Gay Men's Friendships: Cross-Generational Analyses of Two Age Cohorts in Montréal

Matthew Dionísio

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By: Matthew Dionísio

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Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair
Dr. Danielle Gauvreau

_____ Examiner
Dr. Christine Jourdan

_____ Examiner
Dr. Sally Cole

_____ Supervisor
Dr. Chantal Collard

Approved by _____
Chair of Department or Graduate Program Director

_____20____ _____
Dean of Faculty

ABSTRACT

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Matthew Dionísio

This thesis offers a unique comparative analysis of two groups of gay men: the first comprised of participants to come of age in Québec and Montréal during the 1960s and 1970s and a second made up of gay youth in their 20s living in contemporary Montréal. The analysis of life-history narratives, throughout this thesis, allows for an exploration of how the older participants came to build not only safe space through the elaboration of an early gay community, but also how they individually came to develop a desired intimate milieu utilizing close bonds of friendship and meaning. Through this investigation, the reader is able to discover what these "spaces" and "milieus" offer for the individual, how they relate to traditional kinship, and how they have evolved over the life-course and ever-adapting social reality. The comparative approach allows me to then explore whether the same pressures and demands, as recounted by the older cohort, are still in place and experienced by gay youth today. Moreover, a deeper analysis of the younger participant's life-history narratives allows for an investigation of what new challenges have appeared, and how gay youth are employing new liberties, diversity, and options in the experience and construction of new safe spaces and intimate milieu which correspond to the life and social-reality of the new homosexual living in a dynamic contemporary Montréal.

For all those early pioneers, those gay men and women who fought and suffered for their rights and the rights of those yet unknown to them, those who would come after them and benefit from the fruits of their efforts and struggles—this thesis is dedicated to you, these words are your *legacy*.

. . .

To my parents for your boundless love and support, two things for which I was never left wanting—you are the *greatest* people I have known; this thesis, as with all my endeavours, exists because of you—this thesis is dedicated to you.

. . .

To my mentor and supervisor throughout this long, demanding, and sometimes arduous learning experience—professor Chantal Collard. This thesis, as it has been produced and now stands, would not have been possible without your *patience*, *insight*, and *guidance*. Thank you for hearing my voice and allowing me to stay true to my *vision* and expand upon it in ways I could hardly have imagined at the outset.

. . .

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To all those of you—my friends, my collegues—who believed in me and offered me support even when I did not believe in myself—thank you.

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Introduction

For last year's words belong to last year's language and next year's words await another voice.

...

And to make an end is to make a new beginning.

(**T.S. Eliot**)

More than 40 years have passed since the earliest days of the modern homosexual liberation movement and with the passing of those years many of the social realities, as experienced by homosexuals, have also changed as certain freedoms have been won. Increased visibility/social liberty and anti-discrimination legislation, nonetheless, have also meant the adaptation to new and diverse challenges. The more I looked into this rich history, in fact, the more it struck me just how different my life and my experiences, as a young gay man, had been when compared with those who had written about coming of age in, and experiencing first-hand, the early liberation movement in Canada. This prompted me to undertake a multigenerational study of gay men in the social context of Montreal. I decided that half of my research would revolve around and be drawn from the generation of men to come of age during the earliest days of the liberation era in Quebec and Montreal. The other half of the study, then, would revolve around gay men in their 20s living in contemporary Montreal.

With the beginning of the modern liberation movement, homosexuals argued that the only way to reach normalization was through publicly self-identifying as homosexual. With this mass-disclosure, however, homosexuals were finding themselves rejected in large numbers not only by society but also by blood kin. This has been documented in many studies conducted in the United States. Because of that void, homosexuals were forced, or rather felt the need, to elaborate new strategies for regaining elements of lost intimacy and support. Bonds such as friendship, traditionally seen as associatively weak, offered something necessary, something that kin could not—they offered choice; the commitment to and reappropriated meaning of friendship allowed the men to demonstrate the meaning that could be created through its symbolism. Friendship and its inherent

intimacy, as such, emerged as a key site of interest in the anthropological endeavor which, in this regard, had long been overlooked and continues to hold relevance and require investigation even today.

Seeing this trend in the literature among an older generation of homosexual men in the United States, I was curious to see whether or not this same rejection by kin members was occurring in Quebec at that time. Moreover, if such was the case, is the younger generation of gay youth then still experiencing the same type of rejection by kin members? I was interested in seeing how kinship, friendship, and community were negotiated by the older generation and the younger as a result. Additionally, what strategies have homosexual men developed to create safe space, intimate milieu, and what kind of identity have they built? In order to try and answer these questions I decided to conduct 2 months of fieldwork in Montreal among self-identifying homosexual men.

In the first chapter of this thesis entitled: *The Gay Reality: A History (Canada and Montreal)* I premise my own study with a historical review of the gay community in Canada; tracing events and both social and political trends from 1900 to 2010. In chapter ii: *Literature Review: Homosexuality, Family, and Friendship,* I provide an in-depth review of previous scholarly research regarding homosexual groups across North America. Beyond framing my study in both a historical and literary sense, the third chapter, *Methodology and Fieldsite: Subjectivity and Participant Observation*, outlines my methodological framework, how I went about conducting research among the two groups of participants in Montreal. There, I briefly explore many of the complications involved in anthropological fieldwork and, more specifically, issues of methodology connected to subjectivity, and "insider" status inherent in a multigenerational study of

this kind. I also use this chapter to offer some basic background regarding the research participants and how I came to know them.

In chapter iv: *Forbidden Narratives of the Repressive Era*, and chapter v, *A Youth of Difference: Growing up Gay (Pre and Post 1969)* I begin tracing the life histories of the older participants in this study. Through the progression of these men's life history narratives, I elaborate upon different ways in which they created social links within the early community. As the participants age, the reader progressing along these men's life history dialogues, challenges faced by the men will appear and be problematized. One such challenge, embodied in the AIDS era of the 1980s, represented a pivotal moment in the life-course of these participants and is uniquely explored in detail in chapter vi: *The AIDS Crisis: Friends Lost and Ties Strengthened*.

In chapter vii: *Generation X: Growing Up Gay in the 1990s and Post 2000 Era*, the reader will finally be introduced to the younger men's voices as I begin tracing and exploring their life histories much in the way I did for the elder research participants. Coming of age and living in a different era, these young homosexuals have experienced not only the gay community differently but also many elements of stigma differently when compared with their predecessors. I will explore these participants dialogues in order to not only understand the changes that have occurred since the early days of the gay liberation movement, but also in order to understand how these young men face modern challenges and construct support networks.

With the previous chapter bringing the discussion firmly into the current social context, chapter viii, *The "Groups" Cross Paths: Transitions and Self-Image Across the Life Course*, will explore contemporary social narratives concerning aging, life-course

transitions and issues of self-image, as experienced by both groups of men. Given the participants differing positions along the life-course spectrum, issues of self-image in the gay community and aging will be experienced differently, as will be seen. This chapter will investigate how these two cohorts of men are uniquely experiencing these modern social narratives and, in turn, how they are responding to meet the challenge through either repositioning of existing networks of support or elaborating of new and diverse ones.

This thesis will conclude by readdressing the main issues that I set out to explore and developed through an exploration of the participant's life-histories and my many field experiences and observations among them; in light of this work, I will also address new emerging elaborations and possibilities for anthropological inquiry and research.

CHAPTER I

Historical Review: A Brief History of the Gay Reality in Canada and Montreal

I know not whether Laws be right,
Or whether Laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in Gaol
Is that the wall is strong;
All that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long.

But this I know, that every Law
That men have made for Man,
Since first Man took his brother's life,
And the sad world began,
But straws the wheat and saves the chaff
With a most evil fan.

This too I know—and wise it were
If each could know the same—
That every prison that men built
Is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brothers maim.

-Oscar Wilde[1]

[1] In the above poem, Oscar Wilde laments the social persecution he was witnessing in Britain at the end of the 19th century. Wilde, a prominent writer, imprisoned for acts of homosexuality, was in many ways an early activist for gay rights. Influences of this sort remained pivotal in Canada at the turn of the century, as Canada was heavily influenced by what was occurring in Britain both politically and socially. For example, Canada's criminal code continued to incorporate British law governing sexual practices. It was not until 1892, more than 30 years after Britain, that Canada would reclassify sexual acts between consenting adult men—this time as one of the "Offenses Against Morality," carrying with it a potentially lengthy prison sentence (Warner 2002:19). It was only in the 20th century, however, that Canada finally began to break free from these colonial tethers and changes began to appear in relation to Canada's homosexual population, changes that would come to greatly effect the course of homosexual liberation in this country.

With the goals of my research in mind, I set out to spend time among a group of self-identifying gay men in their 60s, a group of participants, as described, who had lived through the "liberation era," and who came of age in the 1960s and 1970s. As a young gay man, however, I am temporally and socially removed from their generation to a larger degree. It was necessary then to initially conduct an in-depth historical review which framed the meta-narratives of the gay community in Canada and, uniquely, of the gay liberation movement in Montreal. Cultivating this historical knowledge better situated me to understand where these men were coming from and thus engage with them socially on a more profound level[2]. Beginning at the debut of the 20th century, ultimately, this in-depth historical review allows me to ground the reader in how we arrived at the social and political reality, as it had come to exist for homosexuals in Canada, by the end of the 1960s. The history then continues through the 1970s and 1980s providing pivotal background information regarding key periods in the gay community such as the AIDS crisis of the 1980s wherein the social atmosphere and construction of space as experienced by homosexuals underwent great change and adaptation, as will be seen. Finally, The 1990s and post 2000 era are discussed, as a clear understanding of Canada's contemporary legal and social climate is pivotal in any analysis of new trends that might be seen among today's youth.

Canadian Social and Legal Trends (1900-1959)

Ironically, while it has never been a crime *to be* homosexual, the word "homosexual" having never appeared in the Canadian criminal code[3], with the turn of the

[2] These intricacies are explored in further detail in *Chapter III - Methodology and Fieldsite: Subjectivity and Participant Observation.*

[3] Homosexual sex in Canada was punishable by death until 1892, more than 30 years after Britain had adapted its equivalent legislation to carry a maximum penalty of 10 years to life in prison (Lauritson and Thorstad 1974:31,Warner 2002:19, Foster and Murray 1972:29).

twentieth century, homosexuals in Canada found themselves fully implicated in a social order which concretized and forced an identity of deviance upon them (Foster and Murray 1972:29). This was a period, however, where there was quite literally no chance, no possibility of incorporating any aspect of one's homosexuality into one's everyday experience(s); because of this, as Ross Higgins points out, information on gays and lesbians prior to the 1940s, especially in Canada, is very fragmented (1999:83). There were very few men in those early days who were willing to risk being identified or publicly labeled as homosexual (Weston 1991:44-45). Imprisonment aside, a man stood to lose his job, family, physical security, and could be subjected to such things as "psychoanalysis, drugs, electroshock treatments, aversion therapy, and even lobotomies..." all aimed at "curing" homosexuals (Warner 2002:24[4]). By the 1940s, however, subtle signs of change were beginning to appear in North America and parts of Europe with the emergence of *underground* gay and lesbian-related pulp magazines (Cossman and Bell 1997:12-13, Warner 2002:21-22). Along with these publications, materialized an ingenuitive underground of private parties and discreet locales where homosexuals could meet and for the first time experience their homosexual "identities" as a group.

Within the medical community of the 1950s, a clear distinction was beginning to appear between tolerating homosexuality and encouraging it (Warner 2002:25). While homosexuals continued to be an underclass, largely out of general sight, "they were to be treated with compassion and pity" (Warner 2002:25). This was, of course, until Dr.

[4] Tom Warner's work, "Never Going Back: A Queer History of Activism in Canada," is utilized heavily throughout the historical review of this thesis, as it offers one of the most complete historical reviews of the gay community in Canada and its specific regions.

Alfred Kinsey released his *sexual behavior in the human male* (1948) and sent shock waves throughout the West,

> ... unleashing a torrent of publicity and discussion in the mainstream American press, scholarly journals and tabloids. Kinsey claimed that his research proved the existence of a heterosexual-homosexual continuum that applied to all people. Kinsey's first study found that 4 per cent of men were exclusively homosexual, 6 per cent were primarily homosexual, and 37 per cent had at least some overt same-sex experience causing orgasm" (Warner 2002:26).

It was the first time in modern society that the general public had been so confronted with, so implicated in the "reality" of homosexuality. As Tom Warner details, this only led to a more publicized spread of misinformation concerning homosexuality—portraying gays and lesbians in a horrible light (2002:26). Matters only got worse with the onset of the Cold War and its subsequent Cold War mentality in North America. In February of 1950, an American Senate Subcommittee was created to investigate homosexuals within government; this led to an initial 91 federal employees being fired. As time progressed, however, this number would swell to several hundred employees being "uncovered" and fired (Warner 2002:27). Canada soon followed the American example "... prohibiting homosexuals from all positions deemed sensitive" (Warner 2002:27). Driven by this momentum, moreover, in 1953, Canada made an amendment to its Immigration Act "... declar[ing] homosexuals a prohibited class—that is, one to whom entry into the country could be denied" (Warner 2002:27).

The Turbulent 60s

With the debut of the 1960s, homosexuality was beginning to be seen as a social category rather than simply a medical or psychiatric one (Warner 2002:42). This was an era of great metamorphosis in North America. "Social and sexual attitudes were rapidly changing. New movements, particularly feminism, the youth counterculture, and, in the

United States, the drive for Black civil rights, emerged to exert tremendous pressure for change..." (Warner 2002:42). Despite these changes, however, homosexuality was still far from gaining social acceptance and traditional legal and social risks continued to render activism difficult. Any homosexuals that were open during this period still tended to hold positions of relatively lower-status (Warner 2002:46). From these humble beginnings, nonetheless, cities like Montreal were becoming known for having a variety of "hot spots" where gays were *tolerated* (Warner 2002:53). Yet as Tom Warner describes, "... restaurants and other businesses where gays and lesbians could go, be comfortable and be themselves, generally did not exist, even in these more advanced cities"(2002:53). Still, in Canada and especially in Montreal, gays and lesbians were discovering new avenues of *resilience* through art (Warner 2002:54).

> The first Canadian films dealing with gay subjects were À Tout Prendre, produced by Claude Jutras in 1963.... In Montreal, gays were achieving prominence in mainstream theatre and were able to do gay productions. Montreal was alive with emerging gay and lesbian authors publishing plays, fiction, and poetry with gay content. [However,] ... gays and lesbians in English Canada were not as prolific (Warner 2002:54).

It was not until the Stonewall riot in New York City, however, that a *new wave* in gay and lesbian liberation began (Lauritsen and Thorstad 1974:5, Noël 1998:190). As Kath Weston reaffirms,

> ...Homosexuals in the days before Stonewall [(pre-1969)] did not dare reveal their sexual identities to others for fear of criminal prosecution, incarceration, and loss of employment. Most people perceived little to gain and everything to lose by claiming a gay identity in a heterosexual context (1991:44-45).

Nevertheless, that was all about to change—homosexuals were tired of constant police harassment and feelings of powerlessness—they were ready to begin fighting back. As such, on the night of June 27th 1969, what began as a routine police raid soon escalated into three days of riots in New York City's Greenwich Village (Noël 1998:190, James

1998:102, Warner 2002:62). This event would come to forever change "... the nature of gay and lesbian aspirations and advocacy" (Warner 2002:62). In Canada, "... [i]ts significance was not so much the event itself, as the movement and literature it generated, and what it came to symbolize" (Warner 2002:66). It hit the "group" *consciousness* and made people aware of the issues facing homosexuals (Noël 1998:190). Indirectly, it led to the creation of *the Gay Liberation Front* (Front de Libération des Homosexuels), Montreal's first homosexual liberation group (Higgins 1999:102, Warner 2002:62). Ultimately, in Canada, the momentum of this decade culminated in the enactment of the Omnibus bill in 1969 decriminalizing same-sex relations between two consenting adults (Higgins 1999:27, Warner 2002:19). Moving into the 1970s, then, as Ross Higgins explains, gay and lesbian fear of the police body began to ease *somewhat* and homosexuals could begin to affirm their "identities" socially (1999:34).

1970s: Brave New World

With the 1970s, "... the youth of America were used to standing up to authority and questioning the decisions and motives of both government and law enforcement" (Jones and Bego 2009:50). In Canada, the gay "community" was born and endowed with meaning as a space in the 1970s (Warner 2002:50). As such, for "... those who live[d] in one of Canada's few metropolitan areas, life as a homosexual [could] be *tolerable"* (Foster and Murray 1972:17 *Emphasis added*). These were among the only places in Canada to find newly elaborated spaces of safety for homosexuals. Prior to 1975 and unlike the movement in the United States, the gay and lesbian movement in Montreal was not largely visible in terms of political activities (Noël 1998:187). Gay locales during this period remained rather indescript, there was no uniquely gay city quarter in Montreal

aside from the few bars in the city's downtown core; in fact, the years leading up to the 1976 summer Olympics in Montreal, came to be termed, by many homosexuals, as "the Olympics of police repression" (*les Olympiades de la répression policière*) (Neimi et al. 1994:59).

> These actions were part of a clean-up of Montreal in preparation for the 1976 Olympic games. A police source in a Montreal community paper, *Gay Times*, noted that the campaign was "designed to frighten gays from frequenting public places where Olympic tourists were likely to be, particularly downtown Montreal" (Warner 2002:107).

Such realities did little to render the early community in Montreal more visible to the general gaze of the public.

As police raids and repression increased, not only regularity but in scale, the more public they became and the more heavily this generation of homosexuals came to figure in the gaze of the general public. One of the most infamous raids of the 1970s occurred on the night of October 22nd 1977 at Truxx bar, in Montreal's downtown. Police forces stormed the bar wearing bullet proof vests and carrying machine guns (Neimi et al. 1994:59, Warner 2002:108): 46 of the bar's patrons were detained for 8 hours without access to lawyers and were subjected to mandatory venereal disease tests (Warner 2002:108). In order to publicly protest this police repression, a demonstration was organized for the following night. The Montreal gay community was fed up with police harassment and was no longer willing to sit back, be unseen, and do nothing, they were ready to be seen and heard (Warner 2002:108). 2,000 people congregated for the event and made their voices heard. Much as with *Stonewall* in New York City, this protest ultimately ended in what participants described as police violence. It might seem fitting then that this event came to be referred to as Montreal's Stonewall by many of my

participants. The final impact of Montreal's Stonewall, moreover, may seem equally potent, as shortly after this event and the media firestorm that ensued, Quebec became, in 1975, the first jurisdiction in North America to outlaw discrimination and allow the exercise of rights based on sexual orientation in *the Charter of Rights and Liberties of Person* (Charte des droits et libertés de la personne) (Neimi et al. 1994:1, Warner 2002:148). Despite this legislation, however, in "... prominent court cases occurring between 1975 and 1984, the courts continued much as they always had in viewing homosexuality as a menacing "other" and meting out punishments for homosexual conduct—a conduct that presiding judges considered destructive, immoral, or corrupting" (Warner 2002:100). Moreover, police continued to employ the common-decency law against homosexual establishments, a law which was used almost exclusively against homosexuals.

1980s: Last Days of the Cold War

By 1980, Montreal's gay "community" was hosting an annual week of events (Gai-e-lon-la) which were bringing in more than ten thousand spectators (Warner 2002:166). Moreover, gay businesses were finding new success and were expanding beyond the bar and dance club industry (Warner 2002:167). While the police repression of the late 1970s is largely credited with pushing gay bars from Montreal's downtown, in reality it was most likely a combination of police harassment and steadily increasing rents in Montreal's downtown core that led to most of these businesses moving out of the area (Remiggi 1998:282). The first bar, *Au Deux R* opened in what would become Montreal's gay village in 1982. Within a year of this move, other bars such as: Normandie Taverne, Max, and Kox, began moving into the eastern neighbourhood and the "Village" was born

(Remiggi 1998:267). In 1986, Raymond Blain, Quebec's first openly gay politician stated that the Village represented a place to belong, it offered visibility and comfort (Remiggi 1998:268). The East Village, now known as Montreal's Gay Village, was so successful, in fact, that by 1992 nearly 65 of 100 businesses and professionals in this neighborhood had listed themselves in *La Fugues*, Montreal's free gay and lesbian community periodical (Remiggi 1998:282). It was these same community magazines that had allowed individuals to follow the movement of gay businesses to the East Village in the first place; village businesses were now using them to communicate with their clientele which was comprised primarily of Montreal's gay population.

1980s: From GRID (Gay Related Immune Deficiency) to AIDS (Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome)

On December 14th 1982, 5 years after the original incident, charges were finally dropped against the 120 men involved in the Truxx raid of 1977 and it seemed as though the 1980s were going to be an era of new openness for homosexuals in Canada. This was, however, until a new illness began to appear in North America. Early in its course, this illness, which doctors were initially unable to identify, came to be associated with the homosexual population; between 1981 and 1983 the disease was almost exclusively evident among homosexuals (Lavoie 1998:339). The media, consequently, came to refer to the illness as "Gay Cancer" (Jones and Bego 2009:107). Likewise, within the medical profession it was first referred to as GRID. By 1982, Canada had fourteen confirmed cases of the disease—ten of which were in Montreal (Warner 2002:163). A worry among the homosexual population quickly became the loss over "[t]he "power to determine [one's] own identity"—seized so aggressively by gay and lesbian liberationists in the 1970s... " (Warner 2002:162). Gays and lesbians feared that it would be "... given back to

the medical profession from which it had been only so recently wrenched" (Warner 2002:162). In North America, it seemed as though the occurrences of the disease would cause a backlash against homosexuals (Jones and Bego 2009:xiv,107).

To meet the growing crisis, Quebec quickly became the first province in Canada to create an organization to deal with the illness (Comité SIDA du Quebec)(Warner 2002:163). As René Lavoie explains, however, in Quebec, prejudice and discrimination were masked as tolerance (1998:339). He cites Quebec films of the era, such as: *La Quarantine,* and *Le Déclin de l'Empire Américain,* for placing homosexual characters in the forefront while endowing them with seemingly non-existent sex lives or portraying them as ill (Lavoie 1998:339). The underlying violence of repression was still in full force, as larger society told the men that they were "tolerated" while continuing to portray them as either diseased or desexualized. Accordingly, stigma was becoming so strong for infected men that it was affectively transforming into an auto-oppression similar to the internalized-oppression for many gays and lesbians in the earlier years of the liberation movement (Lavoie 1998:338). By 1985, nonetheless, it was becoming clear that heterosexuals were equally susceptible to the disease which, by that point, had come to be known as AIDS (Lavoie 1998:339, Jones and Bego 2009:xiv); "[w]hat was originally looked upon as a "gay disease" [, then,] was found to be much more of a pandemic threat than originally suspected (Jones and Bego 2009:xiv). This affectively signaled the dehomosexualization of AIDS in North America (Lavoie 1998:339). Despite this, gay men continued to remain amongst the highest represented "groups" in terms of infection; in 1996, 72% of the cases in the Montreal area were among gay men (Lavoie 1998:342). Yet, due to what many have claimed is continued homophobia, between 1992

and 1995, only 15% of Montreal's budget for AIDS prevention and relief was destined for Montreal's gay community (Lavoie 1998:342).

1990s: The Criminalization of Hate

As René Lavoie concludes, it remains important to views AIDS in relation to homosexuality, in Western society, as AIDS contributed in placing heterosexism and homophobia out in the open (1998:338). While this might be the case, the activism of the early community and awareness resulting from the AIDS crisis certainly did not do away with such issues; homophobia visibly persisted into the early 1990s with continued incidents of police harassment (Neimi, et al. 1994:61-64). For example, a study compiled in 1994 by the *Commision des Droits de la Personne du Québec*, investigating relations between police and Québec's gay community, cites the 1990 Montreal summer arrests which took place at the community labelled "kiss in" protest in front of police poste 25 (Neimi et al. 1994:59). Among the many allegations witnesses leveled against Montreal police were: use of excessive force, abusive language, and discriminatory methods of arrest. These were the criteria which the event was meant to protest in the first place (Neimi et al. 1994:59). In Québec, moreover, between 1989 and 1993, there were 14 documented murders deemed related to victim's sexual orientation.

Yet, in the midst of all this, change was becoming more apparent; in 1992, the federal government of Canada "... finally lifted the ban against gays and lesbians in the military" (Warner 2002:196). Moreover, as a result of violence aimed at homosexuals, in September of 1994, the *hate crimes provision of the Criminal Code* was introduced as Bill C-41 including sexual orientation amongst its criteria (Warner 2002:212). Perhaps the biggest indicator of changing attitudes came in 1999 with the creation of a 30 member

association for gay police officers and firefighters in Québec, groups historically considered to be amongst the most homophobic and discriminatory (Warner 2002:292/3). With the decade rounding out, then, the Divers/Cité annual pride festival was drawing well over 100,000 people a year successfully rivaling celebrations such as the June 24 Québec national holiday celebrations (Demczuk and Remiggi 1998:400). According to Irène Demczuk and Frank W. Remiggi, by the end of the 1990s, every home in Québec had access to gay and lesbian representations whether it be through television programming featuring gay characters, news programs discussing issues unique to gay individuals, or internet resources (1998:401); the 1990s in Québec, according to these theorists, was marked by an impressive revival in militantism (Demczuk and Remiggi 1998:403).

The 21st Century: En Route for Normalization

If the 1990s were marked by a renewed militantism, the first decade of the 21st century was to be marked by groundbreaking landmarks in the domain of equal rights for homosexuals. On April 11 of 2000, the Federal Government of Canada adopted Bill C-23 "... the modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act, which amended the definition of common-law partner to establish for same-sex relationships all of the same rights and responsibilities as existed in law for common-law opposite-sex relationships" (Warner 2002:243). In March of 2004, Québec became the third province in Canada to officially legalize marriage between same-sex individuals following Ontario and British Columbia which had legalized same-sex marriage in 2003 (Statistics Canada 2006:37); and just over one year later, on July 20th 2005, with the adoption of the Civil Marriage Act (Bill C-38), Canada became the 3rd country in the world to legalize gay marriage following

the Netherlands in 2001 and Belgium in 2003 (Statistics Canada 2006:12). With many wishing to take advantage of new rights available since the year 2000, "[t]he number of [officially recognized] same sex couples surged 32.6% between 2001 and 2006, five times the pace of opposite-sex couples (+5.9%)" (Statistics Canada 2006:12). In 2006, 16.5% of gay couples in Canada were married—of these, 53.7% were men (Statistics Canada 2006:12); and in Québec, that same year, common-law and married same-sex couples accounted for 0.8% of all couples in the province, or 13, 685 couples (Statistics Canada 2006:37).

However, Tom Warner (2002) insists that, despite all these landmarks, many difficulties are still facing the gay community in the 21st century. For Warner, notions of assimilation facing homosexuals continue to be produced by a heterosexual majority which "... does not value gays, lesbians, and bisexuals as a group or as individual citizens" (2002:355). According to Warner, homosexuality is still

> ... thought to be so abhorrent and abnormal that society must not condone it. On the other hand, it is so apparently attractive and seductive that stiff social sanctions must be imposed to protect people, especially the young, from being lured into it (2002:354).

Furthermore, as recently as 2002, violence remained a daily reality for many gay men and women across Canada (Warner 2002 356). Viewing all the progress that has been made in the past century, nevertheless, Frank W. Remiggi, draws parallels between Canada's, and specifically Montreal's, gay community and that of Canada's other ethnic communities (1998:284). For him, Montreal's gay village provides a perfect example of a community taking charge of its own destiny and creating a de-marginalized space for

itself, both in discourse and physicality (Remiggi 1998:284). It is impossible, however, to view the gay community in terms of an ethnic community, as homosexuals are found in every group; this reality has never been more visible than it is today. Ultimately, one thing that all theorists might agree upon is that the gay population has changed the face of Canada both at home and abroad.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review: Homosexuality, Family, and Friendship

> One of the crucial variables in identifying why some gay male and lesbian youth prosper in spite of risk appears to be the presence of supportive and understanding peers and adults in their lives… (Grossman and Kerner 1998:28).

A general review of previous scholarly literature is now necessary as it allows a more profound and in-depth insight into elaborations seen in the history of the gay community. Moreover, as friendship and identity support figure heavily in my study, I need to locate and frame them for the reader; once this is done—previous literature synthesized and history laid out—I am better situated to analyze the unique elaborations produced by a multigenerational study in Montreal and gain insight into new elaborations that I will be seeing.

