is necessary to appreciate that the ability to form and integrate a sense of self may first develop in childhood, generally during adolescence.<sup>436</sup> Adolescence has also been identified as a key period in the formation of cultural orientations both from within the familial environment and outwith.<sup>437</sup> In this context cultural orientations may refer to a set of attitudes and beliefs about a variety of social phenomena, such as political beliefs, attitudes towards religion, and potentially, attitudes towards sexual orientation.

A number of studies have examined the potential difficulties experienced by young homosexuals growing up in environments where discriminating ideologies regarding homosexuality have operated.<sup>438</sup> As has been discussed, social and institutional attitudes to homosexuality in Scotland were largely negative during the period under discussion; therefore, it is important to establish just what influence negative cultural discourses on homosexuality had on GBM during their formative years. Additionally, it is also relevant to examine how processes of identity formation in adolescence have impacted upon self-identity schemas among GBM in adulthood.

During every interview several questions focussed on the interviewees' experiences as children. This focus was an attempt to understand the interviewees' knowledge and appreciation of human sexuality at a time when non-heterosexuality was not a subject

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<sup>436</sup> Milton & MacDonald, 'Homosexual Identity Formation as a Developmental Process', p. 92

<sup>437</sup> W. A. M. Vollebergh, J. Iedema & Q. A. Raaijmakers, 'Intergenerational Transmission and the Formation of Cultural Orientations in Adolescence and Young Adulthood', *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001), p. 1186

<sup>438</sup> For example see, Sharon L. Nicols, 'Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth: Understanding Diversity and Promoting Tolerance in Schools', *The Elementary School Journal* 99 (1999), pp. 505-519; Caitlan Ryan & Ian Rivers, 'Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth: Victimization and its Correlates in the USA and UK', *Culture, Health and Sexuality* 5 (2003), pp. 103-119; K. Buston & G. Hart, 'Heterosexism and Homophobia in Scottish School Sex Education: Exploring the Nature of the Problem', *Journal of Adolescence* 24 (2001), pp. 95-109

commonly discussed, particularly in the home or classroom. Most interviewees were happy to discuss their family background, their development as a child and issues related to sexuality and adolescence. In a couple of instances recalling childhood and family life proved a difficult experience charged with emotion and led to the revelation of memories hitherto suppressed or rarely discussed, especially with a stranger.

In this section several common themes have been examined that arose out of these conversations and related to sex education (both formal and informal), awareness of sexuality, childhood sexual experiences and the popular representation of non-heterosexuality. It is important to remember that the interviewees involved in this project ranged in age from 50 to nearly 80 years of age therefore interviewees' 'childhoods' would broadly cover the period from the early 1930s to the mid 1960s, a period when all homosexual acts were outlawed in not just Scotland but the whole of the United Kingdom. For the purposes of this research 'childhood' has been defined as up to the age of 16 as under Scots Law individuals who have not yet reached the age of 16 are generally prevented from entering into transactions and from making legal decisions. As a useful definition *The Children (Scotland) Act 1995* suggests that individuals under the age of 16 are not capable of making independent decisions regarding their general welfare:

...the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 provides that parental rights and responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting a child's health, development and welfare, for providing direction and guidance about personal relations and acting as legal representative apply to children under 16 only.<sup>439</sup>

Obviously, care has to be taken when applying modern definitions of childhood and applying them to historical periods. The discussions with the 24 interviewees offers differing interpretations of the conceptions of childhood and adulthood.

### **Sex Education**

In a number of interviews the issue of sex education elicited a similar response: it was either absent from their development as adolescents, or any reference to sex was vague. Quite possibly related to this was an apparent ignorance of the potential diversity of human sexuality beyond heterosexuality expressed by some interviewees when recalling their experiences as adolescents. There appeared to have been little conception of the

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<sup>439</sup>The Scottish Government, 'Draft Scottish Contribution to the 2007 UK Report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child', available at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/12/19105726/0>, last accessed 21/07/2009

homosexual or bisexual as identities or sexual categories for many of the interviewees. In this section individual recollections of sex education whether formalised within the school environment or informal, home-delivered instruction will be discussed.

### No Recollection of Sex Education (Formal or Informal)

Eight of the interviewees did not recall any sex education instruction being given either in school or at home. The absence of this form of education in most instances led to confusion over issues pertaining to sexuality. Donald (b. 1944) remembers no formal or informal sex education:

JM – So there was no organised sex education?

Donald – Och, no. It was never mentioned. I don't remember my parents, certainly I don't remember my father, ever talking to me about sex and I think my mum would have felt in any case that if sex was to be mentioned it should have been my father that did it, but he never did. We never had sex mentioned at school and not in church, no.

Even although Donald was engaging in same-sex acts with other boys from a young age he had no conception of homosexuality as an identifiable category of sexuality:

JM – When do you think that you began to attach any sort of meaning [to his sexual encounters with other boys]?

Donald – I didn't have a name for it, I still didn't know that's what it was. I didn't realise that I was gay; there wasn't a name for being gay at that stage.

JM – So amongst the....in the school playground for instance there wasn't names that people used to describe or to pick on other boys?

Donald – I don't remember that, no. 'Cos, I don't think homosexuality was something that was talked about. I cannae remember any names or specific words that were used. I mean the only thing I can think of, there were sometimes I would hear, maybe adult conversation even, somebody would say "he's a bit o' a Jessie" or "he's a pansy" but I cannae remember ever hearing the 'poof' word, certainly nobody used 'gay' as a word then. I cannae even remember hearing anybody describing anybody else as 'queer', not until a bit later.

For Simon (b. 1950) the subject of sex and sexuality was hinted at in school but never followed up:



Simon - ...in school we never had any sex education the only ever reference was in a religious education class one day where the teacher came to the seventh commandment and said, "We will just skip that one", and that was the...that was as deep as it got.

Despite the fact that Sean (b. 1955) was engaging in homosexual acts with adult men by the age of 16, he was unsure as to whether he was aware of homosexuality as a distinct and marginalised sexual proclivity:

JM – Did you in your own head class yourself as gay then?

Sean – Ah don't know....I suppose I did, aye. I didnae think that it was a culture...I wasnae daen anything that a guy my age would be daen...

There is little evidence of a universal approach to delivering sex education within Scottish schools. Where sex education did exist it appeared to initially focus mainly on female schoolchildren and even then only in a small percentage of Scottish schools.<sup>440</sup> Even by the 1970s there was still 'no systematic provision for the teaching of sex in Scottish schools or for the training of teachers in sex instruction'.<sup>441</sup>

Peter (b. 1937) found the absence of sex education a major concern as other adolescent boys were his only point of information on all matters sexual, which inevitably led to the promotion of risky sexual advice:

Peter - ...where I would like to see change is the sex education, I think that is something that is needing a drastic overhaul at school. Okay, they have it now but most of them consider it a big laugh and I think that's something where...because there is so much ignorance. I found this out in the Boys' Brigade and okay boys would talk about it, not their sexuality, but about having sex and that and, eh, if I was brought into the conversation and one of the things I would say is 'Well, what about contraception, what if you make a girl pregnant?', "Oh, that won't happen", 'Why are so many teenage girls pregnant then?' I found through that and the things boys said that there was a complete ignorance, that's really what amazed me.

Robert (b. 1937) recalled absolutely no reference to human sexual development during his school years, an experience shared by Drew (b. 1941) and Frankie (b. 1943). Morris (b. 1933) who by the age of 16 had engaged in same-sex acts with other boys and adult men cannot recall at that stage being able to relate his experiences with any socio-sexual phenomenon:

<sup>440</sup> Roger Davidson & Gayle Davis, "'This Thorniest of Problems': School Sex Education Policy in Scotland 1939-80", *Scottish Historical Review* 84:2 (2005), p. 224

<sup>441</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 238

JM – Were you aware of the diversity of sexuality at that point?

Morris – I don't suppose I thought of myself....the word 'gay' hadn't come into the context of sex in those days, 'camp' was the word they used but even that I didn't know. I did know that I had feelings that were wrong in as much as my mates were all wanting to go off with girls...

### Limited Experience of Sex Education (Formal or Informal)

Five of the interviewees recalled some reference to sex and sexuality during their childhood. For those who received formal school-based sex education the majority felt that this instruction was not delivered in an authoritative manner. Walter (b. 1938) was brought up on an island off the west coast of Scotland and his school appeared to employ a rather haphazard approach to the facts of life:

Walter – My primary school class was extremely backward, I think we learned the facts of life from the class below. I was about 11 or 12 when I discovered things.

Although Colin (b. 1945) did recall receiving sex education at school, it was delivered by a physical education teacher:

JM – What about sex? Did you ever receive any sort of sex education as a child?

Colin – Very, very little, I mean we did get some sex education. I was thinking about it when I knew you were coming along because the sex education that I remember we had at school was given to us by a gym teacher and he was an ex-boxer and I really can't remember what he said at all but it was said in his usual kind of pugilistic way. I mean he wasn't a nasty man but he had a certain kind of style to him and there was boy in my class who had been away that day so he missed the sex education, didn't get any sex education at all because he wasn't there that day and I remember sort of like when I, not sure at all what age, but saying to my mother, I was very upset, and I said, 'I don't know anything about sex, I wish somebody would tell me' and she said something like "I thought you would know because you grew up on a farm and there's all sorts of stuff, cows and calves", anyway, she then went and bought two sex education books for me which she never discussed with me but she gave them to me and they were okay...

Chris (b. 1958) recalled that only girls received any form of sex education and that was confined to feminine hygiene and periods. Tom (b.1949) recalls a somewhat awkward

lesson that went into detail about frogs and frogspawn before moving on to human sexuality.

Stewart (b. 1943) spent much of his childhood attending ‘special’ schools due to his cerebral palsy and sex education did not appear to be part of their curriculum, the only reference he was given regarding human sexual development was delivered by his father:

Stewart - ...I have a vague memory of my father giving me some warning about...something like, “Little boys who play with themselves as you tend to do, something happens to them” and then I discovered [many years later] an article in *Scotsgay* [in adulthood] about medical myths about homosexuality and here it was, what he had actually said was that little boys who play with themselves, as I tended to do, become homosexual, it was something you become.

The issue of religion also played a role in the delivery of sex education for school-age children. The Roman Catholic Church in Scotland was reluctant to allow its pupils to be given sex instruction and it wasn’t until the late 1970s that Catholic schools began to institute a system of sex education delivery.<sup>442</sup> Indeed, in the immediate post-war period the church had been openly hostile to proposed changes to the school curriculum to include sex education.<sup>443</sup> Joseph (b. 1959) attended a Roman Catholic secondary school in the 1970s in Glasgow and the subject of sex was never raised within the family unit nor was the subject ever discussed formally at school:

JM – I want to jump back a little to school again; did you receive any sex education?

Joseph – In a Catholic school, in the 70s!? No, no!

If the Catholic education system was unable to offer its adolescent pupils any guidance on sexual issue then perhaps the Catholic Church could offer its young religious instruction of the issues surrounding burgeoning sexuality. Joseph’s experience suggests that the church was unwilling to engage in these discussions:

Joseph - ...I remember at 14 being told by a priest that, you know, it was very sinful to masturbate and while we all had these urges the answer was to have a cold bath [laughs]. When there was a debate it wasnae an informed debate

<sup>442</sup> Davidson & Davis, “This Thorniest of Problems”, p.242

<sup>443</sup> Roger Davidson, ‘Purity and Pedagogy: The Alliance-Scottish Council and School Sex Education in Scotland, 1955-67’, in Lutz D. H. Sauerteig & Roger Davidson (eds.), *Shaping Sexual Knowledge: A Cultural History of Sex Education in Twentieth Century Europe* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2009), p. 93

or an informed discussion.

### ***Popular Representations of Homosexuality***

It is important to assess the level of knowledge the interviewees had about sex and sexuality during their childhood as this may explain how the interviewees developed as young adults dealing with an apparent deviant sexuality. If 'normal' sexuality was rarely discussed in the school and in the home what references were there for these young GBM to relate to? In this section, interviewees discuss how aware they were of non-heterosexuality and the images they had of these people.

#### **Negative Images: Effeminacy and Criminality**

Due to his cerebral palsy Stewart attended schools for children with mental and physical handicaps and little reference to sex and sexuality was made. However, Stewart admits that he was aware of the existence of homosexuals whilst a boy:

Stewart – I suppose I had always heard about it vaguely but it was only something that happened in public schools and something that wasn't approved of anyway. It wasn't something...I was never conscious of or aware of anybody or meeting anybody who was homosexual.

JM – What was the popular representation of the homosexual?

Stewart – Oh, probably public school and talked in a funny voice or something like that and probably dressed as a woman, taking drugs and all beads and so on. The whole effeminate thing and doing female things like sewing or knitting, not good at the right...probably artistic, arty-crafty.

From an early age Stephen (b. 1939), who grew up in the east end of Glasgow, was conscious that there existed something 'different' about him and admitted that this led to 'strenuous feelings', confusion and upset. Initially this confusion regarding his sexual leanings left him feeling unique and isolated but warnings issued by family members offered him hope that he wasn't alone:

JM – So, *when* did you first become aware that you might not be alone and unique?

Stephen –...by this time I had been warned of various places as everybody warned their children not to go here, don't go there, you know. "There's men over there, there's dirty men here" and things like that. The grannies of the day advised everybody...they would say, "Don't let anyone, any men press

themselves against you, or feel your bum” and things like that, which was embarrassing and frightening because I didn’t want to go down that road of discussing anything like that.

The image of the ‘dirty old man’ was not the only pejorative, popular representation of the homosexual. Brian (b. 1936) grew up in a comfortable, middle-class family on the outskirts of Glasgow and recognised from an early age his attraction to other boys. Despite not fully understanding the complexities of sexuality and not fully recognising what he was, Brian still knew what he didn’t want to be:

JM - Was there any social representation of the homosexual during that period?

Brian - I think that what I didn’t want to be at a fairly early age was a bit obvious, flamboyant, I might describe it that way...a homosexual ‘type’...It probably was through the media, and probably also one heard that kind of gay man being ridiculed by one’s peers which made one all the more determined not to seem like that oneself.

Frankie (b. 1943) grew up in Northumberland in another comfortable, middle-class family and was less than impressed with the images presented which were allegedly representative of homosexuals. These images were not representations that Frankie identified with:

JM – What images, what representations of homosexuality were there during that period?

Frankie – Oh goodness me there was...they were extremely negative they were all Kenneth Williams...em...that guy in the Carry On films with the specs [Charles Hawtrey], you know, funny little feeble men who look as if they have been strained through a sheet on which they were born, these sorts of things. They were feeble, they...they just couldn’t help themselves....they were dangerous to society, they would destabilise society and certainly weren’t in the circles in which we would have moved.

JM – And how did that affect your self-perception? How did that influence the way you looked at yourself when you saw these images?

Frankie – Oh, had nothing to do with it, I knew it was nonsense. I certainly didn’t look at all like that, it didn’t affect me at all, just thought that this was the belief that society had and my experience was entirely different.

Frankie was unconvinced over the authenticity of these popular representations of the homosexual and rejected any suggestion that due to his own homosexual desires he was 'different'.

JM – And what about your friends? Were they aware of you being...different?

Frankie – I wasn't different! I was always myself! I've never been otherwise! Which friends? The ones I was having sex with? I hope they realised! I haven't a clue, it didn't concern me.

Ken (b. 1951) grew up in Lancashire and knew from a relatively early age that he was not 'heterosexual' and the realisation that the 'homosexual' was viewed as a sexual deviant caused him considerable personal conflict.

JM – When do you think you first heard the term 'homosexual'?

Ken – It would have been at school. Yes, I think by, I think by secondary school. I'd heard things that men did particularly to boys when I was young, when I was a child, when I was in primary...I remember my mum and my aunt having this discussion about this boy who had been abused and the thing I remember [them] saying that this man had forced his tool inside him and he had been ruined for life and I had this mental image about he's used this spanner and he had made his willy into a fanny and went into primary school with this great knowledge about what had happened to this fellow, this kid. So, that was my first recollection of any sort of, you know, male-male, man-boy, sexual content, but it would have been in grammar school and very, very early in grammar school. I think that shot from primary where you don't talk about anything [and] sex doesn't exist to suddenly you go in at 10 and a half, 11 and now it's being talked about and it would have been 'homosexual' or 'queer'...

JM – So, seeing these images, these negative, stereotypical images left you in a slightly difficult state because was that the *only* image you had? There wasn't a positive image?

Ken – Absolutely none at all. One of the other main influences, I must have been about 12 or 14 when the Profumo scandal and Christine Keeler and all that broke and then there was the Society of Osteopaths I think it was, Steven Ward who was homosexual...and in order to prove that he was homosexual they were doing things like taking sheets off the beds in order to see if there was more than one kind of semen stain and all that sort of thing. So, outside the 'camp' bit was the 'criminal' bit...

The only images presented to a young Ken were that of the predatory paedophile, the effeminate queer and the criminal. Morris grew up in a small Aberdeenshire village

during the 1930s and the only reference he could find to diverse sexualities was in the Sunday papers where stories of ‘perverted’ vicars enlivened his Sunday afternoons:

JM – You were talking about the *News of the World* and any stories you found in that, how were they portrayed, these men, these vicars?

Morris – Well, you could read between the lines, you knew what had been going on and it was wanking material for me really and I did use it for that purpose

Not all interviewees could easily recall the manner by which the homosexual was discussed within society. As a youth Duncan (b. 1946) had little conception of homosexuality or indeed a homosexual despite engaging in mutual masturbation with a school friend. For him, men who had sex with other men were represented on television or in the theatre as an emasculated being:

JM – So, at the age of 12 or 13...and you were experiencing this same-sex activity, what conception did you have of...had you even heard of the term ‘homosexual’?

Duncan – No.

JM – Did you think of it as a type of person you were?

Duncan – No, no. All I knew was that it was probably only men who had sex by them fucking other men. The only other kinna...nothing more to it, just as basic as that.

JM – Did you ever develop a profile for what these people would be like?

Duncan – No. Oh well, maybe in my head, aye, I think possibly once again due to the image that was maybe created on television or radio or even shown in pantomimes or something like that, it was somebody who was quite effeminate.

### ***Moments in Time, Literature, and Round the Horne***

Several interviewees recalled particular events that were publicly recorded and alluded to hitherto ‘hidden’ sexualities. One of the most frequently mentioned events was the publication of *The Report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution*, more commonly known as the Wolfenden Report. The criminal case involving Peter Wildeblood, Lord Montagu of Beaulieu and Michael Pitt-Rivers thrust homosexuality into the media spotlight in a manner perhaps never before seen and

appeared to offer some of the young interviewees some hope that they were not as isolated and unique as they might have suspected.

Colin, who grew up in rural Angus, only caught snippets of information about homosexuality most notably an article in the *Dundee Courier* regarding the Wolfenden Report.

JM – At what age do you think you became aware of sexuality? Aware of the diversity of sexuality?

Colin – I mean that, the Wolfenden Report is very useful in answering that question, it came out about 50 years ago and I was just 12 and I remember being absolutely fascinated reading about it in the Courier [*Dundee Courier*] and the *Daily Mail*, those were the papers that my parent got.

Yet despite having little conception of the homosexual Colin was able to recognise that the Wolfenden Report contained information relevant to him, even at the of 12. However, the absence of more descriptive and accessible texts regarding homosexuality combined with the absence of role models meant that Colin was unable to fully comprehend just how relevant the findings of the Wolfenden Commission would become:

JM – Were you able to relate it at all to yourself? Were you able to personalise this?

Colin – Oh, the Wolfenden Report was interesting to me because it was... somehow or another I knew it was, some of it was about me. I mean, there were other news stories, I used to read the newspaper a lot but that wasn't anything to do with me while the Wolfenden Report, you know, very clearly was. I wouldn't have been able to say, 'Oh, this is giving a name to what I feel!' but it was more than just an abstract story... I mean some of it was clearly to do with the invisibility [of homosexuals] and the fact that there was no sort of... I mean role model doesn't seem the right word to use, there was just nothing at all.

Brian wasn't content to accept the dominant and entirely negative conception of the homosexual fostered by the media and he found solace in literature that presented homosexuality in a more favourable light:

Brian -... I mentioned to you in our preamble before we started talking formally that when I was about the age of 17 one of the books that I would call a seminal influence in my thinking about... was a book by Mary Renault called *The Charioteer*<sup>444</sup> and I remember reading that avidly in hospital, I had

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<sup>444</sup> Mary Renault, *The Charioteer* (London: Longman, 1953)



to get the book before I went into hospital...I think I may have read it under the covers [laughter]. But that helped, things like that helped, they helped to define in your own head what you wanted and what you thought was right for you.

Walter grew up on an island community in the north of Scotland and was totally unaware of issues related to normal and abnormal sexuality up until the age of 15 when a high-profile criminal case in England brought homosexuality out of the shadows. As a young adolescent, Walter had engaged in sexual experimentation with other boys and such activities meant nothing to him until sexual deviancy became headline news on the island:

Walter - There was a boy who was on holiday and we were talking about the facts of life and I asked him to lie on top of me, I was about 9. Things were probably fixed by that time.

JM – Were you ever able to understand these feelings? Were you able to see them as sexuality?

Walter – It was just something that happened, just natural until the press made an issue of it after the Montagu case.

JM – So, were ‘homosexuality’ and ‘homosexual’ terms that you were familiar with when you were young?

Walter – No, not until then.

A very strong theme emerges from the majority of the interviews: there was almost an unspoken acceptance by the interviewees as boys that same-sex desire was wrong and the homosexual cut a lonely and miserable figure. Tom was born and initially raised in the West Indies and South America and when he arrived in Glasgow the difference in cultural attitudes regarding sexuality and the body were markedly different. With regards to sexuality Tom was aware of the existence of same-sex desire within his school environment but was unclear as to what the term ‘homosexual’ represented and how it related to his own feelings and proclivities, and how it related to the term ‘poof’. Tom was unsure as to what his developing sexual identity was, but what he did know is what he didn’t want to be:

JM - Was there any popular representation of the ‘poof’?

Tom - Obviously I was an avid listener to Round the Horne and Beyond our Ken, Kenneth Williams and this kind of thing and I loved that, loved all that, and later shows of that ilk although they wouldn’t have had the same kind of

homosexual undertones and...but I knew, and I know I am kinda stereotyping, but I knew I wasn't a screaming queen, in fact in a way I kinda resented the fact that those people had an identity [laughs] and I didn't.

Chris was a child during the late 1960s and early 1970s and although he was aware of his own same-sex desire there were precious few public figures with whom to identify. The options presented to a young Chris were either the extreme stereotype of a camp, outrageous queen or the grubby criminal:

Chris – Jeff, I think I picked up a sense that I was different from an early age but back in the 60s it was sort of a...I don't know if when I look back on my childhood if I knew what that difference was, or could name it or put a name on it and I think that coming into the late 60s and early 70s sort of people that you might identify as being gay or homosexual on telly they were such extreme caricatures that it was quite difficult to identify with them. You know, Dame Edna Everage or John Inman, all that kind of stuff I found I think as a young teenager really confusing because I knew I definitely wasn't 'there' but didn't quite know where I was, you know? And it was quite hard to actually feel an identity when that was how an identity was portrayed in the media.

JM – Was that the only identity that you could see in the media, whether newspapers, television....?

Chris – They were all sort of negative things, like the other negative things you read in the Sunday newspapers, like people getting caught, or people getting charged with having sex in public toilets, men in raincoats trying to pick up young boys, all that kind of stuff, you know.

Alastair (b. 1948) and his closest friend Allan were great fans of the BBC radio series *Round the Horne* and in particular the characters of Julian and Sandy, two camp individuals who would regularly break into Polari.<sup>445</sup> Although the innuendos went largely over their heads, their interest and enjoyment of the characters set the boys apart from others their own age:

Alastair – Interestingly, my friend Alan and I used to listen to 'Round the Horne' and 'Beyond our Ken'. Do you know about these? We became Julian and Sandy and we could do them perfectly. 99.9% of it had gone over our heads but still we enjoyed the, 'Hello I'm Jules, this is my friend Sandy' and we would do that in the playground while the rest were roughing and tumbling. The people like John Inman and Larry Grayson all came much, much later.

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<sup>445</sup> Polari is a slang language consisting of words and phrases from Latin, Yiddish, Italian, gypsy languages and back-slang English phrases, which was particularly popular during the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

### ***Negative Conceptions: Family and Peer Groups***

For a number of the interviewees the strongest references regarding deviant sexualities came from their own social groups: family and peers. Drew who grew up in Glasgow during the late 1940s and early 1950s was only too aware of the implications that being homosexual brought to an individual's social status and how it may affect their life:

JM – You mentioned there the terms, the term ‘poof’, was that the main term that was used?

Drew – I think it probably was, yeah.

JM – What images did that conjure up?

Drew – I think someone who everyone scorns, em, sissy-ish fellow, effeminate, beyond the pale, a terrific sense of rejection, they confirm that feeling that was already there in me, that you keep everything that you're feeling to yourself.

JM - Were you aware...what were your feelings towards the fact that you were attracted to people of the same sex?

Drew – Horror, horror. I can still sort of sense the feeling of this thing that these boys at school keep going on about, ‘poof’ and whatever, that's me. And I kept trying to get it to go away and of course it quickly...because it wasn't an identity and it was just the entire world who seemed to want what the entire world wants which is sex with a girl and then there's me.

Joseph grew up on a working-class housing estate in the east end of Glasgow during the late 1960s and early 1970s, where discussions regarding the diversity of sexuality were non-existent. The only references to homosexuality for a boy growing up in this environment were the playground names thrown around indiscriminately.

Joseph - ...I was brought up in a very working-class, peripheral housing scheme in Glasgow where the worst insult was to be called a ‘poof’ [laughs] so there was a very, very strong, macho working-class ethos, both within the home and where I lived, at school and among friends. So, people would make jokes about poofs and I would make jokes about poofs an' pretend I wasnae one.

To be a recognised as a homosexual within this social environment was not advisable. Although there was no real discussion regarding sexuality, to be a homosexual was already understood as being unacceptable to the vast majority of individuals within this working-class environment:

JM - ...was there a discussion in wider society about homosexuality?

Joseph – No, there was no discussion. I think certainly, surprisingly (!), in the 60s in a working-class, peripheral housing scheme there was no debate about sexuality, you were a man and if you were a poof then you were disenfranchised, cut off. That was certainly your perception that you would be cut off from family, friends...in the 70s it became more obvious in terms of some of the camp stereotypes, em, that were portrayed in the media, in television in particular, but again they were figures of fun, people to be laughed at and knocked and they werenae quite kosher.

The ‘poof’ conjured up predictable images in Joseph’s head:

JM – When you heard that word, ‘poof’, as a 12 or 14 year old, what images did it conjure up?

Joseph – Em...it certainly conjured up the image of being queer, not quite right, em, and while I wouldnae have been able to articulate in terms of language, probably psychologically flawed or mentally imbalanced, em, and I suppose the main thing it conjured up was a feeling that you were not a part of a group, you were isolated out there, you were very much on your own and you would be a figure of fun and contempt.

JM – Was there any reporting of homosexual issues?

Joseph – Well, yeah, and again I came from a working-class background, it was a very stereotypical working-class background so we didnae read *The Guardian* nor would we have read *The Independent* if it’d been available, it was tabloid papers, *The Daily Record*, *The Sun*, so there was reporting but it was that kind of sensational, dirty, perverted kinda take on it so it reinforced your own self-disgust in many respects

Morris encountered examples of diverse sexuality through the stories told by one of his father’s employees who appeared to have had an active homosexual sex life during his years in the army. These stories appear not to have been condemnatory in nature and therefore did not necessarily appear to Morris to have been negative conceptions:

Morris -...my father had a labourer who was a very much man of the world who....used to retell all these tales about the army days to me, oh the things they got up to you wouldn’t believe and homosexuality would very much come up in this, the army guy who literally had his own harem of army men and I thought this was great and I couldn’t wait to be a part of it.