Traditional Notions of Friendship

Regardless of new elaborations in social relationships, as will be discussed, traditional scripts of friendship, specifically during the 20th century, have always suffered from a general disadvantage. Western friendship, by nature, was seen to be, unlike blood kin, inherently voluntary and, therefore, mortal (Nardi 1992:108). It is this innate mortality that was thought to make friendship fundamentally emotional (Paine 1974:19-20). It was seen as a relationship "... based on spontaneous and unconstrained sentiment or affection" (Carrier 1999:21). Furthermore, friendships during youth were long thought to be relationships of pleasure devoid of the elements of identity formation and support that will be explored (Du Bois 1974:25). Again, this was in contrast to traditional family which was seen to function on the basis of rights and duties (Bell and Coleman 1999:9)[5].

Youthful friendships, then, were thought to diminish in adulthood with the grueling demands of age and family life (Reed-Danahay 1999). As such, it was believed that the freedom and spontaneous emotional nature of friendship offered a sort of *escape* from *formal* positions and demands (Du Bois 1974:30, Allan 1989:64). "... [F]riendship

[5] Unrelated to kin in the West but this is not globally universal (Carsten 2000); many non-Western cultures also practice very intimate and institutionally accepted forms of friendship.

act[ed] as a counterpoint to more formal role positions without threatening the performance of those roles" (Allan 1989:63). Such notions implied that friendship helped to sustain the individual's self, which I believe to be very important for modern homosexuals, but not in the traditionally implied escapist sense. The explanations built by these theorists, painting friendship as an important escape, comes then to paint friendship as subordinate to family. Friendship was, and still is to a large degree, seen as a non-essential escape from the pressures of *real* life and such reduces its social capital. Perhaps the largest problem with friendship, then, is that there is no standard definition of what it is or means. There are many different degrees and types of friendship ranging from acquaintance to best-friend (Du Bois 1974:16). Homosexuals have, nevertheless, begun exploiting this lack of standard definition to argue for the value of friendship.

Relevancy of Friendship

"Friendships provide alternative ways for doing things when the formal structure of society is clearly inadequate... when normative rules of society have come to appear especially artificial and fragile" (Nardi 1992:109). Friendship, as already established, does not mirror family in that there is no power hierarchy present (Rezende 1999:80). Members hold the same status as one another and, as such, place mutual demands on intimacy (Paine 1989:40,119-120, Bell and Coleman 1999:8). Friendship is a structure which functions through choice and agency, yet ironically, again, this is where it gains much ground in modern debates, for, unlike traditional family with its naturally assumed obligation, it must be continually worked upon and demands effort of its practitioners, as it is free of many legal and moral constrictions (Lindsey 1981:268, Weston 1991:27, Nardi 1999:33). It not only takes more effort to establish a meaningful bond, but such

bonds, due to lack of traditional scripts of blood, demand great trust between individuals (Allan 1989:53-59). Erving Goffman, explains how in creating close bonds, individuals allow others to see "backstage," the *self* that is reserved for only a select few, as its nature has the potential to be damaging to the individual sharing it (Goffman 1959, Paine 1999:42). This implies not only a great deal of trust among individuals in what has traditionally been considered an inferior relationship, it implies that individuals are free to truly be themselves unencumbered by the oppositions of formality and politeness (Rezende 1999:91). As Nardi further clarifies,

> … while the moral obligation implied in friendship may not [necessarily] be more forceful than that of kinship, it often seems to be more "pure," not only because the obligation is voluntarily undertaken but even more because it is seemingly disconnected from collectivities with clear interests, boundaries and power… (1999:58)

The power, then, of the many intangible elements of these relationships, such as love and emotion, further reinforce their importance toward identity and mutual support (Lindholm 2007:215). Karen Lindsey, in her work on friends as family, further sums up the underlying power of friendship in her statement: "… people's needs for bonding are deep enough that, even in the face of a society that tells us friends are friends and family is family and never the twain shall meet, many of us unconsciously choose friends to be part of, or even all of, our family" (1981:179).

Entrance and Medicalization of a Homosexual Identity

While it is not the main focus of this research, before one can delve into friendship between older men—those coming of age in the 1960s and 1970s—it is necessary to first briefly situate the entrance of a homosexual identity. It was not until the latter-half of the nineteenth century that a homosexual identity began to be elaborated,

that sexual behavior came to define an individual and their subsequent way of life (James 1998:101-102, Roseneil 2002:30)[6]. This meant a greater public knowledge over an individual's body (Foucault 1978:67); this type of bio-power, as Foucault referred to it, acted to constrain the body rendering it more docile (1984:301-329). Homosexuality, in particular, came to be classified as a *medical condition* which according to Richard Von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*, produced in 1896, was a "… "physiologically based psychiatric pathology" attributable to congenital weakness of the nervous system", it represented a form of "arrested sexual development" (Warner 2002:22-23); once homosexuality was classified as a mental illness it solidified gays and lesbians not simply as deviant but as a subclass in Western society. This was a pivotal moment in modern male social relations, as it subsequently signaled the end of visibly intimate male friendship. All male friendships would now, regardless of one's sexual orientation, come to be cast into doubt, and "... to a significant extent [come to be] read under the aegis of homosexuality. ...[O]ne result of this is that men appear less likely to disclose their personal feelings to other men..." (Rumen 2008:15). Homophobia and social constrictions relating to masculinity have come to limit the options for modern notions of friendship. Moreover, "Lehne (1989) had argued that homophobia has limited the discussion of loving male friendships and has led to the denial by men of the real importance of their friendships with other men" (Nardi 1992:1), as will be discussed in greater detail in the following pages.

[6] Existence of "… a world-mapping by which every person, just as he or she was necessarily assignable to a male or female gender, was now considered necessarily assignable as well to a homo- or hetero-sexuality, a binarized identity that was full of implications, however confusing, for even the ostensibly least sexual aspects of personal existence" (Sedgwick 1991:2). In this world-mapping scenario, "marital heterosexuality occupied the center, constructed as normal, natural, and desirable, with homosexuality as the marginal, perverse, unnatural other, subject to a range of different legal, medical, and social sanctions and formal of regulation" (Roseneil 2002:31).

Modern Male Friendships

With friendship being effected by the entrance of a homosexual identity, children within modern Western society are now largely being socialized and enculturated within a system that from birth strictly regulates the relations that males may enact toward one another. In fact, according to Graham Allan, "by an early age children know their gender, recognize its social significance and develop appropriate role models" (1989:67). For boys the emphasis comes to be placed upon shared activities manifested in such forms as team sports while for girls the focus is much more on communicating and disclosing information about themselves to one another (Allan 1989:67)[7]. These childhood experiences are, of course, of great import as they come to gear children into the patterns of later adult life, set them on the path toward "properly" gendered adult sociability (Allan 1989:68). As one would expect, then, male relationships of adult life are comprised mainly of sociability in the public domain, they are side-by-side, as Nardi refers to them, while female relationships, as in childhood, are considered face-to-face or are largely considered to be in the private sphere (1992:5). Consequently, in the modern domain, friendship is something to which women are thought to excel (Nardi 1999:41). Men's friendships tend to remain quite shallow "... in terms of the degree to which personal worries, anxieties and other matters of consequence to the self are discussed" (Allan 1989:71). Furthermore, explains Allan,

> Men are supposed to be strong and self-sufficient, able to get along well with a range of others, yet not become dependent on them. ...[N]otions of male identity can be seen to pattern the friendships men have, but in turn those relationships play their part in sustaining these notions of maleness (1989:71-72).

[7] Given that this source dates back to 1989, one must be aware that this tends to be less of the case in 2010.

Men may not be free to express their emotional needs and, as such, they may receive less social support from friends[8], but this does not change the fact that men still require such support (Fehr 1996). As such, men must look elsewhere in order to have such needs met. For adult heterosexual males this usually entails looking towards the opposite gender to have one's emotional needs met. Furthermore, the member of the opposite sex is, more often than not, a spouse or romantic partner—family comes to sustain this facet of a man's identity. In this way, men can have their emotional needs met without appearing dependent, for they are simply seen as endorsing traditional marital constructs (Allan 1989:74, Nardi 1992:111).

The entrance and negation of a homosexual identity into the world of male sociability[9], as Kath Weston explains, came to be further enforced by the long standing notion that gays were neither capable of establishing lasting relationships nor of building families (1991:22). This was largely due to the aforementioned

> ... reduction of lesbians and gay men to sexual identity, and sexual identity to sex alone. If heterosexual intercourse can bring people into enduring association via the creation of kinship ties, lesbian and gay sexuality in these depictions isolates individuals from one another rather than weaving them into a social fabric (Weston 1991:22-23).

As such, the homosexual identity was essentially seen as inherently in opposition to the family, it was a rejection of "the family," and a fundamental departure from kinship (Weston 1991:22). This isolation, nevertheless, was not only seen as a rejection, but also as a threat to the family. Gays and lesbians were shaking up the gendered space of family and going against procreative and hegemonic ideologies of the family (Weston 1991:22,

[8] It may be that their friendships are expressed differently, employing different symbolism, as traditionally emotive friendship tends to be associated with feminine imagery. This is arguably the case for an older generation of men. Moreover, it might be argued that one is beginning to see changes in these patterns regarding contemporary heterosexual male relationships among youths.

[9] Refer back to section: *Entrance and Medicalization of a Homosexual Identity*, for further detail regarding the entrance of a homosexual identity into public discourse.

Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003:7). Whatever gay sociability which did occur, then, up to this point, was relegated to the domain of feminine interaction, it was considered largely emotive, illogical, and much less valued.

Gay Youth Pressures of the Stonewall Era

Beyond gender issues, Western children are socialized to develop their own points of view, to be independent of the group, and to reveal their own character (Lindholm 2007:4). Yet, as Lindholm further clarifies, such independence scripts, during youth, may also lead to alienation from one's own existence[10] (2007:4). Children and adolescents, therefore, regardless of these scripts, do remain very much dependent upon their friends (Gillies, Holland et al. 2002:33); such support becomes all the more important, as adolescence is "... the last epoch of a person's life in which his culture can have permanent and basic determining influences on his development" (Du Bois 1974:24). Therefore, the era in which one comes of age and the interaction they experience is obviously of great import (Rodman 2003:218). It is during adolescence that friendship comes to take on the *greatest* emotional urgency for the individual (Du Bois 1974:23, Reed-Danahay 1999:138-139). Friends carry the role of equal, in that there is no hierarchy present; one comes to know oneself better through knowing his or her friend, he or she who mirrors their social and cultural position, thus providing important identity support during a pivotal period (Paine 1974:119-120, Galupo 2007:149). Moreover, "... each of our friendships is seen by us as touching the self in a unique way... [,] each friendship, one may say, is a biography of the self" (Paine 1999:44); it is situated on one's values and, thus, is articulated within its own unique series of exchanges between

[10] Stress may result from the push to conform and belong while simultaneous scripts push independence and individuality—edicts essentially lacking many forms of identity and emotional support.

individuals (Allan 1989:49). Friends, therefore, act as sanctuaries for the self—it is these relationships which work to counter feeling of alienation and rejection during adolescence (Reed-Danahay 1999:141, Paine 1999:44).

What is one left to do, therefore, during this important stage of social development, should he or she be unable to communicate with other members of shared sexual identity? During the Stonewall era, homosexual youths were often isolated; to further complicate matters and as Sara McNamee explains during youth, homosexuals are often aware that they are different from their friends (2002:122, Anderson 1998:58, Altman 1998:308). What this awareness meant during this period of youth was that homosexual adolescents could not relate or "see" themselves in their friends in the traditionally constructed sense. Furthermore, because parents were usually heterosexual and heterosexuality within the family was assumed, the home was often experienced as oppressive (McNamee 2002:123,125). According to McNamee, one consequence of this was often further alienation, as the individual came to internalize cultural intolerance devaluing homosexuality, and, as a result, developing a sort of internal negativity or self-hatred (2002:125, James and Murphy 1998:100).

> Those with low social involvement with gay friends received less self-acceptance and more depression, guilt, loneliness, anxiety, and shame about their homosexuality. Those who were most socially involved with other homosexuals learned to deal with the heterosexual world with "a more subtle, less generalized, and more realistic appreciation of the situation" while also coming into contact with homosexual role models who successfully managed their publicly perceived deviant identity and provide a retreat from oppression (Nardi 1999:18).

During the Stonewall era, few youths were able to "come-out" or publicly proclaim a homosexual identity during adolescence. Yet, with the gay liberation movement getting under way, more and more young men and women were being pushed to come-out through a dialogue of *truth* (Weston 1991:65, Troiden 1998:273). Lindholm

describes how those who feel alienated attempt to free themselves; in this case, coming out effectively tore the mask imposed by society off revealing what lay beneath (2007:8-9). Following Foucault's analysis of more public access to knowledge concerning an individual's body, "coming out" fundamentally became a pivotal experience in claiming and self-labeling oneself as homosexual (Grossman and Kerner 1998:28, Troiden 1998:273). For the first time, the friendships that were resulting from this dialogue of truth were providing references for their practitioners outside of those of the traditional family; gay men could now learn more about their identities, as they could now share their full range of emotions, and struggles with one another (Nardi 1992:109). These friends, among the first sympathetic "others," the first other "selves" offered support as well as some form of protection from alienation and isolation (Goffman 1963:20, Du Bois 1974:32, Nardi 1999:33, Roden 2008:12).

Over the next few years, these friendships were going to play an even larger role, as many individuals found themselves alienated from blood kin. Kath Weston, through her study in California, explains how many homosexuals who "came out" during this period found themselves rejected by family. As Weston continues, the act of proclaiming a homosexual identity was read as a rejection of family (1991:29). Coming out meant bringing the homosexual identity into the family, and families were swiftly rejecting this identity (Weston 1991:38). This may then have had the effect of strengthening the gay community which was forming, as these individuals lost their traditional support network and many moved to urban centers in search of like individuals (Grossman and Kerner 1998:28). "Coming out" started to become increasingly an issue of self-respect (Weston 1991:47). But gay youth, more so during this period than today, often had few

expectations that their families would respond positively to such news (Savin-Williams 1997:75); for fear of rejection many youth preemptively distanced themselves from family well before ever considering coming out (Savin-Williams 1997:79). Consequently, even for those who chose not to come-out, alienation and distance from family was occurring on a larger scale than previously when sexuality had not been connected to identity (Savin-Williams 1997:75,78-79).

Blood Is Thicker Than Water?

It was traditionally believed that blood kinship was an enduring institution (Schneider 1984), that one could not be alienated from one's blood kin (Weston 1991:33-34): "coming out," during this era of isolation, was destined to reveal the truth about kin (Weston 1991:69). As has already been established, male sociability dictates that as men mature they come back to relate more onto family and spouse for support. Given that these homosexual men were often without family to turn to, before or after coming-out, the gay community came to function as a family and support structure, as homosexuals began to elaborate families of *choice* (Weston 1991). For the first time, such "families" seemed truly possible, as coming-out had revealed the fictive nature of kinship as a societal *construct*. Furthermore, as gays would come to claim, there had/has always been a choice, knowing an individual was blood kin told one nothing of the relationship between the two (Weston 1991:69, Nardi 1999:51). As soon as these structures were revealed as fictions, notions such as love and choice could enter into the equation; thus, one witnesses unique elaborations occurring during the Stonewall era, those developed in isolation between friends and later community. It is, ultimately, the desire and effort in building and maintaining bonds which speak to their true power and personal value

(Nardi 1999:51). Furthermore, according to Janet Cartsen (2000)[11], such notions have only come, in more recent years, to be ever more elaborated, as reproductive technologies have introduced choice into the former domain of biological certainty, further substituting alternative symbols for blood and genetics.

Choice: Family and a Move Towards Community

According to Beverly Fehr (1996), in a modern Western context, heterosexual men have always been capable of forming emotional ties among themselves[12]. It was simply that the typical analysis of friendship tended to focus on matters of *gender* wherein women, as has already been elaborated, were traditionally believed to excel at friendship (Nardi 1999:33-38). Again, this "… led to the denial by men of the real importance of their friendships with other men" (Nardi 1991:1). With the emergence of a large group of homosexual men claiming emotive ties to one another, however, such gender notions began to be altered and called into question as social constructs. This became possible because gay men demonstrated the ability and desire to form meaningful non-erotic ties with one another, ties beyond the afore believed *isolating* sexual ties embodied by gay culture (Weston 1991:118). Kath Weston's study of "chosen" kin demonstrates how gays and lesbians have come to use friends and ex-lovers to form new *families* founded upon internal relevance, wherein the men decide what is meaningful and enduring (1991:21-22). For many homosexuals, then, the early liberation movement

[11] The more the natural becomes a matter of choice, the more difficult it is to think outside of cultural convention. Janet Carsten investigates the inadequacy of biological concepts in describing or analyzing cultures of relatedness (Carsten 2000).

[12] To avoid the implication that heterosexual men are incapable of forming intimate relationships, I also review possibilities for male intimacy as laid out by Beverly Fehr (1996). "In a review on friendship, psychologist Beverly Fehr lists several possible explanations for the different degree to and ways in which men and women display intimacy: (a) men are as intimate as women, but only with their closest friendships; (b) men are as intimate as women, but they just don't like the word; (c) men appear less intimate only because intimacy is defined in a female way; (d) men are simply less intimate regardless of the definition; (e) men define intimacy in the same way as women but have different thresholds for intimacy; (f) men are less intimate, but they like it that way; and (g) men can be as intimate as women but simply choose not to be" (As quoted in Nardi 1999:40-41).

became as much an era of identity as it was an era of activism, coming-out came only to be intensified by the desire to become *active* resister instead of *passive* victim (Weston 1991:67). As Nardi further clarifies,

> … when gay men exhibit more disclosing and emotional interactions with other men…, it demonstrates the limitations of male gender roles typically enacted among many heterosexual male friends. By calling attention to the impact of homophobia on heterosexual men's lives, gay men's friendships illustrate the potentiality for expressive intimacy among all men. …[T]oday, the images of true friendship are often expressed in terms of women's traits: intimacy, trust, caring, and nurturing thereby excluding the more traditional men from true friendship. However, … gay men seem to be at the forefront of establishing the possibility of men overcoming their male socialization stereotypes and restructuring their friendships in terms of the more contemporary ("female") attributes of emotional urgency (Nardi 1992:117/118).

Claiming a "chosen" family, nevertheless, was as much about rights as it was about identity. It was about reclaiming access to lost kinship and about changing the public image of what it is/was to be gay (Weston 1991). As this thesis explores, these issues were to become pivotal for later generations of gays. By appropriating the cultural value and symbolism of family and applying it to homosexual relationships, it was the hope of these homosexuals that they could create a *place* for themselves, a *space* of value (Rodman 2003). After all, children have been practicing this shifting of kin imagery with fictive "uncles" and "aunts" for many years (Lindsey 1981:112, Nardi 1999:50,52,70). Demanding that such ties be acknowledged was all too pivotal to the changing social environment for gays and lesbians; the issues of choice inherent in these ties embodied and continue to embody self-determinism through self-definition (Weston 1991:65, 110-111). By rejecting outside notions and taking control over not simply labeling but also *relevancy*, gay men came to elaborate deep and meaningful relationships for themselves (Paine 1974:124).

Contemporary Realities for Homosexuals

Over the past few decades, homosexuals, for the most part, have been quite successful in adapting the image of homosexuality from that of purely sexual to that of identity. One of the ways this has been achieved, again, has been through the increased numbers of individuals overtly claiming homosexual identities over the years (Grossman and Kerner 1998:28). Savin-Willians demonstrates, for example, how in a North American survey of 5,000 individuals, taken in 1995, "... two-thirds of bisexual, lesbian, and gay adults reported that they had disclosed their sexual identities..." (1998:81). This increased proportion of self-disclosure is largely a cyclical result of increased visibility and prevalence of community (Roden 2008:12). As was elaborated in the historical review, whereas bars, sites considered locales of largely sexual and superficial encounters, were once the only places of congregation for homosexual men[13], there are now "... a burgeoning number of other places for gay men and lesbians to meet. With the emergence of visible gay and lesbian communities in the last twenty years, there have also been a growing number of gay and lesbian political activities" (James and Murphy 1998:104). Furthermore, with greater social awareness, many parents are proving to be more understanding of their homosexual children as compared with previous generations of rejection (Savin-Williams 1998). Such understanding is pivotal, as having the support of one's parents allows one to come-out at a younger age and, citing earlier debates regarding youth identity, this aids in the reinforcement of a "healthier" grounded sense of self (Savin-Williams 1998:89, Grossman and Kerner 1998:28, Troiden 1998:277). These increased sentiments of acceptance, arguably, are leading to many new options and elaborations among modern gay individuals and communities.

[13] This is keeping in mind and excluding surreptitious "cruising" sites, etc.

While traditional family ideologies have been seen as rather limiting to a gay identity, changes, as I've developed to this point, are taking place. Given the opportunity youth would prefer to remain vested in family relations (Gillies, Holland et al. 2002:33). This does not, however, change the fact that friendship is a necessary structure throughout the life course of an individual (Allan 1989:66, Bell and Coleman 1999). As such, many modern homosexuals now coming from more accepting family backgrounds are presented with the opportunity to add friendship to family (Lindsey 1981:112-117, Weston 1991:69). Recalling the homogeneity that resulted from the ghettoization of the early community, this might for the first time, represent *true* agency entering into the creation of *space*. Previous notions of recreating family, for the most part, made use of mainstream symbolism, such as imagery of family, which may arguably also have had the effect of reinforcing power dynamics through the perpetuation of many mainstream norms; thus potentially reinforcing the traditional heteronormative ideology (Weston 1991:56, Nardi 1999:70). Therefore, while modern youth may not consciously be choosing to be resistant to mainstream norms, they are making great strides towards enlarging the definition of family through a more integrative type of relatedness (Lindsey 1981, Weston 1991). It no longer necessarily represents a matter of severing ties as much as it does adding onto existing ties (Lindsey 1981, Nardi 1999:59). In such a context, coming-out may be seen as bringing one's identity into the family, and adding friends as integrating the two worlds of meaning (Weston 1991:69). Yet, this represents only one option currently available, the choice still remains whether or not to integrate friends and family; gay men may choose to have separate worlds of meaning and, as such, reject or dismiss the utility in 'recreating' a family of whatever kind. Such a scenario might be

seen as a matter of multiple identities. It remains to be investigated through my research, nevertheless, how such trends are functioning today in Montreal, if perhaps modern trends are not functioning as responses to current issues facing homosexuals.

Implying that perhaps modern elaborations are responses to modern issues, it is now being noted that gay men are increasingly becoming friends with both straight women and straight men (Tremblay, Julien et al. 1998:162, Nardi 1999:114). Accordingly, it is being argued now that such elaborations are ways for homosexuals to integrate themselves into the 'larger' society (Lewin 1998:122, Rumens 2008:15). Women were traditionally thought to be friends with homosexual men through a common disempowerment experienced at the hands of hegemonic masculinity (Rumens 2008:15). However, many feminist theorists argue that as males, gay men may still partake in aspects of masculine privilege and, thus, are still in a position of power comparative to most women (Rumens 2008:15)[14]. However, I am more inclined to believe that these new friendship patterns are related to new social trends, blurred gender roles and issues of identity (Nardi 1999:144). It may simply be, however, that a more accepting contemporary community is allowing for modern identities beyond the necessity of tightly bounded all-male homosexual groups; such might also be stated of the heterosexual world which is also seeing greater importance in friendships (Lindsey 1981, Weston 1991, Bell and Coleman 1999). As Karen Lindsey elaborates, "[p]eople [continue to] need more than the traditional family provides" (1981:247). It could be, then, that gay

[14] Frederick S. Roden maintains that in celebrating "gay friendship" "… we are inscribing a whole set of qualities that separates rather than welcomes…" (2008:11). Therefore, he argues that regardless of the fact that homosexual men are males, they are excluded from "straight" power (Roden 2008:11).

men now have the freedom to seek friends that truly do offer something that they are fundamentally lacking therefore rounding out their identity. Nevertheless, these newly ‘rounded’ identities still depend on the person’s definition of what they gain from the relationship.

CHAPTER III

Methodology and Fieldsite: Subjectivity and Participant Observation

I read once that if you write, you should try to erase your tracks, a blend of memories and experiences, and not reveal the process that got you to the finished product. In most cases I would agree; to do the contrary seems self-conscious: the painter talking about the canvas, instead of simply presenting the finished work. But I will be perfectly honest about my process here. I want to leave a few tracks, simply because my own personal path seems to be tied in to the recording of these thoughts. I am both author and participant, test tube and scientist.

Here is a footprint, and unerased track (Paris 1998:50-51).

With the proposal of a study such as this one, or any anthropological fieldwork involving research participants, there are naturally, as will be illustrated, many practical aspects that much be taken into account and problematized. To locate the methodology of this study, and to develop the many new elaborations, intricacies, and debates of practicing anthropology at "home," I first briefly address traditional anthropological fieldwork practices and fieldsites. This is followed by a discussion concerning the power of dialogue and life-history narrative, as well as their eventual analysis by the *sensitized* researcher. It is through these debates, ultimately, that I mean to develop the utility and intricacies of employing the different methods, strategies, and techniques that are found throughout this thesis.

Formal Neutrality of Participant Observation and Acceptable Fieldsites

"The basic rule of method in the early natural sciences was that scientists should remain detached from their subject of inquiry, and through systematic observation of available data seek hidden uniformities which could be translated into quantitative terms" (Davis 2010:3). Subjectivity, consequently, on the part of the researcher, was seen as tainting to any findings that might result. As James Davies explains, however, with the advent of the social sciences, the limits of quantification and objectification were greatly expanded, "... as skepticism spread about whether detachment could reach what is most essential in human society..." (Davies 2010:4). This realization, nevertheless, still fell under the gravitational pull of colonialism which, as Strathern argues, set

> ... the scene for the traditional monograph, bringing an exotic place to a home audience. The monograph thus emerge[d] as the implicit comparison of two cultures or societies—ours and theirs" (1987:28).

Traditional anthropological works, such as Malinowski's 1922 work "Argonauts of the Western Pacific," then, while employing the then newly conceived method of *participant observation,* were still meant to provide dispassionate and exacting accounts of exotic and distant *others*. Participant observation, as McCall and Simmons describe it,

> ... involves some amount of genuinely social interaction in the field with the subjects of the study, some direct observation of relevant events, some formal and a great deal of informal interviewing, some systematic counting, some collecting of documents and artifacts, and open-endedness in the direction the study takes (1969:1).

The traditional accounts, however, such as those of Malinowski, while embracing participation, continued to ignore the anthropologist's role in the creation of information, viewing him or her as the absolute and unquestionable authority on the subject of study[15]. It was primarily in the 1970s that we began to see the discursive and reflective accounts of the anthropologists in the field. With works such as Paul Rabinow's *Reflections of Fieldwork in Morocco* (1977), the anthropologist was shifting to the position of a visible and active variable, one which could no longer be glossed over or ignored in the collecting and synthesis of data (Davies 2010:9).

Since those early days, fieldwork and participant observation have come to symbolize and delineate the domain of anthropology from all other forms of social or human science, both marking anthropology's independence as a domain of investigation and validating its knowledge (Caputo 2000:21). The anthropologist was now visible, yet the idea of what constituted an acceptable fieldsite or subject of study remained very

[15] Emotions were ultimately still present among these theorists research; one need only look to Malinowski's famous journal to understand this. The writing of such journals during this period, however, served the purpose of acting as an outlet or receptacle for the anthropologist to lay out and understand his or her emotions. In this way, it was believed that he or she could effectively purge such sentiments and ensure that they did not complicate the data creation process. This type of writing, meant to remain unpublished, as such, was meant to allow the researcher to gage his or her level of objectivity, not allowing emotion or sentiment to contaminate this objectivism, as it was then feared to do during this period of anthropological thought.

standardized. As Virginia Caputo argues, even today, there exists "... a continued insistence on a spatialized notion of a "field," as a site of research involving physical displacement to a geographically distant place in order to pursue extended face-to-face encounters with "others"..." (2000:19). As Caputo adds, this "... obscures many of the realities faced by anthropologists working at the end of the twentieth century" (2000:19). In addressing many of the intricacies of an increasingly globalized world, many anthropologists are now disregarding old notions surrounding travel and are instead choosing to conduct fieldwork within their own societies. As Marilyn Strathern suggests,

> [t]he assumption is that we become more aware, both of ourselves when turned into objects of study, in thus learning about our own society, and at the same time, of ourselves as doing the study, in becoming sensitive to methods and tools of analysis. The prospect of anthropology at home thus suggests a contribution to the increasing reflexivity which is urged on the subject from numerous directions (1987:17).

This new notion of "field," while equally complex in its many mitigating factors, seeks to answer many of the questions that have plagued anthropology such as legitimacy of fieldsite and place of the ethnographer in the collection of data. Ultimately, however,

> the personal credentials of the anthropologist do not tell us whether he/she is at home in this sense. But what he/she in the end writes does: whether there is cultural continuity between the products of his/her labors and what people in the society being studied produce by way of accounts of themselves" (Strathern 1987: 17).

Auto-anthropology and the Complexity of the "Familiar"

My entire thesis, in this sense, is a form of native anthropology, or auto-anthropology, in that it "... is anthropology carried out in the social context which produced it..." (Strathern 1987:17). Participant observation was carried out, then, but unlike with the classical works of Malinowski and others, it took place within my own community. Montreal is the city I have lived in for eight years and, as such, is well

known to me. As Goldschmidt (1995) expands, moreover, there are many obvious advantages that might result from this fact. For example, my familiarity with the city and language means that I am not forced to deal with issues regarding either language barrier or new vernacular which was and is often an issue in research which requires distant travel; this background and base understanding meant that I was potentially better equipped to anticipate certain outcomes and direct the research accordingly, as will be shown. This, nevertheless, raises other important issues as touched upon by Goldschmidt:

> [c]an people really study their own culture? Is what they study their own culture or some alien subculture within their own society? Is not an essential element of the cultural perspective a disengagement from one's own culture- alienation? (1995:17).

There are proposed solutions for dealing with this familiarity, however, and "[t]he answer is to find the unfamiliar in the familiar, to make it clear that things are not what they seem, to reach behind the façade of ordinary behavior and belief to the deeper implications of social action" (Goldschmidt 1995:18). While familiarity is quite advantageous, then, the anthropologist must be careful as to not become so comfortable in this familiarity that true understanding risks being obscured or assumed.

Anthropology at "Home:" Fieldwork in Montréal's Gay Community

I walked through Montreal's gay village[16], an action I had very naturally taken many times over the years as a self-identifying gay man. However, this represented a much more intense period of observation. I had never before scrutinized Montreal's gay village or community in the way that I was now doing, marking its many intricacies and

[16] Montreal's gay village comprises one city quarter (commercially located along Saint Catherine's Street from Amhearst Street to Papineau Street) wherein are found a recognized number of gay run or gay friendly businesses. This neighborhood contains the highest concentration of homosexual nightclubs, bars, lounges, restaurants, and cabarets in the city. In addition to this, one will also find other commercial and community services such as Séro-zéro and the village tourist center. The neighborhood hosts the city's annual gay pride celebrations and a large number of the neighborhoods residents self-identify as homosexual. This neighborhood represented an ideal and, ultimately, logical location for observing and interacting with openly self-identifying gay men. (Demczuk and Remiggi 1998).

even contradictions. I was seeing the familiar in a new light. Between June and August of 2009 I spent a minimum of 50 hours in the gay village conducting observation, taking detailed notes, and absorbing the atmosphere of the community. While the bulk of my fieldwork and observation did take place at that time, I continued to have sporadic contact with the men and the community as late as August of 2010. I sat on terraces, went into bars and cafés I had never before set foot in, and spoke with random individuals whenever the opportunity arose. As I came to know certain men within the gay village, often meeting them at their common after work "hang out" for drinks and conversation, there was "... no time to make formal decisions about appropriate research methodology (Goodley et al. 2004:63). I say this because, as Goodley et al. describes, during participant observation of this sort, topics of conversation, and diverse social situations arise at random, all issues that had to be dealt with in the moment. The resulting insights or flashes of raw emotion and adaptation to the moment were all expressed in fieldnotes taken, notes which allowed me to sort out my own experiences, as will be developed in further detail. I moved in and out of the "field" sporadically and, as such, I had no traditional sense of coming and going to the field, but was in continual contact with the community and my everyday life. For me this all came to underscore the reality, as expressed by Virgina Caputo that, "... the unique insights and experiences that are gained through fieldwork are apparent despite the actual physical distance traveled. Ultimately, I was coming to realize, as Homa Hoodfar explains, that "[h]ome once interrogated is a place we have never been before" (as quoted in Caputo 2000:29).

Participant Observation As Young/Partial "Insider"

As was stated earlier, this thesis is a form of native anthropology. I stated this as such because while I do share a common sexual orientation with the men in this study, and while I do frequent many of the same locations in the city, I have not interacted with the social world(s) through which the older men in this study came of age and/or have lived and experienced great change. As Reinharz indicates, it is important to know one's research role while in the field (2010:205). I am not a 60 year old gay man, but rather a gay man in his 20s. Even when considering the group of gay men in their 20s, moreover, I must remain cognizant that gay youth, as will be seen, are in all communities; they are not simply exclusive members of a gay community. There does exist, however, commonality of practice and experience. The many similar or comparable experiences of youth, as a self-identifying gay man, allow me to perhaps anticipate, understand, and direct my research in ways that would perhaps take a different trajectory for non "insiders." While I am removed in many ways from the older men's pasts, then, and am a member of a new diverse generation of gay men, I am still *sensitized*. My unique experiences as a gay man situated me at a specific vantage point not available to all those who might choose to traverse the same information.

While participant observation was undertaken, my main form of engagement with informants during this study was that of interviewing. The interviews were conversational, as Becker and Geer describe it:

> ... the detailed and conversational interview (often referred to as the unstructured and undirected interview). In this kind of interview, the interviewer explores many facets of his interviewee's concerns, treating subjects as they come up in conversation, pursuing interesting leads, allowing his imagination and ingenuity full rein as he tries to develop new hypotheses and test them in the course of the interview (1969:323).

The line between participant observation and interviewing, however, was regularly blurred, as I was often able to witness the participant's homes and thus glimpse their home lives, view photos, and interact with friends who may have been present during or following interviews[17]. When interviews were being conducted, though, they were allowed as organic and natural a flow as possible. Due to my sensitization as an insider, moreover, I could often understand intricacies without having to pause the flow of conversation for further information regarding minute details; directing of conversations, in this manner, allowed me not only to mine certain areas of discourse for deeper insight, but allowed me to see when the men were not saying "everything," or perhaps omitting information which they might have deemed unimportant or not consciously have thought of[18].

Understanding fieldwork from a traditional point of view, nevertheless, as Davies argues, may actually constitute a form of violence towards the men whom I am claiming to represent (2010:26). As Michael Jackson contends: "... emotions are but one aspect of any human experience and that we do violence to the complexity of the lived experience when we make analytical cuts between emotion and thought, or emotion and the senses, thought, and action" (2010:35). I, therefore, utilize my emotions, as Davies describes them, as a "... prism through which the perplexities of indifference could be discerned" (2010:10). In this way, interviews may have been my main form of engagement, but they

[17] Beyond being in their homes for interviews and meeting friends or partners, I actively attended social gatherings at the older participants' homes. Moreover, with men who figure heavily in fieldnotes, yet who were not officially interviewed, I often met for coffee or other drinks and lively discussions, as evidenced through fieldnotes.

[18] As Becker and Geer indicate: "Frequently, people do not tell an interviewer all of the things that he might want to know. This may be because they do not want to, feel that to speak of some particular subject would be impolitic, impolite, or insensitive, because they do not think to and because the interviewer does not have enough information to inquire into the matter, or because they are not able to" (1969:326). An extensive historical review of the gay community in Western society and specifically Canada aided the flow of conversations, provided me with necessary backing to identify any gaps in information, as well as allowed me to compare the men's dialogues to the official historical accounts.

certainly were not my only site of engagement. Ultimately, as Strivers notes: "there is no such thing as removing the observer from the knowledge acquisition process, since to do so would be like trying to see without eyes" (1993:411). And "a true insider anthropology, then, is a reflexive form of native anthropology, implying so much more than simply practising at home" (Ceronni-Long 1995:11). My emotions and reflections on past experiences, then, became a key source of data in my research, they helped me ensure that nothing was taken for granted and are evidence throughout my fieldnotes, fieldnotes that are displayed extensively throughout this thesis and give a grounding of who I was in the undertaking of this research. I was learning about the community and the people. I was learning and I wanted to reveal the individual(s) as they were revealed to me and as I understood them; personalized fieldnotes allowed me to do this.

Language and Translation

As this study was conducted in Québec, it carried with it many intricacies that one might not necessarily have experienced in other communities. For one thing, the premier language of this province is French. Montreal, being a very diverse city, however, also has a large immigrant and anglophone population. The two main groups with which I dealt were drawn from the city's anglophone and francophone populations. Academic literature, moreover, which has been conducted in Québec and written in French was drawn upon for source material regarding Montreal, its history, and the gay community therein. As well, interviews conducted with francophones were conducted fully in French. When employing those literary sources written in French or conducting interviews in French, all of the transcription and translation work was undertaken by me. Translation, as often argued, can be considered an artistic form, one that attempts to

duplicate essence and meaning through and between different tongues. In many cases, the translations are word for word renditions, while in other cases they attempt as closely as possible to capture the essence, insight, and meaning of the original dialogue. For example, if participants utilized vernacular or street-slang, I attempted to guard the same aesthetic in the translation. Having lived in French Switzerland, living in Montreal, and having completed an undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree in French studies (Études Françaises), I saw and see myself as a capable individual in this undertaking. This is part of the reason, moreover, that a study among this city's two diverse main populations was possible, and seemed both interesting, enlightening, and exciting.

Parameters of Analysis

Ultimately, despite increased reflexivity, familiarity, and experience, it is often argued that the interpreter constructs and detracts from knowledge being produced (Chamberlayne, et al. 2000:25). In guiding interviews and in editing one's writing, then, it is argued that "[a]uthorship ultimately rests with the interpreter" whomever he or she may be (Chamberlayne et al. 2000:25). Cultural discourses, nonetheless, refer to widely shared "background" assumptions, or "truths," about how the world works" (Kiesling 2005:696). Discourse, therefore, offers access to the constructive network of knowledge. In this manner, it is fundamentally principal in understanding both how gay men situate themselves and their identities (Kiesling 2005:696). As Dan Goodley et al. reaffirms, then, discourse analysis, on the part of the researcher plays an important role:

> Discourse analysis may allow us to make sense of the ways in which human being are shaped and moulded, via the power of discourses, in given social and cultural backgrounds. This links directly with the original research question of the author; to investigate social and cultural meanings in the lives of people... through the analysis of one narrative (2004:114).

We do not feel comfortable, moreover, as Goodley et al. continue

> ... in leaving our stories open to a relativistic audience, who can do with the stories what they want. Analysis aims to offer a helping hand in guiding readers to the theoretical significances of a narrative (2004:147).

Perhaps of greatest importance, however, especially with this group, lies in the analyst's ability to

> ... not only examine... the wider socio-cultural origins and impacts of discourses (and the consequent subject positions, objects, and possibilities for subjectification) but also explore... opportunities for resistance to dominate governing discourses (Goodley et al. 2004:116).

Gay men today have many avenues of discourse with which to deal with traditional notions of where they "should" stand in the world. Discourse analysis among this group, therefore, may allow me to find discrepancies regarding former research and investigate new elaborations as the men in this study present them.

I was not emotionally removed from my research, as already stated, and, ultimately, the discourse analysis helped me to further bring out my own inner-reflexivity, as it offered the possibility for me to draw on my own narratives and experiences (Goodley et al 2004:167). Anthropologists who are linked in solidarity to those being studied, in such a manner, anthropologists who share in aspects of their informants' realities as well as that of the larger social context, benefit from what Faye Harrison calls a dual consciousness (1991:89-90). As Harrison claims, "..."solutions to problems... are often found by people who can see out of more than one eye" (1991:90). More, than being an insider, Harrison speaks for the benefits of belonging to multiple "worlds." In regards to analysis, then, Harrison further clarifies that the multiple consciousness experienced by an "insider" may "...engender a more perceptive and socially responsible field research..." (1991:105). While there are definite benefits to the

analysis of an insider, it is ultimately the quality and reflexive nature of analysis which will determine the caliber and quality of knowledge gained. After all, as Max Weber has stated, "... the observer and the observed [are] after all constituted of the same human essence, an idea grounding the concept of Verstehen, or knowing through empathic attunement" (Davies 2010:4).

Personal Narratives and Life-histories

Despite the analysis, this entire study was meant to remain as true to the men's own descriptions, interpretations, and elaborations as possible. I was aiming for:

> -specificity not generalization—amenable to the specific description and explanation of a few people rather than the representative generalities of a wider population;
> -authenticity not validity—engaged with the authentic meanings of a story and its narrator rather than devising measures that measure what they purport to measure;
> -language as creative and not descriptive—recognizes the constructive effects of language rather than language as a transparent medium for describing the world (Goodley et al 2004:97).

I wanted the men to speak, I wanted them to be understood through their own accounts; and because I was aiming for specificity and authenticity, while all participants took part in at least one full length and "official" sit-down interview of 1.5 to 3 hours, in some instances, many subsequent conversations may have, and often did, augment subjects of discussion that may already have been touched upon. This allowed me further insight as well as more first-hand experience and tangible evidence. These subsequent conversations, moreover, usually taking place during leisure time among friends, often allowed the men to deepen their narratives, as the air of official interviewing had often long dissipated by that point. After all, as Goodley et al. describe: "[t]he best stories are those which stir people's minds, hearts, and souls, and by doing so give them new insight into themselves, their problems, and their human condition..." (2004:147). This, I would

argue, is what ultimately enriched my field experience—my emotions and insight—and blurred the distinction between time spent interviewing and time spent in the "field." It enabled my understanding of the men to be rendered that much more "round" and cohesive.

Toward this end, then, there is an extensive use of dialogue employed throughout the construction and development of this thesis. In order to best go about this, moreover, life-histories were heavily used. As Maynes et al. explain, personal narratives offer "... retrospective first-person accounts of individuals lives" (2008:1). In this sense, the interviews that were conducted were what Reinharz terms "holistic interviews" (2010:12). The men were asked to describe many different aspects of and periods in their lives. This approach made sense given that within the gay community there is a long tradition of narrative aimed towards empowerment (Maynes 2008:7). One need only think of the gay liberation movement of the 1970s[19] or diverse "coming-out" stories to understand this reality. Understandably, then, as Gregory Currie explains, narratives "...turn the experience of one into the knowledge of all" (2010:v) By this Currie is arguing that a personal narrative makes one's knowledge available, accessible and thus the knowledge of all. Such, moreover, could be of import when analyzing new discursive elaborations among gay men of all generations.

> Narratives are the product of agency; they are the means by which someone communicates a story to someone else. Narratives represent their stories, and do so in a special way characteristic of communication between agents (Currie 2010:1).

[19] This was addressed in greater detail in *Chapter I - The Gay Reality: A History (Canada and Montreal)*

When someone offers a self-narrative expressing their life-history, the dialogue portrays and reflects what is important to the individual (Currie 2010:7)[20]. In getting at what the men consider to be key, moreover, life-histories, allow for me to test against literature, and draw out new elaborations which is certainly one goal of this thesis.

Personal narratives and life-histories, nevertheless, are much more complex than has been laid out above. As Hockey and James argue:

> It is an ideological process in the sense that biographies or autobiographies present a set of ideas about a person. These are not only inevitably partial, being dependent upon memory and scattered evidence, but also socially constructed in the sense that they are authorized into being, either by the self or another (2003:208).

Likewise, Kath Weston, through her use of narrative, also characterizes such accounts as "remembered" (1991:78). Does this mean, however, that life-histories or personal narratives are ineffective or of little use? I would argue that these narratives still represent a reality for the individual sharing them, how the person constructs his or her own past and, therefore, present identity. This allows for the analysis of individual agency as Maynes et al. understand the situation.

> personal narrative analysis... emphasize[s] the narrative dimension of selfhood; that is, well-crafted personal narrative analysis not only reveals the dynamics of agency in practice but also can document its construction through culturally embedded narrative forms that, over an individual's life, impose their own logic and this also shape both life stories and lives. (2008:2).

[20] While these facts have been stated by previous theorists, I chose to cite Currie here as a modern example which consolidates/sums-up past arguments, and expresses the point which I want to convey in my discussion.

Not only does personal narrative emphasize dimensions of selfhood, then, but it also allows for the view of agency, as we look into one's subjective take on their world (Maynes et al. 2008:2/9)[21]. Ultimately, as I have stated, personal narratives "... provide the grounds for understanding the connections between the evolution of an individual's sense of self over time and life-long practices of self narration" (Maynes et al. 2008:30). In this manner, personal narratives connect the present and the past, for as Hockey and James argue, it is of the utter most importance that one understand their past, as they have situated it, in order to be able to move forward and have a clear sense of who they are in the present (Hockey and James 2003:205). Discussion of memory, as such, becomes a discourse of both identity and agency (Hockey and James 2003:207). Such elaborations, narratives of personal growth and identity development, become especially evident when reviewing narratives addressing key periods of one's past, for example, the AIDS era in the gay community. This very idea, moreover, highlights the importance of a multigenerational study such as this one, a study which allows people to describe themselves and their communities across time.

This, of course, reminds me of an important question raised by Hockey and James: how much can one person and their story represent an era (2003:85, Jourdan 1997)? Ultimately, as Maynes et al. state, the stories are not individual, but are told in respect to certain times and circumstances (2008:3). People tend to speak about the large issues and less about daily life, and such forced me to delve deeper in my conversations with the research participants. If we return, then, to the argument that personal-narratives

[21] The ideas expressed by Maynes et al. (2008) and Hockey and James (2003) as cited on this and the following page are restating many assertions made by previous theorists and anthropologists. Again, keeping this in mind, I chose to cite these authors as modern examples which consolidate/sum-up past arguments and express the point which I wish to convey in my discussion.

are fundamentally individual fictions, we must realize that they are equally group fictions (Maynes et al. 2008:4). Read carefully, life histories may provide unique insight and show connections between individual choices and collective (social) forces (Maynes et al. 2008:3). This, again, underscores the importance of an extensive historical review. Moreover, because this study is multigenerational, it was key to play the personal nature of the narratives against the historical information, a take that ultimately proved quite revealing. As Maynes et al. affirm:

> The connections among individual agency, historically and socially embedded processes of self-construction, and the culturally specific narrative forms in which individuals construct their life stories and subjectivities are interwoven through storytelling (2008:2).

Furthermore, "[p]ersonal narrative analysis can capture the dynamic construction process, even as the stories themselves document historic shifts and variations in the experience of particular sexual identities" (Maynes et al. 2008:7). This, finally, then, is the reason that this thesis is structured and organized the way that it is. The thesis follows the chronological ordering of a typical life history: beginning in early youth and ending in present day. Moreover, it traces how the men relate to their pasts and how this, as well as their historical understanding and take on their lives, shapes them and the way they structure their present world whether this refer to type of family they elaborate or how they situate their identity.

Final Methodological Considerations

In the end, I must remain cognizant that all the men with whom I conducted in-depth interviews and conversations, were not only openly self-identified as homosexual, but were all either students or educated professionals. Among these factors, other important personal markers such as, class, income, education, and age, were also taken

into consideration while conducting conversations with participants and subsequent analysis. My findings, nonetheless, do not correspond to many gay men, especially those who are closeted or "stealth," as their life-course transitions are not necessarily experienced in the same way as the participants in this thesis, those who have long lived as openly homosexual men. While the older cohort of four men, for example, tend to comprise a very homogenous group—all having grown up in small francophone cities and later moving to Montreal—the younger cohort of four men tends to be much more representative of the diversity of today's Canadian youth—moving from different regions of Canada, with motivations different from those of their predecessors. Ultimately, as will be seen throughout this thesis, homosexual men comprise an extremely diverse group of individuals: they are present in many different communities and groups and, as such, can never be truly spoken for as a totality[22], nor would such an endeavor even necessarily be desirable, as it would surely lack precision.

Meeting the Research Participants[23]

I came to meet and develop relationships with the men in this thesis in many different and unique ways. Some I knew as former acquaintances, others I met through a snowball referral effect and others still were encountered through pure chance. I met Sébastien, for example, when I was a student in a French literature course which he was instructing. When I reconnected with Sébastien—in order to gage his interest in this thesis and his potential participation in it—he put me in contact with many of his close friends, thus allowing me to expand my pool of potential elder research participants. The participants that I did not meet through referral or that I was not already acquainted with,

[22] One must also keep in mind that this thesis does not focus, in any appreciable manner, upon men currently in their 30s, 40s, or 50s, and, this cannot be taken to represent solid information regarding these cohorts.
[23] All research participants (60s and 20s age cohort) were born in Canada, are Canadian citizens, and are Caucasian.

however, I met through chance and random encounters. This occurred while I was frequenting different locations within the gay village of Montreal and conducting observations. In most cases, these types of meetings occurred as a result of impromptu conversations. Given that I would often frequent the same locations, I came to know the men with whom I was conversing and was able, as such, to eventually gage their interest in participating in this research.

60s Cohort

Sébastien:[24] Sébastien was 62 years old at the time of the interview. He grew up a francophone in the Gatineau-Hull region of Quebec and later moved to Montreal where he currently resides. He lives alone and is an author, poet, and professor of French literature.

Charles: Charles was 60 years old at the time of the interview. He was adopted as a baby and grew up a Francophone in Shawinigan, Quebec and later moved to Montreal where he currently resides with his partner[25] of 10 years. He is an elementary school teacher, a profession that he says he has practiced and loved for many decades.

Jean-Daniel: Jean-Daniel was 61 years old at the time of the interview. He grew up a francophone in Sept-Îles, Quebec later moving to Quebec City and eventually to Montreal where he currently resides. He had just retired when we initially met, but had spent many years in radio and television broadcasting at CBC/RadioCanada.

[24] All names of individuals and specific locations (clubs, bars, restaurants), spoken of or referred to in this thesis, have been changed in order to further protect the anonymity of all involved.
[25] Charles was the only participant in either group to be in a romantic relationship at the time of the interview and any other interaction.

Joseph: Joseph was 65 years old at the time of the interview making him the oldest participant in this cohort. He grew up a francophone in La Mec, Arcadia, New Brunswick, later moving to Gaspé and eventually to Montreal where he currently resides. Joseph is a retired registered nurse who currently resides within the gay village.

20s Cohort[26]

James: James was 26 at the time of the interview. He was born and grew up in Dalhousie, New Brunswick, later moving to Fredericton, and eventually Montreal at 22 years old to the present. James is a university student, having attended university in both Fredericton and Montreal in different subjects ranging from sociology to political science. I had met James at the party of a mutual friend about one year prior to the outset of this research.

Eli: Eli was 23 years old at the time of the interview. He was born and grew up in ThornHill, Ontario just outside of Toronto. According to Eli, who is Jewish, Thornhill is often considered a large Jewish enclave. He attended Jewish schools throughout his life; while religion has played an important role in Eli's life, however, he does not consider himself overly religious, nor does he base his networks on religious affiliation. He later moved to Montreal for university where he has lived ever since. Eli is a university student, having started his studies in the natural sciences, he has since switched over into film studies, a degree he is currently working on completing.

Simon: Simon was 21 years old at the time of the interview making him the youngest participant in this cohort. Having grown up in the borough of Rosemont,

[26] The younger participants are all English speaking. With the exception of Simon, however, who is originally from Montreal, none of the younger men associated their language knowledge and/or abilities with their individual identity work. This is not to imply, however, that they did as such once they moved to Montreal. Given the bilingual nature of the city, nevertheless, one must remain cognizant that such a reality can and often does play a role in the construction of one's network within this atmosphere.

moreover, Simon is the only participant to originally hail from Montreal. His experience with the gay community there, although, did not come until later in his life, as will be seen. Simon has been taking Cégep[27] courses through correspondence and works as an artist producing a large amount of original compositions and works. He also writes and dabbles in poetry.

Lee: Lee was 26 years old at the time of the interview. He grew up in Brandon, Manitoba and later moved to Montreal to attend university. He had already completed a biology degree in Manitoba and was studying French at university in Montreal in order to aid his entrance into a Master's program at University of Montreal, a French speaking institution.

[27] Collège d'enseignement general et professionel; these institutions offer a DEC (College Education Diploma) which is typically 2 years in length and required for university admission in Québec. These programs include the equivalent of what would be grade 12 in other Canadian provinces as well as an additional year of study. Consequently, undergraduate degrees in Québec are normally 3 years in length, as opposed to the 4 years required in other provinces.

CHAPTER IV

Forbidden Narratives of the Repressive Era: The 1960s

Jean-Daniel described some other events to me, stating that he hadn't been able to add these in during the recorded interview, while recounting his history. "It was truly a different time," he explained to me. "I've seen things you could never imagine;" he began to describe an experience to me that he had had in the 1960s. He had been having sex with another man in Park Lafontaine when, according to him, the police suddenly arrived. They were approaching with guns raised, ordering the men to stand down, he described; and he remembers thinking that if he was taken into the station that his life as he knew it would be over. "My life would be over," he repeated anxiously, nearly out of breath as he recounted the incident; so he pulled up his pants in a furry, as he explained, and just ran, no problem at that time apparently, as he used to run 15 km a day. He explained, however, that as he was running away, he could hear gun shots going off in his general direction; he never stopped running, never looking back. I could feel the shear terror and excitement being conveyed through his voice as he explained this to me and I find myself marveling at the reality, which I am well aware of, that such an offense could ever have warranted gunning someone down (Fieldnotes: September 17, 2009).[28]

[28] Sex in public locations, as discussed by Jean-Daniel in these opening statements and later by others, may initially carry with it allusion to elements of repression, as it was and is illegal. Therefore, certain allusions can be made to the repression associated with elements of prostitution and sex workers as a group who could function in public. Similarly with prostitution, such practices were often enacted out of necessity and lack of other options or locations in which to enact one's desired sexual experiences.

Aspects of repression often allow one to document avenues of adaptation. With this in mind, this chapter was added as an introduction to the older participant's voices—utilizing aspects of their life histories to frame the early days of the gay liberation movement in Montreal. Beyond a historical review which recounts these realities, these participant's narratives gave the era an individualized and lived reality for me. Moreover, through recounting the repression that was present, these participants demonstrated sites of resilience and active imagination. Active Imagination dictates that before any change is possible, one must first be able to **imagine** such a possibility (Scott 1996:25), and such sets the tone for all the adaptations that I would be seeing throughout the course of my many conversations with the research participants and, consequently, the remainder of this study.

Walling of the Early Community and the Development of Gay Time

Carol Warren describes how "[a] community that is secret and stigmatized must quite literally have walls: places and times set apart from other places and times in which the community can celebrate itself (1998:183). The early gay community, as a heavily stigmatized group, was able to effectively construct such walls, walls built upon secrecy and often necessity, for as Sartre once argued, even when there is no choice, there is not necessarily a lack of freedom (Hockey and James 2003:155). Imagine, for a moment, then, that you are walking down an unknown street; there are taverns on this street, but all the windows are frosted, the people inside obscured from view; through the doors men are discreetly coming and going. How would you know what type of locale these establishments were or what demographic comprised their clientele? As Warren

continues, in her 1974 work *Space and Time*, "[t]he stigmatization of the gay world ensures that all gay space and time tend toward secrecy" (1998:183).

> Gay inner time and gay interaction are protected from invasion of outsiders by other kinds of walls: the refusal of entry to strangers, the concealment of gay bar entrances, and the palpable change that happens in a gay crowd on the entry of straights. In this way, gay time spent within gay spaces gains a highly exclusive, trusting, and valuable character by its very secrecy (Warren 1998:183).

This "gay time," as she refers to it, largely made up of leisure time, allows or allowed gay men to lead a double life of sorts (Warren 1998:183).

Beginning with a historical review allowed me to frame the chronology of the gay movement in Montreal. It was only when the men began recounting their histories, however, that I understood that to truly understand the oppressive era of the 1960s, beyond what a simple historical review could provide, I needed to live it through the first-hand experiences, the *forbidden narratives* of those men who came of age in Montréal in the 1960s. They make up half of the participants in this study and who better than them to paint a picture of life during this period? All the older participants began by describing the hidden nature of the early gay community.

> At that time there was no village in Montreal. There were just a few bars around Stanley Street and you had to go there incognito. And there were a lot of raids... it was tough at that time; so we were much more in the closet. There were very few effeminate guys. You had to look straight to not have problems; so you didn't let yourself go (Charles).

When I spoke with Joseph, he touched upon many of the same points and described the anonymity to me:

> It was much more hidden during those years. Our bars were small, you never saw a woman in a gay bar, and the exteriors were very discreet. Today you sit in the window of a gay bar and everyone looking in knows that the majority of the men there are gay. However, back then outside of the gay community, no one would know that a certain place was a gay bar without frequenting the gay sub-culture.

> The windows were all closed, etc. it was anonymity. You did your thing and then you went home.

As Warren had described, this walling not only meant secrecy, but often created feelings of security for stigmatized gay men.

> I was very timid back then, but, at the same time, it was anonymous. No one knew me and I didn't know anyone, I was more at ease. But I knew [, while at the gay bars,] that the men that were there were there for the same thing I was. It liberated me (Joseph).