Despite Morris's home village being small, rural and somewhat isolated diversity was not necessarily condemned as the above story suggests. Even as a young boy Morris was aware of those around him who did not appear to conform to society's expectations:

Morris - ...There was a lad two doors down from me in my village in Aberdeenshire, a beautiful young man called Gordon and he used to dress up in his mother's headscarf and make-up and cycle round my village in Aberdeenshire much to the shock of everyone he met, we just put it down to daftness...

For most of the interviewees, to be homosexual was to be an amalgam of various stereotypical images. The only references afforded to boys during the era examined in this research – a period between the 1940s and the early 1970s – appeared to come from the media, whether it be radio, newspapers, or television. These representations were more often than not wholly negative: the mincing, effeminate, emasculated male, the predatory pederast, and the shamed criminal. Both Alastair and Joseph identified the only potentially positive representation and that was David Bowie, the androgynous and sexually ambiguous singer.

JM – So, we touched on this briefly before, during that period of puberty, was there any popular representation of diverse sexualities whether it be newspapers, television, radio?

Joseph – I think I can actually only think of one and that was probably David Bowie, actually, David Cassidy was a 'poof' [laughter], so, celebs were slagged off at school, particularly cute, fresh-faced guys in bands, they were slagged off as poofs. Strangely enough Bowie, even in that kinda working-class environment wasnae actually slagged off. I think there was a confusion about who he was and what he was but he's up there as somebody you could actually like. To be honest he is about the only one, certainly in the mid-70s, that I can think of.

### ***Sexual Experiences in Adolescence***

During the interviews participants were asked whether they engaged in sexual activity as an adolescent. Most of the interviews admitted some form of sexual experimentation before the age of 16 and such activities ranged from mutual masturbation to full penetrative anal sex. The responses given by the interviewees to questions regarding adolescent sex can be broken down into two main groups: those who engaged in sexual activity with other adolescents and those who engaged in sexual activity with adults.

## Adult – Adolescent Sexual Activity

While many adolescent boys engaged in mutual masturbation and heavy petting with other male school friends this did not suggest that all were homosexual. The development of a sexual life outside of the school is in most cases far more significant and suggests entry into a homosexual subculture. Alastair developed a sexual life outside of the classroom while still an adolescent and his entry into the world of the cottage was purely accidental:

JM – So, did you have *many* sexual experiences as a young man, a boy?

Alastair – I mean sex with boys at Hutchie was absolutely commonplace, in the toilets predominantly and then I discovered cottaging and my life took on a whole new meaning because that was all that I knew that I could be.

JM – What age would you be then?

Alastair – 15.

JM – And how did you discover it?

Alastair – I was thinking about this today and I can remember it so vividly. I was...my brother lives in London, as does my sister who is not well now and I was getting on the coach to come back to Glasgow and I went for a pee. I went into the loo and I suddenly realised I could see the guy's cock next to me and this was really exciting. So, I started to pop around a bit and then one day a guy was jerking off, wow! And that was it; I started on an extremely slippery slope [laughter].

Stephen first experimented with school friends from the age of 13 but one year later he was having regular sexual contact with adult men in a public park not far from where he lived in Glasgow's east end.

JM – When was your first sexual experience?

Stephen – Do you mean sexual intercourse, penetration?

JM – Well, not necessarily, just sexual contact. When do you think was your first real, it might be a penetrative act, but when was your first real gay sexual experience?

Stephen – Oh, em, I think about.....13.

JM – 13?

Stephen – As far as boys just kind of experimenting.

JM – And what about with adults?

Stephen – 14.

Stephen had previously intimated that his only knowledge of non-heterosexual sexual behaviour had been indicated by his grandmother who had warned him of the dangers of ‘dirty old men’. Rather than avoid these alleged perverts Stephen sought them out.

Stephen – ...I looked up where these men hung about and I had sex with them and the panic attacks and fear...calmed me down, the panic attacks and stress in my chest disappeared and went away down to a lower level. At least I had found out there was other, albeit older men...men in their 30s, 40s, 50s, and 60s.

JM – So when you went and met them and had sex with them did they ever talk to you about things?

Stephen – No, no, they weren’t...some of these men were married themselves. So nothing was ever really discussed except the sex act and after it was finished it was finished.

JM – So you don’t feel that in any way you were drawn into something that you weren’t sure of?

Stephen – No, that was the only source of information and my logic told me I must find information, this test I was going through that I couldn’t talk to anyone, I must find someone that I can find identification with.

JM – And how did you feel afterwards?

Stephen – Fine and I felt a bit calmer, I felt I had a lot more to do, to find out if I would fall in love and have a partner in life.

Sean was another interviewee who engaged in adolescent sexual behaviour with adults in a public space. Like Stephen, Sean came from a working-class background and had little exposure to information regarding diverse sexualities. Sean engaged in sexual behaviour with similarly aged school friends but at the age of 15 he left school and contact with his former sexual partners was lost.

JM – Was there a point when you had to move away from the school friends and you had to look elsewhere?

Sean – When ah left at 15, aye. There was a guy in ma class who was trying to constantly set me up with other guys in ma class which ah didnae like. He made the last attempt when ah had left school and he brought somebody up one day and it was, “Do ye want tae go somewhere”, but ah had nae time for it and that’s when ah decided that that was that and ah wis leaving them

behind and ah went oot lookin' for mare adults because ah dunno whit it was like for anybody else but the chances o' findin' someone else who wis gay next door tae ye, and you actually likin' them must be very rare so ah wis headin' for the parks and it wasnae guys ma ane age ah wis interested in, it wis older blokes, you know. Despite whit ye hear, there wis never at any time that ah felt in danger or threatened or even remotely in a position when ah hadnae been in control of whit wis happenin', ever. At that age ah wis gaun tae Dawsholm Park an' meetin' guys at various ages an' they were awright guys and nane o' them did me any harm or tried tae dae me any harm, you know.

Sean explained that he was initially unaware that men seeking sexual contact with other men were using parks and public toilets; it was simply trial and error that brought him into contact with the men he met and had sex with:

JM – How did you locate these places, was it trial and error or did somebody tip you the nod?

Sean – Naw, it wis me, ah had nae gay friends, ah had naebody ma ane age or anybody who ah talked tae...ah just as an individual found these places by accident, you know. There were various places ah would go, there wis some toilets, there wis the park, Dawsholm wis the main place ah would have sex an' meet up wi' guys and that. There wis nothin'....ye coulndae open yer mooth, who could ye talk tae? Even though...ah dunno what age ah was but even at 21, that wis totally irrelevant tae me, ah mean ah wis 14, 15, 16, 17...ye coulndae have said anythin' tae anybody, ah wis just picturing me wi' ma school uniform on and either gaun intae care cos ah said, 'Aw, ah liked it'....ah did....there wis naebody tae talk tae, coulndae talk tae anybody.

Morris's first sexual experience as an adolescent began at the age of 11 or 12 and involved an adult rather than a boy his own age:

JM – Do you recall any early sexual experiences?

Morris – Two. I'm not sure but I think I would be about 12 or 13 at the time. I was at the cinema and had gone to see Laurel and Hardy in *Bonnie Scotland*. I was suddenly conscious of this leg rubbing against me. It was packed out because Laurel and Hardy was big business then and there was this fat old fellow sitting beside me and then his hand went up my knee and then he undid my buttons, there were no zips in those days, he started playing with me and I was really excited and then the next thing there was the national anthem [laughter] and we had to stand, there was more than me standing. Anyway, he kept grabbing at my cock when we were going down the stairs out of the cinema and down into this tenement house that had toilets on each landing. He went up to see the name on the door and said, "If anybody comes, we've been to see Mrs So and So", he pulled down my pants and



trousers and devoured my cock, you know. It was my first oral experience and then he produced his rather, in my eyes anyway, enormous thing and then he said, "Show me...give me your fanny", and I said, 'I don't have a fanny'. He turned me around, I was so naïve, but he didn't push it and he wanked himself off and we made a date for the following day, I was terrified and so I didn't go but that was my first experience.

JM – What age were you?

Morris – I was...I think I was about 11 or 12 and I went back and told my mum and I never got to the pictures in 2 years.

Morris claimed that his first 'real' sexual experience occurred in his home village at the age of 15 with a local boy. Prior to that Morris encountered another amorous adult in a local cinema:

Morris – I did know that I enjoyed it. I did know that it wasn't right. In the back of mind I did know [indistinct] but I did enjoy it. There was a second happening years later in the Palace Cinema but I was in charge of a younger child so I didn't go to the bathroom with him, he wanted to, a very much younger man this time and he played with me under his raincoat and then he went away. Anyway that was my two experiences early on. My first actual sexual contact was in my village in Aberdeenshire, this young lad, a very good looking boy when I think about it but I didn't think of him as good looking he was just a mate from the school and my mother let me spend the night with him in my village in Aberdeenshire and he said, "I'm shagging you" and I said, 'Of course you're not' and he said, "Put your hand up", and he was, he was fully into me and I hadn't noticed. That was my first real sexual intercourse.

JM – What age were you then?

Morris – I would be 15.

For Colin, a trip to Dundee was quite an undertaking as a young teenager and his experience of the sexually charged atmosphere of a public toilet was, in a sense, an awakening to the sexual world of the public convenience:

JM – Did you have any childhood sexual experiences?

Colin –...Dundee was quite an exotic place to me and it was quite nice to go in on my own, and when I got to a certain age I could go in on a bus and do whatever I did, can't imagine what I did, went to the pictures, wandered around, but I liked it, just liked being in a city on my own, and I remember going in for a pee in this gents' toilet at the top of Whitehall Street, which doesn't appear to be there anymore. Anyway, I went in and there were men there and I had a pee and then for some reason, I mean I wasn't aware of the idea of toilets and cottages, I noticed that nobody else was going out, I was

sort of the last one in and I was the first one out and I noticed over the next few months, I don't know how I could explain this in terms of my consciousness, but I did go back to that place a few times and it was always the same sort of pattern, that people were there when I went in and they were still there when I came back out and nobody like approached me but I was aware that there was a sexual atmosphere. There wasn't people banging doors or making approaches to each other you know, but I just felt it sort of like in the air, sort of quite strongly.

Drew was another who discovered the pleasures of cottaging early. Brought up in Glasgow during the 1940s and early 1950s, Drew's first exposure to the thriving cottage 'industry' occurred when he was around 14 years old:

JM – What kind of meaning did you attach, if any, to your same-sex encounters as a boy?

Drew –...I obviously thought it exciting, I could remember the very first encounter in Buchanan Street Railway Station which probably doesn't exist any more, one Sunday afternoon walking in and seeing this man's interest, who I thought was much older but he was probably about 20...em...and it was as if something changed, suddenly there was another adult who thought I was all right at this basic level which was to do with sex which I had no idea that we would have a sexual encounter or not but sex was in the...on the agenda. It's difficult to know what age I would be...em...14, 15, em...

Prior to this incident Drew had engaged in same-sex intimacy with school friends but it is apparent that this sexual contact with an adult appeared to be more defining than any boyish expression of sexuality.

### Peer Group Sexual Contact

Homosexual contact between boys during their adolescence appears to have been almost ubiquitous yet such behaviour appears not to have carried any significant stigma among the teenagers themselves. Donald, who went to school in Dunbartonshire during the 1950s, regularly engaged in mutual masturbation with other boys at school between the ages of 11 and 14, but no meaning was ever attached to that activity. Indeed, Donald did not consider himself to be homosexual as to be homosexual involved more than just masturbation:

Donald –...It was just part of adolescence Jeff, you could, em, pleasure each other by doing that, what a word! [laughter] You could give each other satisfaction!

JM – So, at the age of 12 or 13...

Duncan – Aha?

JM – ...and you were experiencing this same-sex activity, what conception did you have of...had you even heard of the term 'homosexual'?

Duncan – No.

JM – Did you think of it as a type of person you were?

Duncan – No, no! All I knew was that it was probably only men who had sex by them fucking other men.

In 1959 at the age of 16 Frankie took the unusual step of outing himself to his mother, a move that would have considerable repercussions for him. Frankie had been engaging in same-sex relations with boys at school for some time and although he knew that this behaviour was 'not standard' he enjoyed it and so no reason to cease:

Frankie –...I had no great...I was caught on the hop really, I had no great intention of discussing what I considered entirely my own business with my parents at the age of 16 but it must have been at some occasion when mother and I, don't know if there were any brothers were there or not, certainly father was not...em....she was rabbiting on, talking about grandchildren and so poor old dear, I said to her, 'Well, better stop you here now and say the sort of sex I'm interested in does not lead to grandchildren' and that's when the shit hit the fan! Well, I was not talking about sex I was talking about her expectations.

JM – And so the reaction was negative?

Frankie – Oh God, yes.

With the exception of Frankie most of the interviewees who engaged in adolescent sexual liaisons were aware of the need for discretion. Mutual masturbation and casual sexual encounters may well have been enjoyable rather than defining but it is unlikely that family members and wider society would have been disinterested in their child's sexual adventures, as Frankie was to find out. Another interviewee whose sexual liaisons as an adolescent caused both concern and embarrassment to himself and his family was Peter, whose activities after Scouts was to come back to haunt him.

Although born in England Peter was brought up in Glasgow during the 1940s and early 1950s and joining the Scouts gave Peter the opportunity to develop an adolescent sex life:

JM – Were you aware of the diversity of sexualities, at that time? Did you know about homosexuality?

Peter – I knew about homosexuals, I knew about homosexuals, and I thought I must be heading that way. Can I just go back a bit? Remember I said that I had got into a bit of bother?

JM – Yes.

Peter – I was in the scouts and there was a crowd of us, and particularly at camp we used to play around with each other and there was one boy who was a couple of years older than me and he and I used to...every Friday the scouts met in a local school, and after scouts were over we used to go through to another building which you could get into and this Friday night we had sex there, both me penetrating and him penetrating and any opportunity we had at home we would call the other. I knew I was definitely homosexual, I couldn't tell anybody because at that time, we're talking about the late 50s, early 60s, it was very much a taboo subject and I couldn't tell anybody which to my mind was far worse, not being able to express myself.

Peter was fully aware that homosexuality was socially unacceptable at the time but these secret sexual liaisons were necessary as Peter believes he has always had a high sex drive. However, although Peter believed that his sexual relations were discreet somehow word got out:

Peter – By the way, just to finish that bit off, somebody in the scouts explained about me...

JM – Just you?

Peter – Just me. I was picked out and I was ejected from the scouts and I was taken home and my father and mother were told why I was being ejected: because of my sexual activities. The first thing my father did was phone the doctor for an appointment [laughter]. I don't know what he hoped he would get with that.

JM – Did you go?

Peter – I went to the doctor, aha. He wasn't that perturbed, he said that they had over-reacted, that was his....he said not to worry about it.

The intervention of the medical community played a pivotal role in Frankie's development as an adolescent. Frankie had been the victim of a sexual assault by an adult male when he was only 8 years old and this combined with his inadvertent 'coming out' at 16 resulted in him being sent to a child psychologist by his parents. The psychologist was concerned

about Frankie's active homosexuality and he issued some stark warnings and recommendations:

JM – So your mother had a medical background?

Frankie – Yes.

JM – So, was that ever an option for you to take a medical path with regards to dealing with your sexuality?

Frankie – Oh, I believed it fully, yes I believed that one was somewhere in a spectrum of sexuality and it was possible to move oneself within it.

JM – Was that something you desired?

Frankie – Yes.

JM – And did you ever act on that?

Frankie – Yes, yes, yes. What I learned from this despicable child psychiatrist was that I could move my sexuality by thinking of doing so, thinking impure thoughts about women...em...that...em...I couldn't be a medic myself if I was homosexual and I was bound to set out and abuse children if I was homosexual so I thought I had better move on and change these things.

### ***Assimilation or Difference?***

Given that there appears to have been cultures of silence operating regarding human sexuality in many of the interviewees' early life experiences, combined with a number of negative discourses on homosexuality, it is important to examine what effect, if any, this had on the development of identities in adulthood. If the majority of the interviewees were exposed to similar discourses regarding homosexuality during adolescence and then during adulthood, it could be argued that they might develop similar attitudes towards their sexuality. One of the first writers to engage with 'generational theory' was Karl Mannheim whose essay 'The Problem of Generations' was published in 1952.<sup>446</sup> Mannheim located generation within historical and social contexts and identified it as 'a key aspect of the existential determination of knowledge'.<sup>447</sup> Mannheim was attempting to

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<sup>446</sup> Karl Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generations', in K. Mannheim, *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge*, edited by Paul Kecskemeti (New York: Oxford University Press, 1952), pp. 276-320

<sup>447</sup> Jane Pilcher, 'Mannheim's Sociology of Generations: An Undervalued Legacy', *The British Journal of Sociology* 45 (3) (1994), p. 483

explain, from a sociological position, why members of similar generational cohorts quite often had similar *weltanschauung* (viewpoints).<sup>448</sup>

This theory can be translated into understanding my interviewees' attitudes to their sexual identity as they may have been influenced by the socio-historical attitudes prevalent in society during a significant period of their lives. However, as Rosenfeld has argued, it is too simplistic to suggest that all those sharing the same generational cohort will naturally share a common *weltanschauung* as social actors often participate in subcultures, which would affect the way in which they viewed themselves and the world around them.<sup>449</sup> For example, a homosexual or bisexual man who had casual, secretive sexual relations with other men while maintaining an apparently heterosexual life publicly may hold a different *weltanschauung* to a homosexual or bisexual man who had immersed himself in the homosexual subcultures of a larger city. This dichotomy would result in members who share a wider generational affiliation holding different viewpoints. According to Rosenfeld those actors affiliating themselves with a subculture 'would participate in and enact subcultural generational outlooks'.<sup>450</sup> This affiliation, according to Rosenfeld, would occur as a result of the individual identifying with a 'particular category of person during a particular historical era'<sup>451</sup> and would not be solely dependent on age. For example, not all 30 year-old men today share the same attitude to homosexuality as other factors are undoubtedly at work in forming generational and subcultural outlooks.

Chapter 3 introduced Rosenfeld's accrediting and discrediting discourse theory, which suggests that prior to the emergence of sexual liberation discourses in the 1960s, the dominant discourses surrounding homosexuality were discrediting. Therefore GBM who grew up in the pre-liberation era were subject to negative descriptions of homosexuality. The question remains as to whether a theory developed with regards to North American homosexuals can be applied to the experiences of GBM from Scotland. Scotland did not have a Stonewall moment, and it is difficult to approximate when accrediting discourses regarding homosexuality replaced, or challenged, discrediting discourses. A limited decriminalisation of homosexual acts occurred in England and Wales in 1967, at the height of sexual liberation, but did not apply to Scotland until 1980. Further, other factors as discussed in Chapter 2 impacted upon discourses about homosexuality in Scotland.

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<sup>448</sup> Mannheim, 'The Problem of Generations', pp. 14-16

<sup>449</sup> Dana Rosenfeld, 'Identity Work Among Lesbian and Gay Elderly', *Journal of Ageing Studies* 13 (1999), p. 124

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

<sup>451</sup> Rosenfeld, *The Changing of the Guard*, p. 95

## Too Straight to be Gay

Rosenfeld's theory regarding discourses of homosexuality suggested that prior to the alleged era of sexual liberation in the 1960s negative discourses of homosexuality prevailed. As a result homosexuals would attempt to hide this aspect of their identity. The main tactic employed by homosexuals for this purpose was to attempt to pass as heterosexual. Among the interviewees for this thesis there were several who chose to attempt to pass as heterosexuals. The drive to engage in passing differed slightly in each of the cases. Donald (b. 1943) was aged 15 when he began to experiment sexually with school-friends but admitted that he was unfamiliar with the diversity of human sexuality at that age and was not aware of the terms 'homosexual' or 'gay'. It was not until he was 21 that he became aware that he might be homosexual. However, the public representations of homosexuality dissuaded him from engaging more fully with his sexuality:

Donald - All that time I never admitted to myself that I was gay, to myself. It just seems crazy now looking back. I think part of the problem was that it just wasn't talked about. I had no...there were no role models; I was living in a rural community where that sort of thing didn't get talked about. I think I realised that what I was engaged in was a bit taboo... By the time I was 21 I began to realise but I still didn't actually think that I fitted into that category because I actually believed then that all homosexuals practised anal sex and I had never ever done so, I knew that homosexuality existed but I still didn't actually think that I fitted into that category and also the role models that were available at the time; you had all these limp-wristed comedians, it was all very...to be anybody that was gay, they would automatically have a handbag, very sort of over the top. I mean there were one or two guys in the town like that and people sort of made fun of them and you know you had people on the telly as well, it was just stereotypical homosexual. Obviously, I didn't want to be like that either.

Donald's exposure to discredited identities, those of the 'limp-wristed comedians', helped him to deny that he was homosexual: he did not fit that role. As he had grown up in a small, rural community Donald felt that he was not exposed to any discussions on the nature of homosexuality whether through education, the media or ability to mix with a larger cohort. His denial of the effeminate stereotype also incorporated some wider implications of identifying as a homosexual:

JM - So did you reject the possibility that you were homosexual based on the fact that the representation of homosexuality was this limp-wristed....

Donald – Yes, a very negative thing, a very negative thing to be. It was also going to have a lot of social repercussions, sort of let down your parents, your family, my

brother, it was just a big no-no, so you just didn't go there, you didn't consider that you really had any option. This was just a sort of hidden area of your life that you just got on with and as I say I felt very, very guilty about it.

When Donald met his future wife, developed a sexual relationship with her, and married, Donald felt that his homosexual feelings receded. However, within 5 years of marriage he had begun to doubt himself and the authenticity of his heterosexual life:

Donald – By the time that I had been married about 5 years I think that I began to realise that I was beginning to sort of revisit some of these gay areas of my consciousness...By that stage I still didn't think I was gay, I thought maybe I was bisexual and some days it became a real worry because I would waken up in the morning and my brain would be racing and lying in bed thinking 'Am I gay, am I gay?', 'No, I'm not, probably bisexual' and other times I would think I was definitely bisexual and I had no sooner convinced myself that I was bisexual and I would start to wonder if it were possible that I was gay and of course by then I had a young son and there was another son on the way and the implications of being gay were so devastating, I didn't know how I was going to make sense of my life, of how I was going to cope with this if I had to acknowledge that I was gay and it was therefore always easier to think that I was bisexual. It was always a relief if I was able to convince myself that no, I was really bisexual, that was a much safer thing to be...

It was not until he was in his late 30s that Donald confronted the issue of his sexuality fully. Donald had never engaged with the gay 'scene' and had deliberately avoided contact with other gay or bisexual men, never visiting public toilets or public parks looking for sex. Donald's prime motivation appears to have been to assimilate as heterosexual; the discrediting discourse had painted homosexuals as effeminate men who engaged in anal sex and as a result Donald was unable to identify with these men. The only sexual relationships Donald had been involved in were with friends in his teens and early 20s who had then went on to marry, therefore, the idea that homosexuals could engage in affectionate, long-term emotional and sexual relationships was somewhat alien to Donald.

Brian (b. 1936) was also exposed to the stereotypical image of the effeminate homosexual:

Brian - I think that what I didn't want to be at a fairly early age was a bit 'obvious'....flamboyant; I might describe it that way...a homosexual 'type'. I was never attracted to that kind of person...Now I suppose that in those days you got from things like radio and then television eventually in the fifties, that kind of stereotypical representation of gay men, and that's what so many people thought of a gay man in these days...well I thought if that's what gay men are...that kind of...I would rather keep it to myself.



Brian did indeed keep it to himself and this combined with his decision to distance himself from more 'flamboyant' homosexuals suggests that Brian too was affected by the discrediting discourse so prevalent in Scotland from the 1940s through to the 1980s. Brian's desire not to be associated with the effeminate homosexual may be related to fear of guilt by association. As Newton discusses:

...the overt homosexual is accused of a more degrading crime, that of being "too nellie", that is roughly, "too effeminate"...In effect, I will not associate with you because you are too stigmatized...<sup>452</sup>

Yet, Brian did not seek to marry in an attempt to adopt a fully heterosexual image; he simply chose not to advertise his homosexuality:

Brian - I didn't think it terribly onerous or irksome but simply the need for discretion... But there is a certain breed of homosexuals today that wants to challenge all the time, they want to thrust it in your face.

Brian appears to have been influenced by the discrediting discourse, as he believed that to be a competent homosexual he had to pass as heterosexual. Unlike other interviewees, Brian did not seriously contemplate marriage but he did distance himself from the stigmatised identity of the effeminate homosexual and largely succeeded by fully privatising his sexual life. Discretion was the key, and through discretion Brian was able to socially integrate into the heterosexual world.

Colin (b. 1945) reflected on his own experiences of meeting an effeminate homosexual while at university:

Colin - I remember a guy at university with me, probably the year under me and he was from sort of like a middle-class English background and he was in the sort of student drama society and he was very, very camp...I was absolutely terrified of him, absolutely terrified...and it just seems such an indictment of the time that this very nice, very intelligent man who was camp, that was what made me want to keep away from him. There were other people I knew at university who were nasty, manipulative, megalomaniacs, all kinds of things but there wasn't the kind of...stigma associated with...him

JM - Was it the fear, the stigma that might fall on you because of the association...?

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<sup>452</sup> Esther Newton, 'The Queens', in Nardi & Schneider (eds.), *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies*, p. 40

Colin – Yeah, I think so. I had a friend who did speak to him. I mean it wasn't that I avoided the guy, the chances of us meeting were very slight but I did have a friend who I remember seeing in conversation once with this English guy and my friend was sort of camping it up and I thought, 'Why's he doing this?!' This friend was about the same level of sexual development as I was, struggling with his own homosexuality, em, and I just thought, 'He's making a fool of himself'.

Colin was able to recognise that his aversion to the effeminate homosexual was based on his own fears regarding revelation. The effeminate, camp homosexual, 'queen' or 'fairy' was suspected of drawing society's attention away from 'normal' or 'straight-acting' homosexuals who were attempting to assimilate into society by showing that negative perceptions of homosexuals were largely grotesque stereotypes. Yet, according to Garton, the effeminate homosexual has played a significant role in asserting a gay identity through the performance of this role:

Equally important, many of these men...refused to accept medical and criminological representations of homosexuals as deviant or sick. They asserted their right to pleasure.<sup>453</sup>

For Robert (b. 1937), the effeminate homosexual was a mystery. Whilst he felt that acting in a camp or effeminate manner was attracting scorn it was also an apparent attempt to forge an identity in the face of opposition and scorn:

Robert - ...men who presumably are gay who behave in a very outgoing way that signals to the world...people think of them as gay, you know, straight people as well, by being...the extreme is being effeminate a bit or even camp or even less than that but a bit sort of like you know...something that kind of tells you that they are kind of in that area and I have never been like that and I suspect most gay men aren't but that always kind of amazes me because in one sense I kind of admire that, there is a clarity about that but it puzzles me...

However, Colin's attitude to his homosexuality altered once he had been exposed to a critical mass of homosexuals. London was to provide a platform for Colin both to engage with his own homosexuality and with homosexuality as a positive aspect of identity.

Colin – I think it was only until I got to London that I actually really realised that, you know, there were people who had same-sex relationships. Whereas all the other sort of experiences, you know, at university, in Tanzania, there was always some kind of underhand sort of aspect to things.

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<sup>453</sup> Stephen Garton, *Histories of Sexuality: Antiquity to Sexual Revolution* (London: Equinox, 2004), pp. 215-216

The main influential discourse, in Colin's case, moved from homosexuality as stigma to homosexuality as status.<sup>454</sup> Whereas, his homosexuality when in Scotland was governed by a need for discretion, in London Colin was exposed to a larger concentration of urban homosexuals, some of who saw this aspect of their identity as an essential feature of the self:

JM – What was it about the social environment in London that was *so* different?