Charles, while describing how the community's small size garnered trust and security, on the other hand, contradicted certain notions of what Joseph perceived as anonymity:

> You could pick up a guy, at that time, for a one night stand and when you left for work in the morning, you would say: "well just lock the door on your way out." You were sure that when you got back nothing would be missing because if something had disappeared, and it did happen from time to time, the guy's reputation would be finished in the community. You would just say: "this guy was at my house and stole from me" and afterwards no one would trust him because the community was so small (Charles).

It remained true, nevertheless, that there was still a good deal of anonymity, as spoken of by Joseph, possible at that time in relation to the world outside of the gay community.

Regardless of the security afforded by this limited "walling" of gay locales, all of the participants spoke of constant police harassment that they not only personally experienced, but that is readily spoken of in the historical literature. Witness, such as that already offered by Jean-Daniel, speaks to the potential severity of police repression.

> We would go out Saturday night and we didn't know if there was going to be a police raid—they happened almost all the time. They would say: "We are here to verify that everyone is of legal age" and the bar would be shut down. You couldn't do anything; they were supposed to reopen afterwards, but by the time that they had verified everyone's age, and they purposely took an extremely long time, well by then it was already 4 am and everyone was going to go home anyway. It was always like this. They regularly closed down the saunas as well. But there wasn't often the kind of violence that one saw at Stonewall. At this time, all the bars were in the West [of the city] and there were sporadic manifestations, but I don't recall much violence. So there wasn't violence, but I

> felt like it was violence because we knew that they were doing it just to close the homosexual clubs, the gay clubs. When they would close the saunas, they would arrest everyone for gross indecency (Sébastien).

Remembering the words of Sartre, however, many gay men of this era developed unique ways to exercise agency in the midst of social repression, as Sébastien elucidated:

> I knew I could go to the bars, I could go to the park, I knew I could go to the sauna—a whole life that no one knew about, but that I knew. It was only the gays that knew about it.

Elaborating this reality, Sébastien recounted one of his experiences for me:

> I was in Bulgaria at a conference. The guests all sat and there was another man at the table; he turned towards me and looked at me. I told my friend: "if he gets up to go to the toilet, I'll join him" and that is exactly what happened. We took longer than I had thought to return to the table. He was being very cautious because he was a member of a film crew that was there filming the event. It's very interesting because if a straight man wants to have sex with a woman at another table he has to go and tell her, but us—we say nothing. With a single glance you could tell if someone was gay and cruising.

As for Joseph, he went about meeting gay men in a slightly different, yet, as he felt, safer manner.

> During that time, you could rent a small room in a hotel to use for sex. One of my first true sexual experiences took place in one of these hotels (Joseph).

And Jean-Daniel, who constantly reveled in the chance to surprise me, intrigue me, make me laugh, had many more forbidden narratives that he was willing to share and that he hoped would speak to the ingenuity of the gay "spirit of rebellion," as he coined it.

> When I went to the CN central station. Have you heard of the CN central station? The toilettes at lunch time... imagine 32 toilettes and in these toilettes you have 28 men having sex. It was the same at McGill university on the 3rd and 5th floors. All the toilettes that were there, during my time, were full. Today it is unimaginable because there is the village, the internet, and, of course, there is AIDS. During my time, there was none of these things (Jean-Daniel).

Jean-Daniel further explained how such things, for him at least, were matters of survival; he was, of course, no stranger to risk, but as I learned, his run-in with the police in the

park was by no means his first venture into what many would consider precarious circumstances.

> At that time, you had to be 21 to enter the bar. So I would only take the risk of going out once a month. It really was a perilous risk because, at that time [of night], there was no public transport and it took me an hour and a half to get to the intersection débaunaire[29]. My parents would go to sleep at 11 o'clock; I would wake up at 1 o'clock in the morning and run there—arriving at 2:15, by 2:20 I had met a guy, by 3:15 I was finished; by 4:30 I returned home through my window and would sleep until 7:30 when I had to leave for school.
>
> *Me*: You don't often hear about that type of thing from the today's generation; I certainly never did anything like that.
>
> *Jean-Daniel*: Of course not because it was a question of survival, I had no choice because it (homosexuality) just didn't exist.

Beyond issues of pure survival, however, many of the men hinted to the fact that there did exist a certain thrill and excitement that was gained when homosexual contact was by necessity forced into the realm of the secretive and invisible.

Advantages/Disadvantages of Repression in a Small Community

"... [F]riendship patterns are influenced by opportunities to meet others and iniate friendships, the content of relationships, and the frequency of interaction" (Galupo 2007:147). The above narratives raise important points, in this sense, about freedom and opportunity in the early gay community. Traditionally, smaller communities were believed to limit one's group of friends or offer less opportunity to interact with diverse others (Du Bois 1974:22).

> At the opposite extreme, individuals who live in a metropolis would theoretically have the most opportunities. However, great as the occasions for meeting may be in large population aggregates, the possibilities for sustained interaction would persumably be less than in small population groupings (Du Bois 1974:21).

[29] Name has been changed.

One could argue, therefore, that the early gay community functioned as a form of small population grouping in that it allowed for prolonged and meaningful contact between homosexuals. The large metropolis (Montreal) allowed for a grouping of homosexual men which would not have been possible in more rural communities, groupings that were anonymous in the larger context. Arguably, for this reason, the liberation movement saw many homosexual men and women migrating toward urban centers.

As people began moving to the city and forming a visible gay community, however, the importance of "coming out" and visibility, as already alluded to, was also established and amplified. While this certainly did catalyze great change in terms of rights and opportunities, many of the participants in this study, through their forbidden narratives, actually speak to a certain loss of freedom with the advent of coming out and visibility. As Erving Goffman describes:

> All the other categories and groups to which an individual necessarily also belongs are implicitly conisdered to be not his real ones; he is not really one of them. The individual's real group, then, is the aggregate of persons who are likely to have to suffer the same deprivations as he suffers because of having the same stigma; his real "group," in fact, is the category which can serve as his discrediting (1963:112/113).

As such, "[t]he homosexual subculture [now] encourages both lesbians and gay males... to perceive the homosexual identity as an "essential" identity—a state of being and way of life—rather than merely a form of behaviour or sexual orientation" (Troiden 1998:273). As touched upon when speaking of Foucault's *Scientia Sexualis*, "[s]ex was driven out of hiding and constrained to lead a discursive existence..., the singular imperialism that compels everyone to transform his sexuality into a perpetual discourse" (Foucault 1984:314). According to Foucault and his *repressive hypothesis*, then, now that the homosexual was a "species," he could assert power "... in the pleasure of showing off,

scandalizing, or resisting" (Foucault 1984:322,324). Although Foucault was referring to an earlier time period or social reality wherein repression and punishment were markably different than in the 1960s, society continued to enforce confessionism and the homosexual community did buy into and vest in this notion of power through visibility. As a result, gay youth today are forced to deal with their sexual identites earlier and more fully than their heterosexual counterparts (Troiden 1998:273), as Charles alluded to when saying: "if you don't accept your situation, those who surround you won't either."

However, the intense gaze of perpetual discourse over sexuality and visibility over its many façets has led to what might be considered certain constraints, as homosexual men and women are now constantly reminded of and defined by their sexual orientation. Remembering, again, that open discourse regarding one's sexuality is now institutionalized as being tantamount to accepting one's self and one's situation, homosexuals must now invest in their position, their "otherness" and self-identify as gay; it becomes important to their notion of being (Hall 2000:19). Likewise, the early gay community, while generally considered liberating, may have had a ghettoizing effect, as it not only visibly identitfied one as homosexual, it potentially limited interactions in the same manner that Du Bois describes of small population groupings (1974:22). Such limitations become evident, remembering that friendship is traditionally built upon trust and freedom, when one recalls the homogeneity of earlier homosexual friendship networks (Weston 1991:111). This, nevertheless, is ignoring the deeper issues and importance of shared identity all of which will be explored further in the next chapter when entering into discussion of the men's youths and eventual community integration.

CHAPTER V

A Youth of Difference: Growing up Gay (Pre and Post 1969)

My understanding that I was gay grew with each passing hour. I hadn't come even remotely close to doing anything about this, and I would push the thoughts I was having more frequently—of what it might be like to kiss another man, to be held by him—as far back in my mind as possible, but the feelings wouldn't go away. This one thing alone contributed to my twisted confidence that I would never be normal, would never fit in, and probably didn't deserve to live. After all, I'd been taught that people like me were the worst sort of perverts, miserable sinners who'd deliberately chosen to turn their backs on God and were headed straight toward the hottest fires of hell. When my prayers and hopeful pleadings for God to change me—to make me be normal—didn't work, I started doing everything I could to destroy my life (Paris 1997:65).[30]

[30] The opening excerpt for this section, in which prominent gay athlete and gay rights activist Bob Paris recounts aspects of his youth in 1970s rural Indiana, was chosen as a powerful example touching upon the emotional difficulty and confusion that often coincided with coming of age within a heterosexual world which placed/places stigma upon one's sexual orientation. Being aware of differences in one's world is pivotal to an understanding of that world, not to mention group membership. However, an awareness of difference marked with notions of isolation, as Paris has shown, can cause a good deal of confusion and hardship.

The case can often be made that young children are aware of much more than adults are willing to give them credit for. Interesting that children would perhaps not even know why they are "different," at least in sentiment, and yet have the earliest awareness of such distinctions; such was the case with the older group of men in this study. As Sébastien described,

> I knew to some point... I didn't know that I was gay, but I knew that I was different. I would say that I knew this from a young age—around 6 or 7 years old. Especially given the fact that my classmates used to call me names... sissy and such; so I knew I was different, but I didn't know what that meant: homosexual. At 8 or 9 [years old] you can't say you are attracted to men. It arrives later during adolescence and that's harder because society wasn't open.

Sébastien felt a sense of difference; whereas he may not have been cognizant at such an early age as to the nature of his perceived difference, however, his peers were telling him, as is often the case, how and why he was *different*. Charles recounted a situation similar to that of Sébastien—a boy unaware of his attraction for men, yet still cognizant of a sense of difference. "Let's say I was 14 years old, before that if you like boys, still you didn't technically know that you were homosexual (Charles)." As Andrew Anderson points out, identity occurs more as a result of difference than sameness, every alternative is an alternative to something (Anderson 1998:66). These youth unable to see themselves as members of the "mainstream," then, "self-other" by way of perceptions of difference. The characteristically earlier introspective endeavor, mentioned in the literature review, is initially a result of this sense of difference, leading these boys to question themselves and ultimately leading them to apply stigma (Benibgui 2007:118); such relates back to Erving Goffman's notion that an individual's stigma comes to be forced upon said individual as a defining identity (1963:112/113). According to Benibgui, furthermore, when youth

perceive themselves as abnormal, the results can be destructive or disruptive as they often result in further feelings of isolation (2007:118).

Adolescence in general, of course, has long been known to be a period of emotional volatility, youth often feeling socially alienated. Nevertheless, unlike heterosexual youth, how could these boys not feel a sense of "difference," as they were unable even to relate to their own parents and their respective relationships in most instances. In the 1950s and 1960s, moreover, there were very few gay role-models, only further compounding issues of isolation, as the boys did not know of anyone like themselves.

> I didn't know any other homosexuals because it didn't exist. Homosexuality in 63' did not exist. You never heard anyone speak of it at 13, 14, 15 years old. I had a very Catholic family; you would never speak of anything like that. I knew that I didn't have the right to speak about it. It was complete and utter silence. It didn't exist, it was *invisible* (Jean-Daniel).

In the case of Charles, he did know of some gay men during his youth, but, as he recounts, they were older and he found that he was unable to relate to the men.

> Yeah, there were a few guys; basically I knew because they were a bit more effeminate. There were two of them and I knew of some others as well, but they weren't my type, I had no interest in being with them and they were always with girls. You know, very much like the cliché (Charles).

This was an era of invisibility and silence in rural Québec where families were generally less informed regarding gay issues and where gay youth were subject to stereotype and misinformation.

> I thought like people said: that it was sinful, it was dreadful, it was desolate and lonely. It was seen as unnatural because I was living in a region that was very Catholic. They put that in our heads: "it wasn't natural, it wasn't something natural." So certainly, it was something that was difficult to live with on a continual basis... that's for sure. It was always a struggle, a struggle.... We were always trying to show something other than what we were. It was a double life. Even if you didn't desire to live that way, you were forced to (Joseph).

As Joseph explained, moreover, the nature of parent-child relationships, and the dynamic within families, has changed over the years. During his youth, as he explained, children seldom had emotionally intimate relationships with their parents. Moreover, because Joseph hailed from a large rural family wherein the age differences between siblings was quite broad, he had less opportunity to develop profound relationships with them. There were, however, other mitigating factors that had long affected the nature of Joseph's relationship to his siblings, as will be expanded upon later on. "I had 5 brothers and 5 sisters mind you. So, of course, whenever they spoke or joked about "fags," I wouldn't say a word. It was always a sort of game of "double life" (Joseph).

As the boys reached adolescence most became conscious as to the nature of the difference from their heterosexual counterparts while for others, such awareness would come as late as 20 years old. Regardless, however, I heard many stories of difficulty during the later school years, years that were often described as solidifying a sense of difference.

> It was difficult because of school. Around 15 years old, we had to take gymnastics and I hated boxing. I couldn't hit another boy, I hated it. So I wasted all my time during gym class and was made fun of for it. I was the first in the shower and the last out. They used to say: "You really spend a lot of time in the shower." I would say: "I like to be clean" (Jean-Daniel).

Joseph described his difficulties resulting from what he deemed his effeminate gait and the constant stress of remaining cognizant of such.

> Of course it was difficult because you can't completely *hide*. You always have more feminine mannerisms—there are things that remain visible. You know what you desire, but you can't express it. There were always things, always individuals or behaviors that would remind you of that. They were pretty awful, very mean; that's why I didn't like school.

In certain cases, the harassment went beyond verbal.

> At the time, it was the brothers of the Sacré Coeur who taught, it (school) was religious. I was treated like a *fag* or *queer* because I was a champion dancer. I loved ballet. On the other hand, I was a singer for the Christian Brother's Choir. The other boys spoke of certain things: cars and breasts; I never spoke about anything of the sort. I was so introverted. So they mocked me and when my parents asked I would say: "I was beat up by some guys in my class." I couldn't take it, so on one occasion, I started running and got a baseball bat to defend myself; because of that I had a social worker investigate my case. My case was that I was gay, I was different and I didn't hide it (Jean-Daniel).

When this type of isolation is felt by youth, a strong support network becomes all the more pivotal. However, for gay youth, the stigma attached to homosexuality in the 1950s and 1960s made a youth network of supportive peers all the more improbable. "I never spoke of these [gay related] things because they were considered abnormal. I can't remember, even in secondary, ever speaking to anyone" (Sébastien). The resulting loneliness is aptly summarized by Joseph:

> When I was younger, I very often felt alone... that's for sure. You're alone for as long as it takes to find someone who you can confide in, those with whom you can speak freely. In other words, someone with whom you can express what you are. It's more difficult, that's for sure, when you are young. It's a problem. I had a few friends, but there was always a barrier between us because we didn't think the same.

Barriers were built through a sense of Otherness. What the boys were able to do despite this social mutism, however, was experiment sexually, as Jean-Daniel describes:

> Around the age of 12 or 13 years old I became sexually active. I was active with cousin's, uncles... but they weren't gay. My uncle was 26 years old, my cousins 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 years old. I was precocious and too curious for my age.

Charles recalled similar experiences:

> I had sex with guys at that time when I was 13, 14 years old. We used to go camping and at that age with boys it was easy. It wasn't because they were gay—they weren't—it was experimenting[31]. But at that time, I still remember, I was in Trois Rivières and I stole a porno mag and I thought: "so that's what you do in bed." So with my friends at the time... I did things with them; some of them

[31] This corresponds with Kinsey's 1948 study, which found that 37 percent of males, regardless of sexual orientation, have had some form of same-sex experience leading to climax.

> freaked out, some others liked it. Even one guy who is straight now, I had sex with him for 2 years, 2 and a half years. He would go cruising girls and if it didn't work out he would come to me. So I started to be active when I was 12, 13.

This experimentation was a far cry from peer support, however, as Jean-Daniel elucidates: "I was very solitary. Even with the 2 or 3 guys I was sleeping with I never spoke. I never had support in that sense. It was always just me." These were relationships of physicality; all the men indicating that what took place between other boys during these early years was never openly spoken of or discussed, as if by some unspoken agreement. This might be seen as an early strategy for these men to relieve stress. It offered these youth some early form of control over their sexuality, a sense of choice as whether or not to engage in such activities, it offered these boys a form of expression for their *invisible* sexuality.

Fleeing as a Strategy: Integration Into the Early Community

As the men have described to me, there was no perceivable way for them to lead the type of life they desired while remaining in their family milieus.

> Jean-Daniel explains how he is from Sept-Îles in Northern Quebec and how things are difficult there, even today. "It is hard to live a gay life." His friend, with whom we were sharing a drink, had been married for 7 years and has a 30 year old son. He doesn't regret his son, as far as I can tell, but does say that those were seven wasted years. This begins a discussion with Jean-Daniel who has never slept with a woman. He tells his friend that, at that time, he lacked the force of character to do what he "should" have. However, as he explains, backpedaling slightly and in support of his friend, it was difficult and there was a good deal of pressure. There were really only three choices at that time for those living in rural Quebec: **commit suicide**, **get married**, or **flee**, as the two men explained (Fieldnotes: August 10, 2009).

As has already been seen in the literature, "fleeing" a given environments in order to find a reprieve from social isolation was very much a reality in those early days. Charles echoed this sentiment as he exclaimed: "When I left home, I left as fast as possible."

Sébastien described his departure in a more conservative manner; even he, however, alluding to a need for new and different surroundings.

> When I came to Montreal it was equally to pursue a career. However, at the same time, I knew to stay in Hull-Gatineau, at that time, that it would be very difficult to live the kind of life that I wanted to live. I wanted to have the official life, career, etc., but I also wanted the everyday life where I could feel good (Sébastien).

Jean-Daniel described a similar situation.

> During my time, age of majority was 21 years; so I stayed with my parents until I was 21; at 21 years old I left. But I had already left earlier, I went to Quebec [city] at 20 years old for school. So I had total liberty, my parents had no idea what I did in Quebec or Montreal. So when I returned at 21 years old, after university at the technological institute of Laval, I said: "Okay, I've found a job, an apartment," and I left.

Joseph was already far from his family when he made the decision to move to Montreal.

> I was 23 years old when I came to Montreal. I was working in the countryside in Gaspésie and I was really sick of that isolation because society was much more closed there; and in Montreal I saw the opportunity to live more freely. I wanted to liberate myself from the type of closure that existed in small places during that era; I'm speaking of 1969.

As Ellen Lewin explains, "... community studies chronicle the way that gay men and lesbians shape their social lives to shield themselves from the hostility of heterosexuals, be they family, coworkers, or neighbors" (1998:92). For the men, both the emotional distance and physical distance from the traditionally repressive environments, allowed them to begin the work of community integration and construction of the lives that they desired. As Sébastien explains,

> When I first moved to Montreal, it was very important to have gay friends. There were many gay encounters, like I was telling you, that happened often. At the time it was very important, there were no gay journals or anything, but you were beginning to see a certain organization.

Not only was it important to be in a more anonymous milieu, but being in a place where

other like individuals could be found, a "safe" space was critical. Joseph explained this:

> When you are gay you think in a certain way. I believe that your mind develops in a different manner than someone whose mind develops in heterosexuality. We don't have the same way of thinking, we don't see the same way, there are many things that are more delicate.

As one man explained to me during an impromptu conversation: "you get there and it is virgin land, you are no one, no one knows you; you are free of judgment and can break the isolation by surrounding yourself with like-minded individuals" (Fieldnotes June 2, 2009).

When one moves to a new city, as Karen Lindsey explains, it is often then that they become or are most aware of their need for a social network (1981:153). In the case of these men, however, the move to Montreal was already part of a larger search for community, the cognizance of this need already being in place. Given the early state of the gay community, then, the men often had a gatekeeper or someone to introduce them to the milieu, offer them integration, and a more diverse network of contacts. Sébastien had a gay male friend who was living in Montreal at the time of his move.

> I had a friend who said: "come to Montreal." He introduced me to the city and took me everywhere in Montreal, to all the gay "spots," the gay bars. It was a friend from Hull, but who worked here in Montreal in the theatre. I already knew him because I was working in the theatre. This man had a boyfriend in the city; he lived in a beautiful apartment on Saint Hubert. That's when I decided to take an apartment in Montreal. So I was shown where to go in the city; I understood very quickly what was necessary. I was nervous the first few times. It's like when you start a new job, but I quickly swam like a fish in water.

Joseph, on the other hand, did not initially have any homosexual contacts when he moved to Montreal. Consequently, his entrance into the community was slower.

> I slowly entered the gay community. Slowly because I didn't know anyone who was gay. But at work, since I was a nurse, I had colleagues and that was how, slowly, I was able to enter the gay community. But, of course, it still took a while. So, again, because I didn't know anyone in Montreal, I made my friends at the

> hospital, my first gay friends were from the hospital. There was one [man] especially who could "detect" the others; it wasn't complicated; he spoke to me. It was with him that I first went out to the bars. This was around 1970. That's when I started to go to gay bars and meet other gay men.

For others such as Charles, entrance into the community took place independently.

> I lived on my own. I found where the boys were, but that was when I started meeting people. I met Marcel who's 80 years old, my oldest friend [(both in age and length of friendship)]. When I met him I was 18. About 7 or 8 months after I moved to Montreal I met Marcel.

Once the men had their entrance into the community, they were able to begin meeting other individuals and expand their networks, as Joseph explained: "so all my friends were from work until I started going out alone. We met at work (colleagues), but would go out in the community and that was how I started to meet other people in the community."

Entrance, as the men have described it here, of course, is somewhat simplified. For this generation, entrance, as previously interpreted by Foucault's repressive hypothesis, was arguably subject to diverse social forces; through such an interpretation, "entrance" into the gay community was mandatory as it meant visibly identifying oneself as homosexual[32]; in turn, being part of said group further enforced for the individual that they were different. Despite this, however, Troiden affirms that "[t]he perception of "belonging" to a world of others situated similarly eases the pain of stigma. They look upon other homosexuals as sources of social and emotional support..." (Troiden 1998:272). This speaks to Lefebvre's (1991) elaboration that space cannot be considered in isolation. Spaces are the product of those who inhabit them, as they are shaped by the unique relationships that the inhabitants must navigate both in relation to their immediate surroundings and the larger societal context; in this instance, the relationships in question

[32] As already touched upon in the section "Forbidden Narratives," while society does still enforce confession, Foucault was referring to a different social reality wherein repression and punishment were much different than they were in the 1960s and 1970s.

were largely between individuals of homosexual orientation and their positioning in relation to the larger heteronormative Canadian society. Within the confines of the community, homosexuals—who navigating similar social relationships—could create a "safe space," wherein they could look to those who shared a common identity (Lefebvre 1991:93-94). It is often argued, then, that the early community was strengthened by a common history of disempowerment (Nardi 1992: 108). It was this common history that enabled the early community to bridge both gaps in age and social class (Rumens 2008:18/19)[33]. As Charles has already explained, he met his friend Marcel, 20 years his senior, when he was 18 years old. Moreover, others explain how they remain friends with ex-lovers or likewise develop friendships through one-time sexual encounters, a practice uncommon among the heterosexual population[34]. Arguably, it is this kind of universal belonging, that existed in the early community, which situated these men to the point that they were then comfortable to divulge their sexual orientation to a larger audience.

Coming-Out to Friends and then Family

Kath Weston speaks about coming out as a way of creating truth, of making one's reality a social fact (1991:65), an ideal, again, that the repressive hypothesis speaks to; the men did see their undisclosed homosexuality as impeding their relationships, as described by Charles and others. "If you didn't accept yourself, it was pretty hard for your family to accept you; if you don't accept your situation, those who surround you won't accept it either" (Charles). Troiden describes how coming-out begins when one first acknowledges his homosexual attraction (1998: 261); and it is true that "[t]he reinterpretation of past events as indicating a homosexual potential appears to be a

[33] Fieldnotes (conversations) offer supplementary support for this assessment.
[34] Again, fieldnotes offer supplementary support for this observation.

necessary (but not sufficient) condition for adoption of homosexual identities" (Troiden 1998:267). Yet, as Troiden implies there is still more necessary to the adoption of a healthy homosexual identity. None of the men of the older generation, who participated in this study, were able to publicly disclose their sexual orientations until they had integrated into the gay community and had established meaningful gay relationships. Yet, as these men have reaffirmed, coming-out, once the possibility existed, was not simply an issue of comfort but was believed a necessity to begin what they considered a full life, a desired life.

Despite social and emotional supports, coming-out, as Grossman and Kerner affirm, is continually one of the most difficult points in one's life (1998:28). The elder generation not only waited until they had reached certain points in their lives but they equally developed unique ways of situating themselves. They remained selective of whom and how they divulged their orientation to. As Sébastien explained, his writing was largely his outlet for self-expression.

> It was a slow coming out, it took place over several years. People knew, for the most part, at a certain point because I was a writer. So in my texts they could see it, it was there. I always wrote about love, men; so everyone felt it in some sense. But, like I told you, I started living the life that I wanted when I came to Montreal. I knew what my life was even if I never cried from the rooftops that I was gay. I would never tell someone outside my immediate group unless they asked me. It's none of their business.

Given the importance of community integration to their coming-out processes, a friend or close group was usually the first to be told. As Joseph recounted, it was with work friends, so pivotal in his community integration, that he first shared his sentiments.

> The first time I ever spoke about my homosexuality was with my work friends, the men that I worked with that were gay. That was when I started to know men a bit in the bars, but I was rather shy and timid (Joseph).

Community integration also made it ultimately possible for them to come-out to family. Because of the traditional power of blood ties, as Tremblay et al. explain, it is believed that individuals will feel uneasy about their identity until their parents are informed or while their parents are kept ignorant (1998:163). Not surprisingly, then, self-identifying as homosexual to one's parents was equally regarded as a necessity, as the next step in the coming-out process or personal development. Due to the era in which this was occurring, however, my participants developed unique strategies for relating to their families. For example, all preemptively distanced themselves from their family before divulging their sexual orientation. This does not come as such a surprise when one recalls the initial exodus from the family milieu and its perceived limitations. The "distance," more than a geographical reality, was often connected to this developing emotional distance. In many cases, this distancing was developed over many years and coincided with others factors of financial and social independence. Charles, for example, described the unhappiness that resulted from the emotional distancing he undertook with his family members during youth.

> I was hiding things from my mother by being gay, she didn't really know me; and my sister and I did not have a close relationship. My teenage years in that home were not that happy. They weren't sad, but they certainly weren't happy either..., but lonely, sure (Charles).

As Joseph has already alluded to when speaking of his relationships with his siblings during youth, mirroring many of the other men's experiences, due to emotional distancing, he long felt as though he led a double life; as he told me, "I never felt very close with my family. I always lived outside of the family in a way."

Fear of rejection, however, lingered and, as such, all the façets of distancing came together as the men preemptively prepared themselves for rejection. Corresponding with

Kath Weston's (1991) findings, siblings are often the first family members to be confided in.

> With my siblings, I told them straight out. It wasn't difficult because I had already told myself, "if they accept it great, if they don't accept it alright." I was ready for either eventuality. It's never easy, but it would have been their problem and not mine. It was easier living in Montreal because when you're in a big city you either see someone or you don't. When I came to Montréal it was freedom I saw and I've never regretted coming here (Joseph).

By ultimately framing their revelation in this manner, and given the preemptive distancing that had already taken place, they perceived of little potential for loss; again, each of them developed unique ways which they perceived as most efficient for coming-out to their parents. As Jean-Daniel explained, for example,

> I moved with Gaston. He was my lover for 30 years. So I told my parents that I was moving in with Gaston. At 22 years old it's not a big deal. It's more around 26 or 27 years old—around 68-69—that they started asking me: "are you planning on getting married?" I said, "no, not really, it doesn't interest me," but I never said I was gay as such. They could see my entourage, the decorations in my place; they knew.

Sébastien recounted a similar history.

> My mother would come and visit me, my father too and they would see a man at my place and they would know that the man was homosexual. So they knew that I was gay; my father, for two years after that wouldn't speak to me. But it was someone else who actually told him directly that I was gay. I couldn't understand at first. I was living my life and didn't pay much attention to it. I only found out afterwards when my sister explained to me, "that's why papa doesn't want to see you, as soon as he knew you were gay." I was already living in Montréal of course."

For these men, placing their parents in situations where there was little doubt as to their sexual orientation was deemed the least stressful way of ensuring parental awareness. Charles, on the other hand, was the only man in this group to directly confront his mother with the revelation.