Colin – I do think that it was the critical mass, you know, the fact that you could go into the pub, there was a pub called *The Coleherne*...and you could go into it and there was all these people there, all kinds of different people, all ages and it just, I try to avoid phrases like 'coming home' but...you walked in there and there was all these people there...it was a place where you felt you belonged... I was very lucky that there was the Gay Liberation Front had started in London in 1970 and I went to my first GLF meeting in 1971.

But, in between his move from Scotland to London, Colin had lived in Africa where he had been exposed to 'radical revolutionary ideas', which challenged his *laissez-faire* attitude to many aspects of life. This appears to have been, in effect, a political awakening that was central to Colin's rejection of discrediting or stigmatising discourses. For the majority of my interviewees, this 'awakening' was absent.

However, radical politics played a significant role in Sean's (b. 1955) life. Although a member of the Scottish National Party (SNP), the party that campaigns for independence for Scotland, Sean's radicalism was much more deep-rooted:

Sean - ...it was like the SNP was this anti-establishment thing, the press, and even tae this day the SNP has this thing, it gets up the nose o' the British media, you know. It's an anti-establishment thing, it was like...we could relate tae that, kind of "Up yours!"... we were just basically sayin' 'up yours' tae everythin', you know what ah mean? We had oor ane private reasons for being part o' this, it wis like we were sayin', "Bugger youse, we don't want tae be a part o' whit ye stand for, the state", it wis a wee bit mare deeper... almost anarchy, we were rejectin' everythin' rather than just simply wantin' a Scottish Parliament, we were sayin' naw tae everythin', the law didnae matter tae us...

Sean spoke of other members of the SNP who were also gay and they shared a closeness, which was based on their radical politics and their sexuality. However, unlike Colin, Sean was never radical about his sexuality:

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<sup>454</sup> See Rosenfeld's model of discourses of homosexuality, p. 85

JM – Did you manage to keep your personal life private and secret throughout that period up until the ‘80s?

Sean – Yep, mainly. Well, I mean with the same group of boys and men who were in the SNP who were the same, we sort of had a wee network, we were private, we would see each other or we...would either go outside oor group aw together...but we never ever told oor families anythin’ aboot anythin’...Being gay? Did we raise it? Did we put oor hand up? Never, ever! It never even crossed ma mind, ever.

During this period Sean was working in Glasgow’s shipyards and occasionally dated other men from the yards. However, everything had to be arranged secretly, shifts were changed so they could work together. Sean lived and worked in a working-class Glasgow environment where his homosexuality may not have sat comfortably alongside the ‘cult of toughness’ said to be operating within his working environment.<sup>455</sup> Whether or not the homophobic, sectarian, hard-drinking, violent, working-class Glaswegian male of industrial Clydeside is a myth or a reality the homosexual was viewed within this environment in one dimension only:

Sean – It was still....it was the bit that was me that was *private* that naebody else knew aboot, that was *central*, it was like.... so important.... ye could never tell anybody in there, never, never in yer life. People in the yerds could only accept somebody like that if ye were very camp....if you were like a joke or a caricature, they could live wi’ that but whit they couldnae live wi’ was somebody talkin’ the same way, cursin’ the same way, actin’ the same way. That is like a big major no-no. If ye were a caricature they would live wi’ that...I didnae want tae become that so ah obviously didnae say anythin’ tae anybody, you know? Ah think there was wan guy on the Queen’s ship, when ah say Queen’s ship I mean it is her craft...they are in there liftin’ aw the grit and rubbish as it’s gettin’ built...there was one guy there but he did play up to the “Ooh!” [puts on effeminate voice], but when ye seen that ye just cringed, ye didnae want tae be a part o’ that.

Sean’s narrative suggests that amongst the largely heterosexual and working-class shipbuilding workforce the effeminate homosexual stereotype was more acceptable than a heterosexual façade masking an individual’s homosexuality. There appears to be something of the ‘other’ about the flamboyant gay; easily recognised, separated and viewed as an object of mirth. Stephen (b. 1939) echoed this view when he suggested that his heterosexual acquaintances accepted his homosexuality because he was open about it but viewed ‘suspicious’ men as a potential threat. Did these men see the ‘passing’ homosexual as a threat to their own heterosexual status? Sean admits that he did not want to be associated with the flamboyant, camp homosexual. As with Brian and Colin, guilt by association may have lay at the root of his discomfort.

<sup>455</sup> Ronnie Johnston & Arthur McIvor, ‘Dangerous Work, Hard Men and Broken Bodies: Masculinity in the Clydeside heavy Industries, c. 1930-1970s,’ *Labour History Review* 69(2) (2005), p. 138

Frankie (b. 1943) was also exposed to the negative portrayal of male homosexuals as emasculated deviants but initially rejected these representations. Frankie, as mentioned previously, had actually told his mother as a teenager that he was primarily attracted to men but firmly believed that sexuality could be altered. To remain as a homosexual, Frankie believed, would result in the end of his aspirations to become a medical doctor and more worryingly, he would resort to paedophilia to satisfy his sexual urges. Therefore, sliding himself along the sexuality scale towards heterosexuality would enable him to continue into medicine and to prevent himself becoming a child sexual abuser:

JM – Did you think you would change?

Frankie – Of course I did! Yes, I was still on this big Kinsey continuum and wanted to nudge myself a wee bit to the right

For Frankie, ‘passing’ was not just to be *perceived* as a heterosexual, he firmly believed that he could *become* heterosexual through marriage and sexual relations with his wife.

The homosexual depicted as gender deviant was a consistent theme across the majority of the interviews. Harry (b. 1950) was astonished when he discovered that not all homosexuals were effeminate:

Harry - I still don't feel at ease with an effeminate gay man. That's just the way it is. There was a time that I used to feel guilty about that but not any more, live and let live, I don't have to cross that barrier and join an effeminate gay man - my choice. My choice is just to stay with butch gay men, if I ever meet them....At that time I'd say that gay men were 'Jessies' and effeminate and eventually I was to meet a butch, gay man that I never knew existed, that's being truthful there. That was one of the wee shockers that I got – you can actually speak to a guy and never realize that this guy is gay because he's so masculine.

Harry hid his homosexuality from almost everyone in his life only engaging in brief, problematic, homosexual liaisons. Indeed, so keen to appear as a ‘butch’ heterosexual, Harry engaged in acts of homophobic stereotyping to please his heterosexual friends:

Harry - One of my ploys, looking back on it, was to impersonate gay men and I would go all mincing and speak with a lisp and everybody laughed and I discovered that I was entertaining them. Then again, it dawned on me that I was entertaining them at someone else's expense – this ‘tag’ that all gay men speak with lisps and

had a limp wrist and throw their hands in the air and their eyes to the sky. I remember doing that kind of thing...

This vilification of the effeminate homosexual, albeit in an attempt to be humorous, helped Harry to deflect any suspicion about his own sexuality:

JM – Did you feel under any pressure to conform?

Harry – Not consciously, but I probably deep down was aware of the fact that any hint of ‘gayness’ from me was taboo. I had to keep that under wraps. I don’t know...I don’t think I’m effeminate, but I suppose I have characteristics which come across, even out dealing with normal people, ‘ordinary’ people as everybody is ‘normal’. I suppose I’ve got wee mannerisms today that probably a heterosexual woman might think, “I think this guy could be gay”. I suppose I must be hemmed in...I remember one evening being in a pub, and I’m a tactile person, and I put my hand on this fellow’s arm as I was telling him something because I can be very animated at times. It’s funny, you asked me earlier on about ‘poofter’, it’s just came to my mind now. He addressed me as that and he told me to fuck off.

For Harry, the decision to try and pass as a heterosexual was based on what he didn’t want to be rather than what he wanted to become. To be known as homosexual would, in his eyes, have severely affected his relationship with family, friends and peers and to escape from this fear Harry attempted to lead a heterosexual life:

Harry - There was a fear there: a fear of rejection, of your peers finding out who I am and I didn’t fancy the idea of not being liked or scorned. I really did think that I was odd when it came to that... I did have women in my life too and there was two serious affairs, which were touching on marriage, or one could have been but one had offered to go to Australia. I had a great feeling for her, ‘Joan’, she was good for me. I remember having this feeling of ‘someone being good for me’; helping me to become something better than I thought I could be or wanted to be... It’s not a very nice thing to do to love a woman and try to be a heterosexual man when you know you’re not. So, I think you have to be fair now and say, ‘It’s no’ for me’.

Not all of the GBM in this research project who chose to pass, some even marrying, came to realise that attempting to be, or to be seen as, heterosexual would ultimately fail. Whilst Frankie’s marriage did end because of his homosexuality, this did not occur for over 20 years. Donald remains married to this day (although his wife is aware of his homosexuality), Peter (b. 1939) also remains married but his wife is ignorant of her husband’s double life.

Morris (b. 1933) from a young age engaged in numerous homosexual encounters that were sexually satisfying but not so emotionally. It was this lack of emotional consistency and fears over his voracious sexual appetite that led Morris to seek medical intervention in an attempt to lessen his physical attraction to men. However, what Morris craved most of all was the opportunity to raise a family and homosexuality did not afford him that opportunity:

Morris – It took a marriage to teach me what love meant. All my sex up to then was pretty basic, ready dicks and ready arses.

JM – When you made the decision to get married, what was your motivation for that?

Morris – To have children, I couldn't have them myself and Ted [his boyfriend at the time] didn't have a womb! I desperately wanted to have kiddies. I realised that if I didn't have kiddies I had missed out some great part of my life. I didn't realise then that everything comes with a cost.

The last sentence in the above quotation is perhaps the most telling. Morris longed for a stable familial environment and wanted to escape his homosexual life, which in his mind was dominated by sex and the search for sex at the expense of emotional security. We can see a discrediting discourse at work in Morris' recollections: leading an active homosexual life was viewed as a sexually-driven existence. Like Harry, Donald and Frankie, Morris could not see himself in a stable gay relationship; these two things appeared mutually exclusive. These men believed that to be competent homosexuals (in relation to Rosenfeld's model) they had to pass as heterosexual, leading any homosexual relationships in private, away from the prying eyes of 'normal' society. Despite these similarities there are notable individual differences: Morris led an active and frequent sex life with men taking numerous risks of exposure while Harry and Donald, in particular, saw discretion as vital in maintaining the appearance of heterosexuality.

Morris' decision to marry and raise a family led to him rejecting his homosexuality for over two decades, only reconnecting with it after his wife's death. It is perhaps no coincidence that Morris and Frankie decided to emerge as homosexuals during the 1990s once the discrediting discourse had been largely replaced with an accrediting discourse. The potential trauma of revealing their homosexuality to their spouses would have been exacerbated by the largely negative social reaction they would have received during the 1970s, for example.

Levine and Kimmel (see Chapter 3) have argued that gay men living under the threat of criminal action adopted 3 main survival techniques: passing, minstrelization, and capitulation.<sup>456</sup> Passing as a strategy of avoiding unwelcome social and legal attention has already been discussed in reference to this thesis. None of the interviewees engaged in outright minstrelization by adopting feminine traits and appearances, although Stephen (b. 1939) viewed himself as effeminate. He also immersed himself, for a period, in Glasgow's gay subculture of the late 1950s and 1960s. Although the adoption of 'camp' names – taking the names of female film stars when in gay company – did occur this was largely within the confines of gay bars and gay parties. None of my interviewees could therefore be described as 'minstrels'.

Capitulation manifested itself through strong feelings of shame, guilt and self-hatred about their sexuality.<sup>457</sup> Such individuals would avoid associating themselves with other homosexuals, and would not immerse themselves in any form of homosexual subculture. Joseph (b. 1959), the youngest of my interviewees, had a strongly negative reaction to his homosexuality, which resulted in a long period of guilt, shame and self-loathing. Joseph was aware of his 'difference' from an early age and was aware of the negativity surrounding accusations of homosexuality amongst his peers:

Joseph – Em...it certainly conjured up the image of being queer, not quite right, em, and while I wouldnae have been able to articulate in terms of language, probably psychologically flawed or mentally imbalanced, em, and I suppose the main thing it conjured up was a feeling that you were not a part of a group, you were isolated out there, you were very much on your own and you would be a figure of fun and contempt.

During his teens and twenties Joseph was an active member of religious communities and could not marry his religious faith with his burgeoning sexuality. Joseph admits that societal expectations, exacerbated by religious expectations, left him feeling insecure, isolated and depressed. As Plummer has noted:

The awareness of stigma that surrounds homosexuality leads the experience to become an extremely negative one; shame and secrecy, silence and self-awareness, a strong sense of differentness – and of peculiarity – pervades the consciousness.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>456</sup> Levine & Kimmel, *Gay Macho: The Life and Death of the Homosexual Clone*, p. 21

<sup>457</sup> Ibid.

<sup>458</sup> Kenneth Plummer, *Telling Sexual Stories: Power, Change, and Social Worlds* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 89



Although Joseph is now able to reflect more critically on a period of his life that was particularly difficult one of the main issues he had with being gay was that sense of differentness. His strategy for passing, engagement, failed so it could be argued that his retreat into religiosity was a last attempt to feel a part of something:

JM – What prompted you to take that step, engagement?

Joseph – I think it is fairly obvious if we go back to what we were saying earlier. It's about society, was about society's expectations... I didnae want to be gay, I wanted to be part of the group, I didnae want to be different.

What is evident in Joseph's case is that a stigmatising discourse did appear still to be powerful in Scotland during the 1960s and 1970s. Joseph had been exposed to the negative stereotyping of the homosexual but he also had been exposed to a fragmented family life during his upbringing, damaged by episodes of alcoholism and domestic abuse. It might be naïve to assume that Joseph's feelings of despair and isolation were solely related to his sexuality: his difficult childhood may well have played a part in his problematic early adulthood. But, what is apparent is the feeling that being different was a hindrance to functioning as a human being.

As previously mentioned reasons give for passing varied. For Tom (b. 1954) it was simple enough:

JM – So, why did you have relationships with girls until 23?

Tom – 'Cos I wanted to have sex [laughter]. Because there has always been a sexual part in me obviously, I have been interested in bodies, I like being tactile, I was looking for comfort, I was looking for love, those type of things but it has always for me been a reciprocal thing so as soon as I have a doubt about myself I will either stop doing it or not continue doing it, so that was it.

The issue of 'silence' crops up again in Tom's narratives. Tom was aware of stereotypical images of effeminate men in particular the 'screaming queen' and the absence of an acceptable or accrediting discourse regarding homosexuals left him feeling somewhat bitter:

Tom - ... Obviously I was an avid listener to *Round the Horne* and *Beyond our Ken*, Kenneth Williams and this kind of thing and I loved that, loved all that, and later shows of that ilk although they wouldn't have had the same kind of homosexual undertones...but I knew, and I know I am kinda stereotyping, but I knew I wasn't a screaming queen, in fact in a way I kinda resented the fact that those people had an identity [laughs] and I didn't...I didn't know what I was, that's

the most honest answer that I can give and I wanted to be an honest person and I didn't know what I was and I didn't know anybody who went to places and were homosexual in those places

It could therefore be suggested that Tom's relationships with girls in his late teenage years and early twenties were not strictly examples of passing. He does not appear to have been consciously hiding his homosexuality in an attempt to pass as heterosexual, he just didn't realise that it was a realistic option to be homosexual.

These examples of passing as heterosexual all appear to be linked to the influence of a discrediting discourse regarding homosexuality, or, the absence of an accrediting discourse. The vilification of the effeminate homosexual came from wider society, whether through the mass media or other sources, but also from GBM themselves. The 'screaming queen' was an image of the wildest excesses of homosexuality which none of my interviewees admitted to represent. Yet this was an identity that some GBM fitted and as a result were subjected to scorn from heterosexual society and homosexuals themselves. Passing as heterosexual was viewed by many as a reasonable tactic to avoid disclosure. The apparent fear may have been that the discreditable self would become a discreditable personage if they were to be associated with the recognisable image of the homosexual at that time.

By examining the experiences and reasoning employed by these interviewees we can attempt to establish why different individuals approached the question of their private and public representations of their sexuality in different ways. Some of the GBM interviewed for this thesis have remained discreet, even secretive about their sexual lives, while others are committed to identifying more publicly as GBM.

### The World We Have Lost

Consideration has to be given to the eras during which these interviewees primarily operated, when they were sexually active, and when they developed knowledge of the existence of men (and women) that were sexually attracted to individuals of the same gender. Broadly speaking, the majority of these interviewees would have gained sexual knowledge in the period 1950 to 1970. This was a period, as we have seen, when in Scotland there was little public discussion with regards to homosexuality and certainly very little favourable discussion.

The Scottish Minorities Group (SMG) did not appear until 1969 and its membership did not rise significantly until the mid to late 1970s.<sup>459</sup> However, fewer than 5 of my interviewees had any significant knowledge of the existence and aims of SMG whilst it was operational as an LGBT rights organisation. This is not to say that the majority of the interviewees had no interest in furthering the rights and improving the conditions of LGBT individuals in Scotland but rather points to the limited platform on which organisations such as SMG operated upon during this period. Indeed, it could be argued that within Great Britain as a whole the initial spark for ‘gay liberation’ – the appearance of the Wolfenden Committee’s report and the change in law in 1967 in England and Wales – did not emerge out of a concerted effort by gay rights activists. As Weeks has noted:

Law reform came about because it was finally seen that the contradictions in the social position of male homosexuals was absurd...it was not brought about by homosexuals campaigning for their own rights.<sup>460</sup>

Yet, certainly in England, during the 1960s there did appear a small number of organisations campaigning for the betterment of the conditions of lesbian, gay, and bisexual members of society. Organisations such as the Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) (1958), the Committee for Homosexual Equality (CHE) (1969), the Albany Trust (1958), and the North Western Homosexual Law Reform Committee (NWHLRC) (1964) all appeared after the publication of the Report of the Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution (RCHOP) in 1957.<sup>461</sup> These organisations did play a significant role in keeping the findings of the RCHOP in the public and political arena but the move towards limited legalisation of homosexual acts had begun in 1957. The HLRS, amongst others, could hardly be described as a ‘gay liberation’ organisation in any case: its public profile was not of a ‘gay’ organisation and its honorary board was filled with notable heterosexual figures.<sup>462</sup>

During the interview process attempts were made to gauge each individual’s attitude to ‘coming out’, whether to disclose or not to disclose and their reasoning behind that decision. According to Friend, GBM who had experience of living during a period of legal oppression often were reluctant to come out as disclosure might result in a loss of

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<sup>459</sup> NAS, GD467/1/1/6, Annual Reports of SMG/SHRG - By 1971, the SMG had fewer than 30 members. This rose steadily to around 200 by 1972 and just over 400 by 1976, the majority, 311, based in either Edinburgh or Glasgow.

<sup>460</sup> Weeks, *Coming Out*, p. 156

<sup>461</sup> Often referred to as the ‘Wolfenden Report’ after the chairman of the committee John Wolfenden.

<sup>462</sup> Neil Miller, *Out of the Past: Gay and Lesbian History from 1869 to the Present* (London: Vintage, 1995), p. 286

status.<sup>463</sup> It is only recently that LGBT individuals have been afforded firm protection in the workplace as the result of the introduction of the *Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations* in 2003. Prior to this, and certainly during the period under examination, 1940 to 1980, the revelation of homosexuality could result in dismissal. Not only was there a threat from employers but individuals also faced the threat of rejection from family members, not to mention the very real threat of legal intervention should an individual's private sexuality enter the public arena. Some of the interviewees in this thesis had sexual liaisons in public areas such as parks and public toilets.

Public arenas offered GBM the opportunity to meet like-minded souls away from their normal day-to-day environment; it also offered them an opportunity to separate their public and private lives. The notion of public and private worlds, and how some of the interviewees viewed this, will be discussed in the following section. This section will also examine the processes of 'coming out' adopted by some of the interviewees and their interpretations of how this affected their outlooks and attitudes to their sexuality and the social world around them.

### Private Worlds

The ability to compartmentalise aspects of their lives into public and private domains was important for some of the interviewees. In some cases this compartmentalisation was a choice, which brought with it a frisson of excitement, while for others it was deemed to be a necessary tactic to protect against involuntary revelation. Robert had grown up with his alcoholic father after his mother had committed suicide when he was 10 years old. Looking after an alcoholic parent meant that Robert had limited opportunities to develop a social life and to explore his sexuality. He was never in a position in which to socialise, as a young man, with other GBM and therefore was unable to discover where in Edinburgh he may find men who shared his proclivities. Robert stumbled upon public toilets as a location for homosexual liaisons (cottaging) purely by accident:

JM – How did you discover that there were places you could go for sex?

Robert – I just had to think of it. After I left...while I was at school there was the odd boy that I could play about with a teeny bit, that sort of took my attention a little bit but when I left school I didn't have that, so there years where I was a bit desperate, 'What do I do?' and I just had to think it up, I just thought to myself,

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<sup>463</sup> Richard Friend, 'Gayging: Adjustment and the Older Gay Male', *Alternative Lifestyles* 3 (1980), p. 236

‘Where am I going to have a chance of anything?’ and I just thought of toilets because I could perhaps stare at somebody else...very straightforward I think.

By his early twenties Robert had been cottaging for some time but rather than seeing it as a necessary evil enjoyed the experience:

Robert - ... I used to quite enjoy the fact that I might go out on a conventional social evening with people I work with, go out with friends or go to the theatre and go for a drink then ‘Bye!’, off home and then I would go out unknown to them and I used to be quite pleased with myself that I was having this extra thing.

The ability to lead a double life offered Robert the opportunity to separate his public and private persona. Any threat of disclosure only came as a result of the inevitable risk of being arrested as a result in participating in sexual acts in a public place. Alongside this threat of disclosure sat the threat of being attacked, but the risk factor in visiting public parks for some was part of the thrill. Alastair (b. 1948) still feels a tingle of excitement to this day whenever he passes a public toilet:

JM – That was part of the excitement, the risk?

Alastair – Oh yeah, there was inevitable risk that you would either be arrested, or murdered, or beaten up but nowadays you go by and think, ‘I want to’, but just walk on, you know, not an issue but it’s still something that’s very deeply seated in your psyche.

For Brian (b. 1936) something has been lost through the development of an accrediting discourse regarding homosexuality:

Brian -... Don’t misunderstand me, the...progressive steps that have occurred through legislation and through everything else over the years has been extremely desirable and favourable and the lot of a gay man now surely must be a lot better than it was in say my time, but on the other hand there was a curious sense of being amusingly different. There was a subversiveness about it that one enjoyed. It was almost as if you enjoyed playing a role on one hand, which is accurate until you come out, but it was almost as if you enjoyed presenting a façade to certain sections of the community, society, your family or whatever and at the same time having a secret life. Now a lot of people would say that that was terrible and they wouldn’t want that at all and you are being repressed, well, I am not sure that we were all that repressed even although we were concealing our sexual identity from our nearest and dearest. There was a lot of fun in it as well and I hate admitting that to an extent. Everything has to be so up front now and everybody recognises everything now, all the signs, everybody knows so much about it now so to some extent with the gains there have also been some curious little losses.

It should be noted that Brian is not advocating a return to criminalisation but suggests that disclosure and the emphasis on 'coming out' so central to today's LGBT movements have thrust both public and private identities into the spotlight. For Brian, it is not necessary to divulge aspects of your life to people you meet. Such an approach is shared by Robert who admits that even today he leads something of a double life despite working for a gay men's organisation:

Robert - ...in a way I have maintained the secret life because...a little bit by going to the sauna now...and with the feeling in me that I am not going to tell people that a lot, even my gay friends, I don't generally mention it. It sounds like I am ashamed of that but it is a slight double life thing and there is a kind of feeling of pleasure in that small scale thing that feeds something in me. It really is funny that I don't want to tell people about it, I mean I work at a gay men's health centre and I feel I'm not connecting with the other people in the office much but I don't...I wouldn't admit it to them, I wouldn't say, 'Bye chaps, I'm off to the sauna'.

Sean also reflected on the thrill that leading an apparent double life brought and that the many positive changes that have occurred over the past two decades have meant that some things however insignificant they may appear have been lost:

Sean - ...when yer mare active, yer havin' mare sex, yer daein aw these things an'...eh....there is a kick ye get oota the secrecy of everythin'. Ye might no get it a 14, 15, it's a nightmare the idea but as ye get a bit older there is a wee kick oota knowing you know somethin' the rest o' the world isnae a part o'. Maybe there is that, ye can say well ....you are underground, have a secret life and ye can maybe have a private smile at somebody across a room an' people...they just don't know, there is that, a kick oot o' that, ye maybe don't get that today...

This theme of something having been lost cropped up occasionally amongst interviewees, particularly older interviewees. Morris, having been born in 1933, was the second oldest of the interviewees and was sexually active long before discussions on homosexuality entered the public arena through the Wolfenden Report or the notable cases of the 1950s. For him the thrill of clandestine activities in some way heightened his enjoyment of his sexual life:

JM – When you see men and women, gay and lesbian, now growing up at 18 or 19 and you think back to when you were 18 and 19 what do you think about the change?

Morris – I think they are enjoying a remarkable freedom...I think they are lucky and yet at the same time, I don't know. Perhaps it is too easy now, it is fun when you are being criminal you know, and getting away with it, it was fun doing it right

under their very noses. You were having the time of your life and they didn't know, well you hope they didn't know.

As I have mentioned previously, I do not believe that these interviewees wished a return to the 'old days'. It was part of their narrative journey to reflect on their emotions, their motivations and their general experiences of gay life before decriminalisation. They matured under the influence of a discrediting discourse which is largely absent for young GBM today, therefore, *their* narratives will only refer to *their* lived experience.

### ***Coming Out***

According to Kenneth Plummer 'coming out' narratives generally constitute a modern form of the classical stories of redemption and transformation:

The narrative tells of a form of suffering that previously had to be endured in silence or may indeed not even have been recognised at all. The stories always tap initially into a secret world of suffering. They proceed to show the speaker moving out of this world of shadows, secrecy and silence—where feelings and pains had to be kept to self and where tremendous guilt, shame and hidden pathology was omnipresent—into a world which is more positive, public and supportive. There is a coming out, a shift in consciousness, a recovery through which a negative experience is turned into a positive identity and a private pain becomes part of a political or a therapeutic language.<sup>464</sup>

The process whereby a homosexual individual reaches a point in their life where they feel able to 'come out' and disclose their sexual identity may appear rather formulaic but undoubtedly each story encapsulates elements peculiar to that individual. By examining disclosure amongst my interviewees it is possible to identify similarities and differences in individual narratives. Table 4.1 details each interviewee's response to the question, "How would you define your sexual identity?"

As Lee has discussed, disclosure or 'coming out' does not need to be a charging out of the closet moment, instead, active and passive disclosures can exist. Lee typifies an active disclosure as being 'prompted' or 'unprompted'. 'Prompted' disclosure is when an individual discloses their sexual identity when specifically asked, and, 'unprompted' disclosure is when an individual reveals all quite freely.<sup>465</sup>

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<sup>464</sup> Plummer, , *Telling Sexual Stories*, p. 50

<sup>465</sup> Lee, 'Exploring the Identities, Welfare Needs, and Service use Experiences of Gay Men in Later Life', p. 184

*Table 4.1 Interviewees' Self-definitions of Sexual Identity*

<i>Interviewee</i>	<i>Year of Birth</i>	<i>Self-defined Sexual Identity</i>
Daniel	1929	Homosexual
Morris	1933	Bisexual
Brian	1936	Homosexual
Robert	1937	Gay (reluctant to disclose)
Walter	1938	Gay
Peter	1939	Bisexual
Stephen	1939	Gay
Drew	1942	Gay
Donald	1943	Gay
Frankie	1943	Gay
Stewart	1943	Gay
Colin	1945	Gay
Duncan	1946	Refused
Samuel	1947	Homosexual
Alastair	1948	Gay
Eddie	1950	Non-practicing gay
Harry	1950	Refused
Ken	1951	Gay
Simon	1951	Gay
Theo	1953	Gay
Tom	1954	Gay
Sean	1955	Gay
Chris	1958	Gay
Joseph	1959	Gay



Duncan (b. 1946) has always been particular about who he discloses details about his sexual life to. As can be seen from Table 2 Duncan was reluctant to ascribe a sexual identity to himself and commented that:

...I am ashamed to say that I have nearly always led a double life in terms of having a lot of straight friends and gay friends so I haven't, em, been open and up front...I wouldn't say I was a gay man, I would be very guarded about who I would say that to...