> I moved to Montreal when I was 16-17 years old and I already knew that I was gay. I told everybody in my family when I was 20 years old. My mother said to me, "I know it, you were 10 years old and I knew it." She didn't care. My mother said to me, "what is important for me is that you are happy, that you have a happy life. If you are gay or straight... I don't care as long as you are happy. I don't want you to be with a woman, get married, and have kids if you are going to be unhappy. This is ridiculous." So that was my mom, and she was old. When she adopted me she was 40 and I was 1 year old. So at that time she was already 59-60 years old. So that was surprising because my mother was not a cultured woman, she didn't read, she didn't seem to know many things about the larger world. She came from a small town. My father passed away when I was 14 so he never knew.

These parents all hailed from small towns or rural regions throughout greater Québec; their recounted reactions to the knowledge of their child's homosexuality during the 1960s and 1970s contradicts much of the literature concerning this period in North America, where rejection by kin upon disclosure of one's homosexuality was often the norm[35]. It could perhaps be argued that the social climate in Québec was unique, perhaps more liberal or in a process of great adaptation during this period, when compared to the climate of English Canada or the United States. Whether one argues the case for parental denial or simple avoidance, the reality is that most of the reactions were rather positive or neutral (the individuals were not excommunicated or disowned by parents) and, with exception of Sébastien's father, certainly not rejecting in nature. In Sébastien's case, moreover, his father was ultimately able to accommodate his son's reality.

> My father started speaking to me again after the death of my mother because my mother died rather young. So when I would go visit Gatineau for the holidays, Christmas, Easter... He had been hearing my name because I had won some literary awards and I suppose he thought: "well he can't be that bad." I never spoke of my personal life in great detail and he never asked. What he did ask me was if I earned a lot of money. But I was never close with my father, he was always very distant.

In this case, coming-out revealed the flexibility of blood ties, that they were ultimately more resilient or versatile than in other regions. What does it mean, then, that these men

[35] As discussed in *Chapter II, Literature review: Homosexuality, Family, and Friendship*, this was the case for all participants in Kath Weston's (1991) important study.

were not blanket rejected and yet still continued to distance themselves from blood kin? There is often a distancing which results when one moves away from family members, as might be seen with new immigrants, but, in this situation, the lack of interest in strengthening bonds to family can be drawn back to the men's preemptive distancing and social independence from blood kin, as already touched upon stretching as far back as childhood; moreover, such gives clues to the eventual relations that these men would nurture with their blood families in later life.

Building Friendship Networks: the Creation of Space and Place

When they moved away from home, they were moving away from what they conceived of as old constraints and towards creating comfortable networks; they set out to create the most well-situated and stigma-free lives possible, the lives that they desired, with the type of support they deemed necessary. Karen Lindsey describes how friends might fight and have disagreements, but that they ultimately accept one another (1981:112). This notion of acceptance "sans frontières" was one of these men's key criteria for identifying close friends and confidants. As Jean-Daniel explained,

> A good friend is someone who accepts the differences and doesn't try to control, tell you what to do; they aren't a mother, they aren't a father, they are the people that are there when you need someone. But that isn't necessarily to say everyday either. It's a confidant, someone you can piss-off and the next day will say: "listen, I know that you were in a bad mood;" and they take you as you are. A friend is not the type of person whom you ask what they want and they say: "well, whatever you want." That type of thing does not work because it will lead to a very boring life and the end of a true friendship. It is someone who remains who they are, but who can respect you at the same time; who can respect the differences between you.

Joseph shared many of these sentiments.

> It's someone that you have confidence in, you can tell what you think, express who or what it is that you are. You don't necessarily have to see them everyday. If a friend needs something you can always ask.

Charles, on the other hand, when asked what made for a good friend, explained the intricacies of multiple friends, each fulfilling a different function.

> You can call a close friend any time of day or night and if you are in trouble and they will be there. Furthermore, if there are intimate things that you need to discuss. There are things that I don't discuss with Steve (partner), who I live with, that I will discuss with Sébastien. There are things that are very personal and that friends will be much more open to, more receptive than anyone else; so it is someone you can count on… people that won't judge you. For example, I get something slightly different from each friend; I mean, with most of my friends I can talk about anything, but you get different things from different ones. You know I don't have the same relationship with Sébastien that I do with Marcel. They are at two extremes, but with each of them you get a little bit of this here and a little bit of that there; and that is what makes the relationships that you have interesting because if you only have two friends and they are exactly the same then you miss out. Just to give you an example, you have someone like Sébastien who loves reading and is very cultured and, on the other hand, you have someone that is not cultured at all who would go into sports, traveling. You get the good side of each; things that you wouldn't get with one person, you get with the other one, you see? I enjoy the full spectrum from all of them. Let's say that you don't accept yourself because there are guys at 50 years old, 30 years old who still do not accept themselves because of the lives they had as children. So if you accept yourself totally and you are comfortable with yourself, then you can say anything to anyone. Sometimes it takes many years to reach the point where this is possible.

While friendship networks tended toward gender and age homogeneity, this notion of variety, which was later touched upon by the other men, might also speak to the existence of a greater diversity in the early gay community than that which is often acknowledged.

In order to create lives shielded from stigma, as Lewin has described it, the men employed the notion of internal relevance in their personal relationships. Unlike with blood kin, using a dialogue of internal relevance meant that the men could choose what their relationships to friends would signify, how deep the personal attachment would go. As previously described in the work of Kath Weston (1991:135-36), the truth revealed through ruptured family ties was destined to reintroduce this form of agency; where

blood proved insufficient, people had the option of creating their own families (Lindsey 1981:112-113). In the case of the present study, blood was not insufficient—the elder participants were not excommunicated—but, as was the case with Kath Weston's participants, family remained insufficient in meeting demands and requirements of support and common identity. The traditional argument holds that friendship carries enormous risk when compared with family due to the nature of the commitment (Lindsey 1981:179). The level of the men's commitment to their friendship networks, then, speak to the value they placed upon the relationships. In Kath Weston's (1991) study, friendship was the only option for these men to reclaim family, her participants referred to their networks as "chosen" families wherein members came to act as a surrogate family fulfilling all of the traditionally ascribed roles. The older participants in this present study, however, did not speak of using friends as the only option for reclaiming a family. Rather they described it more as creating something new, for them it was more related to the creation of place and/or space than the recreating of something *lost*. As Sébastien explained, "I knew that I was marginal so I led a marginal life. I never had a family; I never had it so I never desired it."

The elder participants set out to create their idea of place with a group of chosen individuals. Jean-Daniel, for example, described the "community" he created with his closest friends during the 1970s.

> During that time, when I was with Gaston, we were all neighbors. We were on Rue Saint Jacques (pseudonym) in five houses one beside the other; out of these 5, there were four gay households and one straight. It was the mini-village of our lives in 1977. We were always together—this group. If I was ever in serious trouble, these friends would have helped me, but I never really had any serious troubles.

While none of them spoke of these networks as a family, they did touch upon traditional family roles as being fulfilled within these newly created spaces. More than simply offering descriptions of what a friend entails, as many of the dialogues had begun, the men had practical examples[36] of their roles in each other's lives. As Joseph recounted, for example,

> I spent two months in Gaspésie caring for a friend who had had an operation on his knee. He couldn't be home alone so I went and spent two months with him. So it is in this sense that I find friends important because you have confidence in them. You don't have to see them everyday, but they are there when it matters.

In fact, as these participants assured me, they would seek out the aid of friends before ever deferring to blood relations.

> My group is my friends, my family is not my group. You keep asking me about the family, the family... for me family doesn't exist. It is there, we call it family, but... whenever I had a problem I went to my friends. They were the ones that told the truth (Jean-Daniel).

By this point, these elder participants were spending most of their holidays with friends and developing traditions that would endure and evolve over the years as they themselves evolved. An important step in this evolution was to occur during the AIDS crisis in Montreal's gay community of the 1980s. As the next chapter will investigate, it was during this pivotal period of crisis that friendship and community were forever changed.

[36] This is expanded upon in *Chapter VI - The AIDS Crisis: Friends Lost and Ties Strengthened*.

CHAPTER VI

The AIDS Crisis: Friends Lost and Ties Strengthened

Following our interview, Jean-Daniel offered to show me some of his old photo albums. I was immediately struck by how handsome and happy he was in the 1960/70s, somewhat of a change from the 60 year old man now sitting in front of me with a lifetime of experience behind him; yet, despite it all, he is still quite funny and eccentric. It was obvious judging by the photos that he has traveled quite a bit, often with lovers, sometimes friends—all sporting the styles of the era (including hair and mustaches). He had lived on a street with his close friends—5 houses in a row; many of the photos were of this group, his family. I suddenly felt really sad for his personal loss as he went over the men one by one stating: "mort, mort, mort aussi." They had all died of AIDS and this had obviously changed the dynamics of his good friends as a group (fieldnotes, September 17, 2009).

Researching the history of the gay community made me aware of the deep impact that AIDS had upon the homosexual population, but it was not until I was sitting there looking at Jean-Daniel's photos and listening to him recount his experiences that I truly understood the human element of that impact. When I asked Jean-Daniel how he would sum up this period in his life, he replied: "Oh my god, it was the worst period of my life since adolescence because I spent the majority of my time in funeral parlors wondering what was happening." For him, as for most, in the short history of the modern gay movement, it was an era of unparalleled loss and confusion; it was an era that would forever change the gay community and what it meant to be an openly homosexual man.

There were only 14 confirmed cases of AIDS in Canada in 1982—10 of those in Montreal (Warner 2002:163); so it made sense when all the men I spoke with explained that the disease was not generally spoken of in Montreal before 1985. Prior to this, mere whisperings had begun to surface of a new illness afflicting gay men in the United States. André was on holiday in San Francisco when he first heard people speaking of the sickness afflicting the gay population. "...[T]hey were already speaking of this illness, but they didn't know what it was at that time." When the disease began to appear more readily in Montreal, it was its prevalence among homosexual men and the initial lack of information regarding the virus which created an atmosphere of crisis and disbelief. During a conversation, Sébastien described this lived reality to me:

> ... it is really incredible the number of people who died...[,] it's unimaginable. Every day you learned about someone who had AIDS. There was a terrible period, and they were all around the same age—my age or younger. It was a kind of tragedy that arrived; everything you knew, your world began to fall apart. You had this impression of disaster within the community.

With everyone I spoke with I seemed to be encountering similar stories, similar *voices*. Charles described how he "... lost nearly all [his] friends at that time. They were all dead, one after another. Rather than going to happy hour at the pub, it was: "What funeral parlor am I invited to this weekend?"." The extreme feelings of crisis and loss seemed inevitable as many of these men lost their entire "families," those who had stood by them through their greatest *trials*.

These men could see the disease taking its toll all around them and yet, as I have read and as Jean-Daniel further clarified, no one knew how the disease was transmitted or if they would become ill: "We knew it was a gay illness, but we didn't know it was the sperm, blood. I wasn't convinced that it was that." This young community was in a sense of panic as it faced a new adversary—this time, one it could not identify.

> If you knew someone had AIDS you wouldn't give them your hand. There were no medications—once you had it you were finished, you would die. In one year, two years, sometimes very fast, it all depended because it could turn into cancer—AIDS isn't the *illness*. At first, there was pneumonia, and then there were skin lesions, brain cancer. (Sébastien)

Even when the medical profession began issuing statements advising homosexuals to use condoms, explained Charles, the fear remained.

> …[T]here was the point when they said, when the doctors told us and everybody to start having sex with condoms. At one period, people didn't even French kiss. They just kissed on the cheeks. "Ils se carressaient" and they were jerking off not even sucking each other anymore. When it came out (the illness), let's say for maybe two, three years it was like that. I mean you might as well sleep with a poupée gonflable (inflatable doll), it's the same thing you know.

While these new daily-lived realities were setting in among the gay population, however, changes were also taking place within the larger social context. A backlash, as detailed in greater depth in the history section, was developing against the visibly homosexual population; the media began referring to the illness as "Gay Cancer" (Jones and Bego

2009:107). The AIDS crisis brought homophobia into the open at a time when political correctness had made for a more masked form of discrimination—hidden from general view (Lavoie 1998:338). The consistent lack of AIDS funding aimed at the gay community was the most visible example of this (Jones and Bego 2009:342); this continued well into the mid-1990s.

As the Community came under new/renewed scrutiny from the "outside," many of my participants described how they came to realize that their greatest asset was, as in the past, each other. Group organizations, such as *Séro Zéro* (Lavoie 1998:342), were formed to meet and focus on community needs. Homosexuals were rising to the occasion in support of their friends and "family," as Charles explained: "They were the only people you were counting on;" the community, as he describes, was still small enough at this time that

> we knew everybody in the milieu, so I mean Sébastien would say:
> "did you know so and so?"
> And I would say, "ya I know him."
> "Well he passed away last week."
> And because you knew him or sometimes you knew his family, you [would] show up [at the funeral] (Charles).

Often, as many participants attested to, when family refused to visit their dying children, friends would shun both stigma and fear to show up at the hospital and let their friend know they were loved. As discos were replaced by funeral parlors, the gay community drew tighter through shared experience, and a new *common* voice emerged. In the end, those who lost most often spoke of having only the community to rely on.

When I asked the men how they survived, while so many others, so many of their friends did not, most of them told me that it was luck.

> It was truly luck. It truly was. I knew people that [slept around] like forces of nature and are HIV negative and others who had an accident one time a year and bang. So what can you call that? (Jean-Daniel).

Others described how they were busy with careers or in committed relationships during this period, and thus missed the initial wave of the illness. While most men described the "fun" and freedom of sexual practice they enjoyed in the 1970s, they now admitted that, beyond notions of fear, their attitudes regarding sexuality and sexual practices were forever changed in the 1980s. Sébastien summed up the lasting nature of this *maturation* for many of the men: "I knew that I could no longer lead the life that I had been leading. When you're 40 years old you don't want to change, but AIDS forced a change in life-style." Charles, provided a practical example of this change:

> When you're younger and you were invited for dinner, you would look at your watch and say I have to get out of here to go to the bar and pick up someone to have sex with. Now it doesn't matter if the dinner goes until 1:00 am. I play cards with my friend Marcel [80 years old]. We bitch and laugh like crazy. We call it Saturday night therapy. You go to bed and you're much more satisfied.

Whether this notion simply represents adapted attitudes toward sexuality, however, or is a result of overall life-course maturation is debatable.

After they had worked through those initial years of death and shock, many of the men described feeling fortunate that they, ultimately, had not lost everyone:

> I was lucky enough, I mean not *everybody* around me died. But I mean some people… it was bad. Some of my friends lost everybody. There is a guy I knew at the time, he lost his lover, and he lost all his friends, all of them! Within a four year period he lost *everyone*. (Charles).

Because of scenarios like these, most were adamant that this era had further reinforced the existing importance of close friends. This all seemed to be culminating in the theme of survival, something I was readily hearing among this generation. In recounting a trip to New York City, Sébastien first introduced me to this idea:

> I was in New York visiting with a dancer friend about 10-15 years younger than me. There was a bar there and we went there at 5 o'clock. We looked at the people and the people there around 5 tended to be older than the average crowd, maybe 40, 50 years old; and he said to me: "These are the survivors, these are the people that made it through the AIDS crisis." Because he himself had lost his boyfriend to AIDS. He (his boyfriend) was around 30, 35 years old. They had lived together up until he died. Anyway, he looked and he said: "The people that are here are *survivors*, they passed through AIDS." That really hit me and I thought to myself, "it's true, I'm a survivor too." I was really hit by this sentiment.

Community identification and notions of survival were developed and solidified as a result of this period increaseing overall resiliency by promoting adaptability for many among this generation of men.

Robert Hays et al. clarifies that "... older gay men in urban areas have [now] dramatically decreased sexual behaviors that can transmit HIV infection..." (1990:901); this assessment remains in line with the narratives of men such as Charles. Paradoxically, however, much of the literature now suggests that "... high percentages of younger men continue to engage in unsafe sex..." (Hays el al. 1990:901); given the history of the AIDS crisis, this idea was surprising, as "[t]he experience of this age [18 to 25] is very different from that of previous generations of gay men since their sexual careers were initiated in an era when information about AIDS was widely disseminated" (Hays et al. 1990:901). Given the supposed availability of information, then, I found myself wondering why the younger gay men I spoke with were silent on the issue—never mentioning the disease, their worries regarding it, or of knowing anyone living with it.

René Lavoie speaks of the "dehomosexualization" of AIDS that began in 1985 when it became evident that heterosexuals were also susceptible to the illness (1998:339). Regardless of this trend, however, as Lavoie explains, AIDS had become intimately connected to the identity of gay men and remains so to this day (1998:341). What this meant for the youth "coming out" after this period increasingly was that they were now

implicated in the domain of AIDS[37] as well as their sexuality—possibly adding one further challenge to the overall coming out process (Lavoie 1998:341). Yet, the younger participants never made mention of AIDS during our conversations. My initial interpretation of the younger participants' silences was that the young men, affirming their sexuality in the AIDS generation, were attempting to distance themselves from the AIDS association now tied to the gay identification[38]. As I continued speaking with the older gay men and surveying the literature, I came to see other possible factors that might be contributing to this silence. Charles, for example, was skeptical as to whether or not the younger generation has really benefited from the suffering and tragedy of his generation; he described to me how he saw the present situation with younger gay men:

> I mean the level of contamination is still very high. At one point the younger guys said: "well since we don't have sex with the older guys, the ones that are HIV positive or whatever then we cannot catch it." So a lot of them were 20, 21 having sex without condoms and they think well it doesn't matter because I don't have sex with older men, I'm not going to catch it. Still, when you're drunk when you're high, you go to bed with someone and you say "well are you healthy?"
> "Ya ya ya no problem, I just went to have my test;"
> and because you are drunk, because you're high and everything you just sort of forget.

As will be explored in greater detail in the following section, the younger and older generation of gay men are divided, in many aspects, within the modern gay subculture. Many sources claim that AIDS has now come to be seen as an older gay man's disease (Hays et al. 1990: 901)—it acts as one factor that distances or "divides" the identity of the two groups, it symbolizes two separate lived-realities. There are other intricacies at play that contribute to this divide, however. For example, men are no longer

[37] From the moment of public self-identification as homosexual in the post AIDS era, gay men are now associated with or linked to the reality of the disease; because of this arguably negative association, "coming-out" may be experienced with an additional point of stress.
[38] During my own coming-out experience, I was asked if I was worried about or feared AIDS. A gay man is seldom allowed to forget this connection.

dying at the rate they once did[39]. With the introduction of drug cocktails, men infected with AIDS are now living longer and healthier lives; they also appear much more healthy, as Charles elaborated for me:

> A lot of the guys that are HIV positive, they are healthy even if they are HIV positive. They have bodies like Schwarzenegger and everything [because of the steroids that comprise part of the AIDS drug cocktail]. You see them in the village, you know, but the thing is still, I take these pills everyday. There are side-effects and everything; it's not so livable. You're better off not having it, but until they find something, find a cure you still have to live your life.

Charles was also responding to my query of why AIDS has become invisible within the contemporary gay sub-culture and, moreover, why many younger homosexuals feel as though they know of no one or few with the illness; one can already see how the atmosphere surrounding the Disease has been altered from the early days of the AIDS crisis.

It stands to reason that the older generation of gay men would know and have known more men with AIDS and this direct contact, coupled with the tragedy of the AIDS crisis, added a sense of reality to the disease. The social dynamic of the disease today, however, is that of an abstract complication or danger related to sexual activity. For many younger homosexuals this has caused a disassociation with the disease in terms of a lived-reality, one that has affected loved ones and friends—the disease has been removed from individuals and has simply become a risk factor[40]. As such, much of the group voice and shared identity of suffering has now been replaced by AIDS organizations and anti-HIV transmission programs. For those coming of age after the AIDS crisis then, this has meant less exposure to the common identity of AIDS suffering

[39] Many youth now see and consider the disease as livable.

[40] Furthermore, as Hays et al. note: "Younger people in general have heightened feelings of invulnerability... which may cause younger men to engage in more HIV risk behaviors than older men" (1990:901). Moreover, "[f]eelings of isolation and alienation common among gay youth... [,as already discussed in previous sections,] may also reduce their motivation to engage in safer sex" (Hays et al. 1990:905).

and peer support that developed during that period. The literature suggests, furthermore, that young gay men lack many of the communication skills that emerged as a direct result of this crisis—perhaps another clue at the division between the two age cohorts within the current homosexual sub-culture[41]. This touches upon and introduces the differing social reality in which young homosexual men and all youth are currently living. In the next chapter I will explore such issues as I delve into the life-course narratives of the younger participants and investigate their unique shaping and experience of safe and intimate space as contemporary youth in Canada.

[41] While I have referred to a division existing within the contemporary commercial gay community (subculture), one must remain cognizant of the fact that gay men today do not truly make up or comprise a single quantifiable subculture. Gay men, by contrast, are present across diverse groups and identities.

CHAPTER VII

Generation X: Growing up Gay in the 1990s and Post 2000 Era

When we assume a comparative approach to sexual identity development... the variability in processes of narrative engagement becomes immediately apparent. Individuals born in the United States in the 1950s and coming of age in the 1960s, with the historic events of the Stonewall Inn riots, engaged with narratives of "gay liberation" unavailable to same-sex attracted individuals born just 10 years prior. American youth in the twenty-first century engage with narratives of "queer" and "postlabel" identity that are antithetical to the recognition for which the Stonewall generation fought (Hammack and Cohler 2009:14).

Growing up gay today remains difficult; such is one of the general assertions made by Quebec theorist Nicole Tremblay (2007). Tremblay studies adaptation among young homosexuals in the province and states understandably that, despite the progress of recent decades, childhood and adolescence continue to represent especially stressful periods in the lives of young homosexuals (2007:163). These are assessments that, even today, few could contest. Tremblay's report, moreover, was produced in 2007 and if such arguably continued to be the case as recently as 2007 then it is important to remain cognizant that the group of diverse, mostly anglophone young men in this thesis, in their mid to late 20s at the time of this study, experienced their childhoods in the social world of the early to mid-1990s. Adolescence in this case, then, is situated from the mid 1990s to around the turn of the century. It must be acknowledged that like their older counterparts, these men have experienced great social change since their childhoods. In the early 1990s, homosexuals did not enjoy the same mainstream exposure on Western television or in Western media that many do in 2010. Only recently out of the AIDS crisis of the 1980s, with films such as "Philadelphia" and "The Band Played On," media was continuing to portray many homosexuals as ill or as leading lonely, desolate lives. These young men, then, continued to come of age against a backdrop of stigma.

> I remember, when I was younger, watching that movie "The Birdcage" with Robin Williams. It was a movie about a gay couple whose son is getting married and the bride's parents need [or wish] to meet the gay couple (the groom's parents). Naturally and to everyone's amusement, one of the gay men decides that he has to go in drag and pretend to be the mother of the groom. I was watching this with my parents and... naturally, we were all laughing, but still it was awkward. Then I remember my dad saying, "look at the queers, look at the queers." I didn't "hear" that the same way that everyone else did and it kind of reinforced the fact that being gay wasn't something to be respected, it was something to be ridiculed or used for cheap laughs (Lee).

As Lee describes, visibility did not render early awareness any easier; unlike with the older generation of men, homosexuality was no longer "invisible," but its connection to early awareness remained an equally complicated aspect of these men's youths. Again, these youth continued to grow up outside of the gay milieu and had no gay role-models within their immediate networks (Nardi 1999:192). Youth generally continue to be exposed to one model, that being the heterosexual model of the familial home; such is key to the individual's early social development, as the interactions that occur within the home during youth continue to be among an individual's most intimate relations (Lindsey 1981:117). With the home environment remaining isolated, in terms of exposure to other sexual models, many of the men remained quite insular and because of this tended to carry skewed images regarding homosexuals, images that were on par with many of the stereotypes of the early 1990s. Simon described his early views of homosexuals and how they reflected much of what he saw around him during his early years.

> The image that I had of gays was bizarre. I had the impression that it was a bizarre type of life and that they were weird people. On television they would show us gay people as those who had problems, they had AIDS or did drugs; so I had an image that made me fearful; I hoped that I wasn't gay, but I felt it a little and that made me fearful, gave me anguish. Around 8, 9, 10 years old I felt that perhaps I could be gay, but I was scared to be considered as such, as someone in those images, sick...

James also spoke of how his early environment influenced his view of homosexuals.

> At first it was, no I'm not gay, I'm not gay and then.... At first I was scared and didn't want to be gay because it was a huge taboo and I always heard people talking negatively about it. I *never* heard anything positive about it... ever; so it was scary and so I went into denial about it. Probably around the age of 13 to 17... like between those years, I was in denial.

As Eli explained, early awareness remained a complicated issue.

> I wasn't fully aware about the whole gay thing. I was very very secluded in my Jewish bubble when I was growing up. I knew that I was gay, but I was

> completely repressed it from the age of 11 to, let's say, 14-16. I would tell myself that I was bi. I wouldn't say it as a defense mechanism—I think it probably was a defense mechanism—I would just say it... I knew that I didn't like girls; I dated a girl during that time, but we didn't really do anything. Maybe I thought that if I said I was bi it would be okay... more so than being gay. Actually, that's exactly what I thought. I thought if I was gay that other people would be ashamed of me.

These fears appear to be directly linked to the earlier introspective endeavor that many homosexual youth experience. The youth had doubts as to their proximity to peers or to the heterosexual "model" their peers embodied. Their adverse views[42], then, toward homosexuals largely caused a similar form of self-othering to that which had occurred within the older community; the negative views and consequent self-othering which resulted led to the feelings of alienation and isolation that the men described. For Lee, who claimed that his youth was characterized by a more neutral view of homosexuals, the reality of silence remained rigidly in place.

> I think I knew within myself that gays and lesbians weren't horrible people, because I felt like I was a good... enough person and knew that I couldn't be the only one. That didn't change the fact that I couldn't speak about it though. I remember just knowing inside, feeling from my youngest age, even before I knew what it was to be gay, that this was one aspect of myself that had to be kept deep inside and never shared with anyone. I don't know how I knew that, I don't even know where the idea came from; I can't remember when I first knew it... but somehow I remember from the earliest age thinking that this was something that I had to live with... in secret. So funny thinking of it now... that I could have thought that way as a young child. The mere idea of this makes me supremely sad.

Even for those who did not speak of stereotypical images the realities of isolation and Otherness were equally present from an early age. As a study conducted in 1988 notes, "...homosexual males... were twice as likely (72 per cent vs. 29 per cent)... to report feelings "very much or somewhat" different from other boys during grade school (grades 1-8)" (Troiden 1998:266). Therefore, even though adolescence is a period of great

[42] Adverse views refers to the early insights as already discussed by Lee, Simon and James in their dialogues prior to this point in the chapter.

turmoil for many youth, a period in which many of them feel alienated and are in search of a place in which to situate themselves, there is a recognized precedence for such sentiments among gay youth, as has already been in evidence with the older generation of men. James described how his fears caused him to feel alienation.

> I would say that a lot of my internal baggage when I was younger was because of the fact that I was gay and scared about it; it held me back. I suppressed who I was a lot when I was like an adolescent and I think it created small social problems which then made it harder for me to warm up to people and make new friends and stuff; so that's why I don't have a lot of really good friends.

Youth today, according to Lindholm, are raised to believe in the value of individuality and independence and, yet, as he describes, such often causes modern youth to feel alienated from their own existences (2007:8/9). Unsurprisingly, this group of men did not speak of suffering the same physical abuses that the older generation of men suffered while in high school, but rather they tended to focus more on common themes of isolation, alienation, and general otherness—feelings of constantly being on the outside looking in. Simon spoke of his alienation at school.

> I was always very solitary in school. I wasn't alone, but at school I was always the black sheep. Not necessarily because I was gay, but because I was different than the others. I didn't have the same interests as everyone else. I did feel it when I was younger, but I couldn't draw the line between isolation and homosexuality.

James' testimony touched upon many of the same themes. However, unlike Simon had many friends growing up; and yet, he described how his own fears and feelings of isolation led to the creation of "barriers" that existed between him and his friends; as he explained, he was unable to fully relate to them.

> I had friends when I was younger, but I didn't feel connected to them because I knew that they didn't know who I really was. It was as though I felt like the black sheep or something. When I was in high school a lot of my good friends were girls, but they never ever saw me as one of them because I was a guy, you know what I mean? But I was still a guy, right? So they always saw me differently.

> Maybe if I had been less scared and had told them who I was, maybe they would have included me more.

James was aware of openly homosexual men at his high school, yet he was unable, at that point in his development, to relate to them, as he described:

> I never had a gay friend until after high school. I didn't even really know anyone gay. There was like one gay guy at my high school who all my friends made fun of; so I would make fun of him too. I would never do it as much as anyone else, I would just maybe laugh.