In the 1970s when he was manager of a community centre two female colleagues quizzed him about his sexual preferences, which made him uncomfortable. He chose to deny his homosexuality, which he would still do today in similar circumstances. In fact he admitted during the interview that this was the first occasion that he had disclosed his sexual identity to someone other than a close friend. Despite a notable change in attitudes towards homosexuality in recent years several of the interviewees were still reluctant to disclose. It could be suggested that for many who grew up under the influence of a discrediting discourse, the fear of being stigmatised is still relevant. Duncan has been selective in his disclosure, choosing to disclose only to those individuals he knows very well and trusts. A public declaration is not something he has contemplated.

Despite being a central figure in the SMG during the 1970s, Walter (b. 1938) admitted that he was still not 'out' to many people. In fact, he sought assurance that all identifying features in the interview transcript would be removed or altered, as he did not wish anyone from his original community to recognise him. He put this down to 'a fear of being isolated'. Walter claims that many members of the SMG chose to use pseudonyms as it allowed them to contribute far more than if their real names had been used. Even today, Walter is reluctant to engage with the new generation of gay rights activists, as he says, 'Pride is a good thing but leave me out of it'. Robert too thinks that Pride marches are a step too far for men like him, 'I don't think it would be impossible for me to do that but I just pull back from it. That is quite significant I suppose.'

Brian does not believe that he has ever come out nor does he believe that is necessary to proclaim one's sexuality publicly, be it to friends and family or a wider social audience:

Brian - I thought what was the point of upsetting other people...I never came out to my parents but I am sure that my father knew perfectly well but I didn't need it and therefore I didn't see the point of creating unnecessary complications for other people as well, you know...I mean I had my own epiphany about it privately and

that was enough for me really and it was fairly early on and I didn't struggle with it for years not like my mate who only kind of finally realised that he wanted a relationship with men when he was past two marriages and had kids but could do it without causing upset to them. So, I never had a problem with it for myself and I didn't honestly feel that I had to tell everybody.

Brian was also protected somewhat against the harsher social sanctions in place by his profession, and to a certain extent his social class. His entire career was within theatre and television and he accepts that this environment was more tolerant to diverse sexualities:

Brian - ...it is easier for middle-class people to accept themselves and become accepted and certainly in a profession like the theatrical profession it is much easier...

It could therefore be suggested that Brian operated within a largely protective environment, which was apparently more tolerant of difference. Indeed, the theatrical profession was often viewed as a hotbed of deviance. In his report to the Wolfenden Committee, James Adair singled out the theatrical professions as an area 'where the practices are particularly rife'.<sup>466</sup>

Ed (b. 1950) felt that there was no reason for him to disclose his sexuality any wider than his immediate family and group of friends. His rationale was that why should homosexuals disclose their sexual identity when heterosexuals do not feel the need to do so. Ed also rejected the need to identify as 'gay', 'homosexual' or 'queer':

Ed - ...'gay', I don't know who thought that name up! I'm me, but that's just the way society is, we have got to label things, I'm sure I do it myself, I don't particularly like it.

For other interviewees, disclosure has been a central aspect to their narratives. For example, Alastair was quite frank about his sexual identity from his twenties onwards and never felt the need to attempt to pass or conform to societal expectations in any way. However, Alastair benefitted from being a part of a homosexual network, which operated in Glasgow in the 1960s and 1970s. This network, made up of members from a variety of middle-class occupations adopted Alastair as a young man and introduced him to the theatre and the wider arts community. In effect, having a large group of homosexuals as friends appeared to insulate Alastair from more hostile social forces. Yet, when asked if he had gone through a process of coming out Alastair remarked that he had never told his

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<sup>466</sup> RWC, p. 120

parents as he did not feel a need to disclose his sexual identity as ‘they didn’t have to apologise to me for their sexuality and vice versa’.

Yet, Alastair’s experience was not all plain sailing: he firmly believes that his decision to disclose seriously affected career opportunities at that time:

Alastair - ...I taught for four years in secondary school and I used to apply for some form of advancement and it never happened and I remember the last time that it didn’t happen. It wasn’t long after my mother died and the report came back to the rector of the school that ‘A’, I had done this and ‘B’ I had done that and ‘C’, that I could have toned my dress down for the occasion...I think word had got back that this was somebody who was perhaps a bit suspect.

Despite his struggle to overcome feelings of guilt, shame and self-loathing Joseph came out in his thirties, after the limited decriminalisation of homosexual acts in Scotland in 1980. Joseph believes that his sexuality is an important aspect of his identity and one that needs to be affirmed in certain situations:

JM – Are you comfortable being known as being a gay man?

Joseph – Yes, very comfortable, very comfortable.

JM – Do you think these categories are helpful?

Joseph – I don’t think that they are always helpful in that my sexuality is obviously an integral part of who I am but it doesn’t define who I am in my entirety, em, so I don’t think the label is necessarily always helpful but I think it’s still necessary, I think it’s still necessary for people to say in certain situations, “I am a gay man”, particularly where you might be sitting in a gay bar or whatever and people are being overtly homophobic and it is sometimes necessary to say, “Well, actually I am a gay man”. I don’t fit the stereotype; I am quite capable of adopting children and not abusing them sexually or in any other way. While it no’ always helpful, I think it is still necessary.

The sentiments visible within Joseph’s narrative are mirrored in that of Simon’s. Despite marrying at a young age, raising a family, and effectively passing as heterosexual for over two decades, Simon (b. 1950) views his sexuality as a ‘natural’ facet of his identity that should be recognised:

JM –How did you feel about the process of coming out; was it something you wanted to do?

Simon – Yeah, I was quite fine with that, it wasn't a problem at all. It was like a complete break and a completely new life so any new people I was seeing I was

who I was, I was a gay man...I didn't go around saying "I am a gay man", but if that was what people understood from a conversation or whatever else then that was fine....or I would speak about my partner being another man, I didn't hide it but I didn't particularly talk about it I just felt it should be a natural part of my life.

Once again it should be noted that Simon chose to come out as homosexual after 1980. Indeed, it was well into the 1990s before Simon felt comfortable enough emotionally to declare his homosexuality to his wife and family. In Simon's case it is possible to debate as to whether the discrediting discourse on homosexuality influenced his decision to lead a heterosexual life as Simon did not fully appreciate his homosexuality until well after his marriage. Silence is an issue in this case as Simon was not fully cognisant of the potential for GBM to lead a fulfilling homosexual relationship. Simon had viewed his early attraction to good-looking men as 'intellectual' rather than 'physically or sexual' and was ignorant of the existence of same-sex relationships; 'I wasn't really very aware of it...at university I was quite isolated in that way'. Added to this, much of Simon's early adult life had been dominated by religion: Simon had been an evangelical Christian minister in a church where sex and sexuality were rarely mentioned.

For the majority of the interviewees 'coming out' and disclosure involved a process of informed navigation. However, Samuel (b. 1947) was a victim of involuntary disclosure, which led to a period of great distress. Around the start of the 1980s Samuel had disclosed his homosexuality to a colleague working in his college department. Soon after, his home was burgled and students in his classes began to make it obvious that they knew about his sexuality. Although Samuel has no proof that students or college colleagues perpetrated his burglary he maintains that this was the case, and that they believed he would not go to the police to report the incident. As a result of the burglary and his involuntary 'outing' Samuel had a nervous breakdown.

Gregory Herek, J. Roy Gillis and Jeanine Cogan have demonstrated that homophobic victimisation can cause greater psychological distress than other non-bias harassment.<sup>467</sup> Similar, if not as severe, cases of psychological distress are visible in the narratives of a number of interviewees: Ken, Simon, Donald, Harry and Joseph all struggled with episodes of depression during their early adulthood which may well have related to their attempts to pass as heterosexuals. Further, negative experiences relating to suspicion of their homosexuality may well have influenced their decision as to whether to disclose their

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<sup>467</sup> Gregory M. Herek, J. Roy Gillis & Jeanine C. Cogan, 'Psychological Sequelae of Hate Crime Victimization Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adults', *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 67 (1999), pp. 945-951

sexuality or not. Of the above group, only Ken has fully committed to disclosing his sexuality and this is perhaps related to his desire to ensure that young GBM do not suffer the same emotional trauma that he endured.

Of all 24 interviewees Chris (b. 1958) was the most forthright about the need to proclaim his homosexuality. Chris had been brought up in mid-Lanarkshire but moved to Glasgow to attend university and quickly became immersed in Glasgow's gay scene after deciding that academic life was not for him. As Chris himself puts it he 'killed two birds with one stone' by getting a job in a gay bar. Working and socialising in this arena offered Chris the opportunity to mix socially with other GBM. Any doubts or concerns about the nature of homosexuality quickly receded once Chris had been exposed to a supportive network of gay men, bisexuals and lesbians:

Chris –...It was really exciting, I think that's the only word I can really describe it as, it was really different, really, really exciting and it wasn't like anything else you could experience outside the gay scene and probably the gay scene today, but I think as a young man today just coming out and feeling okay in his own skin, it felt as if all the shackles had...just disintegrated.

Being exposed to a friendly and supportive critical mass of people sharing his sexual preferences enabled Chris to disclose his sexual identity to his family and friends:

JM – How supportive were the people you worked with, the people you knew?

Chris –They were great, they were family and in actual fact I know...I've heard a number of gay men describe that but that's exactly what it was, it was another family. I think all of us were from the same time, the same generation, all working together, all had really quite bad experiences of either coming out or of being gay, homophobia, that stuff was around an awful lot more and I think it makes you bond, it was a different bond, a commonality and you stuck together and it was like another family... it was a matter of a few days, couple of weeks before I told my parents.

It is evident from Chris' narrative that his sexuality is a key aspect of his identity and he feels it is important that people are aware of who he is. Although Chris remarked that he disclosed his sexuality when it was relevant he also admitted that he was 'in their faces' about his sexuality during the late 70s and early 80s and if someone asked about his personal circumstances - marriage, girlfriend and so forth - he had no qualms about telling them. At the beginning of all interviews, participants were asked to describe the sort of person they were in one sentence, Chris said:

Chris – Hmm. A fifty year-old gay man. I think it's important for me that my sexuality is in there and yeah that's how I would generally describe myself.

## Summary

The interview data analysis demonstrates that many of the interviewees appear to share a number of experiences growing up in Scotland (and in northern England). These childhoods cover roughly a 25-year period from the early 1940s through to the mid 1960s but there is a consistency of experience in most cases. There appears to have been an almost total absence of thorough sex education in schools and where provisions were made to deliver sex education these appear to have been largely ineffective until at least the 1970s. The absence of any cohesive national policy regarding the provision of sex education combined with Scotland's religious peculiarities resulted in a rather haphazard approach to the delivery of sex education. In saying that, it is somewhat unlikely that if a national policy had been implemented homosexuality would have been a topic explored given that homosexual acts were illegal in Scotland during the period under examination.

Positive public discourses regarding homosexuality were largely absent, which is apparent from many of the interviews. The only references to homosexuals appear to have emanated from the popular media which painted less than flattering portraits of criminals (whose activities were occasionally covered by the Sunday tabloids), perverts with an unnatural interest in pre-pubescent boys' bottoms, and mincing queens who attracted scorn and laughter. Without positive role models with whom to identify many of the interviewees felt isolated and confused during their adolescence as they attempted to come to terms with a sexual preference somewhat demonised publicly.

A number of interviewees embarked on a sex life at a relatively early age. What is notable is that many of the interviewees did not attach any meaning to their sexual exploits as adolescents, which is perhaps a result of the lack of public discourses regarding non-procreative sex during this period. In a number of cases adolescent fumbling gave way to sexual activity with adult males in public environments and in these cases these events seem to have had an affirming affect on the individuals. The realisation that there was adults out there who were attracted to members of their own sex meant that feelings of isolation were lessened somewhat. Such exploits may be deemed risky and exploitative today but those who engaged in these activities in the 1950s and 1960s appeared to see things differently.

There are several experiences that were shared by the majority of interviewees during their childhoods and these relate to cultural silences regarding homosexuality. This silence is evident in the lack of provision regarding sex education. This silence is also evident in many of the interviews where the interviewees recall that they had little conception of homosexuality during their adolescence even although the majority were engaging in homosexual acts. There is also evidence of silence in the public profile of the homosexual who is largely presented as an emasculated individual, either criminal and predatory or weak and effeminate; rarely is the homosexual presented as a normal individual. Even when interviewees recall individuals who were not necessarily condemned or parodied, like David Bowie, there is more of an ambiguity about their proclivities than any stated reference to homo- or bi-sexuality.

The second issue developed in this chapter relates to the types of dominant discourses that were operating during the period under examination. These dominant discourses would fall under what has been termed 'discreditable' i.e. that homosexuality (bisexuality too) fell under the umbrella of abnormal sexualities, and these discourses were also influenced by religious and moralistic themes. The chapter has also examined how generational cohorts may influence the experiences of the interviewees and how subcultural cohorts in turn play a significant role in the development of individual viewpoints. What can be noted is that interviewees who still choose to hide their homosexuality from their peers and families did have a tendency still to be influenced by a discreditable discourse on homosexuality. This can be seen in the narratives of several interviewees with Brian, Robert, Harry, Duncan and Donald being some of the most noteworthy examples. Despite being confident in their private sexual identities these men were, and still are to a point, reluctant to 'come out' and fully disclose their sexual identities when it may be assumed that it would be appropriate. When asked to state their sexual identity for the purposes of the research Robert, Harry and Duncan were reluctant to engage with the question.

Yet, in many cases there were other factors that may have influenced individual decisions about who they were and what they did about it. Brian was brought up in a middle-class household and was exposed to homosexuality through literature and through his involvement with the theatrical profession which, it could be argued, was more tolerant than most. Alastair was a member of a select group of older middle-class homosexuals, which acted as a protective barrier against anti-homosexual feeling that existed at the time.

Colin's involvement with radical politics, coupled with his travelling experiences exposed him to a critical mass of homosexuals he was unlikely to find in Scotland.

Chris, perhaps the most 'open' of the interviewees, had fully immersed himself within the gay 'scene' in Glasgow during the late 1970s and early 1980s. He credits this as having a very positive influence in his life at that time that offered him support and companionship and gave him the strength to 'come out'. Samuel's testimony arguably shows that the absence of a support network can affect an individual's experience of disclosure. In his case disclosure was not voluntary and the negative effects of this and assumed homophobic actions against him had a deleterious effect on his mental health.

Rosenfeld's identity cohort thesis is an interesting way in which to examine identity careers, however, other factors influence and shape the formation of identity. As mentioned previously, social class, religion and the availability of support have all played significant roles in the experiences of the interviewees. What is also apparent is that, in the main, interviewees were reluctant to engage with the accrediting discourse that appeared sometime after the legalisation of homosexual acts that occurred in 1967 in England and Wales. It could be argued that this accrediting discourse was not fully apparent in Scotland until after 1980 and the change in law here which may have enabled gay men to engage with an accrediting discourse. It could also be argued that social and cultural changes in Scotland linked to a dissatisfaction with the continued illegality of homosexual acts necessitated a change in law and led to a wider engagement with the accrediting discourse on homosexuality. The narratives of these interviewees would certainly suggest that they were not initially stung into action by developments south of the border.



## **Chapter 5**

### **In Sickness and in Health: Interviewees' Interactions with the Medical Profession**

The relationship between medicine and (homo-)sexuality is one that has been recognised and discussed by a number of authors.<sup>468</sup> With reference to Scotland, the link between 'deviant' sexual behaviour and sickness had grown stronger as the twentieth century had progressed and by the 1950s the Scottish Home Department had introduced psychiatric provisions for offenders convicted of homosexual offences.<sup>469</sup> By the 1970s some general practitioners in Scotland were admitting that they viewed homosexuality as a mental illness or genetic frailty.<sup>470</sup> Considering that some general practitioners were willing to offer advice to patients seeking assistance with their sexual problems it was felt prudent to ask the interviewees whether or not they had ever considered their sexuality a medical matter and whether they had sought advice from medical professionals.

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, during the first half of the twentieth century in Scotland homosexual conduct was viewed primarily as a legal-moral issue dealt with by the courts. James Adair the former procurator fiscal and member of the Wolfenden Committee forwarded this approach and had little confidence that medicine could offer an answer to the issue of homosexuality. For much of the post-war period in Scotland opinions about the dysgenic effects of non-procreative sexual behaviour, the predatory and paedophilic nature of homosexuals, and the requirement for homosexuals to 'recruit' dominated Scottish political and legal institutional attitudes.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> See, for example; Ivan Crozier, 'Taking Prisoners: Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud, and the Politics of Constructing the Homosexual, 1897-1951,' *Social History of Medicine* 13 (2000), pp. 447-466; Ivan Dalley Crozier, 'The Medical Construction of Homosexuality and its Relation to the Law in Nineteenth-Century England', *Medical History* 45 (2001), pp. 61-82; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality I: An Introduction*, translated by Robert Hurley (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978); David F. Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 397-433; Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1990), pp. 23-32

<sup>469</sup> Roger Davidson, "'The Sexual State': Sexuality and Scottish Governance, 1950-1980', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13 (2004), p. 507

<sup>470</sup> Roger Davidson, "'The Cautionary Tale of Tom': The Male Homosexual Experience of Scottish Medicine in the 1970s and Early 1980s', *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 28 (2008), p. 124

<sup>471</sup> Davidson, "'The Sexual State'", pp. 509-511; RWC, P. 118.

However, as Davidson has discussed, the subtle but significant manner by which homosexual prisoners, especially ‘passive homosexuals’, were singled out for extra supervision and separation alludes to a particular concern regarding their character or general wellbeing,<sup>472</sup> almost as if their proclivities were infectious. This concern regarding the medical fitness of those convicted of certain crimes was apparently a feature focused upon under Scots Law more frequently than under English Law.<sup>473</sup> As a result, Scottish courts had the power to recommend a full medical report on offenders prior to sentencing to establish whether or not medical treatment would prove a more suitable ‘punishment’ than incarceration.

The theoretical positions of some Scottish-based medical professionals on the issue of homosexuality have been discussed in Chapter 2. However, it is pertinent at this point to summarise some of the treatment options that were available and were being used during the period under examination.

### ***Sex Drives and Psychiatry***

As the twentieth century progressed homosexuality became of significant interest to the psychiatric profession.<sup>474</sup> The study of the sexual instinct had once been the preserve of marginalised investigators, such as Havelock Ellis,<sup>475</sup> but was now being much more freely discussed among the medical fraternity. The Wolfenden Report may not have been the instigator of freer discussions of homosexuality, certainly in Scotland, but it can be considered a moment in time when homosexuality was brought in from the cold. The 1960s saw a rapid growth in the number of academic studies regarding homosexuality, its potential causes, and notably, its potential treatments.

Writing in 1960, B. H. Fookes detailed his five years of using electric-shock aversion therapy on a group consisting of homosexuals, transvestites, and exhibitionists.<sup>476</sup> Although Fookes did not view any of these individuals as suffering from any categorised mental illness, the alleged successes of his treatments led him to suggest that proper consideration should be given to psychiatrists using this form of treatment to relieve

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<sup>472</sup> Ibid., p. 507.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Glenn Smith, Annie Bartlett, Michael King, ‘Treatments of Homosexuality in Britain since the 1950s—an Oral History: the Experience of Patients’, *British Medical Journal* 328 (2004), pp. 106–113

<sup>475</sup> Lesley A. Hall, ‘The Sexual Body’ in Roger Cooter & John Pickstone (eds.), *Medicine in the Twentieth Century* (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic, 2000), p. 264

<sup>476</sup> B. H. Fookes, ‘Some Experiences in the Use of Aversion Therapy in Male Homosexuality, Exhibitionism and Fetishism-Transvestism’, *British Journal of Psychiatry* 115 (1960), pp. 339–341

‘causes of human misery’.<sup>477</sup> M. P. Feldman, writing in 1966, discussed the relative merits of a number of aversion therapy techniques.<sup>478</sup> Feldman argued that a number of successes at reducing homosexual desire in patients were achieved through the use of a variety of aversion therapy techniques including electric shock treatment and chemical therapy.<sup>479</sup> John Bancroft, writing in 1969, detailed the results of his research using electric-shock treatment on 10 homosexuals. Among the group who volunteered for the study, a reduction in homosexual interest and behaviour was noted. However, lasting changes to the participants’ homosexual impulses were recorded in only one individual.<sup>480</sup>

Hormonal treatments were also used in an effort to suppress homosexual impulses in patients. However, such treatments were controversial due to the potential side effects and had been abandoned in English and Welsh prisons for the treatment of homosexual offenders for this reason. The Wolfenden Report, however, recommended the lifting of this ban and that oestrogen treatments should be made available to offenders should they wish to use this form of therapy. In Scottish prisons no such ban had been in force.<sup>481</sup> Davidson has stated that hormonal treatments were used in the Jordanburn Nerve Hospital in Edinburgh in the late 1950s, but generally when the reduction in libido they offered would prevent criminal activities such as paedophilia.<sup>482</sup>

To understand the influence that medical theories of non-heterosexuality had on the creation of identities, and how individuals perceived themselves, questions were asked during each interview that related to the influence of medicine and medical theories of sexuality. These questions were generally asked early in the interview when the participant was recalling their early adulthood, in an attempt to gauge whether individuals at any time viewed their sexuality as a medical matter, and if they did, whether they sought advice from medical professionals. The interviewees, by virtue of their responses can be broken down into 3 groups: those who dismissed any notion that their sexuality was a medical matter; those who were unconvinced by the medical argument but considered it a possibility; and those who actively sought treatment for their ‘condition’.

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<sup>477</sup> Ibid., p. 341

<sup>478</sup> M. P. Feldman, ‘Aversion Therapy for Sexual Deviations: A Critical Review’, *Psychological Bulletin* 65 (1966), pp. 65-79

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> John Bancroft, ‘Aversion Therapy of Homosexuality: A Pilot Study of 10 Cases’, *British Journal of Psychiatry* 115 (1969), p. 1430

<sup>481</sup> RWC, pp. 71-72

<sup>482</sup> Davidson, ‘Psychiatry and Homosexuality in mid-Twentieth-Century Edinburgh’, p. 408

### ***Interviewees and Medical Interpretations of Homosexuality***

Several of the interviewees claimed that they had never entertained any thoughts that their sexual proclivities might be the result of any pathological condition. Harry (b. 1950) was blunt in his appraisal:

JM – There are various theories regarding homosexuality over the past century and one of those related to a medical situation. Is homosexuality congenital or pathological etcetera? Do you ever feel there was something wrong with you medically?

Harry – No.

JM – You never asked medical questions or sought medical answers?

Harry – No, did not.

Duncan's sister was alarmed and disgusted to discover that her brother was a homosexual and urged her sibling to seek curative treatments but Duncan (b. 1946) was comfortable with his sexuality and saw no need to seek advice:

Duncan – My sister...what I was going to explain was that my sister, she was the one who was given the opportunity to have a more wider education, a wider view of the world as opposed to the farm but I discovered that she was really, really homophobic because by that time I had started to see somebody on a fairly regular basis and on one occasion and this time I was down visiting her as by this time she had moved away from Glasgow and was down in England and, em, I was visiting her and this person contacted me and there was lots of questions asked and stuff like that and then my sister looked through my case and when I came back to the house that particular day she confronted me and said, "I have suspected this a long time, that you were probably following a gay life", she says, "I hope you realise that it's a choice" and then this big long discussion about choice, "You've made a choice, you're choosing a very difficult path through life and if my mother or my father ever finds out it will be dreadful, you'll shorten her life and you'll kill her and she'll never be able to accept that, you're bringing shame on the family, do you know it's a choice and a psychological thing, why don't you go and sign up for a dating agency and meet people your own age and then you'll discover it's psychological... she actually made an appointment with a psychiatrist for me which I was really angry about and I had to phone and cancel and say that this was ridiculous the way she was treating me...

Although Donald (b. 1944) suffered two psychological breakdowns during his life he was unwilling to suggest that his homosexuality lay at the root of these events. Donald married

and ignored his sexual desires for other men for some years which undoubtedly led to stress and anxiety but he never felt that his homosexual desires were a medical concern in themselves:

JM – Was there any point, particularly during your early years...did you ever feel 'sick'? Did you ever think that what you were was an illness?

Donald – No, I don't remember ever thinking that I was ill. I did at one point have a breakdown; in fact I've had a couple of breakdowns in my life. I did have a breakdown when I must have been about 37 I think so that would be....1971, would it?

JM – '81?

Donald – '81, would it? I remember I suffered from anxiety and depression and part of it was my work and part of it was the sexual thing and sort of dealing with it and I remember a psychiatrist and a social worker came to see me and after one or two visits I did tell them that I was gay and he said to me, "If I was able to tell you that I could take away being gay and make you, in quotes, normal, how would you feel?" and I just said, 'I wouldn't want you to do it anyway because it's who I am', I don't think he was proposing to do anything I just think he wanted to see what my reaction was and I just said no, wouldn't entertain that because that would have been tampering with my essential self and that would be wrong and that's just not....I have accepted that I am gay and it's important to me that I am gay.

Drew (b. 1941) never viewed his homosexuality as a medical concern. The church dominated his life, he became an Episcopalian and later an Anglican priest, and professionally his homosexuality was treated more as an example of sinful behaviour that could be ignored than a pathological weakness or even a moral outrage:

JM – Did you ever seek any support, any guidance, and advice?

Drew – Well, the provost at the cathedral, I spoke to him and as I say, he was very much in that you were confessing a sin, em, and when I went to college ultimately, in Edinburgh, certainly there was a breath of fresh air when a new principal came in and had come from a New York seminary and I spoke to him about it and he was, 'Oh, no problem, that's not a problem'...

Like several other interviewees, Stephen (b. 1939) experienced moments of depression or doubt at different points of his life. On one occasion his feelings of depression drove him to seek assistance at a hospital in London but his insecurities did not appear to be caused by any concerns about the nature of his sexuality:

JM – Did you ever...the first institution we can talk about is the medical institutions....did you ever, you know, perhaps in the early years, feel you needed to see a doctor about the way you were? Or at any point?

Stephen - The straight answer to that would be no. No. Although in later years, breaking up with relationships and in the throws of loneliness and alcohol – I wouldn't say alcoholism – having a good drink in me, feeling lonely, broken heart, nobody understands, eh, I've walked into a hospital in London. I walked into a hospital in London, completely broken, and it was St. Thomas' hospital and it must have been one o'clock in the morning and the staff and the doctors were superb and I needed to talk and there was nobody to talk to, there was nobody to understand. They asked me what was the matter with me and I said I was depressed and I just burst out crying and I cried profusely. A young doctor came in and chatted to me in this cubicle and I told him everything then he gave me a prescription there and then. I remember saying to him that I had already alcohol in me but he said it was okay this would just calm you down a bit. That was it, I left and I thanked him. But looking back that was just somebody to get rid with to share with.

JM – So, did you explain to him that you were gay?

Stephen – Yeah.

JM – And what was his reaction?

Stephen – Oh, he was fine with that, but then again it was London.

Ken (b. 1951) was also to suffer from depression and his sexuality played a significant role in his condition during his 20s. The thought that his depression and his sexuality might be linked did occur but the thought of revealing his sexuality to a medical professional coupled with reluctance to engage in any curative treatments meant that Ken did not pursue the medical possibilities:

JM – So, during that early adolescent and adolescent era, you weren't at all aware of medical theories or pathological or criminal theories?

Ken – No, that would have come more late teens, early twenties when I was going through quite a period of depression and thinking about how to get help and then thinking of this idea that this must be part of your mental condition you know, so maybe they will drug you and put 3000 volts through your brain and that really stopped me seeking any mental health medical help for my depression at that time and certainly would never have mentioned it to any clinician, that I was gay.

What is apparent is that Ken felt unable to pursue therapy for his depression because he was fearful that a medical professional would treat his mental health problem as being a symptom of his homosexuality.

Quite a number of the interviewees did not believe that their sexual desires were the result of any pathological cause. Colin, Sean, Chris, Robert, Brian, Daniel and Theo either never considered medical attitudes to their sexuality important enough to contemplate, or had never encountered them, and thus medical attitudes appeared to have had little direct influence in the forming of an identity amongst this group of interviewees. Theo was born and spent much of his youth and early adulthood in the Netherlands where he suggested the main discourses regarding homosexuality were positive. Indeed, as a child if homosexuality was mentioned, represented or discussed on television it was ‘more as a celebration than as a negative’. For Theo, his sexuality had never been viewed as a medical issue when in the Netherlands and he described his initial experience of Scotland and its attitudes towards homosexuality as a ‘culture shock’.

### Interviewees Who Considered a Medical Explanation of Homosexuality

A number of the interviewees were aware of medical approaches to non-heterosexuality during their early adult life. However, knowledge of these theories did not necessarily mean acceptance of these theories. Yet, some of the interviewees did spend time trying to understand why they were homosexual while peers were not. Alastair (b. 1948) was one individual who gave consideration to a genetic explanation:

JM – Bearing in mind that attitudes to homosexuality during this period were various in the sense that it could be seen as a legal situation, a moral side, and a medical side, were you ever tempted to look into homosexuality...to assume...that it might be a medical condition?

Alastair – Well, a fascinating question is why I am the way that I am and I’ve rationalised that it is because I was brought up in a feminine environment with an ineffectual father. The X and Y, Y chromosome, whatever one it is...I have read about it but okay if that’s the case then that’s the case.

JM – Were you aware of anyone else that you knew who had taken steps, for instance visited the doctor...

Alastair – No, but you’ve just triggered a thought in my mind. I went to the doctor’s once, I had hurt my leg or something and he asked me to take my trousers down *and* my pants for some reason or another and he said, “You did that like a girl”. He was a former public schoolboy too [laughter]. Apparently *real* men take their pants and trousers down together but I take my trousers down then my pants but he had made some comment about this not being quite right. That’s the only thing I can remember, em, and I had read about aversion therapy and thought this was appalling, em, because as I said I was really quite comfortable, a bit scared of the consequences, but quite

comfortable in the fact that I was who I was, what I was.

Although Alastair was willing to consider that his homosexuality was the result of a combination of nature and nurture he was never tempted to explore alleged curative treatments for homosexuality. As mentioned previously, the use of oestrogen as a treatment to reduce homosexual desires was not unknown in Scottish prisons although electro-convulsive therapies were not used as they had been in England.<sup>483</sup> Alastair did consider that the absence of an effective father figure might have played a role in the development of his sexuality, an explanation that has been discussed by other homosexuals.<sup>484</sup>

Walter (b. 1938) briefly entertained psychiatric therapy to deal with his homosexuality. This desire was the result of a build up of stress and frustration with a homosexual 'lifestyle' that appeared to be dominated by cruising and other surreptitious activities. Just how serious Walter was about seeking a cure became apparent after initial discussions with his psychiatrist.

JM – Did you personally, or anyone you knew, ever seek medical advice regarding your sexuality?

Walter – I went to see a psychiatrist because I was coming home from somewhere, not gay, and I was followed by someone from Calton Hill which was a gay...he got into the stair here and knocked on the door and that frightened me. I asked to see a psychiatrist at that time.

JM – Was that a difficult decision to make at that point?

Walter – Yes, yes. But it seemed to be the only one to make at that time. I felt under pressure that that might happen again. I had an excellent GP and I saw a very shiny, fresher psychiatrist who interviewed me and went to see his boss. I think they satisfied themselves that I didn't really want to be cured.

JM – Do you think there was willingness in the medical establishment to take on cases? Or were they less encouraging? Do you think that up until 1980 they believed that homosexuality could be cured?

Walter – That was the early 1960s and I think Edinburgh was....but it probably depended on the consultant. Certainly that consultant had the impression that if people could go away happy, don't put any pressure on them and save the hospital some bother.

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<sup>483</sup> Davidson, 'The Sexual State', p. 507

<sup>484</sup> See, Glenn Smith, Annie Bartlett, Michael King, 'Treatments of Homosexuality in Britain since the 1950s—an Oral History: the Experience of Patients', *British Medical Journal* 328 (2004), p. 427. During an early meeting of the Scottish Minorities Group several members believed that the absence of an effective father-figure during their early life was significant to their later sexuality.



Joseph (b. 1959) felt that his homosexuality was undoubtedly caused by some anomaly:

JM – Did you ever consider your sexuality to be a medical matter?

Joseph – Yeah, certainly thought that there might be something psychologically amiss, em, or mentally, em, amiss, yeah absolutely.

JM – Did you ever pursue that?

Joseph – No, never.

For individuals like Joseph the potential stigma attached to being known as a homosexual even within the privileged relationship of doctor and patient was too much to risk even although he felt his sexuality was a matter for a psychiatrist to unravel. His father's attitude to Joseph's brother's health concern was enough to put him off pursuing the medical route any further:

Joseph – ...My other brother was epileptic and my father's response to that was, em, "Well it didn't come from my side of the family", so I knew that if epilepsy was some kind of indictment on his genetic background then to tell him I was gay was certainly going to be, you know...I couldn't possibly be a poof and be his son, you know.

Unlike all other individuals in this section Peter (b.1939) was a child when he consulted his general practitioner about his sexuality. This wasn't so much a voluntary consultation as Peter had been ejected from the scouts after being discovered engaging in sodomy with another boy at the age of about 14 or 15. Peter's father insisted that his son should seek guidance from the family doctor immediately:

Peter –I was picked out and I was ejected from the scouts and I was taken home and my father and mother were told why I was being ejected: because of my sexual activities. The first thing my father did was phone the doctor for an appointment [laughter]. I don't know what he hoped he would get with that.

JM – Did you go?

Peter – I went to the doctor, aha. He wasn't that perturbed, he said that they had over-reacted, that was his....he said not to worry about it.

JM – Did your...did you explain that to your parents once you had been to the doctor?

Peter – No, no, I just said we had talked.

Few of the interviewees actively sought medical treatment for their ‘condition’ and those who flirted with medical intervention generally found an unwilling medical profession or backed out before any treatments were suggested. As mentioned in Chapter 2 there were several specialist medics in Scotland who were consulted by the Scottish Minorities Group and who did not view homosexuality as a psychological problem. Yet, even as late as the 1970s, as Davidson has noted, there existed several high-profile psychologists willing to label homosexuality as a mental condition.<sup>485</sup>

### ***Seeking the Cure***

Several of the interviewees might feel fortunate that their initial dealings with the medical profession led to no further action being taken regarding their sexuality. In these cases there appears to have been little appetite from those medical professionals to attempt to change the individual’s sexual preferences. However, in the following two cases there was a belief and an appetite.

Frankie (b. 1943) had been sexually molested as a child and this coupled with a self-engineered outing during his teenage years led to him attending a child psychiatrist for therapy. His dealings with this medical professional were to have a significant effect on the path his life took thereafter:

JM – So, was that an ever an option for you to take a medical path with regards to dealing with your sexuality?

Frankie – Oh, I believed it fully, yes I believed that one was somewhere in a spectrum of sexuality and it was possible to move oneself within it.

JM – Was that something you desired?

Frankie – Yes.

JM – And did you ever act on that?

Frankie – Yes, yes, yes. What I learned from this despicable child psychiatrist was that A, I could move my sexuality by thinking of doing so, thinking impure thoughts about women....em....that...em....I couldn’t be a medic

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<sup>485</sup> Davidson, ““The Cautionary Tale of Tom”, p. 124

myself if I was homosexual and I was bound to set out and abuse children if I was homosexual so I thought I had better move on and change these things.

The child psychiatrist whom Frankie consulted believed that homosexuality was a mental condition that could be cured by a form of aversion therapy. Frankie's mother was a medical doctor who perhaps did not share this outlook but did believe that sexuality could be measured on a Kinsey scale.<sup>486</sup>

Frankie – ...Father probably suggested that I desist, stop like that, mother was a little more useful than that, suggested that it might just be a phase I was going through or that maybe I was confused along the big Kinsey spectrum of sexuality...clever people my parents...then I was sent off to a child psychiatrist which was ghastly, an incredibly negative experience.

During the 1960s Frankie was a medical student and his experience of a medical education was largely free of discussions of sexual deviancy:

JM – You were studying medicine obviously. Did sexual...issues of a sexual nature crop up at all during your medical studies?

Frankie – Medical? Oh very, very little. Do you mean like discussing sex? Oh lordy no! This was the 60s...sex, they hadn't invented it yet, the poem hadn't been written [laughs]. They described intercourse, making babies, that was discussed and there was a revolting picture in a medical textbook of a homosexual's anus [laughs] which might have been the most horrible thing you had ever seen! You must get a 1960s copy!

What seems to be apparent that even as late as the 1960s discussions regarding sexuality played a minimal, almost non-existent, part in the education of Scotland's doctors. Indeed, it was not until the early 1970s that limited moves were made in Scotland to ensure that student doctors were given direction on issues related to sexuality.<sup>487</sup> However, where reference to homosexuality was made it was largely negative. Davidson has noted that the 1975 edition of *General Practice Medicine* listed homosexuality along with drug addiction and alcoholism under 'Behavioural Disorders'.<sup>488</sup> This is possibly not too much of a surprise as homosexuality was not removed from the International Classification of

<sup>486</sup> Kinsey believed that an individual's sexuality could be measured on a seven-point scale between 'exclusive homosexual' and 'exclusive heterosexual'. For further information see Kinsey et al, *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* (Philadelphia; London: Saunders & Co, 1948).

<sup>487</sup> Davidson, "The Cautionary Tale of Tom", p. 125

<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

Diseases, 10<sup>th</sup> revision (ICD-10), until 1992.<sup>489</sup> The power contained within the warnings issues to Frankie by his child psychiatrist about the jeopardy of maintaining his homosexuality and continuing with a medical career and the inevitability of paedophilia, is notable. As Frankie himself admitted his relationship with this child psychiatrist was short:

JM – So, over how long a period of time did you see this child psychologist?

Frankie – Oh, I stopped...wasn't going back after the second episode.

JM – And what age would you be then?

Frankie – Oh, 16 and 10 weeks [laughs], it didn't take long for all this to happen, there was a hell of a momentum.

Frankie did not wish to engage with any organised curative treatments rejecting aversion therapy when his psychiatrist offered it. Frankie is of the opinion that the medical community would have entertained any practice to 'cure' homosexuality if it appeared to offer treatment for various social ills and revealed that he was still angry with the medical community:

JM – Are you angry about anything?

Frankie – Oh yes, various things. That terrible old shit, who will be dead, I hope, by now who mucked around with me. I am still furious with my father, we argued till the day he died, didn't wish him dead or anything like that, he was wrong, wrong and I still know it. I despise the psychiatrist and feel that he should have done better. I think, I certainly did despise the medical establishment but I think I still do, they are a bunch of self-seeking, self-important wankers, don't like them, they just ponce about and I certainly am cross about the stupidity of society in which I particularly include medics of the type that I was with at university.

When asked if he believed that the medical community, particularly those who supported therapies to treat sexual 'deviancy', saw a new market in which to operate Frankie suggested that this may have been true:

Frankie – That thought had never actually crossed my mind until you put it in [laughter]. I wouldn't be at all surprised; I wouldn't put anything past medics.

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<sup>489</sup> Smith *et al*, 'Treatments of Homosexuality in Britain since the 1950s', p. 428

When it became apparent to Frankie that his own attempts to shift his sexuality along Kinsey's sliding scale were futile he married and for over twenty years hid his homosexuality behind a cloak of married respectability, working in Africa before settling down as a general practitioner in Fife. When asked if there was anyone he blamed for his inability to be 'gay' Frankie pointed his finger at 3 candidates:

Frankie – Three people. The man whom I...mucked around with me, father, and the psychiatrist. I shouldn't have been so gullible, so credible.

Whilst Frankie never engaged fully with any therapies offered by the medical establishment as a means to treating his sexual 'deviance', Morris did. Morris almost stumbled upon drug therapy by accident when he attended his doctor's surgery to complain about the after-effects of recent treatment for thyrotoxicosis.<sup>490</sup>

Morris - ...when I came back from the RAF I thought that I had to do something about this [continuing glandular problems] and went to see my doctor. Anyway I told him all this [an active homosexual sex life in the RAF] and to my astonishment...at this time this I didn't know what they were but he prescribed me these pills and said take these and you will probably feel a bit better. I know now that they were female hormones and it certainly nullified my sexual feelings to some extent, I certainly wasn't continually looking for sex but I was growing tits and I wasn't shaving as regular.

JM – Where was this doctor?

Morris – In Aberdeen, I was back up in Aberdeen. I went to see him and that was repeated twice and then I mentioned about the changes and he took me off of those and he put me onto oestradiol and again it was almost a female hormone, part of the hormone, and I was on that for some time and by this time I was getting pretty sick of it all really...

During the period that Morris began receiving hormone treatment (*ethinyl estradiol*) he was still having an active sex life in Aberdeenshire. It was unclear from the interview why Morris had received this particular treatment although it appears that his doctor took it upon himself to identify his homosexual dalliances as the cause of his physical and emotional discomfort rather than his existing glandular problems. The doctor's failure to refer Morris to a psychiatrist seems unusually cavalier behaviour as it was usual practice to

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<sup>490</sup> Thyrotoxicosis is a condition in which the thyroid gland produces excessive amounts of the thyroid hormone (thyroxine) and results in symptoms affecting the whole body including; emotional instability, a rapid heart rate, weight loss, and tremors.

seek the opinions of a ‘specialist’.<sup>491</sup>

The side effects of the treatment being administered caused Morris some concern and it is perhaps no coincidence that just as these side-effects began to show in the form of the development of breasts and the decrease in stubble growth Morris began to wonder whether he was transsexual. A consultation with a psychiatrist put pay to this concern and Morris continued with his hormone treatment until another visit to his doctor when he confessed that he was now seeing a woman socially and had started a sexual relationship with her. The catalyst for this sudden interest in members of the opposite sex was the realisation that all of his male lovers eventually married and Morris believed that this was a social expectation that no one could avoid. On hearing that his patient was now engaging in a sexual relationship with a female Morris’s doctor changed tact:

Morris – I went to see my doctor there and he said that I should go on methyltestosterone<sup>492</sup>, which was pure male hormone. I had let the fireworks out of the bag and I was even having sex with the girlfriend by this time...

It could be suggested that on hearing of Morris’s sudden ‘conversion’ his doctor felt his job was done and his patient had been cured. The use of *methyltestosterone* reversed the side effects Morris had endured whilst on *ethinyl estradiol*. Morris noticed that the opinions of the general practitioner and the psychiatrist were very different:

JM – Was there a difference in the attitude of your doctor, the GP and the psychiatrist?

Morris – The psychiatrist had my number, because by then I was going with Stan, a married man and I was having sex with him and he said that was fine and said, “Accept your life for what it is” and he walked off and that was it, never saw him again. The doctor thought he could cure me with pills. I went to train as a nurse and I went to my doctor there and he said that I didn’t need any pills and after that I had one dose of methyltestosterone, that was it I never needed it any further as it had brought all my male...maleness to the fore and I was more manly than I had ever been.

Morris’ experience of using female hormones to treat his homosexuality suggests that his general practitioner favoured the treatment not because it ‘cured’ homosexuality but that it

<sup>491</sup> Davidson, “The Cautionary Tale of Tom”, p. 126; Smith *et al*, “Treatments of Homosexuality in Britain since the 1950s”, p. 428

<sup>492</sup> A drug used in men to treat testosterone deficiency.

contained the ‘symptoms’; Morris states that although his sex-drive diminished during his period of medication his attraction to men rather than women did not. Despite still harbouring this attraction to members of his own gender Morris married the female with whom he had begun a sexual relationship and the marriage lasted for over 25 years until his wife’s death from cancer in the early 1990s. Similarly, Frankie’s marriage lasted nearly a quarter of a century but that union ended in divorce.

There is little evidence from the interviews conducted that there existed a uniform response from the medical establishment in Scotland towards men (and boys) presenting themselves as homosexual. There is also little evidence from the interviews that medics, of general or psychiatric practices, were routinely attempting to medicalise any unconventional form of sexual proclivity. The case of Frankie does stand out amongst the interviews with the heavily negative attitudes presented by the child psychiatrist evidently having a detrimental effect on Frankie’s developing identity, so much so that even when he was a practicing doctor himself he still believed the warnings issued by this individual: that giving in to his desires would mean an end to any medical career, and, that he was destined to become an abuser of boys if he gave in to his apparent perversion.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, data has been gathered regarding the influence of medical discourses of homosexuality on identity and self-perception among the interviewees. The majority of interviewees questioned about how aware they had been about medical explanations of homosexuality appeared unsure and lacking in knowledge. Those who could remember details of medical intervention tended to refer to the most drastic of procedures related to altering sexual desires: aversion therapy, and more specifically, aversion therapy using electric shocks. In reality, electro-convulsive treatments appeared to be rare in Scotland with regards to homosexuality<sup>493</sup> and were not used within the prison service.<sup>494</sup>

The majority of interviewees did not appear to have been aware of medical theories regarding homo- or bisexuality, which is not surprising when one considers that in Scotland by the mid-twentieth century there appeared to be little agreement on how non-heterosexuality should be explained. There were certainly medical professionals willing to offer homosexual patients referrals to psychiatrists and in the case of Morris a couple of

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<sup>493</sup> Davidson, “‘The Cautionary Tale of Tom’”, p. 130

<sup>494</sup> Davidson, ‘The Sexual State’, p. 507

general practitioners (albeit one in England) willing to prescribe hormonal treatments without a referral.

However, it does appear that the GPs consulted by Peter, Walter, Stephen and Donald and the psychiatrists consulted by Walter and Morris did not see homosexuality as a solely medical concern. The particular enthusiasm for viewing homosexuality as both a morally repugnant and medically treatable problem shown by Frankie's child psychiatrist is indicative of the contradictory attitudes held by many medical professionals (as well as legal commentators) at that time. As mentioned previously the textbook, *General Practice Medicine* appeared to be reluctant to label homosexuality as either a legal, moral or medical matter as late as the mid-1970s, preferring the less troublesome descriptor, 'Behavioural Disorder'.<sup>495</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Davidson, "The Cautionary Tale of Tom", p. 125



## **Chapter 6**

### **Conversations with God: Reconciling Religious Identities with Sexual Identities**

There are a number of factors that may influence identity formation in human subjects. This thesis has so far examined the influence of discourses of homosexuality on interviewees during their adolescence and early adulthood. The influence of medical discourses of homosexuality has also been examined. Another area, which may impact upon attitudes to self-perception and identity among GBM, is religion, and in particular, religious discourses on homosexuality.

Andrew Yip has stated that many Christian churches have been uncomfortable with discussions of homosexuality for some time, although more recently the issue has been aired with more regularity, particularly amongst the world's Anglican churches.<sup>496</sup> In Chapter 2, the attitudes held by the Church of Scotland towards the findings of the Wolfenden Report were detailed. Officially, and publicly, the church was not immediately in favour of implementing any of the legal reforms recommended regarding homosexual acts, but privately would be initially supportive of the work of the SMG by the late 1960s. However, it would be the *public* discourses on homosexuality that most GBM in Scotland would be aware of and, therefore, it is pertinent to try and establish what impact upon self-perception potentially negative religious discourses of homosexuality would have on these men.

Every interviewee was asked during the course of their interview why they felt that Scottish homosexuals had to wait until 1980 to see legal equity with England and Wales. When asked, most of the interviewees viewed Scotland's churches as being an instrumental factor in the delay. This might suggest that religion and religious institutions in Scotland had considerable influence over both popular opinion and legal institutions. However, as discussed in Chapter 2 the reasons for the delay in bringing legal equity were much more complex and cannot be attributed solely on Scotland's religious institutions. In an attempt to understand why interviewees viewed the churches as instrumental in

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<sup>496</sup> Andrew K. T. Yip, 'Spirituality and Sexuality: An Exploration of the Religious Beliefs of Non-Heterosexual Christians in Great Britain', *Theology and Sexuality* 9 (2002), pp. 137-138

denying Scottish gay men and bisexuals legal equity with their English and Welsh counterparts, we must examine both the historical role of Scottish churches when it came to discussions of diverse sexualities, and, interviewees' relationships with religion.

Scotland's two main churches had played a significant - if not a highly public - role in the early years of the Scottish Minorities Group (SMG). One of the group's earliest liaisons was with Ean Simpson, an Argyllshire minister and a representative to the Church of Scotland Moral Welfare Committee (CSMWC).<sup>497</sup> The Roman Catholic Church had also offered some assistance to the SMG during its earliest years with Father Anthony Ross, the Catholic Chaplain to the University of Edinburgh, offering SMG the use of a meeting room in late 1970.<sup>498</sup> Born out of these initial meetings, the 'Cobweb' developed into a social group on a Saturday evening where it could be suggested that the gaze of the Chaplain ensured the introduction of a no kissing, no petting and no dancing rule.<sup>499</sup> At the University of Strathclyde in 1971, Father Columba Ryan was central in the creation of a SMG-inspired homophile student organisation, which after a shaky start ran until 1973.

The support offered by both churches was tentative and limited by an official hostility to same sex relationships. However, their engagement with Scotland's chief homosexual law reform organisation does offer an alternate impression of the attitudes that these churches held towards homosexuals. Through its relationship with SMG it was becoming apparent to members of the group that the Church of Scotland saw its relationship with SMG as the perfect platform from which to build its own infrastructure of counselling and care. Walter, a founding member of SMG recalled the reaction of the CSMWC to SMG's attempts to widen its membership and offer homosexuals in Scotland more than counselling and pastoral care:

We got frozen out of the Church of Scotland as a result of that...I remember one fairly nasty meeting with the secretary of the Church of Scotland Moral Welfare Committee.... It was like being threatened by someone from the mafia! I think most of it wasn't direct confrontation but there were people in the background trying to stop us getting anywhere.

Despite the willingness of the CSMWC, and representatives of the Roman Catholic Church, to engage with the SMG, Walter's comment seems to indicate that the relationship was tense. Whereas the CSMWC had held a more sympathetic approach to homosexuals

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<sup>497</sup> NAS GD467/1/1/1, Letter from Ean Simpson to Ian Dunn, 27/02/1969,

<sup>498</sup> Orr, 'Capitalism, Patriarchy and Gay Oppression', pp. 19-20

<sup>499</sup> Ibid., p. 22

in the immediate post-Wolfenden era, the Assembly had held a rather rigid and uncompromising view. Despite the Assembly's apparent hostility to the thought that homosexual acts could be decriminalised the Church and Nation Committee (CNC) of the Church of Scotland had been instructed to examine the issue of homosexuality in 1956 in direct response to the enquiries being undertaken by the Wolfenden Committee. Initially the CNC saw merit in the decriminalisation of private, consensual homosexual acts but it still regarded homosexual activity as sinful. As detailed in Chapter 2 rifts occurred within the CNC with the investigating sub-committee favouring decriminalisation and the main committee viewing such a move as problematic.<sup>500</sup> Publicly, the Church of Scotland was to stand rather isolated as one of the only major churches in Britain to oppose the findings of the Wolfenden Report.<sup>501</sup> According to a report in the *Daily Mirror* in 1960, the Archbishops of York and Canterbury, along with the Methodist Conference, and the English Roman Catholic Church, all supported the findings of the Wolfenden Committee that private homosexual acts between consenting male adults, should no longer be deemed unlawful.<sup>502</sup> Yet, the development of a relationship between the CSMWC and the SMG suggests that the Church of Scotland was unwilling to simply ignore homosexuality.

During this same period the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland remained remarkably quiet on the issues of homosexuality and the law. The church south of the border had been in favour of the limited decriminalisation suggested by the Wolfenden report and commented that its findings were 'only acceptance of the fact that the community should not, in general, pry into a citizen's private deeds – even when they are misdeeds'.<sup>503</sup> Whilst suggesting that the law should not penalise homosexuals for being homosexual and engaging in homosexual activity in the privacy of their own homes it stopped short of accepting homosexuality as morally acceptable.

Faced with the apparent intransigent attitudes to non-procreative sexuality expressed publicly by the major churches it is important to examine how gay and bisexual men in Scotland reconciled any religious faith they might hold with their sexuality. Granted, not everyone brought up within Scotland held a faith, indeed many of my interviewees had little interest in religion at the time of their interviews, but for some, religion and religious morality played a significant role in their upbringing.

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<sup>500</sup> MacDonald, *Confidence in a Changing Church*, p. 149

<sup>501</sup> Ibid.

<sup>502</sup> Daily Mirror Reporter, 'Don't Ease the law for Them – Vote MPs', *Daily Mirror*, 30/06/1960, p. 1

<sup>503</sup> *Time*, 'GREAT BRITAIN: The Wolfenden Report', 16/09/1957, available at <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,809883,00.html>, last accessed 12/08/2010

As Andrew Yip has suggested, after Weinberg and Williams,<sup>504</sup> gay (and presumably bisexual) men and lesbians are much more likely to experience feelings of guilt, anxiety and shame, as well as living with a fear of exposure.<sup>505</sup> These are just some of the potential problems that gay and bisexual Christians may experience whilst attempting to negotiate a position of faith in the face of what appear to be homophobic religious institutions. Many have failed to reach an understanding that allows them to remain committed Christians whilst, at the same time, engaging in homosexual relationships. Yet, there are individuals for whom resolution of conflicts regarding faith and sexuality have been possible. This resolution, it has been argued, is achieved through a process involving the revision of their religious beliefs that challenges existing religious interpretations regarding homosexuality and renders them invalid.<sup>506</sup>

During the interviews with the 24 gay and bisexual men recruited for this project each respondent was asked whether they had been exposed to religious teachings during their childhood; what impact these teachings had on them; and whether they had remained committed to their belief system throughout their lives. The majority of respondents acknowledged that religion had played some part in their early lives but the influence of religion and religious teachings had waned significantly during their life course. This secularisation amongst many of the interviewees had not been specifically related to their sexuality, or at least they did not suggest this during the interview. Six of the interviewees had held a position within a religious organisation: Daniel is a semi-retired Catholic Priest; Peter is a retired Church of Scotland Minister; Simon was a minister of a Scottish Protestant church; Drew is a retired Episcopalian/Anglican priest; Ken was a lay preacher in a Baptist Church; Joseph was a ranking officer in The Salvation Army. Stephen was and still is a practicing Catholic, as well as a practicing homosexual. It is upon these 7 individuals that this chapter is concentrating as their journey offers an insight into the impact of religion and of sexuality on those of faith. The other interviewees consulted during this research did not believe that religious attitudes to their sexuality had played any significant part in their secularisation.

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<sup>504</sup> M. S. Weinberg & C. J. Williams, *Male Homosexuals: Their Problems and Adaptations* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1974)

<sup>505</sup> Andrew K. Yip, 'Gay Male Christians' Perceptions of the Christian Community in Relation to their Sexuality', *Theology and Sexuality* 8 (1998), p. 41

<sup>506</sup> Michelle Wolkowicz, *"Be Not Deceived": The Sacred and Sexual Struggles of Gay and Ex-gay Christian Men* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), p. 14

## ***Catholic Guilt, Sin and Reconciliation***

Christianity is not composed of one single, homogenous group but is split into a number of independent churches. The Roman Catholic Church was not the most vocal of churches when it came to discussions regarding homosexuality and law reform, but, as has been discussed, was supportive of legal moves to decriminalise homosexual acts in England and Wales. More recently, the church has been a vocal opponent of moves to give LGBT individuals greater freedom through improved human rights, such as the recognition in law of same-sex unions, and has consistently condemned homosexual practices.<sup>507</sup> Therefore, it would be cogent to examine how Catholic GBM reconciled their faith with their sexuality.