By his willingness to participate in the teen bullying of other gay students, James makes it evident that group membership and belonging continue to be important themes. Of course, his actions were also precipitated by fear, but one can see how the promise of individuality during youth is often revealed to be a fallacy. The pressure James felt to conform showed this clearly enough and Lee further elaborated upon this point.

> I remember in grade 10... that was before I had come out. At that time, I still couldn't imagine a day when I could be "out." I used to drive in my car and that was my place to let my emotions out, that was a place where I was alone. I used to drive home and cry to myself thinking: I am so alone, I'm so alone. I had friends, but I seemed to float from one group to another with no deeper anchor to any specific group of people. Of course, I used to tell myself that I liked being so versatile that I get along with everyone... and I did, but I really felt alone. I knew that there were other people out there, people who must have known exactly what I going through, but I was alone (Lee).

This notion of individuality that characterizes many social interactions today does not go away and may, in fact, lead to many of the identity issues that characterize gay youth today, as will be explored in greater depth later in this thesis.

Even for those youth who did not know any homosexuals, for this generation there was a marked difference in that, by the mid 1990s, they largely had access to new communication technologies such as the internet.

> We didn't even get a computer until I was 13 years old. I remember that the big thing then was chat rooms... and it just occurred to me one day that I could

> probably meet other gays on there. I mean, I knew they were out there, right? Of course, in the mid-90s the internet wasn't what it is today... I think hotmail had just come out that same year... I was able to speak to gay guys in the end, but it was either not the kind of conversation I was looking for... as in far too sexual or they lived 1000 kilometers away minimum. But, I suppose it did help in a way knowing concretely that there were others out there that were like me (Lee).

As Lee described above, the internet meant that gay youth, for the first time, had possible early access to other homosexuals from within their own homes. During early adolescence, however, this openness online did not necessarily translate to the real world and to the individual's daily lived reality, as Eli explained.

> AOL chat used to be the big thing. That was a huge thing and I remember always thinking—I'm going to go into the gay chat rooms—and then I found 2 guys in my high school; one was extremely flaming. I was in grade 9 when this happened and I remember seeing him walk down the halls with a rainbow flag button and all the stuff and earrings and I was just like: "I can't associate with this guy... I'll be outed like that" and I didn't want to be out in high school. I wasn't ready, I'm like, "I'm not ready for that." None of my school friends knew. So I saw him and this other guy Adam, whom I later lost my virginity to, we also met on chat and it took a few years before we actually met in person. It was so awkward, I was with my friends and I said, "come and eat lunch with us," and I didn't say a word the whole lunch and neither did he. After that, every time I walked by him in the halls I would walk the other way or just wouldn't look at him. He would give me the biggest smile... like he knew I was so afraid of him (Eli).

One could, therefore, argue that, despite the continued alienation and isolation of this generation of homosexuals, there were considerable benefits offered by new technologies such as the internet, the power of possessing concrete knowledge that one is not alone, while not equivalent to community entrance among the older generation, cannot be underestimated especially if the youth in question finds himself far from an urban center with an appreciable gay population. As Eli's dialogue and the other men's youth experiences have shown, however, the idea of being "outed" as a homosexual to one's immediate network and living an openly gay life, before one is ready, remained and remains extremely stressful.

Generation X Comes-Out

The reality of taking on an essential identity or master status associated with one's main area of *stigma,* as discussed with Foucault (1978) and Goffman (1963)[43], has undergone adaptation with time, but its fundamental tenets have never been more strongly ingrained within the homosexual psyche. When James spoke of the barrier he felt between his friends and himself, them not knowing who he really was, he was speaking to this underlying notion of truth, the reality that realizing one's sexual identity as pivotal to the creation of inner-truth. As with the older generation, then, these men felt the continued pressure to render their reality a social fact through confession. The idea of recognizing one's inner-truth, of being continually confronted with the reality of one's stigma, was a common theme for these young men in the lead-up to their ultimate decision to publicly claim a homosexual status or identity. As James explained:

> it was basically just reality hitting me in the face that made me acknowledge it. I couldn't ignore it forever. I think after I came out I stopped holding myself back a little bit. You macho it up a bit. I was slightly less gay before that, I would hold myself back, but now I just act like how I am.

James was describing his take on sharing what he considered his "true" identity and the liberation of his underlying self which resulted from this. Tom described the growing conceptions of truth which he felt upon entering high school.

> None of my friends knew about it at that point, but the reality of telling people... of telling my friends actually started to seem like something that would actually be possible. I knew it was something that had to be done eventually... because I didn't want to be alone... living a *lie* for the rest of my life. It just kind of became something that I knew somehow would happen or... well, had to happen when that right moment presented itself. Of course, that doesn't mean that I didn't still stress over it; who to tell, how to tell them, and the possible reactions. It was basically the fear of being so uncertain and yet knowing that this eventuality was just hovering over you... You have to face it someday kid.

[43] See *chapter IV, Forbidden Narratives if the Repressive Era: The 1960s*, to review Foucault and Goffman's arguments in greater detail (page 63).

The sequence of events, as is already evident, differed markedly from that of the older generation. The conceptions of inner-truth in association with a strong new curb toward individuality, as argued by Lindholm, worked and are working to push homosexual youth to come-out much earlier independent of whatever gay attachments and support they may or may not have (2007:8-9); coming-out, for this group of men, then, was not as intimately connected to entrance in the gay community as it was for previous generations. One might assume, as such, given the lack of common homosexual support—often derived through the early community—that it is possibly less requisite owing to the social changes that have occurred since the 1960s. Public revelation of one's intimate life, however, during the often stressful phase of adolescence, in this case much earlier than for the older generation, tends to make for an equally difficult or stressful experience for today's gay youth. Yet, recalling that this group largely experienced their initial coming-out toward the end of the 1990s, while still considered recent history, it is not speaking to the social climate that is in place in 2010. These men were publicly self-identifying as homosexual in a Canada that existed before such daily realities as legalized gay marriage. Some of the advantages of coming-out near the end of the 1990s, nevertheless, were described to me by a gay man in his late 20s.

> Had an impromptu conversation today with a friend of a friend. We all seem to have randomly crossed paths in a café, and he raised some very interesting issues which I had heard others speak of, but regardless intrigued me all anew. He explained that by the late 90s there were enough broadly known cultural references that they, truly for the first time, were becoming useful in gay men's coming-out endeavors. He went on to explain how he used to watch shows such as "Sex and the City," "Queer as Folk," and "Will and Grace," all of which featured prominent gay characters. What was more interesting, however, was that these shows offered him the opportunity to gage his friend's reactions. It wasn't simply the reality of knowing that people were watching such shows or that such shows existed, but, rather, he would actually see how his friends would react to the characters in these shows; this allowed him the opportunity to gain some

> insight into his friend's underlying attitudes and see how they might react to his homosexuality. Ultimately, according to this man, he admits that it may have been a factor in relieving a lot of his stress regarding coming-out. As one of my informants, Lee, however, described, seeing his parents reactions to a film featuring gay characters had much the opposite effects; so it would seem that having these readily available references with which to gage people's reactions can truly operate in both directions (Fieldnotes October 10, 2009).

All of the men, ultimately, developed their own distinct trajectories for publicly claiming a homosexual status, the intricacies of which were unique. Nevertheless, the participants in this group all commonly came-out to friends prior to coming-out to family, in some cases by many years. Such seems to be a common occurrence according to Nicole Tremblay with 75% of youth first sharing with a friend; in contrast, only 10% of young homosexuals in Quebec today will tell a parent first (2007:163). One could argue that this results from fear of loss of the intimate ties of family. It could also be argued, however, that friends, representing an alternate relationship, provide and embody different types of support for these young people. Perhaps the most discernible explanation though is a combination of multiple factors. For example, by exposing purportedly less intimate relationships to breakage prior to the more intimate, one is in many senses testing the waters in order again to gage possible future reactions. Moreover, as was the case with Eli, all of the men were able to avoid the threat of heterosexual masculine pressure[44] from peers by first confessing to female friends, a reality that did not exist in the more homogenous older community.

> The first person I told was my friend Abra. I don't speak to her anymore. She was from Buffalo, New York and I met her at Jewish camp in Ontario. She was the first person that I said, "listen, I might be gay."

[44] Increased stress as a result of conflicting scripts of masculinity and perceived "acceptable male relationships in adolescence (high school) when played against perceptions of homosexuality. Traditional feminine scripts, in this sense, may seem less threatening in relation to a newly self-identified and developing homosexual identity, thus lending themselves as potential sites of support and understanding.

Simon, described how he first slowly revealed his homosexuality to a female friend, a friend with whom he felt he shared many social attributes.

> The first person I ever told was a friend of mine in secondary, Cynthia. She was an albino and so she was also rejected by the other students. Right away she understood completely. We were the two black sheep. So it was her, the very very first person I told was her. I slowly started speaking about it by raising my doubts. I would say: "I think I would like to sleep with that guy, etc." She responded positively. She said that the only way I would know was if I tried it; and, of course, that is exactly what I wanted to hear. She was basically giving me the right to sleep with another man.

For other men it was easier to first come-out as bisexual. It represented another way of gaging people's reactions, as Lee explained.

> I remember sitting in my friend Andrea's living room one afternoon after school watching television and just thinking to myself I could tell her right now. I just knew that she would probably take it well and that she would keep, guard my confidence. But, still it seemed so hard to just blurt out, "oh, hey, by the way, I'm gay." So I said, "you know how Larissa keeps telling me that she has a crush on me? well I can't do anything about it because I'm bi and I really don't want to hurt her feelings." It just seemed so much safer to say bi. If I was bi I was only half gay; after so many years of silence I still had so much trouble even saying "the" word out loud. She wasn't about to let me get away with that though. So she asked, "well if you're bi then you could technically still date her." She had me cornered and completely figured out; I just thought it's now or never, this is something I'll have to do eventually and why not do it with her, right? So I said, "okay, actually I'm not bi, but I'm gay."

Eli described a similar scenario and the difficulty that one can have with first verbalizing the reality that they self-identify as homosexual.

> When I came to McGill [(University)], I told my first floor fellow that... I went to her and said, "listen I just wanted to share with you that I think that I'm... bi" even though at that time I knew I was gay, it was just to say it to someone. So I said that to her and then I went back a few days later and said, "listen, I'm gay; I just couldn't say it at the time." I went to my first psychologist at 19 and I cried the first time I told her because it felt so wrong to say it so freely because I was so worried what people would think. I wasn't ashamed of it, but like I had said before, I thought other people would be ashamed of me.

The men, for the most part, were uncertain of the reactions they would receive from friends. Most, however, were commonly surprised to receive positive responses. "For every negative response that I received, there were a hundred positive ones, he told me" (Fieldnotes October 10, 1999). Eli described one such scenario.

> When I told people they were totally fine with it. The funniest one was my friend Matt. This was when I was at McGill and I hadn't told him... we had gotten very close the first year; he is like a staunch republican and is studying business; he is anti this anti that and so I was very reluctant to tell him. Eventually a friend of mine told him. When I found that out I was like shit, he's never going to talk to me again. Then I received a text message from him saying: "E[45], why didn't you tell me? I should have been the first to know." He said, "listen, I may have all my politics, but I'm still your friend and I'll introduce you to some people. It was the total opposite reaction of what I was expecting which was really nice. It was just really nice, that was one of my favorite reactions. It's the people you would least expect that give you the biggest okay.

As Simon would go on to explain, moreover, positive reactions often had the effect of strengthening and reaffirming friendship networks and reinforcing the ideal of inner-truth already touched upon.

> I was lucky because I was never faced with many "bad" reactions. I don't really think that they had to deal with many bad reactions; and that was what helped me to realize... well, this is no big deal. With my best friend, coming-out actually made us closer. But, of course, coming-out changed things. I no longer felt the need to hide anything, I didn't need to hide who I was from anyone. That was a step forward, there was no longer stress aligned with this "secret." And with my friends, especially my best friend, when I told them, they saw it as a sign of confidence and trust that I had in them and held for the friendship. I think my best friend say it this way, anyhow, and this brought us closer together. He responded well; so I, in response, saw his reaction as a sign of trust and respect and had more confidence in him.

As these men described, then, friends' reactions actually played a role in self-acceptance and would, as will be shown, play an important role in later revelation involving family members.

[45] This is in keeping with the use of an abbreviation, as done by the informant before pseudonyms were applied.

These young men, much like their predecessors, did not expect positive reactions from family members, thus leading to a great deal of initial stress. Again, they were much younger than in previous generations, they had not undertaken the same type of preemptive emotional distancing spoken of during the 1960s and 1970s and, in fact, were still very much dependent upon their families both financially and emotionally. As such, it could be argued that they were less equipped to deal with adverse reactions; they perceived themselves as having more to lose in relation to kin ties. Yet, a potential site of support lay in the fact that these men had already come-out to their closest friends; this meant, then, that many did have some form of outside support network from which to draw. As Eli described of his experience revealing his homosexuality to his parents,

> my friends were along for the ride. one of my friends Lee, I would speak to her. She was along when I told my parents... her and Abra basically, they were big supporters.

Having gone through the experience of coming-out to friends, for the most part, had positively reinforced these youths' notions of inner-truth to the point where they could now conceive of telling family members, a situation somewhat similar in certain aspects to the emotional and psychological reaffirmation gained through entrance in the early gay community.

Ultimately, as with previous generations, the power of kin ties continually weighing upon individuals led them to feel obligated or uneasy until such time that they shared what they deemed their inner-truth or master status with their blood kin (Tremblay et al. 2007:163). Even those who initially told their friends and yet showed little interest in telling family, then, came eventually to feel the need to share with family members.

Most were very forthright with how they presented the news, yet, for some, such as Eli, this directness and time of revelation resulted from a period of great emotional strain.

> Family, I didn't think about telling at all. Family, I was like... I'm okay not telling them, I just want my friends to know... I'm just afraid of what they will think. It just came out when I told my mom. It literally was a moment of my lowest low when I came out because I had flunked out of McGill at that point. I came home, I was there for four months working a 6 to 6 job—I had to work from 6 in the morning to 6 at night—and I was miserable. It was just one of those nights... my mom picked me up from work, we were waiting for my brother and she had gone to my grandfather's birthday and my grandfather had mentioned to her a script that I had written about a tranny teen getting beat up in a Jewish high school... and she was like, "are you gay?" I'll never forget that moment, I remember every little detail that went through my mind at that point and just thinking... fuck it, it's now or never; so I just said, "yup, I am," and that's how it came out.

Simon described the long process he underwent from telling his friends to eventually telling his family members.

> With my family, it took a long time. It was very long. I had two years of coming-out with my friends before ever even thinking of telling my family. My mother took it well, but I only told my father afterwards. I wrote my mother a note. She took it well enough, but with a bit of awkwardness... I know my mother. Her response was, "well what do you want me to do about it?" Everything was the same after a certain time.

Much like Simon, Tom explained how he had allotted himself a two year interval between coming-out to friends and telling his family members. Lee, however, took a much more nuanced approach when broaching the subject with his parents.

> It just seemed like such a difficult subject to bring up with family. I mean how do you speak about something like that... "oh, ma, by the way, your son is a fag or hey ma, could you please pass the potatoes to a queer? thanks." No, you can't do that; so what I decided to do, which, in hindsight, was probably more embarrassing than just broaching the subject myself, was that I bought lots of posters of men in bathing suits, models, etc. and I hung them all over my room. Well after that, they kind of brought the subject up to me and then all I had to do was respond. I really don't know what I was thinking, but it seemed like a good idea at the time.

Because of their age and reliance upon family, parental acceptance for today's youth arguably, more so than peer acceptance, is key to increased self-acceptance (Tremblay et al. 2007). Nevertheless, having a homosexual child equally involves a period of adjustment for the family; according to Tremblay, 50 percent of parents in Quebec being told they have a gay child initially respond negatively or with silence (2007:165). Eli described one such experience.

> My mom didn't talk to me for a week and I never actually told my dad—my mom told my dad. He brought it up a month later in a completely unrelated fight we had... he tagged it onto the end as if it was a side-note. He said, "and don't forget what your mother told me, we are going to discuss it."

For James, the situation was unique. His sister, a self-identifying lesbian, had already publicly claimed a homosexual identity by the time he came-out. As James explained, however, his parent's experience with his sister's homosexuality did little in rendering his coming-out endeavor any less stressful. It was only after he came-out, in fact, as he recalls, that his parents truly began the process of "adjustment," that the reality was finally brought into the family.

> I told my mom at a wedding because my sister and some guy were hanging out a lot at some cousin's wedding and my mom asked me if I thought that my sister liked this guy I was like, no mom, you know how she is. My sister had already come-out, but my mom was like in denial about it or trying to change it or something. So I was like, no mom they are just friends you know how she is... he knows how she is, they are just friends, they don't see each other that way. I kept going on about it and my mom said: "are you talking about her or are you talking about yourself." She lobbed it over to me because I wouldn't give up talking about it. I was like: "no, she's gay, she's not going to change... that's how she is." I just kept going on and on and finally she was like, "are you talking about her or yourself" because it looked like I was a little too obsessed with the topic or something. She was kind of joking when she said that and I was like, "actually yes I'm gay." I told her not to tell my father and she looked like she was going to throw up and then she left. Ten minutes later, my dad told me, my brother, and my sister to get in the car and that we were leaving. I never caught on until the next day that my mother had told my father. Sometimes my dad is just like that so I didn't connect it at the time.

For Lee, the initial response was more one of silence.

> They didn't come out and speak about it right away. I remember my mom just quietly remarking one day, about the posters in my room, "You know, maybe people wouldn't make fun of you so much if you stopped doing things like that." In a lot of ways, it was such a hurtful remark, so simple and yet so hurtful; it made me very resentful. How do you respond to something like that? But, on the other hand, at least I knew that they had seen the posters and that now they knew. So my plan was kind of working the way I had wanted it to. They just needed more time though. I'm sure that it is a bit jarring to see something like that and have to deal with it without having any initial conversation. Like I had said though, perhaps it wasn't the most brilliant idea I had ever had.

Coming-out, as has been shown, at least for this group of men, is the first step in integrating worlds, bringing the reality of an individual's homosexuality into the world of the heterosexual familial domain. Recalling Goffman's (1963) arguments, this often means bringing the stigma connected with homosexuality into the home. Parents, as evidenced through the periods of adjustment undertaken, then, often, in many ways, go through their own form of coming-out wherein they may or may not come to accept this reality into their lives. Delayed public revelation, as was often the case in previous generations, along with the damage resulting from preemptive distancing from kin, were noted, as has been shown, to undermine the parent-child relationship. Following these young men's dialogues, however, it came as little surprise that all of the parents came to respond positively to their children's revelations; such implied a certain amount of openness among this generation of parents which to some degree must already have been in place. Whereas, coming-out among the older generation had traditionally meant the disruption of kin ties, then, these men found their networks being reaffirmed and the stress placed upon these relationships being eased. This pivotally, moreover, was occurring at a period in their lives early enough that the relationships could be salvaged,

strengthened, and maintained over the long-term (Roden 2008:12, Grossman 1998:28). Yet, as Eli described, this was often still a slow process.

> My dad made me go to a shrink because of the whole gay thing. It showed that they cared, in a way, but it was the opposite of good at that time. Since then, my dad has come to visit me a few times and every time it is something different. Two times ago he asked how I was doing, etc., but this past visit he asked if I had a boyfriend. It was crazy.

James described a similar situation with his parents.

> I never spoke about it with them again until I was home from university for thanksgiving. My mom was the first to speak about it. She said, "so what you told me over the summer... I don't really care. I'm just worried that you are going to have a hard life because of it." I never talked about it with my dad really until a few months ago when he asked me if my friend was my boyfriend—Alex. Alex had come to New Brunswick with me for Easter weekend and my sister had also brought her girlfriend. My dad was like, "so is that Julie's girlfriend?"
> And I was like, "yeah."
> And he said, "well what about you, is that your... boyfriend?"

While these endeavors proved stressful where parents were involved, other family members, often siblings, could be confided in sooner and with greater ease. This could be the result of many of factors. Ultimately, the reality is that the relationship between siblings is unique in comparison to that between parent and child. Siblings, for one thing, tend to not hold the same life-course expectations[46] toward one another which parents hold for their children. For this generation, however, the main determining factor was most likely the age difference and generational gap which existed between child and parent. Siblings habitually mature side by side, possibly producing a certain emotional proximity, but, more importantly, they come of age in a similar social world. Lee explained how his sister had pushed to bring his sexual orientation into the open in order to strengthen their relationship.

[46] When parents have children, they often imagine the child ultimately getting married and having children, in essence creating their own heterosexual nuclear unit, etc. This is not necessarily the same reality for and/or between siblings.

> I was driving with my younger sister one day when she started to ask me if I was dating anyone. We never really spoke of things like this because I always kept my private life just that... private; so there I was saying: "no, I'm not dating anyone," very indescript. But she kept on pushing, and actually started asking if I like boys or girls. I couldn't believe she was being so open like that; so I just started saying: "shut up, mind your business." We were never very open about these types of things... probably from so many years of never speaking about it with anyone. But, I know my sister and I knew that she would be fine with it. We were more like friends by that point anyway... having a sister is like having a built in best friend. We grew up together, for crying out loud. I mean, she was always there and so I had a certain intuition already... and so did she. She wanted me to be honest with her because she wanted us to have a fuller relationship and drop those barriers. That was why she kept pushing the issue... and besides I was so tired of so many years of living that kind of double life between home and social life anyway and so I just told her: "ya, I'm gay." It wasn't a big deal and we kind of went on with our lives after that point. The difference was that we could speak about relationship issues more openly now. I can't say that I didn't ultimately appreciate it and it also gave me more faith in ultimately telling my parents.

For some of the men, then, certain family members stood out early on and came to be their greatest advocates and sources of support. Eli, for example, had, in fact, come-out to his grandmother before ever broaching the subject with his parents; as he describes, this led to the creation of a relationship which had not existed prior, a relationship based on profound trust and acceptance.

> My grandmother was the first person that I told in my family though. I don't even remember the specific reason why I went to tell her, but it just came up. I was getting close to her because we never had a real relationship even though we are quite close now. We lived in Toronto and they are here [(Montreal)] so we never really saw them ever. We were getting closer and so I just thought: tell her, you have nothing to lose. I was kind of nervous, but I think she had prompted me actually. We had gone to the kitchen and she was like, "is everything okay? Is there something you want to say?" I just told her and she gave me the biggest hug and said, "listen, there's nothing to be ashamed of. It's who you are." And she told me that her and my grandfather kind of had a... "Your grandfather is 80 and doesn't care about your sexuality. He just wants you to be happy." It was a weight off my back. Later, when we were in Florida, my grandmother told me that she had called people in the family to explain the situation and ask people to be supportive; and then people would just come to me and say, "listen, as long as you're happy and you're playing safe then who cares." Even my macho uncle Jeff told me that it was cool. So my grandmother was the biggest supporter during that whole time.

The fact that Eli's grandmother is from Montreal perhaps had an impact upon her initially more accepting response[47]. There seems to have existed, as the responses of the older generation's parents have already intimated, an openness already evident in the early days of Quebec's gay community. A much larger sample would, however, be necessary in order to confirm this observation.

Family and Friendship Relations

Gays and lesbians, as the older men have already shown, tend to shape their world in such ways that they are shielded from conflict (Lewin 1998:92). With the increased choice now available or possible among friendship networks, then, these men are arguably better situated to combat internalized homophobia and prejudice by truly creating their own diversified networks, not out of necessity, but out of choice. The narratives, yet, of what a friend entailed, did not differ markedly from the older generation, as Eli demonstrated.

> A good friend is someone who can read my emotions without me having to say specifically what is wrong with me. I am kind of an open book though in that I don't hide my emotions. But someone who knows how to read me properly, not just someone who can say, "oh, he's sad today." Just someone that I can confide in and he or she can confide in me back. Someone who talks to me and not just waits for me to talk to them. Basically someone who is open and honest; and the same definition applies to family. Sometimes friends and family meld together; family especially, sometimes they can go together and family members can become almost like friends. My grandmother, for example, I consider her a confidant, I consider her my grandmother, I love her, and I consider our relationship open and balanced.

Eli, however, is not speaking of the substitution of friend's intimacy for that of family, but of how he places the two relationships side-by-side. Unlike with the homogeneity of

[47] This may, more significantly, be the typical response of a traditional Jewish grandmother who has been living in Montreal all her life, allowing her to witness great social change and the development of a gay community, and who, above all, cherishes and places a premium upon family unity.

previous generation's networks, moreover, Eli went on to describe his diverse group of close friends.

> I would say that I have 4 to 6 really close friends right now if I had to put a number; they're women, mostly straight... well there is one that is questioning. I met most of them at school just by going up to them and starting to chat. 2 or 3 of them I met through one or the other... there are secondary connections. Sometimes we hang out as a group, but not often.

As Simon expressed earlier when discussing the increased trust that his friends and he placed in each other after his coming-out, a friend is someone who:

> ...believes in you. But you share the sentiments of that person because you believe in them as well. You don't speak about everything with everyone; so there are actually a few people around you who are up to speed on how you feel and your way of thinking; and it is with these people that you can easily share these sentiments. You share your pains and your joys. I know that sounds a bit lame, but that is how I feel about true friendship.

James similarly described his close group of friends.

> A friend is somebody that shares the same moral and value system as you. It is someone that you talk to about anything and not feel weird while you are telling them; and you can trust them, you know that if you need something they will be there for you. Like anyone who isn't there for you in a time of need is someone who doesn't care. There is no difference between a really close friend and my family. I don't think there is a difference. My closest friends are like my family, to me they are like part of my family. I would definitely say I have no more than 5 very close friends. Friends I would consider part of my family would be 5 and maybe not even that... maybe 4.

These men were able to establish and develop their friendship networks in diverse locations. Arguably, following Lewin's logic, this new diversity, as will be investigated in more detail, among friendship networks, offers solutions for dealing with contemporary issues such as the demands of individuality and other modern alienating factors.

While many of the elaborations might seem similar to those of the previous generations, the youth of today are unique in many facets. With the precedence of young

people, more so than in previous generations, to remain in the family home later, to travel, and to study longer, they are experiencing a prolonged youth of sorts. These youth are situated between their childhood home and their future employment (Hockey and James 2003:114). This is a shadow of the changing and changed dynamic that exists between parents and children[48]; along with prolonged youth comes prolonged dependence upon parents, especially financial dependence. Even though these men left their familial homes and moved to Montreal, they have maintained close ties with family and continue to be financially dependent upon their parents. Most of the younger men spoke of the move to Montreal as only minimally being related to the larger gay population in the city. For the most part, the relocation was related to educational opportunities. Given the continued importance of blood kin, then, it was unsurprising that the men did actually voice their willingness to integrate both friends and family. When asked, however, the men described the mitigating factor as mainly one of geographical distance.

> I go visit family with friends, but otherwise the two groups don't have much chance to mix. If my family lived here I would or if I was there I would. The only reason I don't has to do with proximity, I don't live close to my family. It's 8 hours drive; so I'm not going to go there for the weekend to party so that my parents can join us (James).

Nevertheless, despite this distance, as James stated, friends do still have opportunity to interact with the men's families. Eli is a unique case given that his grandmother lives in Montreal.

> I never mix my friends and family just because I don't really have family here; I live here and my friends are here while my family is in Toronto. I mean my grandparents are here and I actually took my friend Raoul over to their place for Shabbat dinner. I thought it would be the cutest thing to bring him over and I even

[48] Children today, those in transition or a period of prolonged youth, come much more than in previous generations to know and interact with their parents as adults, through adult dialogues of understanding.

> have pictures of it... pictures of him in a kippah. It was very cute. That was really the only interaction in the last little while that my friends and family have mixed. I don't try to keep the two groups separate. If my parents lived here, they would probably know my friends much better. I would care... I mean, I would probably have people over for Barbecues and things, whatever.

More so than financial dependence, however, the men demonstrate the continued emotional dependence upon and commitment to their parents. When asked who they seek out in times of need or stress they universally leaned toward family. While they might share more superficial or what they themselves would consider shallow issues with friends, in the instance of extreme circumstances, the men go to blood-kin for support.

> Of course, I share a lot of thing with my friends. We speak about relationships issues and things like that... issues that I'm sure anyone would find awkward to discuss with their parents, but if I am having a serious crisis in my life, the first person I am on the phone to would be my mother. If I am feeling overwhelmed, I immediately think about going home for a visit and recharging the batteries (Lee).

While James and Eli, for example, described their friends as akin to family, then, it is evident that the men still feel a certain division between the two groups; this is not to imply that friends are unimportant, but that they perhaps do not embody the encompassing roles they did for the older generation and such could be argued for all people today situated within the transitory stage of prolonged youth. As Eli intimated, the unconditional love of family implies that its members can handle issues that friends would perhaps struggle with.