Father Daniel is a 79 year-old, semi-retired Catholic priest who by his own admission is gay. His sexuality is well known within his church but mostly unknown amongst his former parishioners. According to Daniel the Catholic Church in Scotland has always given the impression that it takes only a hard line regarding homosexuality:

Daniel - The Church hasn't changed in the sense that basically everything that comes out officially from the Vatican to the local hierarchies maintains the line that homosexuality is disordered, that kind of language. Although there has been a lot of helpfulness at a pastoral level for a lot [of homosexuals] there is still a lot of prejudice against any expression of homosexuality. That hasn't changed a lot.

Daniel suggested that during his 7 years of training to become a priest there was no specific reference made in his teachings to homosexuality. Daniel perceives this omission as suggesting that homosexual acts were viewed by the church as just one in a catalogue of sins that human beings had the potential to commit:

JM – Obviously the Catholic Church never embraced homosexuality and said that it was fine. Do you think it was treated any differently from any other sinful category?

Daniel – No, it wasn't treated any differently as it was looked upon as a sin. Therefore it wasn't treated any differently. All I can say to elaborate on that is that all sexual sins in most instances from my knowledge would be embarrassing to a great number of the priests so wouldn't want to go into

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<sup>507</sup> See for example, *Times Online*, 'Pope Benedict on Homosexuality', 23/12/2009, available at <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article5388920.ece>, last accessed 12/08/2010; Nick Squires, 'Pope says homosexuality is "insidious and dangerous"', *The Telegraph*, 13/05/2010, available at <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstoppers/religion/7719789/Pope-says-gay-marriage-is-insidious-and-dangerous.html>, last accessed 12/08/2010; Brad Haynes, 'Pope's No. 2 blames homosexuality, not celibacy, for pedophilia', *USA Today*, available at [http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2010-04-13-catholic-abuse-gay-blame\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2010-04-13-catholic-abuse-gay-blame_N.htm), last accessed 12/08/2010.

detail so would be quite happy to say, “Don’t do it again and say 3 Hail Marys”. During a lot of the training sexuality wasn’t mentioned, they were more interested in the nature of the trinity.

The potential problem with this suggestion that homosexual practices were viewed in a similar vein to any other sexual sin is in the statement ‘don’t do it again’. An individual who commits adultery, for example, can be absolved of his sin if he seeks forgiveness for his transgression and endeavours not to repeat his act. For a Catholic homosexual or bisexual whose sexual and romantic attractions are focussed on other men then the only alternative to a life of sin would arguably be a life of celibacy. However, Daniel stresses that things are not black and white when it comes to the issue of sin and celibacy:

JM – Could you have been, at that point during the 60s and 70s, a Catholic and be actively homosexual?

Daniel – That is a difficult thing to directly answer. It wasn’t as clear as that. You would definitely be able to advise someone, ‘Right, that is what the Church teaches’. But also the Church teaches or recognises that there is a priority of conscience. Now the Church would then say it has to be an *informed* conscience. We had to leave it there in an unsatisfactory situation but at least whoever is asking for guidance gets a sympathetic hearing and the bottom line is that God is the judge. The Church is tied to a certain institution and eventually you have to decide whether God would judge you harshly or kindly. You couldn’t be clear because there wasn’t clarity.

The sympathetic hearing that Daniel refers to seems in stark contrast to the attitudes publicly espoused by senior Vatican figures in recent years and hints at contrasting approaches to the issue of homosexuality from church leaders and parish priests. The issue of ‘priority of conscience’ does crop up in some of the interviews undertaken with interviewees who saw themselves as Christians or former Christians, but more common is the rejection of traditional Christian teachings on homosexuality. Stephen (b. 1939) has retained his Catholic faith and has done so through reappraising his relationship with God. While in his early teens and coming to terms with his sexuality, the Catholic Church seemed to offer little succour:

JM – So, during your upbringing were you influenced, you mentioned you were a church-goer, did your religion influence the way you grew up and in particular did it ever influence the way you thought about yourself knowing you were different?

Stephen – Aye, it did, a lot in my case being a Catholic and the Catholic Church, I mean today at least in the Catholic Church it can be discussed by a priest that maybe holds perhaps a sympathetic view towards that

situation but the church and the priests in general there was nobody you could talk to about it, this hang-up about being a Catholic and should it be known you just wouldn't be accepted in the Catholic Church in these days.

JM – And how did the Catholic Church, if you went into mass or spoke to any priests did they ever mention this, this 'thing'?

Stephen – No...there was never a priest I could tell, so you go to confession and you told him how many times you masturbated, if you said you had sex with someone, usually you were likely to be asked the girl's name, or who the girl was or how you met the girl, it was to be assumed it was a girl. And it certainly...would have been sacrilege. It was a sacrilege in these days to tell a priest a lie anyway.

Rather than rejecting a religion, which apparently condemned what he was, Stephen adopted a stance, which rejected Daniel's assertions regarding sin and conscience. Stephen did not wish to abandon his faith, so, chose instead to redefine his relationship with God:

JM – Knowing that the Catholic Church would take a dim view...of the fact that you were having sex with men, did that influence then, the way you looked at yourself, the way you felt about yourself..?

Stephen – Well, only to a certain extent, but I was a very strong believer in God and I kept a close relationship with God...so the relationship between God and myself kept me going and I had to decide that even though I knew nothing about the situation and how it happened or how it came to be sort of thing, I decided there's nothing that I can do; it wasn't my fault. If God made me, then he made me the way I am so therefore that would be between God and me, and that's how I managed to get through it.

JM – So you weren't overcome with guilt and.....

Stephen – No, I felt God knew me better than the priests knew [me].

Whereas Daniel largely maintains a traditionally Catholic attitude to homosexual practices, with an emphasis on sin and personal conscience, Stephen has rejected the condemnation of the church regarding his sexuality but still has maintained an active relationship with Catholicism. This is not unusual; according to Scott Thumma the *Good News* evangelical Christian movement has managed to maintain an evangelical approach to religion whilst counselling its members that a reappraisal of the teachings of the Bible on same-sex desire

is not going to bring upon them God's wrath.<sup>508</sup> Thumma claims that this is an almost unique approach to compromising the problem of core identity dissonance, a condition where an individual is in conflict over separate spheres of their identity; in this case, their homosexuality and their evangelical Christian beliefs. As Thumma suggests, this is a case of having one's cake and eating it too.<sup>509</sup>

Stephen also views his homosexuality as something that he was born with, something innate, God-given. This essentialism is apparently common amongst LGBT individuals with an active church connection. R. Stephen Warner, in his article on the activities of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, cites the influence of similar essentialist theories on human sexuality amongst church members.<sup>510</sup> In Wilcox's study of lesbian Christians it is suggested that many LGBT Christians view their sexuality as being central components of their creation and thus do not see it as something that would prevent them from engaging with their church.<sup>511</sup> Yip has suggested that in cases where an individual's church rejects the validity of same-sex desires, his/her relationship with God moves from institutional to personal which allows the individual to maintain his/her church connections whilst maintaining a LGBT identity.<sup>512</sup>

### ***Protestantism and Working within the System***

While the Catholic Church in Scotland remained relatively silent over perceived moves to decriminalise homosexual acts in Scotland, as a result of the Wolfenden Report, the Protestant churches in Scotland were initially publicly dismissive of such moves. However, as has been discussed, by the late 1960s the Church of Scotland had softened its stance towards homosexual acts. This raises the question as to whether Scottish GBM who were Protestants were aware of the fluctuating attitudes towards homosexuality in their churches.

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<sup>508</sup> Scott Thumma, 'Negotiating a Religious Identity: The Case of the Gay Evangelical', *Sociological Analysis* 52 (1991), p. 339

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 345

<sup>510</sup> R. Stephen Warner, 'The Metropolitan Community Churches and the Gay Agenda: The Power of Pentecostalism and Essentialism', in C. L. Williams & A. Stein (eds.), *Sexuality and Gender* (Malden, Mass.; Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 285, 287-288

<sup>511</sup> Melissa M. Wilcox, 'When Sheila's a Lesbian: Religious Individualism among LGBT Christians', *Sociology of Religion*, 63, (2002), pp. 504-505

<sup>512</sup> Andrew K. T. Yip, 'The Persistence of Faith Among Non-heterosexual Christians: Evidence for the Neosecularization Thesis of Religious Transformation,' *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, (2002), p. 209



Peter (b. 1937) was a Church of Scotland minister for nearly 30 years and was actively bisexual. Peter's bisexuality is unknown to his wife, family and officialdom in his church yet Peter is unconcerned about the potential religious problems of being a representative of a Christian church, which has historically, decried homosexual practices and being bisexual. Although readily admitting that the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland still views homosexuality with some suspicion, he has little concern regarding his sexual life and its relevance to the teachings of his church:

JM – And the religious angle? I suppose you could generalise and say it was seen as a sin or something like that?

Peter – Well, it was but and then again I am not a fundamentalist. The fundamentalists see it as abhorrent and a sin against God - I don't see it as that.

Such an approach ties in neatly with Thumma's experience of the revisionism used by members of the *Good News* movement in the United States of America. Peter views those who quote from the Bible in an attempt to validate their claims that homosexuality is an abomination with some suspicion, and prefers an individual interpretation of how God might view homosexuals. Peter accepted that there existed an official 'line' on homosexuality but claims that such a line is not representative of many of his fellow clergy; indeed, Peter was not the only minister in the same position:

Peter – ...in my last 3 years I met 3 ministers. It happened to be that before I retired we were on a course with me and we got talking about it and I don't know why but we started to talk about sexuality and they opened up and said they were gay and I said I was bi. It formed a bond, not that anything happened or that, but I mean I have spoken to them and it's the kind of thing, don't speak about it, don't tell anybody.

Peter does not view his bisexual life as being in contradiction to the teachings of his church, nor does he see his adultery as problematic. Peter regularly uses an internet-based dating site to converse and meet other married men who are either gay or bisexual:

JM – It's interesting...somebody might look...and say that it's a shame, he's obviously not got the strength to come out, break off the shackles or whatever, do you have the perception that it's not like that, or it is like that?

Peter – It's not like that. I have opened up to people on the net and they have opened up to me and nowhere have they said, "Hold on, what about the wives?" - never been thought of that way.

It should be noted that Peter has never really felt uneasy about his position as a church representative whilst engaging in secretive homosexual liaisons. Whereas several of my interviewees have experienced periods of turmoil, depression and guilt as a result of their sexuality, Peter has remained comparatively stress-free:

JM – Do you have any regrets about how your life has mapped itself out?

Peter – No, I would do the same again.

JM – You wouldn't change anything?

Peter – I wouldn't change anything. I have led a very happy life.

Not every interviewee who engaged with religious beliefs managed to compartmentalise their lives in such a successful and relatively stress-free manner. For some, religion did impinge on the way in which their life developed and the way in which their relationship with religion developed. Born in Glasgow in 1941, Drew spent over 20 years as an Anglican priest in England although he spent over 20 years living and training in Scotland in the Episcopalian Church. By the time Drew entered the Edinburgh Theological College he was firmly aware of his same-sex preference (if not its name) and had been engaging in sexual acts with others, primarily in public toilets:

Drew – ... I can still sort of sense the feeling of this thing that these boys at school keep going on about, 'poof' and whatever, that's me...My sexuality awakened about the same time as I became involved in church, choir, youth-club, which I was very prominent in and I don't remember anyone ever saying that homosexuality is wrong, it seemed I knew. I think I became in my own mind a sort of, not just a homosexual, but someone who wanted sex in secret, exciting places...it felt that if I don't have to meet people in cottages then I will be like everyone else. And of course the word [homosexual] wasn't known.

Drew developed a firm interest in religion after a visit to his mother's Episcopalian church in Glasgow. Initially Drew had flirted with the idea of converting to Catholicism as 'they took God seriously, they weren't paying lip service' but he found that the Episcopalian Church offered him the opportunity to debate and to learn. Another feature that attracted Drew to the Episcopalian Church was its apparent liberal attitude to issues such as homosexuality. Indeed, when he began his training at the Edinburgh Theological College he approached the newly installed principal and mentioned his homosexuality:

JM – Did you ever seek any support, any guidance, and advice?

Drew – ...Certainly there was a breath of fresh air when a new principal came in and had come from a New York seminary and I spoke to him about it and he was, “Oh, no problem, that’s not a problem” and it was he who said that I should tell the bishop before he ordained me, he should know, but “no problem...nobody over the years really knew what I needed but the message I got was “No problem!” which was a bit way out and was a bit impractical in the 60s or “this is really dreadful, you should sort this out because you are a nice person, it’s a terrible business!”.

Yet, despite this very favourable response from the principal of his college Drew was all too aware that this personal opinion did not sit comfortably alongside the more prescriptive attitude offered by Biblical interpretations of same-sex desire. During his early career, Drew was careful not to draw attention to himself by deliberately challenging attitudes to sexual morality:

JM – What about morality, was morality important to you, from a religious perspective?

Drew – Eh, it’s a complicated answer because I felt it would be beyond the pale so my view of morality really crumbled because no one would listen to me anyway, but being a priest and talking... teaching people, em, a sort of ethical stance I have never [had], [I have] always [been] very stoic...so in my mind I would think of institutional ethics and didn’t think at an emotional level, used to keep quiet about morals, so they wouldn’t find out about anything.

Drew certainly believes that the Episcopalian Church and its associated church in England, the Anglican Church, held a slightly different view of homosexuality from the other Scottish churches at the time in that homosexual acts were not necessarily condemned outright but were tolerated, to an extent:

Drew -...it was okay if you turned a corner and there was an irresistible man and you had sex and confessed it but if you intended to meet him again then that was sinful, you couldn’t do that...

However, such an approach with an emphasis on sin is actually remarkably similar to the approaches of both the Catholic Church and the Church of Scotland albeit without the condemnatory flavour favoured, especially in the 1950s, by the Assembly of the Church of Scotland. To some extent the words of the principal of the theological college had given Drew some hope but the question of reconciling his faith and his sexual life still brought some discomfort:

JM – Was it difficult to reconcile, to bring together these two different parts of your life? The church, your sexuality and the church that is critical of anyone who is apart from the norm?

Drew – Difficult, yes certainly but I think the internal homophobe links up with the church...I think agonising was a better word than difficult, it was a constant tussle, how conscious or not of the background, to leaping from one world to another and believing in both. I think there are various psychological reasons for being ordained but I mean I believed in it and thought it could change people and that a more liberal version that I could bring would help people even more, but it was still this leaping in and out.

It is apparent that Drew never considered abandoning his faith but chose to realign his own relationship with God, in a similar manner to that undertaken by Peter and Stephen. For Drew there were two ‘Gods’: a personal God and an impersonal one, the latter a product of the church. This process was by no means resolved quickly and for Drew this was a lifelong undertaking. This can be viewed as a process of adult socialisation and according to Thumma this process involves internalising social meanings and reinterpreting them in an effort to create a stable and coherent self-concept.<sup>513</sup> This links neatly with Thomson’s description of ‘composure’: describing a dual process whereby we construct our story, or memories, using the meanings and public language of our culture, and, we compose the memories which assist us to feel comfortable about our lives.<sup>514</sup>

Drew’s decision to reject one issue from countless issues mentioned in the Christian Bible was not problematic for him personally, but the long-held attitude of the church regarding homosexual acts did, for a time, interfere with his professional and personal life. This entrenched position regarding homosexual acts was somewhat paradoxical when considering what was occurring around Drew during this period:

JM – Did you ever cause...or was there ever a situation where sex was mentioned at college? Was sex and sexual morality a part of teaching?

Drew – Really, it must have been. You would expect a certain mention because I think a third of the students were gay, some *very*...

JM – You mentioned essentially that a third of the students were gay. What was the attraction?

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<sup>513</sup> Thumma, ‘Negotiating a Religious Identity’, p. 334

<sup>514</sup> Alistair Thomson, ‘Anzac Memories: Putting Popular Memory Theory into Practice in Australia’ in *The Oral History Reader*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, ed. by Robert Perks & Alistair Thompson (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 245

Drew – Well, I suppose there are many attractions. I suppose in the 50s, 60s, and to some extent still, em, for a gay man you try and chose a profession where you will get on a path, em, so that rules out a factory or office work or, em, I suppose it is also acceptance in a leadership role where you wouldn't be anywhere else because as soon as you are ordained you are a leader, em, and your sexuality is not questioned so much in the church and it's sort of accepted in the church that there are single men.

While in Scotland, Drew did not challenge the entrenched attitude towards those who regularly engaged in homosexual sexual activities, yet, when he accepted a position in London with the Church of England he was able to incorporate some of his own beliefs regarding religion and sexuality into his preaching (although never personalising them). For Drew, living in Scotland during that period was much more restricting and he felt that there never existed a platform within the church or within society to offer a serious debate on homosexuality, religion or the law. It becomes evident in narratives such as these that discourses of homosexuality in Scotland during this period were very restrictive.

JM – Em, did you notice the benefits of this [his move to London], did you feel free?

Drew – Yeah, I think so. To London more, there's not the same noticing what people are doing, you can disappear in London, like I lived in Earl's Court and within 5 minutes you can be in a totally different part of London where you don't know anyone and won't be known. In Earls' Court...no matter what you were doing most people wouldn't be bothered because people were very particular, quite different to anywhere else.

Drew – My experience of Scotland is much more 'keeping up appearances'. The Scotland I knew would find it impossible to talk about homosexuality in a serious enough way to change the law.

### ***Evangelical Christianity, Silence and Turmoil***

For other interviewees it has been even more difficult to reconcile religious belief and sexuality. Simon (b. 1950) spent 20 years as a minister of a Scottish evangelical church, moving around the country with his wife and children. The issues of sexuality and sexual identity did not materialise for Simon until much later than most of the other interviewees and does not fit any of the presumed models for the development of non-heterosexual

identities.<sup>515</sup> Whilst the majority of my interviewees experienced indicators of same-sex attraction during their early-teenage years, Simon claimed that such attractions were absent:

JM – So during this period until you were 17, 18, 19 years old you had never any concerns yourself about the object of your sexual attraction?

Simon – No, no, none at all because I was also interested in girls but I never did anything about it, I just pretended that things were happening and I had opportunities but there was never any real...nothing really, no.

It wasn't until Simon attended university that he became aware that he may be sexually attracted to other men but didn't attach any particular meaning to this. Simon suggests that the culture of sexual ambiguity that was apparent during the late 1960s and early 1970s played a significant role in his denial that he may be homosexual:

Simon - ...there was a lot of ambiguity about gender, you know, dress and behaviours were becoming much more fluid at that time: the late 60s, early 70s so if I did rationalise it, I was thinking I would see someone in tight jeans I would just think that they were really attractive but it was the same kind of attraction I might feel for a woman although my attraction was less physically and sexual than it would have been maybe intellectual...

In any case, Simon had become heavily involved in the church and his life was being governed by a Christian philosophy that suggested that all sexual thoughts outside of marriage had to be denied. This allowed Simon to ignore the object of his sexual fantasy and focus on the denial of any sexual fantasy. For Simon all sexual fantasies regardless of the object of the fantasy were sinful.

JM – So would you say that it didn't give you too much pressure, did you feel desperate or depressed, or...?

Simon – No, no I never felt like that, I just felt good when I saw another man...I didn't feel pressure or depressed about that at all, I mean because I was quite religious any kind of sexual impulse of any kind I would probably suppress so it would be the same for that attraction to a man as it would be to a woman so I suppose there was a suppression of sexual feelings but that was about *any* kind of sex, I wasn't feeling bad because I was attracted to men.

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<sup>515</sup> See for example, R. R. Troiden, 'The Formation of Homosexual Identities', *Journal of Homosexuality* 17 (1989), pp. 43-73; S. Maguen., F. J. Floyd, R. Bakeman, & L. Armistead, 'Developmental milestones and disclosure of sexual orientation among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth', *Applied Developmental Psychology* 23 (2002), pp. 219-233; A. K. Malyon, 'The homosexual adolescent: Developmental issues and social bias', *Child Welfare* 5 (1981), pp. 321-330.

Simon contends that because of his ignorance regarding homosexuality and the potential for homosexual relationships ‘it would have been an abnormal thing to do, it wouldn’t have been the usual thing to do. I suppose in social or religious terms I would have considered it very immoral and very abnormal’.

There does appear to be a strong element of denial in Simon’s story; the question to ponder is whether the denial of latent homosexual feelings was a direct result of his religious beliefs. We have already seen how men such as Stephen and Daniel who had, on differing scales, strong religious beliefs were able to accommodate their homosexuality within the framework of their religion. Simon, however, immersed himself almost exclusively within an evangelical Christian community and adopted their beliefs with regards to sexual morality:

JM – So when you look back on that period of your life do you ever think it was unusual?

Simon – My life? [JM nods] I think the religious side of it was very unusual, it was too closeted and too restricted...that was my circle with which I was quite content... but definitely now looking back it wasn’t healthy...I didn’t build other kinds of relationships and I wasn’t exposed to and I wasn’t challenged in any way by other interpretations or ideas around life or sex and sexuality...

The absence of discursive platforms within his church, or wider society in Scotland, through which to debate issues of sexual diversity seems to have insulated Simon from the alleged sexual revolution and the wider implications for Christianity that were taking place around him. Callum Brown has argued that the 1960s was a significant era for Christianity in Britain and posits the rise of secularisation during this time. The 1960s saw the end of excessive moral censorship, according to Brown, as well as the introduction of legal measures to end the criminalisation of private, consensual gay sex; the granting of easier divorce; the legalisation of abortion; the emergence of women’s liberation movements; and a radical youth culture incorporating rebellion and resistance.<sup>516</sup> Yet, for Simon, insulated from the apparent radical restructuring of Christian Britain, conformity appears to have played a significant role in how he was living his life and how his future would map out:

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<sup>516</sup> Callum G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularisation 1800-2000* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 173-174

JM – Do you think that you felt any pressure to conform?

Simon – Oh I definitely had an ideal and I had a goal as by that time I was quite religious and very heavily involved in the church so my ideal would be definitely that I would get married and have children ...my pressure to conform was probably from within the church and probably within myself...

The only point at which Simon became aware of discussions and religious concerns about homosexuality was when the issues were discussed on a religious radio broadcast not long after the law had changed in England and Wales. Simon did not, at this point, personalise the debate regarding homosexuality. In fact, it would be another 15 years or so before he was give serious thought to how he should be living his life. It could be argued that the silence concerning homosexuality from within his church actually assisted Simon in his struggle to come to terms with his homosexuality. There was never any specific reference to homosexuality from within the church and this insular environment in which Simon operated in some ways protected him from any anti-homosexual feelings that existed elsewhere within society. Indeed, when Simon chose to leave the church he arranged meetings with church officials to inform them the he believed he was gay. The reaction he received surprised Simon:

Simon -...I asked...the church to put together a small group, two or three folk that I could speak to and at first I only expressed to them that I was under a lot of pressure and things weren't right...but it was only after about two or three meetings with them that I said to them precisely what the root of it all was and to be fair to them they were trying to understand it and trying to support me and there was somebody else outside that circle who was a very senior person, very highly respected in the church who also tried to support me in that but actually the guy from outside that circle understood more but the circle itself couldn't understand anything. It was more a case of me supporting them to cope with what I was telling them, they just didn't understand, they confused it with me confusing my gender identity and so on, so they didn't really have any concept themselves of sexuality, I could tell that they didn't understand...

Unlike Stephen, Peter and Drew, Simon could not reconcile his sexuality with his faith; a faith which failed to recognise the diversity of sexuality and condemned non-procreative sexuality, even if it was apparently ignorant about the existence of individuals for whom same-sex desire was a cornerstone of their identity. Simon's evangelical church appeared to hold the view, as Simon himself did initially, that homosexual acts were just incidences of sin rather than anything more concrete. As these discussions with elders of his church



took place in the 1980s this suggests that even after limited decriminalisation discourses regarding homosexuality were stunted, certainly within that community.

Whereas one could argue that the insular, religious, environment within which Simon worked played a significant role in his inability to recognise a burgeoning sexuality, others were quite aware of their feelings and what they meant and faced a different struggle to come to terms with their sexuality and in trying to reconcile them with their religious beliefs. Joseph was born in Glasgow in 1959 and was brought up in a religious, Catholic household. Realising from a relatively early age that he was in some way 'different' Joseph was able to recognise that this difference related to sexual feelings:

JM – Was there any point in your childhood when you felt disconnected or different?

Joseph – Yeah absolutely. I'm not sure at what age but I certainly felt from an early age in terms of my sexuality, although I wouldn't have been able to articulate it, that I was different and that it was something that I had to hide and something that was probably sinful and needed to be battled against. I was certainly aware that I was attracted to boys as opposed to girls and I knew that was just not an acceptable way to behave in terms of how my family would view it and in terms of how wider society would view it.

Although Joseph admits that homosexuality, indeed any sexuality, was rarely if ever discussed in chapel, his Catholic upbringing left him with a strong moral code with regards to sex. From a young age Joseph was witness to the stereotypical images presented on film and to the playground taunts of 'poof' and 'queer'.

JM – When you heard that word, 'poof', as a 12 or 14 year old, what images did it conjure up?

Joseph – Em...it certainly conjured up the image of being queer, not quite right...probably psychologically flawed or mentally imbalanced...and I suppose the main thing it conjured up was a feeling that you were not a part of a group, you were isolated out there, you were very much on your own and you would be a figure of fun and contempt.

JM – Did you ever identify in any way with that image?

Joseph – Very much so, very much so, and that came primarily from religious beliefs because I did believe that, em, did believe that, em, we were created in the image of God and to be created in the image of God was to be heterosexual and to fulfil the expectations of the church and your family, to be attracted to women, to have a relationship and have children, to make a family, that was what I believed was the norm and

that was what I believed at that time made people happy, contented and fulfilled.

Joseph fully believed that maintaining a relationship with the Catholic Church would help rid him of his homosexual feelings and when he recognised that these feelings were not subsiding he left the church and joined The Salvation Army. For Joseph the Catholic 'prescription' had had no effect on his sexual desires and the move to an alternative, evangelical Christian organisation was an attempt to try another 'cure'.

The Salvation Army offered Joseph a slightly different take on his sexuality - it was okay to be gay as long as he did not act on his sexual drives. The feeling of community and a sense of belonging meant that Joseph, in the short term, felt better within himself and his struggle to overcome his latent sexual desires. However, this feeling of comfort and security was short lived:

JM – So, what was the Salvation Army like? Was it all you wanted?

Joseph – I think it's like most ghettos whether those be religious or, dare I say, homosexual ghettos, like most ghettos it is what you want for a while. What you want is a refuge, what you want is respite and what you want most of all is to feel included, valued, respected and yeah for a while it was all of those things until you begin to realise that actually the religious prescription isn't working... I felt valued but that doesn't last because you're gay and fundamentally the organisation that you belong to says that what you are and who you are is sinful and if that very patronising, very patronising response as well, you know where people say "We love the sinner, but not the sin"... Eventually, it's a kind of flawed theology, em, but the longer you maintain that belief, em, the more psychologically damaged you become as a person.

Experiencing cognitive dissonance regarding faith and sexuality is not an unusual feature of homo- and bisexuals' experiences with religion. Wolkomir has argued that studies focussing on homosexuals and Christianity have consistently shown that cognitive dissonance occurs frequently when individuals attempt to find a compromise position between their religious beliefs and their sexuality.<sup>517</sup> Cognitive dissonance can occur at two levels: internal, which is typified by a contradiction in an individual's own beliefs and feelings, and, external, which is typified by a contradiction between an individual's own beliefs and those of an external agent.<sup>518</sup> Some are able to live with this conflict, while

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<sup>517</sup> Wolkomir, "*Be Not Deceived*", p. 13

<sup>518</sup> Ibid.

others choose to revise how they approach matters of sexuality, and some abandon their faith altogether.<sup>519</sup> Joseph attempted all strategies in an effort to bring some accord in his life although all attempts to end the cognitive dissonance regarding faith and sexuality ultimately failed.

JM – So, during that period ...what prevented you from speaking to somebody?

Joseph - ...no I didn't speak to another human being and I didn't pick up the phone and speak to Switchboard, I spoke to Jesus, which again for a while was a reasonable coping strategy.

JM – Did he speak back?

Joseph – It wasn't the religious stuff as time went on. I'm not sure it was Jesus speaking back to me or...I'm actually sure it was myself saying, 'You're a good person, you're a person of value, a person of worth and your sexuality that is something that you should see as a gift not a curse', so, that was what Jesus said but it was actually what I had said.

JM – Was there a point when you decided that this religious thing and your sexuality couldn't go together and you had to make a break?

Joseph – Yeah, yeah, absolutely, but very late in life. I was 33 when I made that decision, when I finally accepted that I couldn't reconcile this anymore and actually I understood to be the life and soul of the party within this organisation and then to go to bed every night wishing that you didn't wake up in the morning and actually was fundamentally flawed and actually the word of God, em, in my view that wasn't how he intended me to live, with that degree of tension, unhappiness and...and certainly, you know, a loving God wouldn't want you to live that double life, so yes, absolutely, there came a point when I said that this was actually bollocks and I don't believe it anymore and couldn't live with it anymore, em, and had to be who I am, but very late in life.

As Joseph points out, it was only at the age of 33 that he was able to make a significant decision about how to deal with the intense pressures and strains that his sexuality was having on his religious faith and vice-versa. The fact that it wasn't until 1992 that Joseph felt comfortable enough in his sexuality to break from religion may again be tied to the lack of positive and accrediting discourses operating in Scotland, even in the years immediately preceding limited legalisation of homosexual acts. As a result of the strain Joseph had experienced he was 26 before he had any sexual contact with anyone. Through a combination of the attitudes held by his church, his peers and the popular press Joseph had been committed to rejecting homosexuality and despite the considerable inner turmoil this

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<sup>519</sup> Ibid., p.14

brought he managed to maintain his celibacy until he was 26 years old. Central to this reluctance to explore his sexuality was the intransigent attitude held by both churches he had been associated with. Although Joseph resented the homophobic stance taken by his churches he did not challenge their position until after he had left The Salvation Army:

JM – Were you ever in a position when you were in the Salvation Army of having to deal with a situation where somebody maybe looked for advice or they were discussing somebody who could be gay?

Joseph – Em, I've certainly been in a situation...I've never been called to deal with anybody in a congregation who is gay but I've certainly been in situations where people were discussing the subject and I remained non-committal, no' that I believe in sin anymore, but the sin of omission, but I basically didn't participate in the condemnation but I didnae challenge it, em, I was non-committal. I did have one or two friends who had to leave the Salvation Army because of fairly high-profile scandals in terms of tabloid newspaper coverage. I think it's fair to say that in terms of the subject I would have remained non-committal. I certainly wouldn't have been condemning people but I wouldn't have been challenging attitudes either.

JM – And how do you feel about that when you look back at that now?

Joseph – Disappointed in myself although I don't torture myself over it because...in many respects because of who I was it was a fairly understandable stance to take, em, but certainly in retrospect I wish I had been more honest, I wish I had been more brave in terms of tackling some of the homophobia that was around.

The issue of cognitive dissonance is particularly evident in the case of Joseph. He resented the attitude of his church yet did not challenge it. By the age of 27 Joseph had been meeting men in public toilets in Glasgow for sexual release yet still felt the heavy burden of his religious beliefs. Yet, the eventual resolution lay not with religion but with love. A brief but noteworthy relationship occurred out of an encounter in a Glasgow sauna and this relationship showed Joseph that homosexuality was not necessarily incompatible with living a contented life.

Joseph –...It was just a whole revelation, absolutely brilliant. Without being too dramatic about it, it was like getting out of prison, you know, being on this commercial gay scene and if people were fucked up and screwed up it wasnae obvious [laughs]. People were socialising, people were there to go and enjoy themselves and for the first time I realised that you could have this fairly open lifestyle. It was quite a revelation.

JM – What happened after the relationship ended?

Joseph – I was devastated [laughs] and decided then that I needed to leave the Salvation Army and have a life.

Joseph rejected his faith and chose to engage more fully with others sharing his sexual identity, just as Simon had done. For Joseph, being a gay man and being a man of faith are largely incompatible, certainly within an evangelical Christian movement. For some time Joseph had attempted to reconcile these two aspects of his life and his identity but there was no resolution to what, in his eyes, were competing aspects rather than complimentary ones.

The experiences discussed so far demonstrate interviewees whose attempts to reconcile their religious faith and their sexuality have ended in resolution or the rejection of religion. The next interviewee's experiences, although sharing many similar qualities has a slightly different resolution, a resolution, which was imposed rather than chosen. Ken was born in Lancashire in 1951 but moved to Dundee in 1972 after accepting a new post within his firm. From an early age Ken had been actively involved with an evangelical church as both a worshipper and as a teacher and lay preacher after studying divinity at university. The move to Dundee may have been initially driven by his employment but the move was also calculated to allow Ken to 'come out' far away from his local church and community:

Ken -...in '72 when I went up to Dundee, part of moving up to Dundee was the idea that's where I will be able to 'come out' but after a few weeks of complete loneliness and isolation I knew that the one place I would find comfort was the church. So, I went back and immediately I had a family again, they took me in and fed me, they took me to their houses and I think that was that major belonging bit that counted for me.

Ken mentions issues such as loneliness and isolation as central to his decision to return to evangelical Christianity. Loneliness and isolation as well as suicide and episodes of depression are common features amongst gay and bisexual men and it has been postulated that gay and bisexual men are up to 7 times more likely to attempt suicide.<sup>520</sup> However, Ken admits that to achieve that sense of belonging he craved he had to confront other issues that were part of his church and wider faith:

JM – Was there any problems with the fact that traditional attitudes from

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<sup>520</sup> For further discussion see; J. M. Saunders & S. M. Valente, 'Suicide Risk among Gay Men and Lesbians: A Review', *Death Studies* 11 (1987), pp. 1-23; R. W. Colcher, 'Counselling the Homosexual Alcoholic', *Journal of Homosexuality* 7 (1982), pp. 43-51; B. R. Rosser *et al*, 'The Relationship between Homosexuality, Internalized Homo-negativity, and Mental Health in Men Who Have Sex with Men', *Journal of Homosexuality* 55 (2008), pp. 185-203.

the church towards non-procreative sex?

Ken – Well, on and off. I suppose as I got older I got more involved in the messages and the message became more and more adult in a way, then there was a very strong message going through it and the same message going alongside it and actually [you] could be redeemed from that; could have a miracle, could have a cure and so whilst at the same time, you know, desperately knowing who I was and what I wanted, I spent many years hoping and trying for this situation to change and that would have been everything: to fit in. I'm easy, so if you want to go into a hellfire and brimstone sermon about homosexuality, I will preach one for you because in order to rid that demon and try and cure myself I could tell you all the reasons why you shouldn't be gay and bring up families and all that sort of thing. For years the message was very prevalent for me because it was of a more evangelical tradition and I got more involved....rather than coming along, singing a few songs, put your money in the tin, you're okay...

There exist some similarities of experience between Ken's story and that of Simon: both men were socialised within a strong, evangelical Christian environment that either condemned non-procreative sexual relations or ignored them completely. The feelings of isolation that Ken experienced could be attributed to the lack of contact Ken had with other gay men and wider, more positive, discourses on homosexuality. At this stage of his life Ken, like Joseph believed that there could be a religious 'cure' to his same-sex attractions:

JM – Do you think it was ever a realistic belief within yourself that this could disappear? That the religious side of this *could* help...

Ken – Yes, well, because I think that side of you, that side was always presenting you with the possibility of a miracle...and then when they run out of miracles the next thing was, em, find a nice girl, settle down and everything will be okay because at that stage I was just testing the people close to me; 'please hear the signals'...and the church almost did an arranged marriage for me, they found a desperate girl that thought I was okay and wanted desperately to settle down and have my babies and so that was the next level of, if you like, the 'cure'. But I mean, that was a pretty fatal cure for everybody involved and yet I hoped it would have been. It would, at that time, would have been easier, a lot easier.

Ken withdrew from the marriage preparations six months before the pre-arranged wedding date after several unsuccessful sexual encounters with his fiancée. It was at this point that Ken chose to take decisive action after noticing an advert aimed at gay Christians published in an evangelical church magazine. Ken's motivation for taking this step was directly linked to what he perceived was a drastic downturn in his mental health:

Ken -... I think that was where a lot of the depression and mental health problems came from, em, because of the bit about not being able to bear myself and to be under such pressure and...the anxiety...always having to concoct reasons why you are single and never actually being able to say 'this is what it's all about'.

Despite answering the advertisement and meeting up with a group of gay, evangelical Christians who were positive about both their sexuality and their faith, Ken was reluctant to engage with the gay 'scene', basic as it was, in Dundee. His church frowned on drinking and hostelry-based socialising. The influence of his religious upbringing and education was still denying Ken the ability to fully confront the cause of his anxiety and depression. Not only that, but a sense of internalised homophobia made it difficult for Ken to imagine what life as a homosexual man might be like:

Ken -...I even remember the first time I saw two guys kissing on television and I didn't like it, was uncomfortable about it: coming to terms with that bit...

Internalised homophobia is recognised by most researchers of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) issues as a stress-inducing scenario that many sexual minorities relate to or have experienced at some point in their lives. I. Meyer and L. Dean view internalised homophobia as 'the gay person's direction of negative social attitudes toward the self, leading to a devaluation of the self and resultant internal conflicts and poor self-regard'.<sup>521</sup> In the case of Ken who had limited exposure to any positive attitudes to homosexuality then it is not presumptuous to assume that dominant negative social attitudes were greatly inflamed by his church and his reading of his faith.

Ken's internalised homophobia dissipated substantially when he met an elderly gay male couple during a visit to a friend living in London. The impact of seeing two men co-habiting in a monogamous, loving relationship both moved and informed him. Previously, Ken was ignorant of whether a homosexual relationship was feasible as well as other aspects of same-sex desire:

Ken – I was always hoping that I could be, em, out and comfortable and I didn't have any image of a relationship because I didn't know how they did it, I only knew about sex and I did *want* sex, did *need* sex...My

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<sup>521</sup> I. Meyer & L. Dean, 'Internalized Homophobia, Intimacy and Sexual Behaviour among Gay and Bisexual Men', in Gregory M. Herek (ed.), *Stigma and Sexual Orientation: Understanding Prejudice against Lesbians, Gay Men and Bisexuals* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996), p. 161

fantasy was always, always men but I didn't have any concept that two of you could actually live together.

Being socialised into an environment where homosexual relationships could be witnessed was something of a culture shock for Ken coming from Dundee where gay and bisexual men, in the main, sought others in public toilets or by the riverside. The issue of cognitive dissonance is also notable in Ken's story and his attempts to marry his homosexuality together with his membership of an evangelical Christian church became more and more problematic. As Ken developed contact with other gay and bisexual Christians both in Dundee and further afield his relationship with members of his church became more strained as his private concerns seeped into his public life:

Ken -...I began to meet people with what you might call, a more sort of slightly gay, slightly camp lifestyle but not so theatrically camp...The interesting thing was when I was eventually chucked out of the church [after his associations and sexuality became known], over the next few years the number of people that have actually then sought me out "cos they too were gay, they too were lesbian", they now have somebody that could bridge the experience for them.

As mentioned previously, Thumma's research into the *Good News* evangelical organisation in the United States of America discovered evangelical Christians who had solved their internalised homophobia and cognitive dissonance by celebrating both their sexuality and their faith, the same could not be applied to Ken. Remaining active within his evangelical community would have meant remaining relatively silent about his sexuality and being prevented from engaging with issues pertaining to sexuality. In any event, it appears that Ken's association with individuals known to be homosexual led to his expulsion from his church which underlined to Ken the apparent incompatibility of his sexuality and his chosen faith. Ken did not choose to leave his church; this decision was made for him.



## Summary

In this chapter the data gathered has been examined to identify how GBM of religious faith have attempted to reconcile their sexual identity with their religious identity. There exist some similarities and consistencies throughout the experiences covered, but also some noteworthy divergences. It may be unsurprising that a Catholic priest with over half a century of experience is able to reconcile his faith with his sexuality no matter how unconvincing the form of resolution reached may appear to an outsider. As Daniel pointed out, according to Catholic theology, to be homosexual is not a sin but to engage in homosexual activity is, yet, Daniel brings up the issue of ‘priority of conscience’ where an individual must take responsibility for their actions and decide whether or not they can live with the consequences. This does appear to be an insufficient way to deal with any cognitive dissonance experienced and does seem to underline an area of conflict for Catholic homosexuals.

However, Stephen is a homosexual *and* a practicing Catholic who has achieved a level of cognitive harmony between both his religious identity and his sexual identity. To achieve this he has had to reappraise his relationship with God thereby rejecting the sin thesis of homosexuality as typified by Daniel’s approach to his Catholicism and by adopting a personal relationship with God over an institutional approach. This manoeuvre has allowed Stephen to continue in his faith without allowing the Catholic Church’s official position towards homosexuality to impinge on his ability to celebrate his faith.

Peter’s experiences as both a bisexual man and a Church of Scotland minister are slightly more complex. Not only did Peter have to confront an area of his life that sat at odds with the mainstream teachings of his church regarding sexuality, he has also had to maintain a loving relationship with his wife and family while conducting homosexual relationships in secret. To achieve a positive self-concept Peter explains his attitude to his bisexuality as a matter of personal conscience: whilst the official attitude of the church is still somewhat negative to active homo- and bisexuality Peter views this as an area of principled disagreement. On the matter of his infidelity Peter views this as something that cannot be avoided in an effort to prevent embarrassment and harm to his family. It could be argued that this is not an ideal solution and whether or not the secrecy with which Peter carries out his activities suggests the existence of cognitive dissonance is open to debate.

Drew shares aspects of Peter and Stephen's experiences in that he chose to follow a personal God over an institutional God with the regards to the issue of homosexuality. Drew was able to confront the issue of internal cognitive dissonance (the contradictions offered by his sexuality and his own faith) by viewing his sexuality as a central feature of his identity that sat comfortably alongside his position as a Christian and a theologian. To some extent, however, the external cognitive dissonance (his sexuality and how it is viewed by his church) he experienced still exerted enough pressure on him to lead to his decision that after more than 20 years as an Episcopalian/Anglican priest his future lay elsewhere. It could be argued that the absence of a discursive platform through which to debate and challenge his church's perceived attitude to homosexual activity meant that his external cognitive dissonance led to a growing disaffection with the *status quo*.

Simon's experiences as a minister of a Scottish evangelical Christian church show evidence of the pressures of both external and internal cognitive dissonance. Not only that, but his experiences also showed the potentially closeting impact of enveloping oneself within such a community. The argument that silence played a significant role in the prevention of sexuality and its diversity being discussed within a Scottish social and legal platform has already been discussed, and the same argument can be applied at a micro level when discussing religious communities. Issues surrounding sexuality were not a major concern for Simon when he started out in his chosen profession and because Simon fully submerged himself within his evangelical community, it could be argued that any concerns he may have had about the object of his sexual attraction the full implications of that were lost. Simon had married young and produced three children in a relatively short space of time therefore any concerns he had were obfuscated by his immediate responsibilities at both a professional and personal level. Yet, once Simon began to recognise that homosexuality was something being discussed in Scotland in the lead up to the change of law in 1980, the pressures upon him became more and more significant.

Simon's experience of trying to explain to his church the reasons why he wished to take a leave of absence underlines the ignorance at play. The total inability to understand Simon's concerns regarding his sexuality shows that his church engaged in little, if any, discussion regarding sexuality. In the end, Simon felt that it was in his own best interests to leave the church, end his marriage, and confront the issues directly leading to his deteriorating mental health. Once Simon had the opportunity to do this he was clear that his life as a man of faith was over, as he could not serve or worship in a church that was both ignorant of diversity and condemnatory of sexual sin in equal measures. Simon could not simply

alter aspects of his belief system to make his relationship with religion more palatable and, therefore, revisionism was not an option.

When Joseph felt that his relationship with the Catholic Church was not going to rid him of his homosexuality he sought another brand of faith that might be more successful. Joseph, unlike Simon, recognised his sexuality from an early age and immediately viewed it as incompatible with leading a Christian life and viewed it as a scourge. Joseph was an interviewee for whom his sexuality caused the most inner turmoil and at one point he viewed death as a potential release. Internal cognitive dissonance, coupled with external cognitive dissonance meant that Joseph's relationship with his faith was, from the beginning, particularly destructive. There is little evidence that Joseph was able to consider adapting his belief system to incorporate two valid identities: that of a Christian and that of a homosexual. There existed a firm belief that if Joseph prayed enough then salvation from a life of sexual deviancy would be delivered. However, when the religious prescription failed he rejected his evangelical church and his entire religious belief system.

Ken told a very similar story. Involved with evangelical Christianity from a young age he was conscious that homosexuality was not, in his opinion, conducive to leading a life of religiosity. Again, the issue of closeting is apparent in this case. Ken's ignorance about the possibility of engaging in homosexual relationships may well have been influenced by his submersion in a religious community where discussions regarding sexuality were suppressed. The issue of social and cultural silence also rears its head as Ken felt that in Scotland there was little positive discussion about homosexuality with which to engage. The issues of internal and external cognitive dissonance are also apparent as Ken attempted unsuccessfully to negotiate a position that recognised both his sexual and religious identity. Indeed, when suspicions regarding his sexuality were aroused Ken was thrown out of his church.

In light of the experiences described in this chapter it is understandable as to why many of the respondents saw the influence of the church as instrumental in the delay in bringing legal equity between England and Wales, and Scotland. For many, religious faith and active homosexuality were incompatible and for the majority of respondents their relationship with religion dissipated quite considerably over their life span. However, some interviewees were able to negotiate a position that recognised both their religious faith and their sexual identity through a process of mediation. Attempts to settle issues of cognitive dissonance were central to successful mediations and this is apparent, to a degree,

in the cases of Stephen, Peter, Daniel and Drew. Interestingly, when Peter, Stephen and Daniel were asked why Scotland had to wait 13 years for legal equity with England and Wales, they indicated that they felt that Scotland's churches had played an active role in preventing this from happening. Despite the fact that they had reached, to differing extents, a point where they could celebrate their sexuality and their religious faith, they opined that the very churches in which they worshipped had actively sought to prevent LGBT individuals in Scotland from feeling that they were valued citizens of Scottish society.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine how gay and bisexual males (GBM) in Scotland formed a sexual identity during a period when all homosexual acts were outlawed. To examine this issue, the thesis has investigated the social, legal, political, and cultural climate in Scotland with regards to homosexuality and homosexual law reform during the period 1940 to 1980. It was in 1980 that new legislation was introduced, which partially decriminalised homosexual acts and brought Scotland in line with England and Wales, where similar legislation had been introduced in 1967.

Therefore, to examine how the processes of sexual identity formation operated it was important to examine the reasons why Scotland was excluded from the 1967 legislation. Identifying what discourses were operating regarding homosexuality is central to establishing grounds for the delay in homosexual law reform, and, identifying dominant discourses would offer an appreciation of the moral climate in which individuals formed sexual identities. The introduction to this thesis outlines the research questions that have directed the focus of this research and offers new perspectives on homosexual law reform in Scotland and the concomitant development of sexual identities of 24 GBM who had experience of living in Scotland during this critical period.

#### ***Scottish Peculiarities***

The main reasons, which have been forwarded for the exclusion of Scotland from the 1967 legislation, relate to the distinctness of Scots Law, the relative independence of Scottish churches, and also cultural factors, which inhibited the development of non-moralising discourses regarding same-sex desire. Popular discourses regarding homosexuality in Scotland for much of the twentieth century focused primarily on the effeminacy and predatory nature of the homosexual. Such discourses not only operated within legal and political circles and prompted institutional responses that favoured a policy of silence regarding homosexual behaviour, but also within social circles. This policy of silence affected legal discussions, media discussions, and informal discussions of the issue of homosexuality. This silence was temporarily suspended by the publicity that erupted with

the publication of the Wolfenden Report in 1957, and with the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which brought limited decriminalisation of homosexual acts to England and Wales.

It is certainly accurate to argue, in line with Davidson and Davis, that the distinctness and relative independence of Scots Law seriously hindered the push for homosexual law reform north of the border.<sup>522</sup> However, as this thesis has demonstrated, these procedural differences and the issue of ‘public interest’ saw Scots Law being valorised in the Houses of Parliament, which, in effect, reinforced the legal position in Scotland. Any appetite for reforming a legal system that rarely prosecuted private, consensual homosexual acts quickly dissipated in the immediate aftermath of the publication of the Wolfenden Report. Further, the only strongly dissenting voice to be heard from the inner workings of the Wolfenden Committee came from James Adair, a former procurator fiscal and church elder, who in effect bridged two key Scottish institutions – the law and the church. What this thesis has shown is that early discussions regarding Scottish law reform exhibited a form of proto-nationalism that viewed Scots Law and any reforms as a distinctly Scottish issue. The valorisation of the Scottish legal system underlined its separateness and elevated it to a position of a benchmark against which English law could be measured, effectively bypassing the question of reforming Scots Law.

Successive Lords Advocate in Scotland had followed an unwritten rule that private consensual homosexual acts would not be prosecuted. A variety of connected reasons have been forwarded for this decision, primarily by Davidson and Davis.<sup>523</sup> Firstly, the issue of corroboration under Scots Law meant that it was extremely difficult to achieve convictions. Secondly, prosecutions in Scotland were only pursued if the matter was in the ‘public interest’, and thirdly, the Scottish legal establishment demonstrated a culture of anti-homosexual feeling and was thus unreceptive to homosexual law reform. Weeks has described a culture of restraint that existed in early to mid-twentieth century Britain regarding issues of sexuality, which enforced ‘severe injunctions on what could be said and not said, both in public and private’.<sup>524</sup> This restraint - or silence as has been demonstrated in this thesis with reference to Scotland - also typified institutional responses to homosexuality. Discussions in the Houses of Parliament in the 1930s regarding the issue of homosexual prostitution demonstrated the desire of Scottish legislators to hide such activities, as pursuing them would potentially reveal the ubiquitous nature of

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<sup>522</sup> Davidson & Davis, “A Field for Private Members”, pp. 174-201; \_\_\_\_\_ ‘Sexuality and the State’, pp. 533-558

<sup>523</sup> Davidson & Davis, “A Field for Private Members”, pp. 174-201

<sup>524</sup> Weeks, *The World We Have Won*, p. 37

homosexuality and lead to its propagation. This culture of silence was not limited to legal or political arenas, but was also evident in the provision of sex education and, to some extent, in discussions regarding sexuality within religious institutions. The interviews with the GBM who participated in this research demonstrate the general absence of open discourses concerning homosexuality.

The Scottish Minorities Group (SMG), which became Scotland's foremost homosexual rights organisation, entered this arena in 1969. As this thesis has demonstrated the SMG also saw the issue of homosexual law reform in Scotland as a distinctly Scottish issue, and it is telling that the majority of its early campaigning was focused on the actions of the Scottish legal community, Scottish police forces, and the medical profession north of the border. Laws could only be changed in London but to change attitudes in Scotland might lead to a reassessment of the decision to exclude Scotland from the 1967 legislation. The SMG was a Scottish organisation, and it had to contend with two distinct areas: on the one hand, Scottish cultural, institutional, and social attitudes, Scots Law, Scottish churches and the effect they had on public opinion, and, on the other hand, national issues relating to the United Kingdom, evident in politics, and medicine. In the immediate aftermath of the publication of the Wolfenden Report in 1957, homosexuality became an issue for discussion. But, within months the Scottish press had discarded the issue of homosexual law reform, and the culture of silence was reinstated. It was left to the SMG to reignite the debate on homosexual law reform, but it had to deal with a reluctant audience.

The SMG was a small, tight-knit organisation, which engaged in discussion rather than confrontation. This approach was adopted because it was considered the one most likely to succeed considering the apparently conservative attitudes to homosexuality that existed in Scotland. Such attitudes were evident in the responses to the issue of homosexual law reform from Scottish religious institutions, the largest of which, the Church of Scotland, was outwardly hostile to any proposed relaxation of laws governing homosexual acts. However, publicly hostile attitudes belied considerable ambivalence on the issue. The Church of Scotland Moral Welfare Committee (CSMWC) had already established contact with the SMG by 1969, and had demonstrated a history of sympathy, rather than solidarity, towards those of a homosexual disposition. The Roman Catholic Church in Scotland, publicly silent on the issue of law reform had also been supportive of the SMG, albeit at a pastoral rather than political level, which is a significant contrast to the public policy of the church today. However, GBM in Scotland would not have been aware of these facts, unless they had been intimately acquainted with the SMG and its work. The interviews

conducted with the 24 GBM for this research has established that the vast majority of interviewees were aware only of the public hostility these churches fostered. Yet, to portray Scotland's main church, the Church of Scotland, as wholeheartedly against homosexual law reform would be misleading, as such a statement ignores the debates, which raged within the church's leadership in the years following the publication of the Wolfenden Report.

Yet, the relationship between the Church of Scotland and the SMG faltered when the church realised that pastoral care would not be sufficient to alleviate the problems encountered by a group of politically and culturally conscious activists. Robert Orr has argued that the SMG was ignorant of the forces and discourses that aimed to marginalise homosexuals in Scottish society.<sup>525</sup> However, as has been demonstrated, the SMG went to considerable lengths to counter the negative discourses espoused by various Scottish institutions including the Church of Scotland. The relationship with this church had floundered once the SMG had intimated that their objectives lay beyond offering counselling and social support and were directed towards challenging the legal and social discourses, which emphasised the moral degeneracy of homosexuality.

The SMG had to contend with a culture of silence regarding homosexual law reform, but also had to contend with overt homophobia when discussions were prompted. While a more positive or accrediting discourse regarding homosexuality was beginning to operate in England in the years immediately preceding 1967, and in the years after,<sup>526</sup> Scotland held fast to negative discourses. These moralising discourses emphasised the potentially degenerative effect homosexuality could have on the nation's morals, and the potentially dysgenic effect it could produce in future generations. Such an approach was evident in the words and actions of James Adair, the most outspoken and dissenting voice from within the Wolfenden Committee. Adair's reservations related to the potentially propagating effect that liberalised laws on homosexuality would have on homosexuality in the general population. After the legal change in England and Wales in 1967, Adair was to comment on how morally decadent these nations had become.