> The two main people I go to are between my dad and my grandmother. I go to family especially if it is something that I don't think that my friends can handle or that I wouldn't want my friends to know. In this case, I wouldn't mind a family member who has already known everything about me to get that info, I was suicidal a few months ago and I didn't call a friend for that, I called my dad for that.

Even Simon, for example, who spoke of his friends assistance in such matters as his finding an apartment and moving, spoke of seeking out family members in the instance of

what he termed a "serious" problem. While the men do utilize both groups for support, then, the location of differentiation lies in the theme and content of emotional dialogue shared.

The men, obviously, depend on their family members much more than was initially implied. Even though they spoke of their friendships in terms of trust and support, the precedence given to blood kin in times of crisis hints to a lack of intimacy in certain matters regarding friendships. The men will speak to family members regarding issues that they deem too personal[49] to share with friends, but that blood kin, whose relationships are considered more intimate and unconditional by comparison, must accept. One of the main themes that has been repeatedly developed up to this point is the utility of and commitment to friendship as demonstrated through an individual's willingness to allow friends, relations traditionally seen as uncertain[50], to see "backstage" (Goffman 1959). These men, therefore, seem to be contradicting scripts regarding the power of friendship as elaborated by the older generation of men who came to draw their support almost exclusively from friendship networks. It is difficult to determine, though, whether or not these men are lacking intimacy enjoyed by the older generation of men, as, unlike their predecessors, the young men were not separated from their families. Recalling Karen Lindsay's argument, however, even heterosexuals tend to have close

[49] Further discussion: When the men refer to issues that are too "personal," they are speaking of realities that they do not believe that friends and friendship networks can deal with, absorb, or would be *willing* to deal with and accept. This, ultimately, rests upon the men's own assumptions and sentiments of their friend's perceived reactions. This could, moreover, also refer to certain realities that the men simply did not wish their friends to know of either due to the personal nature of the revelation or possible feared embarrassment that would result from its being aired. This all speaks to the depth and genre of intimacy which engenders the relationships in question. This is why, for example, Eli did not feel comfortable sharing his suicidal thoughts with friends. His assessment of this revelation and his sentiments regarding the unconditional nature of kin ties would only allow him to share such details with kin.

[50] See *Chapter II, Literature Review: Homosexuality, family, and friendship*, to review traditional notions of friendship (Page 21-22).

family friends with whom they share intimate details (Lindsay 1981:179)[51]. It may simply, then, be an idiosyncrasy for these younger gay men, or most youth, who find themselves situated in a period of transition or prolonged youth, as will be explored further. Remember, however, that the young men tend to not have developed the same type of bonding rituals that the older men have spoken of, such as spending holidays and special occasions together. Again, moreover, the simple reality is that this group of men have not had 20 years or more, as the older generation has in many cases, to develop profound intimacy among friends. Rather they still find themselves in that precarious transitory stage of prolonged youth, which is a current reality.

The traditional argument has been that friends are meant to provide something that the individual is lacking. Young gay men today are consistently promised the profound freedom that was often denied their predecessors, they are told that they may develop diverse networks through which to address the myriad of demands placed upon them by modern Canadian society, again such as demands of individuality; for the most part, many of these men have developed unique networks which include both women and heterosexual men. As Eric Aoki (2008) insists, despite the older generation's perceived lack of diversity, having gay friends remains important for young homosexuals today (2008:129). Aoki chronicled his sense of isolation after moving to a small town with a near nonexistent gay population.

> ... I can easily add that I still feel a sense of loneliness or absence with having no gay men with whom I identify or look to for support, or who might help me negotiate the challenges and celebrate the beauty of our shared identities [...] In the years since, my perception is that the lack of gay male friends has contributed to the challenges of achieving identification with other gay men and those pieces of myself (2008:130).

[51] See *Chapter II, Literature Review: Homosexuality, Family, and Friendship*, to review Karen Lindsey's arguments (Pages 34, 35).

Regardless of these sentiments of choice, ultimately the young homosexuals of today are still under the perpetual gaze of a society that is constantly reminding them that they are different. As Kath Weston describes, for example, homosexuals are prompted daily to reveal their sexual orientation or come-out regarding normative issues ranging from everything such as relationship status to with whom they will spend holidays (1991:69). An individual's sexuality, as Goffman has argued, then, tends to remain the focus of his identity (1963:112/113). Having less gay male friends, in this sense, may theoretically increase the challenges faced by this generation of men. Nevertheless, today's generation of gay men continue to be more removed from what the community has become and, more often than not, as they claimed, tend to have few homosexual friends. Eli elaborated upon this when he stated: "I'm not that type of person who needs that gay shelter from the storm," referring to the early gay community.

As Aoki has illustrated in his narrative, however, the lack of similarly situated individuals may result in a poorly situated mirror-self[52]; and such, may result in great stress for the individual in question. Despite increased choice and familial acceptance, then, long argued to increase youth's resistance to stress, the younger men continue to offer present day narratives of loneliness and isolation. Eli explained that his experiences coming of age as a homosexual had opened him up to "... taking chances rather than not going for things"[53] which is plausible. Yet, he seems to contradict himself when discussing why he has few gay male friends.

[52] See Chapter II, *Literature Review: Homosexuality, Family, and Friendship,* for a review of the "Mirror-Self (Page 27- 28)

[53] Eli was describing how his life experiences have fed his willingness to take advantage of available options. Nevertheless, as will be investigated, he continues to avoid many possibilities for intimacy and offers extensive narrative speaking to aspects of loneliness.

> No, actually I don't like gay friends to be honest... gay male friends at least. I have jealousy issues and I just don't like hearing about other people's relationships, gay relationships because I have such low self-image of myself. You've seen the guys that I like and they are clearly out of my league. I don't like to hear about their relationships so I don't really have any gay male friends. If I have any gay male friends it is because they're not in relationships or they are in relationships that I could care less about or that I don't have any desire for; that's why I don't have gay male friends and I don't feel like it is something that is all that important. Also bringing back the stereotype of going out in the village and clubbing and basically doing things I don't like. Not that I can't have friends who like to go out, but I relate more to people that are more so in my camp than stereotype camp. When it comes to gay friends, they have to be almost like me because I can't deal with the ones that make me feel even worse about myself.

Eli described his comfort level with his homosexuality as being "120 percent." Many men today, such as Eli, moreover, feel that they are able to function without actively acknowledging what Goffman would argue is their main stigma as the crux of their identity, they have heterosexual friends and dismiss homosexuality as a sole defining personal category; it simply becomes one part in a greater whole. These sentiments, furthermore, are not out of form for many heterosexual youth who find themselves experiencing sentiments of alienation in relation to the society in which they live or certain social or cultural groups which surround them. Again, however, it cannot be ignored that homosexuals today, as a unique category, still have the stigma of homosexuality ascribed to them by others regardless of choice. Coming into play, moreover, are modern pressures placed upon physical appearance which may render homosexual stigma stressful, as will be delved into in more detail in later sections. It is evident, then, that Eli is still carrying a great deal of baggage regarding his gay identity and the positioning of it as an ascribed principal identity. He offers a dialogue which would situate his self-image apart from his homosexuality and yet in reality he seems to be struggling to overcome what Goffman argues is his main identity or master status. Lee

equally spoke of his inability to relate to other gay men and the effect that this has upon him.

> It is strange because I feel as though I am caught between two generations. The younger generation perhaps has more of a voice, and then there's the older mindset of previous generations. I don't really feel as though I fit in the gay community and, yet I am constantly wishing that I had more gay friends. I try to meet gay people to hang out with... I see those young gay guys with their group of close gay friends and I have never been able to relate in that way.

Gay men, of course, do not truly "mirror" one another, but the identity support provided by like-minded individuals with possibly shared experiences would seem to remain pivotal. There evidently is a form of identity support provided by other homosexuals that perhaps the family is still not equipped to adequately deal with (Nardi 1999:69). Just as with the previous generation of men, "the perception of "belonging" to a world of others situated similarly [would seem to still] ease... the pain of stigma" (Troiden 1998:272). The reality of not belonging and the inherent alienation therein, more importantly, may be, as Tom has demonstrated, an even greater site of stress.

While alienation from other homosexuals is certainly a reality for many youth today, then, others such as Simon find themselves quite well situated within gay networks. Simon reinforced the reality of this assessment when he spoke of the uniqueness of homosexual male friends.

> Your family isn't gay and you are gay and the problems of gays are not the same problems as heteros. It is much more agreeable to spend time with people who share your world, people who are concerned that you are gay, and who understand the complications that that can bring. So today it is definitely important for me to have gay friends because you have that proximity that isn't always possible with others. But it is not just a question of problems and all that because I also speak about those things with my straight friends, but we can make jokes and speak about certain things. When you are gay and you are out with your gay friends you can speak about men. It's something that is fun, it's our culture; and so having gay friends is being in "our" culture.

Simon in particular acknowledged the sacrifices and hardships endured by those who came before him.

> We have a lot of rights that we have gotten from those who came before us, we have benefited from those who suffered before us... we are very lucky. The generation before us imposed themselves. The police used to smack us in the mouth and now they protect us. Not that many homosexuals have made their mark in different domains, we can work in many places that might have been closed in the past.

This dialogue reinforces his self-proclaimed positive self-image as a gay male and his commitment to the gay community or to like-minded individuals. Simon spoke of how he accommodates these two realities in his daily life.

> There was no one who introduced me to the village, it was really my choice. I knew that there was a gay village and I wanted to enter it. I feel at home here, I don't really worry about anything. I'm with people that are like myself and that can understand me. Today I feel at ease anywhere in Montreal, I feel at home anywhere in Montreal. But when I come to the village it is because I know everyone, I know that I am going to see someone I know. So, of course, there I feel more at home because I know people. But, it's not that I necessarily feel any less at ease anywhere else in the city, I just like it here.

The men who seemed to have a grasp on both worlds, made possible through the employment of a truly unique identity work, tended also to deal with present day adversity in a more efficient manner; this perhaps is the greater freedom to which many theorists are truly speaking of in terms of the contemporary gay community and homosexual youth.

CHAPTER VIII

The "Groups" Cross Paths: Transitions and Self-Image Across the Life Course

> Would to God these blessed calms would last. But the mingled, mingling threads of life are woven by warp and woof: calms crossed by storms, a storm for every calm. There is no steady unretracing progress in this life; we do not advance through fixed gradations, and at the last one pause: - through infancy's unconscious spell, boyhood's thoughtless faith, adolescence' doubt (the common doom), then scepticism, then disbelief, resting at last in manhood's pondering repose of If. But once gone through, we trace the round again; and are infants, boys, and men, and Ifs eternally. Where lies the final harbor, whence we unmoor no more? In what rapt ether sails the world, of which the weariest will never weary? Where is the foundling's father hidden? Our souls are like those orphans whose unwedded mothers die in bearing them: the secret of our paternity lies in their grave, and we must there to learn it.
>
> **-Herman Melville**[54]

[54] I chose this quote by Melville because it has always represented the cyclical nature of life and of cross-generational learning for me. It reminded me, in a more eloquent manner, of many of my early musings about the inter-generational relations within the gay community; more specifically, it drew allusion to one of my early journal entries: "When I began conducting research for this thesis, I asked myself or rather caught myself wondering: is it the sin of today's generation that we (gay youth) take our freedoms for granted, that we forget the trials and tribulations, the "payments" made in suffering by those who came before us? Or is it that we are faced with new challenges today which test us in new adjacent ways? Is such a thing necessarily unique to gay youth? One might argue that change for minorities of sexual orientation is a cycle, as one struggle ends more simply appear" *(Excerpt from pre thesis writing journal: January 2010).*

We have now had the opportunity to survey the life-course narratives of both groups of participants. We have seen how these men have employed friendship and other relationships of significance to construct spaces of both meaning and support that have aided and aid them in meeting diverse challenges. Narratives of aging and self-image, however, have now come to figure heavily in the narrative of the contemporary gay community and have become key sites for further anthropological investigation in general; self-image is intimately tied to life-course transition and the two are arguably experienced to a more intense degree today then they were 40 years ago[55]. This is not to imply, however, that homosexuals who experienced youth transitions 40 years ago and are considered mature today are experiencing these current issues of age and self-image to any less of a degree than contemporary youth. The older participants, now situated in their 60s, will experience many of these same narratives in a unique manner due to their later positioning along the life-course spectrum when compared with the gay research participants in their 20s. This chapter brings the two *age cohorts* together in a modern social context in order to look at these contemporary issues plaguing both older and younger gay men. As will be seen, changing demands have meant the repositioning of support structures and spaces such as friendships, as both groups search for new sites of comfort and support in the wake of current social trends significantly experienced.

Life-Course Transitions

"... [W]estern culture has inscribed numerous milestones in our daily contexts that help to better define [age] categories, including the age of retirement, the age one begins to collect social insurance based on years lived, and the legal smoking and drinking

[55] This is, of course, universally experienced by youth and elder individuals today in Western society. Because of the positioning of homosexuals as a unique minority, however, they may be among other groups to be more strongly affected by such trends.

ages...” (Fox 2007:34); homosexual men in Canada share many of the same social markers that all men experience in their lives. Yet, my initial review of the literature on aging indicated that, among gay men, I was likely to find an *accelerated sense of aging*. “The theory of accelerated aging contends that gay men view themselves as older at a time when heterosexual men do not. This echoes the commonly accepted statement that a gay man is old when he turns 30... ”[56] (Schope 2005:25, Brown et al. 1997:8). This accelerated sense of aging, among other factors, is said to result from an inappropriate interpretation of age resulting from a lack of “... “markers” such as the birth or graduation of a child that guide perceptions of age for heterosexuals...” (Schope 2005:25).

When I began to speak with the older men about age, I was expecting to find many of the patterns that had been laid out in the literature. What materialized instead was a complex series of elaborations that spoke to both sides of the aging debate. It came as an initial surprise, given the aforementioned literature, that the men continually attested to the inverse. All the men described how happy and self-fulfilled they were or felt with their lives. Jean-Daniel going as far as stating: “I would never change a thing about my life.” Charles, moreover, spoke to many of the advantages that come with age. For example, “you have the financial means that you don’t have when you’re 20 years old; you have the luxury to enjoy your home, your friends;” such was an issue that would later come to be of great importance. I asked all the older men, moreover, how lonely they felt at the time of the interview and all replied by stating that they were seldom lonely, and certainly not to the degree described during their youth. All the men expressed their hopes and aspirations for the future—Sébastien speaking of his future

[56] Schope and Brown et al. state this fact as a commonly understood anecdotal truth among individuals in Western industrialized society. Whether this is ultimately true or not, as an anecdotal truth, it will still carry weight in the Western consciousness.

plans of travel and leisure. For him, age only represents a number—one that does not match how he feels on the inside, a sentiment often heard among older members of the population regardless of sexual orientation.

Aging, Beauty, and the Generational Divide

The men, therefore, all began by describing positive concepts of beauty and aging, yet as the conversations progressed a recurring trend began to surface, a trend that was in line with certain aspects of the accelerated aging theory. This perception was first encountered in Montreal's gay village during a serendipitous conversation with Denzel, a self-identified gay man in his 60s.

> He spoke to me about how he thought the village and gay community in general was too obsessed with youth. He himself, however, was extremely sensitive about his age, at first refusing to share it with me; this seemed quite natural. Nevertheless, it was obvious that he was in his 60s. His beard was unnaturally dyed brown and his head was shaved. He continually spoke of how much he loved the gym and staying fit, all signs of youth consciousness. He seemed to be speaking to of an obvious disconnect with the gay community and the group identity therein, as he explained that the community is now "me, myself, and I." All the sad faces walking by the [café] window, according to him, were a result of low self-esteem caused by an obsession with youth. This, nevertheless, might also be speaking of an obvious disconnect with the current generation and gay liberation movement—perhaps why he is continually critiquing youth culture (Fieldnotes May 11, 2009).

Going to the gym, of course, may simply represent health consciousness or the desire for a healthy old age and not simply imply youth consciousness or nostalgia. Nevertheless, Denzel did still heavily critique today's youth. At first this was taken as an isolated case from a man who was perhaps more socially isolated or less self-confident than the men whom I was interviewing, as those with a weaker social embeddedness are stated to potentially experience a higher degree of loneliness and stress (Fokkema and Kuyper 2009:265). Yet, the same stories of *invisibility* soon began surfacing from all the older research participants. Charles described how he experienced this reality:

> Face it, when you're more than 35 years old pssst—you're out. You go to the village and you just look at the average age of guys who go out. I mean when you're 35 you're an old bag…. You sit on a terrace like I did with André two days ago; the average age at 5 o'clock was about 40 years old, 45 years old... between 5 and 7 [o'clock]. The younger gay guys, they don't even look at you.

Again, all the men were speaking of how young and healthy they felt on the inside, and yet they were all hinting at feelings of invisibility within the contemporary gay sub-culture. As Hockey and James reaffirm, consumerism, creating a pervasive ageism, has now rendered the biological base of aging less powerful (2003:120). Yet, the new demands for fitness and maintenance of vitality meant to delay the appearance of one's biological age are being felt stronger than ever. Such sentiments of invisibility long afflicting aging women and exacerbating their feelings of isolation are now being felt by many men and are being visibly mirrored within the gay sub-culture.

According to David Schope, "... this perception of older gay men perhaps derives from an exaggerated importance of sex within the gay community, with gay men placing a strong emphasis on physical beauty and youth, both in whom they are attracted to and with respect to evaluating their own self-worth..." (Schope 2005:26)[57]. Male sexuality has traditionally been "... seen as active, initiatory, and divorced from emotional attachment" (Troiden 1998:271). Yet, as David Haber explains, this increased sexual focus that gay men experience is "... a characteristic that does not age well" (Haber 2009:272). It is, nevertheless, perhaps what the men were not saying that most allowed for the recognition that many of them were affected by no longer feeling sexually attractive within a gay culture that seems to put so much emphasis on youthful beauty. The reason that focus came to be situated on the silences was due to these subtle dialogues of critical reflection

[57] Again, parallels to women's experiences of being sex and fertility objects/symbols and considered worthless once they are no longer viable

regarding the gay sub-culture; they were often expressed even encoded within descriptions of the men's decreased concern with sexual issues, those deemed pivotal in today's gay community. As Charles describes,

> I'm happy to be 60. You know the libido at 60 goes down a bit. You're not, let's say, sexually oriented [anymore] unless you're a maniac. Biologically you're not strong sexually at 60 like you are at 20. So the idea of having sex five times a week, or three times, or two times a week doesn't exist anymore. Yeah once in a while it's fine, but it's not as important as it is when you're 20. So you move your energy elsewhere, to other things: traveling, reading, having fun with friends, having a dinner party.

Yet, despite this appraisal, it is easy to see how such conventional ideas or stereotypes about aging and sexuality could represent an extra hurdle that gay men have to contend with; as Ragan Fox asserts in his statement: "[o]lder gay men suffer the same age-based discrimination as their heterosexual counterparts but have additional sexually charged stereotypes to deal with" (Fox 2007:36)[58].

The older cohort seemed to be placing the weight of the youth imperative squarely upon the shoulders of the younger generation, how they "chose" to construct their reality within the gay sub-culture. As was soon learnt, however, while the older generation was expressing a sense of invisibility, the younger generation seemed to be the one most visibly affected by this notion of accelerated aging. As a researcher situated within the age cohort of the younger group, I can confidently affirm that I have always been aware, sometimes painfully so, of the pressure that I feel to appear young and attractive and I found that the moment I began to listen—my ears and eyes fully opened—I was hearing young gay men all around me express the same concerns.

> Sitting in a café in the village today... reading, observing the dynamics of the neighborhood still trying to settle into truly observing. The men sitting directly beside me were speaking quite loudly with one another and I couldn't help but

[58] Again, In this case, this also refers to many aspects that women are forced to contest with.

> overhear their conversation. One of the men was telling the other how he loves to go out to the clubs and dance every weekend. The other retorts by stating that that period of his life is over and he doesn't often go out anymore. "Ah, you have to live and enjoy your life," the other quips. I found myself agreeing with the man stating that he is no longer interested in drinking and partying every weekend like a high school student. The younger of the two begins describing how he had gone out the weekend prior and had been IDed at the door of the club. "I'm only 21," he states. Apparently, the doorman had thought that he was 27. "It was the worst day of my life," he cried. Naturally, his friends starts laughing, as the idea of a 21 year old worrying about aging and appearing "old" seems so comical from a traditional Western sensibility. It almost seemed as though he was attempting to brag at the same time, as his friend was evidently older (probably 30) and while he was amused he looked slightly taken aback by the joking banter that a younger and older person can have with one another when the younger knows or feels that he is more attractive than his slightly older friend (Fieldnotes May 12, 2009).

This represents perhaps a more extreme case of accelerated aging solicited by fear, social pressure and insecurity, but for many young gay men, encountered during my research, it lies all too close to home, as was already revealed when speaking of Eli's strong sense of insecurity. Not only is the gay community now situated upon a pervasive youth imperative, but "… the male social role as defined by the homosexual subculture is predicated on a greater degree of narcissism… than is the heterosexual male role (Brown et al. 1997:9). The opportunity to experience this, to a degree, during my time in Montreal's gay village, often arose when conversations were initiated between younger men (20 to 40 years of age) and myself.

> As we were sitting conversing on the terrace, the conversation was continually interrupted in order for this individual to make comments about passing individuals. As he stated, " the "scenery" was nice." Furthermore, he knew many regulars of the village quarter and made many such observations. Such as, "that man is always so nice to his dog," "He always looks so bitchy," " He's hot, but never notices me," etc (Fieldnotes June 7, 2009).

These similar dialogues continued to appear while in the "competitive" environment of the gay community (village).

> There is animosity toward the really built and beautiful who walk through the closed streets of the village during the summer. People desire them and yet despise then at the same time. I was privy to such an event just the other day, as two men I was speaking with referred to two very handsome men walking by as "village plastics," which I can only assume was meant to be a reference to male doll like perfection and reference other social factor such as the plastic surgery movement and social ideals of male perfection. I try to remain unbiased, but these "plastics" do seem to be aware that people desire them; they walk through the crowd with a somewhat superior attitude not looking at anyone they consider below them. It's an enigma how at such times fraternity is felt while at others one constantly feels as though they are caught between cliques (Fieldnotes June 26, 2009).

There is an emerging attitude in our culture that views older people as cognitively deficient and weak, but most of all sexually unattractive and/or inept (Fox 2007:36). If one should accept, then, that the same forces of sexualization and youthful beauty, present among the older generation, are at work within the contemporary gay sub-culture of young homosexuals, it begins to make sense that accelerated aging consciousness would be so disproportionately represented. "... [W]hen a young person comes into contact with an older individual [, moreover,] nonverbal cues (e.g., graying hair, dress) trigger age stereotypes that alter normal communicative behaviors..."(Fox 2007:36). Relationships with older men could, as such, potentially remind young homosexuals of aging and the danger associated with that reality within a sexualized environment, triggering a fear of **Other**. In this sense, Charles's discussion of reduced sexuality in his 60s, as spoken of previously, could be taken as an example of the generationally differentiated language reinforcing the divide between the two groups. For Charles it is a rationalization of his current reality[59], for certain youth, however, it is seen as a frightening eventuality. While no one directly stated that this was the case, very few of the research participants maintained intergenerational friendships. This may also be true

[59] Rather than a rationalization, this may also be a legitimate life-course script wherein sex comes to carry less importance, as one experiences later life-course transitions.

regarding intergenerational friendships among heterosexuals, however the history of the gay community demonstrates the lack of tolerance and generosity, as spoken of by the older men, as somewhat of a newer elaboration. Intergenerational relationships were not only once much easier, they were more common. Remembering the history of the gay community, then, such seems natural.

> At that time [1960s, and 70s] it was not like today. It was possible to be friends with older gay guys because the milieu was much smaller. So today because it's out in the open, and it seems that everybody's gay... the gay boys, the ones that are between 18 and 30, act like they are in the straight world. In the sense that they don't restrain themselves to a small area (Charles).

"... [I]n the past, there were fewer opportunities for people to get to know a partner of the same sex because of the stigma attached to homosexuality. As bars were the only established meeting places for homosexuals in former years..., contact might be fleeting and superficial" (Fokkema and Kuyper 2009:265). Claude further refined much of what the historical review was saying:

> The younger men often depended on older men in order to be brought into homosexual circles. Many men who were able maintained chalets in the North. They were able to have their gay gatherings there in their chalet.

Today, nevertheless, many of the younger participants did express distaste for older gay men (30+ years) whom they saw as constantly seeking out younger homosexuals for sex[60]. As Warren claims, moreover, many younger men claim that older gay men "… are no longer able to compete sexually in the marketplace of the gay bar…" (1998:187), and, therefore, this is the reason for their withdrawal from such milieus[61].

[60] This also falls in line with literature (Schope 2005:26).

[61] Again, one must keep in mind the previous argument stating that multigenerational friendships are equally uncommon among heterosexuals of differing generations. Especially, as is the case of this study, given that men are 40 years removed from one another. This may also be a result of generational "forgetting" that is seen among contemporary youth wherein today's generation glosses over the sacrifices of those who preceded them.

Charles, during one of our discussions, offered a brief explanation of why much of the onus for this reality and the subsequent withdrawal is placed upon the contemporary gay sub-culture; moreover, perhaps why the youth today feel such pressure.

> In the 70s nobody was muscled. I don't remember anybody, except the ones that were working on farms. The ones who worked on a farm with their mom and dad and moved to Montreal at the age of 18, 19... so they had nice bodies. But nobody was muscular in Montreal, *Nobody*. *La Culte de la beauté masculine* basically came from the United States. At one point everybody had to muscular, everybody had to be "trained," everybody had to be perfect and everything. It was much easier before where you had the body that you had—if you were thin you were thin, if you were fat you were fat—that's it. Most of the guys were thin and it was okay. Now it's: "if you don't look that way, I'm not going to go to bed with you, if you don't have a fit body, I'm not going to bed with you." It's so complicated. I find it so complicated now. I'm happy to be 60.

Charles is stating that he is happy yet the issue runs deeper and maintains an element of importance, as the older men continually express feeling as though the younger generation is less willing to recognize diversity among its older members. Again, Charles aptly described this frustration to me.

> If a guy like you came and joined us to play cards on a Saturday night you would say: "boring, what am I doing with those old bags?" but if you open your mind just a bit, then you see, then you hear all the stories of their lives; what they've done and everything. Then you go home and you say: "hey I've learned something today about being old and being gay," which you don't learn when your friends are all 20, 21, 23 years old.

The older men may potentially be feeling the pressure both to conform to an inhospitable reality and/or may be suffering an apparent lack of tolerance or generosity as offered by the younger generation. Such might go beyond intergenerational relations and perhaps speak to the lingering sentiments of being excluded from the gay sub-culture once so central to their lives. The men of the older group, then, are perhaps feeling the strain of

role loss, a possible age marker, as they perceive of being pushed from the gay subculture (Brown et al. 1997:10).

Such stereotypes and sentiments play an important part in why many of the older men have withdrawn somewhat from the contemporary gay subculture, seeking refuge among friends and more intimate encounters. Despite this dialogue of invisibility, however, the older generation of men are not necessarily excluded from the gay community. As Lester B. Brown affirms, most older gay men have mastered both independence and stigma, as a result of many years of having to fend for themselves and elaborate their own networks (1997:11). Ultimately, then,"…by the time a gay man reaches old age, his sexual orientation has affected most of the important areas of his life" (Brown et al. 1997:21). Despite the lack of conventional aging "markers" as experienced by heterosexuals, when gay men reach 60 years of age they tend to be better equipped and exceed the ability of most heterosexual men to deal with adversity and stress (Brown et al. 1997:10/104). This is mirrored in Schope's sentiment that while most older gay men believe the majority of the gay community views their age as something terrible, only 5 percent of men actually tend to view themselves in this light (2005:34).

While the stereotypes and sentiments of invisibility do play an important part in why many of the older men have withdrawn somewhat from the contemporary gay subculture—seeking refuge among friends and more intimate encounters—the men's critical analyses of the contemporary gay subculture would seem, ultimately, to have less impact upon the quality of the men's lives than initially believed. Many older homosexual men actively choose to no longer participate as habitually in the gay sub-culture as they once did and their frequency of contact with the community decreases

(Brown et al. 1997:12). Their focus, as touched upon, shifts not only toward intimate friendship networks, but towards the importance of the home. While this may be common for many older Canadians once retirement age arrives and children are no longer in the familial home, it is evident that many of the forces behind this trend among older gay men remain unique. Charles further elaborated this reality for older gay men:

> When you get older, what is very important is the friendship. If you are lucky enough to have good friends then that is what is important. Because if you are gay and you are alone, you have no spouse, etc. and on top of it you don't have a lot of friends, then it can be pretty hard… pretty difficult.