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<sup>525</sup> Orr, 'Capitalism, Patriarchy and Gay Oppression', pp. 10-23

<sup>526</sup> In Jivani, *It's not Unusual*, the author hints at an immediate post-Wolfenden change, and, a more noticeable change in the years preceding and following the 1967 legislation. In Cook, *A Gay History of Britain*, the author suggests that 1960s saw a change in the way homosexuality was discussed in a cultural context. pp. 173-177



The publication of the Wolfenden Report in 1957 may have been a trigger for the setting of a new ‘moral economy’, as Weeks has suggested,<sup>527</sup> but chiefly in England. Cook has suggested the 1960s saw a shift in the cultural climate of Britain that brought the Wolfenden Report’s recommendations back onto the political agenda,<sup>528</sup> but such a statement seems to ignore the continued lack of appetite for reform in Scotland. Weeks has positioned the emergence of a more confident attitude towards sexuality in the 1970s<sup>529</sup> and this is perhaps reflected in the manner by which the SMG approached the issue of law reform in Scotland during that decade. Yet, the ‘closeted queer’<sup>530</sup> was still very much the norm for many GBM in Scotland by this time. This thesis has suggested that the effects of Wolfenden in Scotland were much less instrumental. Davidson and Davis have argued that Scottish public debates on homosexuality appeared to be still dominated by a desire to limit any corruption of Scotland’s moral fibre.<sup>531</sup> Certainly, this thesis offers considerable evidence to support this argument. The SMG were operating in this culture of opposition to homosexual law reform and thus sought not to change society, but to educate society about the problems that homosexuals in Scotland faced. Orr has claimed that the SMG aimed to highlight the respectability of most homosexuals and to integrate them into society, while avoiding direct confrontation of the most insidious of negative discourses concerning homosexuality. Considering the level of opposition to homosexual law reform in Scotland then it could be argued that the SMG’s adoption of a non-confrontation policy was the most rational way of dealing with anti-homosexual feelings in Scotland. My examination of the SMG archives has offered a more nuanced understanding of the social and political climate in which the organisation operated.

### ***Negative Discourses***

While it is entirely accurate to suggest that the independence of Scots Law played a significant part in the decision to exclude Scotland from the 1967 legislation, it is also important to recognise the influence of other negative discourses regarding homosexuality that operated in Scotland. This thesis has offered a novel approach to examining how influential such discourses were in the identity formation and perceptions of GBM in Scotland. The voices, perceptions, and experiences of Scottish GBM have been analysed in an effort to reconstruct the social arena in which they operated. Whilst existing research

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<sup>527</sup> Weeks, *The World We Have Won*, pp. 53-54; *Sex, Politics & Society*, pp. 243-244

<sup>528</sup> Cook, *A Gay History of Britain*, pp. 175-176

<sup>529</sup> Weeks, *The World We Have Won*, p. 59

<sup>530</sup> Ibid.

<sup>531</sup> Davidson & Davis, “A Field for Private Members”, p. 199

has tended to examine the processes and politics of homosexual law reform in Scotland by focusing on institutional responses, this thesis offers an examination of individual responses.

This thesis has demonstrated that the majority of interviewees were exposed to the most pervasive negative discourses regarding homosexuality in their adolescence and early adulthood. The idea that the homosexual was an effeminate, threatening, criminalised and predatory ‘other’ was a discourse consistently encountered by the majority of interviewees. Even when interviewees, during their formative years, perceived themselves to be gay, bisexual, or just different they did not view this stigmatised stereotype as being representative of them. The absence of a positive discourse regarding same-sex desire led to feelings of isolation, self-doubt, and loneliness. In some cases early sexual experiences with other men and boys had an affirming effect and brought the realisation that they were not unique. For several interviewees sexual experiences in their youth, with adults, had a positive effect on their self-perception despite the dangers that such encounters brought. Yet, in many cases there were other factors that may have influenced individual decisions about who they were and what they did about it. Brian, for example, was brought up in a middle-class household and was aware of homosexuality from an early age through literature. He also worked within the theatrical profession which, it could be argued, was more tolerant than most. Alastair was a member of a select group of older middle-class homosexuals which introduced him to a distinctly middle-class environment which effectively acted as a buffer against the excesses of homophobia that existed at the time. Colin’s involvement with political radicalism, coupled with his travelling experiences, opened up his attitudes towards his sexuality and undoubtedly his migration to London exposed him to a critical mass of homosexuals he was unlikely to find in Angus, or arguably, Edinburgh.

Negative discourses regarding homosexuality could be found in legal and political objections to the possibility of legal reform. They could also be found in common parlance, with the stereotype of the effeminate, predatory, and lurid homosexual. Throughout the 1960s and into the 1970s discussions regarding homosexual law reform for Scotland in the Houses of Parliament were dominated by either silence or occasionally vehement rejections of the need for change. Even when more favourable discussions about law reform took place they tended to focus on the legal anomaly present in Scotland – that the laws governing private homosexual acts were not being enforced and the potential embarrassment this could cause – rather than widening legal rights to Scottish

homosexuals. Negative attitudes to homosexuality and the threat it posed to society lingered on after the law had been changed in England and Wales in 1967. Some legislators spoke of the threat homosexuality posed to the law and morality while others consistently linked homosexuality to paedophilia. Such stereotypes were identified in all of the narratives collected for this thesis. Negative or stigmatising discourses could also be located in the public objections to legal reform offered by some of Scotland's religious institutions. The public attitudes of Scotland's churches did little to alleviate the stress and isolation felt by many GBM in Scotland. There existed a consistent belief across the majority of the interviewees that religion had played a significant part in denying legal equity between Scotland, and England. It is certainly accurate to suggest that Scotland's main churches had not been immediately in favour of homosexual law reform but, as has been demonstrated in this thesis, legal factors lay at the root of this decision.

It may be possible to argue that interviewees' recollections of the struggle for legal reform may have been affected by more contemporary opposition to homosexual rights exhibited by churches such as the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland. Nevertheless, in the interviews conducted with men who had an active church connection, episodes of cognitive dissonance could be found regularly. These interviewees struggled to be faithful to religions that apparently sought to exclude them, or to categorise them as dangerous or morally challenged. The most effective tactic employed by religious GBM was to attempt to renegotiate their individual relationship with God, or conversely roundly reject religious belief. Within the testimonies of those interviewees who remain committed Christian theologians, sexuality had become a personal matter rather than a church matter. Although religious discourses regarding homosexuality had a powerful impact on identity formation, individuals navigated and negotiated these negative and hostile discourses and did not meekly accept them.

Negative or stigmatising discourses emanating from the medical community, the religious community, and legislators all impacted upon identity formation among GBM. Arguably, negative medical discourses had the least influence on the interview group as a whole, and this is perhaps related to access to medical discussions. However, in two cases, those of the interviewees Morris and Frankie, a negative medical discourse significantly affected identity formation and self-perception. Notably, both of these individuals actively sought medical advice with regards to their sexuality and thereby were exposed to negative medical discourses. Most of the other interviewees saw no value in viewing their sexuality as a medical problem.

Whereas the 1960s seemed to bring a multiplicity of discourses on sexuality, and saw the liberation of homosexuality from criminality south of the border, few challenging discourses were operating in Scotland. Undoubtedly, the SMG had attempted to introduce more positive discourses concerning homosexuality. In the 1970s, when the SMG was most active, attempts were made to challenge negative discourses, yet the majority of the interviewees consulted for this research had not been aware of these attempts. This suggests that although some positive or accrediting discourses existed in Scotland after the events of 1967, accessing these proved extremely difficult for the majority of the interviewees.

Scottish cities did not have the critical mass of homosexuals that could be found in metropolises such as London, and the embedded and unchallenged nature of negative discourses made the availability of support limited. More positive discourses regarding homosexuality which grew in England in the years immediately preceding and following the 1967 legislation did not take root in Scotland, and this can be linked to a combination of cultural and legal factors that were peculiar to this nation. These factors are crucial when interpreting the availability and impact of both negative and positive discourses of homosexuality. These findings reflect the pervasive nature of negative discourses on homosexuality, which could be found in other more provincial areas of Great Britain.<sup>532</sup> Rosenfeld's model of accrediting and discrediting discourses offers insight into the responses to accrediting and discrediting discourses regarding homosexuality. However, this thesis has offered a more comprehensive account of the influence of discourses on identity formation in Scotland, and specifically, how factors such as geographical location, social class, religion, and the (lack of) availability of support impacted on the recognition and internalisation of operational discourses.

### ***Individual Responses***

The absence of positive or accrediting discourses seems to have been a major feature in the lives of Scottish GBM. The responses from the individuals interviewed offer an interpretation of how discourse can influence self-perception and identity formation. The pervasive nature of negative discourses coupled with the very real threat of criminalisation led individuals to attempt to compartmentalise their lives. A public/private divide is

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<sup>532</sup> For an example of this with regards to Yorkshire, see Lee, 'Exploring the Identities, Welfare Needs, and Service use Experiences of Gay Men in Later Life', pp. 166-167

recognisable in the majority of the interviews. The public world was dominated by forging the illusion that they belonged to the heterosexual world and various strategies were employed to ensure that they conformed to the expectations of a heteronormative society. Passing as heterosexual was the most commonly and routinely used strategy. For some of the interviewees, dating women, and even marrying and starting a family, were strategies adopted. However, maintaining a façade of heterosexual respectability came with a price, and the majority of interviewees who followed this strategy found that it had a heavy price, and in many ways exacerbated feelings of isolation, loneliness and shame.

The legacy of apparently stubborn and immovable negative discourses regarding homosexuality in Scotland is identifiable in the recollections of many of the interviewees included in this thesis. Central to this thesis has been the argument that the absence of strongly positive discourses regarding homosexuality in Scotland has had a significant effect on identity formation and self-perception in GBM who have remained in Scotland, but could also potentially be related to issues such as social class and religious beliefs. Immersion within a protective, middle-class homosexual subculture offered some form of shelter from the most negative effects of stigmatising discourses. Crucially, the immersion in this form of network also allowed a greater freedom of expression and offered the opportunity to come into contact with alternative and more positive discourses of homosexuality.

However, for the majority of the interviews the absence of supportive networks led to a continuing feeling of disconnectedness. This disconnectedness has led to many of the interviewees feeling ambivalent towards the later generations of GBM in Scotland who have been able to connect with a more positive discourse regarding homosexuality. A number of the interviewees view the changes that have occurred in more recent times as having bypassed them. This thesis has demonstrated that the stigma associated with homosexuality that operated under discrediting discourses maintained its grip on a number of the interviewees long after such discourses had been challenged elsewhere.

### ***Contribution to Historiography***

British histories of homosexuality and homosexual law reform have to date largely neglected the Scottish dimension. This thesis has added considerably to the small but focused literature that has examined Scotland and homosexual law reform. Additionally, it has contributed significantly to sexual identity formation research and offers new perspectives on cultural, social, and sexual history research. This exploration of homosexuality in Scotland has incorporated two approaches: an examination of institutional responses to homosexuality in Scotland, and, a bottom-up approach which as focused on individual GBM, their responses, their perceptions, and their narratives of identity.

Cultural silences and negative discourses can influence identity formation. This thesis has demonstrated that engagement with a positive or accrediting discourse regarding homosexuality was much more difficult in Scotland where the cultural changes often associated with the 1960s and 1970s appeared to have had less impact. Building a model of sexual identity formation based upon interaction with discrediting and accrediting discourses is much more problematic when related to Scotland. The issue of silence is noteworthy. Although groups such as the SMG were creating more positive discourses in the 1970s these were operating within overarching negative discourses, perpetuated by many in the legal establishment, and amongst Scottish churches.

This thesis has added significantly to the historical developments surrounding the Wolfenden Report and British society. A variety of theoretical perspectives have been forwarded with reference to what significance Wolfenden has had on the regulation and discussion of homosexuality. Authors such as Weeks have viewed Wolfenden as having been a crucial moment in a twentieth century historiography of homosexuality. Wolfenden's recommendations saw the increased regulation of public morals while at the same time loosening the law's immediate grip on the private worlds of homosexuals. Weeks has also argued that it brought about a new and distinct homosexual identity recognised in law.<sup>533</sup> Other authors such as Mort suggest the grip on the private world of the homosexual simply changed hands from the law (power in one form) to medicine and social services (power in another form), other spheres of social control that invaded private

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<sup>533</sup> Weeks, *The World We Have Won*, pp. 54-55

spaces.<sup>534</sup> However, Wolfenden's implications for Scotland were not so easily defined. The regulation of public morality, particularly regarding homosexuality, had been a consistent theme across the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Scots Law was specifically tuned to regulate public morals while at the same time distancing itself from private morals. Whereas Leslie Moran has argued that the limited decriminalisation of private homosexual acts in England and Wales would allow private immoralities to disappear into seclusion,<sup>535</sup> this thesis has demonstrated that in Scotland this had been the legal position for some time, although minus the concomitant emergence of new legally defined homosexual identities.

Admittedly, the influence of discourses in identity formation or in projects of remembering can be overstated. However, as this thesis has shown, the impact that dominant discourses had on identity formation can be clearly seen within the narratives offered for this thesis. These narratives have offered a unique opportunity to explore not only the ways in which GBM negotiated such discourses to create their own identities but also in the way in which they achieved composure in understanding and expressing often difficult experiences.

## **Reflections**

The changes in law that have occurred in Scotland since 1980, and the changes in attitudes too, did not bring about the same responses from all the GBM interviewed. The combination of oral history and sexual identity theory in this thesis has established the complexities and difficulties faced by individuals in constructing narratives of identity from a period in recent history where identity options have been limited by the dominance of negative discourses of homosexuality. Oppositional discourses were largely absent and interviewees were met with cultural silences. The combination of negative discourses and cultural silences resulted in difficulties in forming identities that allowed the interviewees to achieve a sense of composure about their past. This can be seen in the disconnectedness that many of the interviewees feel about the more recent cultural changes regarding sexuality in Scottish society.

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<sup>534</sup> For example see, Mort, 'Sexuality: Regulation and Contestation', pp. 38-51; \_\_\_\_\_, 'Mapping Sexual London', pp. 92-113

<sup>535</sup> Leslie Moran, 'The Homosexualisation of English Law', in Carl Stychin & Didi Herman (eds.) *Legal Inversions: Lesbians, Gay Men and the Politics of Law* (Philadelphia: Temple, 1995), p. 22

Many of the GBM interviewed are ‘out’ but only to their nearest and dearest. For many of the participants there still exists a discomfort about open expressions of homosexuality. This is also evident in the difficulties I encountered in recruiting participants. I appreciated that this research was dealing with a potentially sensitive subject, but this was more fully underlined once the interviews had begun and participants spoke in detail about the challenges they had faced living during a period when homosexual acts were outlawed in Scotland, and when there existed a social climate hostile to same-sex desire. Discretion, fear, and secrecy had been central to these men’s lives, and some of the experiences of these men were distressing. However, there was also some nostalgia about a period of history where suppression of diverse sexualities was the norm. Many of the respondents spoke of their enjoyment of leading a double life and the thrills that secrecy brought with it. I had perhaps been unprepared for some of the revelations, which have emerged from the data analysis, and, if I were able to conduct the same research again, I would perhaps have made different choices.

### ***Avenues for Future Research***

The analysis in this thesis of self-perception and identity formation among GBM during a period when all homosexual acts were illegal in Scotland has highlighted areas for further research. Several of the interviewees recalled their experiences of using public spaces for sexual purposes. The development of homosexual subcultures in large urban environments in Scotland is a particularly interesting area. How certain urban spaces came to be associated with GBM in Scotland is an area worthy of further analysis. Potentially, such a study would be able to offer an insight into what type of men used these spaces. Certainly, with regards to this research, there appears to be a link between social class and the use of urban spaces. Linked to this is the development of a gay commercial scene in the cities of Glasgow and Edinburgh. Interviewees have hinted at their experiences in commercial premises that offered GBM a relatively safe setting for socialising and potentially for networking, and for romantic and/or sexual assignations.

The interpretation offered by this thesis as to why Scotland only offered limited decriminalisation of homosexual acts in 1980, when similar legislation had been applied to England and Wales in 1967 also raises questions for future research. As the vast majority of homosexual offences appear to fall under the remit of the lower courts in Scotland, it would be worthwhile to examine how these courts treated the accused, and to discover what offences GBM had allegedly committed. This could be achieved by further



examination of Sheriff Court records pertaining to homosexual offences. Such an investigation would have the potential to offer further insight into the operation of legal discourses on homosexuality and to examine how, if at all, they changed over the period of the twentieth century.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1

#### Question/Topic Guide for Interviews

##### Basic Questions Template

Could you tell me what year you were born?

Whereabouts were you born?

Where did you spend your childhood?

If someone were to ask you to define yourself in one sentence, how would you do that?

How would you define your sexual identity?

Has the way in which you define your sexual identity changed over your lifespan?

##### Childhood Experiences

Looking back on your childhood, was there anything that made you feel ‘different’ or ‘disconnected’ from your peers?

Did other people ever treat you differently as a child?

Did you have a good relationship with your parents/guardians?

What social class background were you from? How important were issues of class to you as you grew up?

Do you recall any early sexual experiences?

When were you first aware that you might be ‘different’? How did this manifest itself? What kind of emotions did you experience during this period?

Were issues regarding sexuality ever discussed by your a) peers and b) by adults?

- Were you aware of any 'names' used to describe 'homosexuals' or those who may not have 'conformed'?
- When did you first become aware of the term 'homosexual'?

What was your family's religious background? Did that play any significant part in your childhood?

Were there any popular representations of 'homosexuality'? Could you identify with any of these? How was homosexuality represented (moral, medical, legal, other)?

Did you feel any pressure to conform?

### Early Adulthood

When and why did you leave home? How old were you?

Did your sexuality play any role in your decision to leave home? (If applicable)

Were you sexually active before leaving home? Did this change once you had left home?

Was your sexuality playing a significant role in your life by this stage? Was there accompanying pressures and concerns regarding your sexual preferences?

Did you attempt to disguise or hide your sexuality by dating members of the opposite sex? How concerned were you about the opinions or suspicions of others?

How aware were you of the legal situation regarding homosexual acts? Did this play a part in your life?

Did you ever discuss or contemplate discussing your sexuality with a medical professional or a religious figure? If so/If not, why?

Did you actively seek others of a similar persuasion? If so, how?

Did the people you meet conform to the images of the non-heterosexual you had met? Did sharing a common non-heterosexual identity unite in any way the people you met?

Did you conform to the image of masculinity at that time? What was the masculine ideal?

### The 'Scene'

(May lead on from previous questions) Would you say that there was a 'gay scene' during this period? If so, what was it like?

Were there 'rules'? Was risk a factor? Any language used specifically in that environment?

Were you aware of the 'cruising' grounds, cottages, and public spaces?

Did the people who frequented the 'scene' identify themselves as 'homosexual'? What types of people were they? (Gay, straight, lesbian, bisexual, trans)

Did people from different social classes mix? Indeed, were issues of class or even religion evident?

Did you feel as if you 'belonged'?

How significant a role was your sexuality playing in your life by this stage?

### Employment

Did your sexuality affect any choices you made regarding career direction?

Was your sexuality known within your working environment? If so, what effect did this have?

Did you actively keep personal issues private? If so, why?

### Activism

Prior to and post-1980 did you ever get involved with any organisation that was attempting to bring attention to 'queer' issues?

If so, what was your motivation?

### Coming Out

Did you go through a process of 'coming out'? If so, what were your motivations for doing so? What type of reaction did you receive from family, friends, work colleagues etc? Did it affect the way people treated you?

Did you believe that it was important to ‘come out’?

Did ‘coming out’ bring added pressures?

How important was your sexuality in defining who you were? Has your attitude to issues of your identity changed over the years? Do you feel that you cemented any form of ‘identity’ during that period?

Were you comfortable as being described as a gay/bisexual man?

What kind of emotions describes your experience as a gay/bisexual man in Scotland pre-1980 and post-1980?

How did your life change as a result in the change of law? Why do you think that Scotland was different –why the longer wait?

And finally...

Any further issues you wish to bring up? Any questions?

## Appendix 2

### Recruitment Breakdown

Interviewee	Recruitment Method
Alastair	Snowball
Brian	Advert
Chris	Snowball
Colin	Via Contact
Daniel	Snowball
Donald	Advert
Drew	Snowball
Duncan	Snowball
Ed	Advert
Frankie	Advert
Harry	Snowball
Joseph	Snowball
Ken	Advert
Morris	Advert
Peter	Advert
Robert	Advert
Samuel	Advert
Sean	Advert
Simon	Snowball
Stephen	Advert
Stewart	Advert
Theo	Snowball
Tom	Snowball
Walter	Via Contact

## Appendix 3

### Information Sheet

#### **'Gay and Bisexual Men, Self-Perception and Identity in Scotland, 1940 to 1980.'**

Department of Economic and Social History  
University of Glasgow

'Gay and Bisexual Men, Self-Perception and identity in Scotland, 1940 to 1980' is a PhD research project being carried out in the Department of Economic and Social History at the University of Glasgow. It is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.

This research project focuses on gay/bi-sexual men in Scotland who have experience of living during a period when all homosexual acts between consenting males were illegal. It explores the way in which gay men, during this period, formed an identity based on their sexuality at a time when positive role models were absent from the social environment. The theories that tried to explain homosexuality during this period tended to be based on morality, sickness and the law.

This research project aims to interview gay/bisexual men who have experience of living at any time during the period 1940-1980, and to understand how they dealt with their sexuality considering homosexual acts were illegal, and wider society appeared to view such activities with suspicion.

Interviews will be conducted at mutually convenient times and locations and should you agree to participate you are free to withdraw at any time. The interviews should last at least one hour. All interviews will be recorded, but when the material is used for the research project all personal details will be anonymised and identifying features will be removed.\*

At the end of the project the interviews will be used, within a PhD thesis, and may be used in other future publications (with the same conditions of anonymity). While in use for the study, all recorded materials and transcripts will be stored safely and securely and access will be restricted to those engaged in this research.

Your permission will be requested to deposit the interviews at the end of the study with the Economic and Social Data Service, a national service based at the University of Essex, where access will be granted to authorised researchers. If you do not wish your interview to go to the ESDS, it will be securely stored in the University's Record Centre where only Mr Meek will have access.

If you would be interested in participating in this research project please contact Jeff Meek at the Department of Economic and Social History, Lilybank House, Bute Gardens, University of Glasgow, G12 8RT. Telephone: 0141-330-8118 (Confidential Voicemail Service) or email: [j.meek.1@research.gla.ac.uk](mailto:j.meek.1@research.gla.ac.uk). I will be happy to answer any further questions you may have about the research before the interview.

\* Confidentiality of the data will be preserved except in cases where the interviewee reveals information related to an involvement in any currently criminal activities. This condition of confidentiality may also need to be broken if the interviewer believes there is a risk of harm to the interviewee or to others.

In the unlikely event that you have any problems arising from participating in this study please feel free to discuss them with Mr Meek. If you have any further enquiries as to the nature of this study you may contact Dr. Rosemary Elliot at the Department of Economic and Social History, Lilybank House, Bute Gardens, University of Glasgow, G12 8RT.

## Appendix 4

### Consent Form

#### **‘Gay and Bisexual Men, Self-Perception and Identity in Scotland, 1940 to 1980.’**

Department of Economic and Social History  
University of Glasgow

*This data is being collected as part of a research project concerned with Gay Men, Self-Perception and Identity in Scotland, 1940-1980 by the Department of Economic and Social History of the University of Glasgow in collaboration with the Economic and Social Research Council. The information that you supply and that may be collected as part of this research project will be entered into a filing system and will only be accessed by authorised persons of the University of Glasgow or its agents or its collaborators in this research project. The information will be retained by the University and will only be used for the purpose of (a) research, and (b) for statistical and audit purposes. By supplying such information you consent to the University storing the information for the stated purposes. The information is processed by the University in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.*

#### **Pre-Interview**

I have received an information sheet about this project and have had all my questions answered.

I agree to be interviewed by Mr. Jeff Meek as part of the above research project.

I agree for my interview to be audio-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the project at any time.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_



**Post-Interview**

I hereby assign the copyright in my contribution to Mr. Jeff Meek.

I have been made aware that the audio-recordings will be retained and stored securely, transcribed and that all personal details will be anonymised.

\*I wish/do not wish to view the transcripts of the interview before any part of them is published.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Print Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\* Delete as appropriate.

## Appendix 5

### Support Sheet

#### Helpful Telephone Numbers and Websites

Strathclyde Lesbian and Gay Switchboard – 0141 847 0447

<http://www.sglis.co.uk/>

Lothian Switchboard – 0131 556 4049

<http://www.lglis.co.uk/>

Bi Scotland (social support group for bisexual Scots) – 0796 396 0321

<http://www.biscotland.org/default.htm>

Gay Men's Health (sexual health support and wellbeing) – (Edinburgh) 0131 558 9444  
(Glasgow) 0141 552 0112

<http://www.gmh.org.uk/about/home.html>

Samaritans – 08457 90 90 90

<http://www.samaritans.org/>

Primetime (social group for gay and bisexual men over 40) – 0131 556 1309  
0141 552 0112 (Edinburgh & Glasgow)

[http://www.gmh.org.uk/about/prime\\_time.html](http://www.gmh.org.uk/about/prime_time.html)

TOGETHER – support group for gay and bisexual men living with HIV  
0141 552 0112 (Glasgow)

<http://www.gmh.org.uk/about/together.html>

Waverly Care – support for those living with HIV

0141 558 1425

<http://www.waverleycare.org/>

## Appendix 6

### Interviewee Breakdown

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth Year</u>	<u>Birth Place</u>	<u>Current Res.</u>	<u>Sexual Identity</u>
Alastair	1948	Glasgow	Glasgow	Gay
Brian	1936	Paisley	Glasgow	Homosexual
Chris	1958	Glasgow	Glasgow	Gay
Colin	1945	Dundee	London	Gay
Daniel	1929	Glasgow	Glasgow	Homosexual
Donald	1943	Hawick	Edinburgh	Gay
Drew	1942	Glasgow	Bath	Gay
Duncan	1946	Alexandria	Glasgow	Refused
Ed	1950	Edinburgh	Edinburgh	Non-pract. Gay
Frankie	1943	Tynemouth	Edinburgh	Gay
Harry	1950	Clydebank	Glasgow	Refused
Joseph	1959	Glasgow	Glasgow	Gay
Ken	1951	Lancashire	Fife	Gay
Morris	1933	Aberdeen	Dumfries	Bisexual
Peter	1939	England	Dumfries	Bisexual
Robert	1937	Glasgow	Edinburgh	Gay
Samuel	1947	Glasgow	Glasgow	Homosexual
Sean	1955	Glasgow	Glasgow	Gay
Simon	1950	Lanarkshire	Edinburgh	Gay
Stephen	1939	Glasgow	Glasgow	Gay
Stewart	1943	Johnstone	Edinburgh	Gay
Theo	1953	Enschede	Glasgow	Gay
Tom	1954	South America	Glasgow	Gay
Walter	1938	Inverness	Edinburgh	Gay

## Appendix 7

### Interviewee Ethnicity and Social Class

<u>Name</u>	<u>Birth Year</u>	<u>Birth Place</u>	<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Social Class</u> <sup>536</sup>
Alastair	1948	Glasgow	White Scottish	1
Brian	1936	Paisley	White Scottish	2
Chris	1958	Glasgow	White Scottish	3
Colin	1945	Dundee	White Scottish	2
Daniel	1929	Glasgow	White Scottish	2
Donald	1943	Hawick	White Scottish	3
Drew	1942	Glasgow	White Scottish	2
Duncan	1946	Alexandria	White Scottish	4
Ed	1950	Edinburgh	White Scottish	3
Frankie	1943	Tynemouth	White British	2
Harry	1950	Clydebank	White Scottish	4
Joseph	1959	Glasgow	White Scottish	4
Ken	1951	Lancashire	White British	3
Morris	1933	Aberdeen	White Scottish	4
Peter	1939	England	White British	2
Robert	1937	Glasgow	White Scottish	3
Samuel	1947	Glasgow	White Scottish	2
Sean	1955	Glasgow	White Scottish	5
Simon	1950	Lanarkshire	White Scottish	2
Stephen	1939	Glasgow	White Scottish	5
Stewart	1943	Johnstone	White Scottish	4
Theo	1953	Enschede	White European	3
Tom	1954	South America	White British	2
Walter	1938	Inverness	White Scottish	3

<sup>536</sup> Derived from the National Statistics Socioeconomic Classification, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/about-statistics/classifications/current/ns-sec/self-coded/index.html>, accessed 21 March 2011

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#### **Hansard**

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