During youth, lack of certain "markers" meant that beauty was more heavily felt by homosexuals, but, as the men aged, the nature of friendship, as already described, also changed; one need only think to the AIDS crisis experienced by this generation in order to understand the importance placed upon their friends as family. With the home becoming the focus of attention, then, it became clear that these men maintain very active and rich social lives. Charles, with his large garden, where the interview was conducted, explained how he loved to have friends over to really enjoy his home and their time together.

> Later Sébastien, who had referred me to Charles, showed up to enjoy Charles's garden. During the interview, Sébastien came out to lay on a chair in the garden and, subsequently, fell asleep. Charles referred to him as sleeping beauty[62] and later the two joked with one another on friendly terms. The one constant was how they always referred to one another in feminine terms. Sébastien would say that the dog [Charles's] was a bitch just like his mother (Sébastien) and Charles would joke that Sébastien was/is an old queen (vieille reine). Despite the two being so jokingly rough on one another, they both expressed how close of friends they are. The fact that they joked in such a manner seemed to make it evident. Charles's

[62] Of personal interest: it came to my attention, while conducting fieldwork, that many men of the older cohort would refer to their close homosexual male friends with the use of feminine terminology, imagery, or pronouns. While other interpretations are possible, this is arguably to desexualize these men in the eyes of their close friends. By referring to one another with these feminine terms, they are being removed, even if only subconsciously, as viable objects of sexual desire. Although further research would be necessary, in the case of this thesis, this notion makes sense when speaking of the earlier community where age tended to differ between members and sexual regulation was therefore more pivotal.

friends come to spend time at his house because it is so comfortable and has a nice garden; such is precisely what I was witnessing with Sébastien. These two men have both expressed their preference for spending free time among friends at one of their respective homes; such seems among their daily traditions in maintaining ties with one another. They've expressed that they get the same satisfaction today having an evening with friends that they would have had years ago had they been clubbing every weekend. "The values and goals change," says Charles. One is no longer thinking I have to leave by 11:00pm to go and find someone to have sex with, but rather they are thinking that it is more important to be emotionally fulfilled with friends (Fieldnotes July 23rd, 2009).

The Generational Divide on Marriage and Political Issues

Went to *Relaxation Bar* to speak with older gentlemen (in their 60s) today. Sat with a group of three men who were all friends and all self-identified as gay. Only one, Lawrence, however, has a partner. All three men were quite funny and carried on witty banter with one another. Lawrence told me that Laval (one of the three men) has an abrasive sense of humor and tends to be quite dry. According to the same man, moreover, Paul (the last of the three) has an equally abrasive sense of humor; they are constantly joking with one another—it is a very relaxed atmosphere. We start speaking of gay marriage because I asked Lawrence if he was married to his partner. This starts a fresh bit of funny banter between the three, as Lawrence explains to me that Laval doesn't believe in or support the notion of marriage. Of course, he's joking in nature. However, as I then learn, for Laval marriage is for women—getting your picture in the paper and having the dress... this is all about assuring the woman. "When two men get married, which one wears the dress?" he asks me. "How do you work out the roles?" For him, it would seem, as he explains, that marriage is a type of conformity, trying to be just like heterosexuals. However, for Lawrence marriage is somewhat different. He doesn't see the utility of roles, as expressed by Laval; his boyfriend is simply that; he doesn't feel any need to be married. He has been with his partner for 5 years. He explains, nevertheless, that he has asked a man to marry him before, but was turned down. 4 years later, apparently, this person returned and asked if the offer was still open—ugh NO! "Un fois pour chaque," (*one opportunity for each*) jokes Laval.

When I ask: "do you think it is a matter of generation why you see marriage as less important; because it was never an option when you were younger, it perhaps seems less important or conforming now?" Laval tells me that it is of little difference as, in both generations, it is something that is for heterosexuals. This demonstrates, again, a very narrow elaboration or understanding of such commitments and options available; this could be due to coming of age in a different generation. Lawrence, on the other hand, after further conversation, does confess that he thinks that it is different for the younger generations, as they can dream of these possibilities, of having this type of life while they are still young. In a way, then, he is admitting that never having this as an option growing up has affected attitudes, or could affect attitudes and

> expectations. Nevertheless, they all continue to joke that marriage is only good for tax reasons. Laval adds that once you're married you then also come under divorce law and that is even worse (Fieldnotes June 2nd 2009).

Many of the adaptations these men spoke of do affect what it means to be a homosexual today, the realities, the hopes and aspirations that are now possible. This conversation, therefore, really intrigued me and, upon leaving the bar, I found myself wondering how these men's perceptions regarding modern legislation and adaptations might offer certain insights into intergenerational relations among self-identifying gay men. Could these attitudes be contributing to the others factors that seem to be keeping the two generations of gay men segregated from one another? I decided, as such, that when conducting interviews, I would include a brief conversation with all participants regarding how they see and feel about the changes taking place in Canada today including everything from legalized gay marriage and possibilities for adoption to anti-discrimination legislation.

When we began speaking of these changes, all the older men quickly described to me how they had never dreamed of being married or having children in the past. Joseph was the most adamant about this fact:

> *Joseph*: I never desired to get married to either a woman or a man.
>
> *Me*: You never thought about adopting a child or anything of that sort?
>
> *Joseph*: never, never, never, never. I never wanted to have a child.

Moreover, he did not see more recent legislation, such as legalized gay marriage, as something that had any discernible impact upon his life.

> *Me*: What do you think of society today with all the new legislations, with all the new freedoms such as gay marriage?

> *Joseph*: It's not the type of thing that touches my life to any greater degree. If people want to get married it's their business, but it is something that never never interested me; to be married to a man—I never had this idea. But, again, it doesn't bother me at all if you want to live that way... it's your life not mine.

Because such options had never been available during these men's youth, it stands to reason that they never saw such options as future possibilities, as Lawrence spoke to during our brief conversation at the bar. It made sense to me, moreover, that they saw little personal utility in such options today. Charles, the only participant in a long-term relationship, further elaborated this idea for me.

> So now politically... you see I've been living with Steve for 10 years and we have no intention of getting married. I have this little thing on my fridge that says: "let them suffer like straight people do." You are entitled to the same rights, but, at the same time, the same obligation. So why bother getting married? Especially for gay guys... men and women are different, you know? Unless you are sure that this person is going to be with you for the rest of your life and you want to have children, it's another story. Otherwise, I live with Steve and the day that it doesn't work anymore it's still good. The day it's over, he's going to go his way, I'm going to go my way and that's it, you know?

I found that, after a lifetime of developing fulfilling relationships, this specific group of men no longer found it necessary to employ these newly available elaborations toward their comfortable constructs of what a relationship entails. A possible consequence of this, again, is that it perhaps further separates the way the two generations relate to one another and their individual lived-realities. It is tantamount to speaking a different language.

This is a group of men who had to fight for everything they gained in their lives. It was not surprising, then, to find that most were skeptical and cautious when speaking of any new "liberties."

> I don't find that things have really changed. Me, I've changed because I have aged... at 30, 40, 50 years old, my life has changed. I don't live the same life I lived at 30 years old—thank goodness because I would probably have a heart

> attack; so, in many ways, my life has changed along with society, but I'm always scared of deluding myself with those types of advancements because regression is always a possibility and can occur so easily. We never know if our newly won rights are going to be taken again. If gay and lesbian men and women want to be sure to keep their rights then they must always be very vigilant, they must always pay very close attention. Of course, I have benefited from modern changes because society has moved, walls have been repositioned, but still I've never found these changes solid... what we think of as progress can always be reversed. Furthermore, I'm not that sure that marriage or being gay really is all that accepted today (Sébastien).

As Sébastien has elaborated, the men are aware of the increased freedoms that are enjoyed by homosexuals today. There remains, nevertheless, the sentiment that such changes are either not enough or act as smoke screens for continued social bigotry, as Jean-Daniel elucidated:

> When I hear about gay children being abused in rural schools today, that tells me that the social issues have not been dealt with. If I was suffering the same abuse in 1964 then it still exists. The new laws today are truly not enough... truly not enough. It's not because we have the right to marry, because we have certain rights, that we are equal. They don't know what it means to be ridiculed, to always be hiding. If you were to go to Northern Quebec, I'm convinced that it would be no different than in 1964. The youth don't implicate themselves in politics anymore today. I don't know what the ratio is today... there are maybe ten per cent of people who continue to fight for rights.

Of course, I am cautious to say that the youth no longer implicate themselves, but this does certainly show that the two groups are not necessarily speaking the same language or that they are perhaps off sync.

Young homosexual men today share the milestones of previous generations of homosexuals such as reaching legal drinking age and coming-out as a homosexual, yet they now also experience "markers" that were largely impossible for their predecessors. This reality for today's young homosexuals was further clarified following a conversation with Bruno a gay man in his late 30s.

> He asked me if I had a lot of gay friends. "No I don't really," I explained.

> "You'll find as you get older that that will change, as your straight friends begin to get married, have kids, and buy homes. They will have different interests and priorities; everything will be about their baby and diapers, etc. Furthermore, they will begin spending more time and becoming closer with other couples and married people with babies, etc." In a way he could have been explaining why he now has almost exclusively gay friends I was thought to myself (Fieldnotes June 2, 2009).

Bruno's dialogue was relevant, as it offered an insight into the gap which I was experiencing between the two generations of men. Here was a man who had been able to enjoy a diverse friendship network, including heterosexuals, yet who still came of age at a time before legalized gay marriage and the possibility of adoption. These "markers," nevertheless, that traditionally remained within the realm of heterosexuals are very real options for the younger homosexuals today. The men, therefore, may decide to marry and even have their own children. This would allow them, consequently, to follow the pattern Bruno described as followed by his heterosexual friends wherein the gay men could very much enjoy couples' activities with heterosexual friends and their children. In the interest, moreover, of exposing one's children to diverse individuals, spending time would the children of one's friends could likely be a common reality, as it is for many heterosexuals. The markers experienced by young Canadian men today, however, have changed from previous generations and it is not yet possible to determine which route the young homosexual men in this study, still within the stage of prolonged youth, will choose to follow. As Guy, a 26 year old gay man, explained to me: while he is not thinking of kids at the moment, the reality of seeing gay couples pushing strollers gives him hope that he might one day be in a stable relationship and choose to have children. With gay marriage and adoption being such recent realities, nevertheless, the literature regarding these possibilities, among this group of men, has yet to be written.

The younger group did not speak about activism or a willingness to fight for their rights, as many of the older men mentioned. What they did demonstrate, however, unlike the older generation of men and their dialogues of vigilance, was their optimism and hope for the current rights and social status enjoyed by homosexuals within Canadian society, as James explained:

> I think that I benefit from these new laws because it shows that people are coming around to a better way of thinking and doing things. They are waking up to not being discriminatory or whatever. When I walk through the city the only thing I notice is a difference in my surrounding and not in myself or the attitudes other have towards me.

Simon, who also described his comfort within traditionally heterosexual milieus such as straight bars also spoke with great optimism.

> We definitely have benefited from the modern changes. Before the police would beat us, hit us on the mouth, and now they protect us. It's normal now to see gays in many careers and domains, because they have made their mark. The gays have always been there, but it was more hidden. Now it is more open and you see more gays in the arts, etc. Being gay today is modern. When someone finds out that a man is gay they think that he must be intelligent.

The older group of men never expected to have a "straight" life, but they did still embody many notions of "passing," the desire to be considered heterosexual in certain instances. The men hinted upon this when they spoke of their coming-out experiences. They were open about their homosexuality, yet expressed reserve over who was told. Most, moreover, expressed desire to keep such issues private in many cases not disclosing unless otherwise asked. This can still be seen among youth today and may simply represent a desire to keep one's personal life private. However, as David Haber implies, for older men (65 years and more) such as Joseph, representing the oldest man in this cohort, already in their late 30s during the critical era of the 1970s, the importance of a

certain degree of invisibility remains key (2009:270). Joseph touched upon this reality briefly when he spoke of wishing to keep a "foot" in both worlds.

> it allows me to keep a foot in society other than the gay culture or society. I'm gay and that is where the majority of my relations come from and I live a gay life, but I also try to keep a foot in the world….

One can see how the discourse is different today, as youth move more fluidly between both groups.

"… [T]he projected shame that many homosexuals have felt for being different is precisely what led the younger population of gays and lesbians to "celebrate diversity" and, therefore, embrace a queer sensibility" (Fox 2007:49). The positive outlook regarding modern changes is part of the young homosexual's affirmation today that invisibility is the problem.

> Gays have now acquired the right to marry and adopt children. We are in the media more than ever and this is all part of what is showing people that we are human beings just like they are. Human beings going after their dreams (Lee).

Survival today, then, as many discussions have led me to believe, often comes to center around visibility; recent legislation, in this sense, does speak to what it is to be gay in today's Canada. Overall the two groups of men do, then, seem to be using different discourses. The older group of men speak of rights, individual autonomy, and freedom, whereas the younger group of men tend to focus on legislation, culture, identity, and even social norms. Communication is possible, however, between these two groups if the older generation is adaptable and open to new dialogue and structures and the younger generation remains open-minded and cognizant regarding those who fought for their rights. Jean-Daniel and Simon, as close friends, exemplified this openness on both ends.

With men such as Lee among others, moreover, declaring their openness, and even history, regarding possible relationships with older gay men (in their 40s and 50s), much of what the research says regarding intergenerational relations within the gay subculture today is being either broken or at least proven incomplete.

Conclusion

The stories we tell of our lives, being richly bound up in experiences and habits, always speak of lives lived at particular moments in history at particular points in the life cycle. Stories have very specific timings and generations, which should never be overlooked. The stories we tell at any time are also bound up in the historical moment and place. They are always tales about time and space. These are generational tales (Plummer 2009:x).

When I began this study on friendship, kinship, place, community, and identity in Montreal, my intention was to look at what one might perceive as two sides of the same coin, two groups of distinct men, similar at first glance, yet upon further inquiry diverse. This simple comparison, while far expanded upon in this study, does nonetheless continue to highlight a key theme: that I was tracing the life-course progression of two distinct groups of individuals; because of this, more importantly, I remained constantly aware of the importance of era, the social reality in which one comes of age and the social reality in which one experiences different life-course transitions and builds intimacy.

The 1960s and 1970s, as the older participants have constructed it through their narratives, especially evident in the section dealing with *forbidden narratives and the repressive era*, was a unique period in history for self-identifying gay men in Québec and Montreal. As the first generation of men "pushed," or compelled, as Foucault (1978) and Goffman (1963) argue, to publicly disclose and "live" their sexual orientation—their main site of stigma as a defining personal attribute—these men were faced with many new and unique realities when considering family and social relations. Fleeing their familiar environs early on, having already weakened ties to kin members, the men made their ways to Montreal in search of like-minded individuals. Unlike the men in Kath Weston's study, the older participants in this thesis came to the Montreal gay community before ever divulging their homosexuality to family members. The familial environment, as constructed at that point in the history of the gay movement, was incompatible with the type of personal milieu that the men were looking to create. For them the early collective

location of like individuals was what would become the gay community, coming to act as a unifying space in so many ways.

The men's early discourse regarding the community, ultimately, is seen as speaking to their authorship and agency. It was through their discourse and action that this early physical and solid space was for homosexuals created and experienced. The men created or constructed it as the first location in which they could be open, meet like-minded people, and, as they state, begin to live the type of lives that they wanted. As they described to me, all of these things seemed possible once they entered the community, the safe space. Visibility, as will be discussed later, if one recalls, meant that one had to deal with their homosexual identity. This unified discourse of gay space and open identity, nevertheless, made for cyclical outcomes: as more people came *in* there was increased visibility and, ultimately, there was now power in belonging. The men's actions are where they showed their commitment to the space that they had and were creating. Many of the men, even those outside of the gay village like Jean-Daniel, for example, chose to live near other like individuals. The clearest example of this commitment, however, occurred during the AIDS period of crisis which at first largely took place within the gay community and, as has been shown, directly affected the construction of a safe space and milieu for intimacy among gay men.

When one is working within different eras, it is easy to focus on the group, as I have been doing. For each individual, a place or space has a unique reality, elaboration, and role; and herein, as I have stated repeatedly, lay much of the utility and importance of analyzing the men's individual narratives, narratives addressing how they each created both place for friendship and community and space for intimacy in their individual lives.

Again, Quebec was unique in North America; this was clear in many of these narratives and especially so once the men spoke of not being blanket rejected from their families. This, of course, contradicted seminal studies in this field such as that of Kath Weston (1991) conducted among homosexual men in the San Francisco region. Despite this, as we have seen, the men participating in this study still chose, much as Weston's participants did, to ground their intimate space, the meaningful construction of the milieu they were creating for their lives, around their friends; for this cohort of men, friends were largely homogenous in that they were mostly male and usually in the same age range. Unlike in Weston's study, however, the men did have female friends, but they tended to remain in the outer circle of intimacy with the more homogenous friends comprising the inner-rung.

With the continually adapting social reality of the early community and the normal shifts of the life-course trajectory resulting from aging and experience, these older participants began shifting their unifying space from the community to that of the *home*. They were developing and had developed new identity work and adaptive strategies/skills which, among other things, would have repercussions for the larger community, as it (the community) began to play less of a critical role in the men's daily lived realities. This, again, was especially evident following the AIDS crisis. With the profound loss that occurred during that period, many of the men spoke to not only losing many friends, but of coming, in the aftermath of the crisis, to re-prioritize the importance of these relationships as those that were key in their lives. The men elaborated their milieu through a dialogue of inner-meaning and importance, wherein they dictated that which carried significance and meaning for them and in regards to their personal relationships

beyond traditional scripts of blood and family. Such discourse, of course, had been in place in the early community, but with new emphasis being placed on the home as a space of meaning, the men came to elaborate many new traditions and commitments to their most intimate group of largely gay male friends. Evidently, living in the early gay community, in the context of Montreal, had an impact upon the more intimate spaces which followed.

Furthermore, it became obvious early on how much the creation of safe space and one's group of friends—intimate milieu—relates to identity. Again, as Hockey and James have stated, identity is not meaningful in isolation and, therefore, the notion of being a member at any given time will be intimately interwoven with identity work (2003:127). It was clear throughout this thesis, as such, that identity was correlated to everything that the men said, said they did, and that they were doing. As the social reality changed so too did the men's identity work; as the first group to truly deal with many of the issues concerning a publicly recognized homosexual identity, the task of investigating this was made somewhat easier, as, again, the men were much more homogenous than the self-identified homosexuals whom we see today, building strong networks of gay friends.

The early community also offered the men the mirror support that they needed, in that it enabled them to develop a certain level of comfort and normalcy related to their own homosexual identification, by bringing them into contact with similarly stigmatized men. This identity reinforcement, moreover, was of such importance that despite the ghettoizing effects of the early community, as have been discussed, the men still chose to leave former constructs for newly developing ones in the form of the developing visible gay population aggregate. The men did, however, continue to work within many

traditional scripts, but expanded upon what was possible at the time. For example, when developing "families," or the space of the home in relation to an intimate group of friends, the men initially took much of the imagery of the traditional Western family. As Weston laid out, again, the identity among these groups, during the early community, was much more one of likeness, and thus the employment of traditional scripts of a diverse kin group, in this identity work, had more to do with the limited options that were available as a result of the social context. The use of this imagery early on allowed the men to experience from one another the type of support and love that was normally received from family members, it allowed the building of more appropriately situated intimate social networks.

In many ways, it was evident that the older generation of men had undergone great adaptation over the years, but as Hockey and James specify, such is necessary for the progression of identity and, at greater depth, every life-stage shift. They argue, for example, that in order for one to avoid having his or her identity work derailed, he or she must overcome certain loss and diversity requiring great work on the self throughout one's life (Hockey and James 2003:204). Interpersonal relationships, of course, that offer psychological and lived support are key in this. While such is true and may be the case for many adults, it must be recognized that in order for these gay men to continue with their identity work, in this sense, they were still constantly forced to adapt. This group of men had to deal with not only the symbolic loss of normalcy, but with lived loss and rejection. The only way for these men to get "back on track" then, as Hockey and James have laid out, was to undergo progression of identity, whether this meant elaborating new skills or drawing on intimate relations in new ways. In many cases, again, this resulted in

and led to certain life-stage transitions and as this older group of men adapted so too did their identity work leading to much of the resiliency we have seen among and through their narratives. As Brown et al. have stated, moreover, the stresses of life and aging unique to homosexual men have seen them being attributed to the significant concept known as crisis competence (1997:21). Crisis competence states that "... many older gay men have developed, early in their lives, self-coping skills for managing loss and adjusting to major life events" (Brown et al. 1997:21). According to Schope, furthermore, because of being forced to continually restructure their identity work and develop skills of adaptation, which are cumulative and reinforcing, older gay men may often be considered better able to manage the diversity of later life than their heterosexual counterparts (2005:25). With resiliency taking root, the men were that much better equipped and situated to support their intimate relationships and in return receive such support from them.

When this study began, I was aware that as much as 40 years, in some instances, separated the men of the two age cohorts. Yet, I was not surprised to find that there remained many commonalities between the groups. For one thing, as has been shown, experiences of early youth tended to remain quite comparable. Experiences of coming-out, moreover, while altered with a new social reality, tended to remain among the most stressful points in the lives of all the men I spoke with. One of the fundamental questions, nevertheless, when looking at these two groups was: how similar are they actually when looking into the grounding and creation of place and space? Again social reality and the importance of era must be acknowledged. The younger participants experienced more early fear of family reaction in relation to coming out both due to their younger age at

that time and their dependence upon family. Yet, as I came to see with the family's reactions, the social realities truly were not the same as with the older generation of men. They were not rejected from their family milieu nor, as was the case with the older participants, did they feel the need to distance themselves from blood ties. Such factors would not only come to alter the discourse of safe and/or personal space, but also to make for new adaptations regarding the men's unique identity work.

The younger cohort, as we have seen, resulting in large part from technology (internet) and media (television, film, news and print), came to the knowledge of homosexuality, in regards to an awareness of gay individuals and activities in society, much differently than their predecessors. Moreover, they came-out at a much earlier age and were able to self-identify to heterosexual and gay friends should they choose to do so. The discourse regarding what the gay community comprised was naturally very different. For one thing, these men no longer shared the early commitment to a centralized gay space that the men had in the 1960s and 1970s; the investment in such a space was no more evident in the men's actions. They did speak of occasionally going out clubbing or socializing in the gay district, but it is not a site that was actively depended upon as a safe, inclusive, or even unifying milieu. While this may simply be the result of increased freedom and choice among younger homosexuals today, it may equally draw allusion to the backlash that has become evident regarding the presence and significance of an overtly gay district. If the gay quarter continues to be ghettoizing, in that it overtly identifies one as homosexual, as Foucault might argue, then these younger men may wish to distance themselves as a strategy of increased choice in creation of space and identity, as will be seen.

The younger participants used multi-vocality in their creation of personal space and social milieu. As has become evident through their narratives, they were and are developing diverse groups and these multiple spaces each incorporate differing levels of commitment and flexibility. For this group of young men, however, while multi-vocal in their creation of personal space, such space continues to be heavily grounded within the traditional "home." The traditional home referred to here, however, is not the same as the home which existed in the 1960s and 1970s. Rather, the men's blood kin come to embody a space which is pivotal and congruent with the prolonged period of youth and uncertainty which many people of this age cohort experience today. The constant anchoring of home among kin, especially among parents, while subject to multiple influences, could potentially be a product or result of this fluid phase in the men's lives where other elaborations of personal space are equally fluid or temporary. The transition through this period, then, may require such an anchor, one space of consistency and constant security for one to return to. While there seems to be much more flexibility in terms of relationships—these youth having both female and straight male friends—the faith or commitment to friends at this stage in the younger participants lives, at least in terms of commitment through action, was and is shown to be weaker than among previous generations of gay men.

Just as the young men created multiple sites and elaborations of meaning, so too did they create multiple or more fluid identities. The young participants' identity work was already expected to be quite different by virtue of the changed social reality, of course, but also because of the fact that their friends were not exclusively homosexuals. Youth today, particularly those in their 20s, are situated within a state of prolonged youth

and fluidity wherein choices are abundant and the demands of individuality are placed at a premium; as such, the young gay men and all young people naturally experience life-course transitions much differently than in previous generations, as has been detailed throughout the thesis. My findings, ultimately, concur with Stuart Hall's assessment of modern identity work whatever the person's sexual orientation.

> ... modern identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices, and positions. They are subject to a radical historization, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation (2000:17).

Individuals fill multiple roles and thus have multiple identities, but the identity work of these younger participants, as they elaborated it, is inherently nomadic. It is nomadic in the sense of being fragmented, as Hall explains, but also in that it is inhabited more in the moment, as Hockey and James argue (2003:113). This nomadism of youth identity represents the fluidity of this period of youth, but, moreover, it represents the opening up of possibility for "... multiple lifestyles and identities which can be combined or exchanged across time and space" (Hockey and James 2003:107).

With the advent of all these new possibilities, the younger participants now claim that their gay identification is not their principal identity (Goffman 1963, Foucault 1978). Rather, they argue for a certain versatility in relation to the larger social context. I argue, however, that these youth are still feeling the pressure of identity work unique to stigmatized youth in addition to the effects of less common identity support, as experienced by the elder gay men. Recalling the argument put forth by Eric Aoki (2008), today's gay youth may still be feeling the sting of society's perpetual gaze because they are lacking the mirror-image support of homogenous gay personal social networks or

friendships, as in the older community, and it is here that the nomadic identity might become problematic. With the constant dialogue of acceptance and individuality (Lindholm 2007:8), which many theorists detail today, the question is: are these youth being lulled into following what society dictates, believing the possibilities of liberation and safety while being continually identified by their "principal" source of stigma?

Identities do structure, but they do not necessarily speak to how people experience transitions in their lives. The younger participants, through their dialogues and friendship elaborations have stated and shown that ties of common sexuality (homogenous gay male friends), while perhaps not inutile, are not enough for them. As I have stated previously, diverse groups of friends with differently vested levels of meaning and commitment and forms of identity support could potentially represent a new strategy for dealing with issues unique to the social reality for youth and young homosexuals today. However, does this truly mean that a broader gay community is unnecessary? These young participants spoke of the visible or commercial gay community and "gay culture," as they see it, with animosity and disappointment. The young cohort's dialogues and the realities, mentioned previously, it occurs to me, nevertheless, may be causing a certain disconnect between their needs and their insights into the community. When the younger participants voiced their discontent with the community, they were not necessarily expressing the constructed reality as it firmly exists, but what they were addressing was their emotions. In this light, such criticisms and disapproval of the gay community, and the direction it is taking, may actually latently represent a form of call to action. By discussing what they

do not like about the gay community and the image it portrays for them, then, could these young homosexuals be revealing their underlying values and actually be discussing what they are lacking?

For the elder participants, it has become clear that identity work is correlated to friendship and gay identification. They are committed to their identities as homosexual men, stating, as has been seen, that they would change very little about their lives if the opportunity ever arose to do so. The younger participants, likewise, state that they are well situated in relation to their gay identities, but, as has been in evidence throughout this thesis, they continue to struggle with issues relating to the situating of what arguably would be their principal stigma or master status (Goffman 1963). Andrew Anderson argues this as the result of a simple correlation between "...self-esteem and age and the locus of control and age suggest[ing] that as participants aged, their self-esteem and an internal locus of control increased" (1998:64). For the older participants, it seems almost natural that they would be well situated in relation to their homosexual identification, as, by the present point in their lives, being gay has touched most stages of their development. I am tempted to state, as such, that the older participants have developed more unified, "healthier" identities. Such an assessment finally, however, cannot be made because of the current life-stage in which the younger cohort of participants finds themselves.

Ultimately, if one does come to know oneself through challenge and the competency built over a lifetime (Hockey and James 2003:204), then one truly would have to revisit the younger participants' lives in 30 or 40 years time. While much has been learned from this study, this is the only way to offer a truly comparative sample.

Such would allow the researcher a retrospective look into many of the outcomes associated with the identity work resulting from the social elaborations that are only beginning to be seen or studied today and that the men are faced with presently. Consequently, the researcher might view how issues were dealt with, how personal relationships evolved or changed in relation to their structure or role, and where these young men have arrived by the time they are in their 60s. Much anthropology has been done on kinship, but, as this study has shown, more is still required when looking beyond the formal nature of friendship and into the true intimacy it can embody. Ultimately, with even younger generations today (born post 1990) coming of age in an atmosphere of rapid information technology, social networking, and reinforced discourse regarding individuality, the role of these types of questions and this type of research, research into elaborations of early youth, contemporary identity work, and the role of intimacy become ever more valuable to the future of the anthropological endeavor.

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