

Positively Experienced Man/Boy Sex: The Discourse of Seduction and the Social Construction of Masculinity

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ABSTRACT

Homosexuality is constituted as a transgression against hegemonic masculinity. In this context the discourse of seduction is one of the most common responses to voluntary man/boy sex. It is feared that the boy will be seduced into homosexuality. This paper analyses the interview strategies of people who were the younger parties in positively experienced man/boy sex. To some extent interviewees drew upon positions made available from within the gay community and took up a gay identity socially constructed in opposition to hegemonic masculinity. As well, interviewees adopted aspects of the current version of hegemonic masculinity, stressing adolescence as a period in which masculine sexuality and political rights are appropriately established.

HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY AND MAN/BOY SEX

Connell has used the term 'hegemonic masculinity' to refer to a version of masculinity which is dominant in society as a whole (Connell, 1987, 183). It is both embodied in social practices and also represented in discourse. These practices are worked out in relation 'to women and to subordinated masculinities' (p. 186). In relation to women hegemonic masculinity implies the maintenance of practices that 'institutionalize men's dominance over women' (p. 185). In relation to other men, hegemonic masculinity marginalises and disempowers men whose social practices do not accord with hegemonic masculinity. It is the association of this discourse and these practices with *social power* which defines hegemonic masculinity as the dominant version of masculinity; it is not merely the *most popular* discourse of masculinity, though it is that as well.

As Connell points out, the current version of hegemonic masculinity is established in reference to specific subordinated masculinities. He maintains:

The most important feature of contemporary hegemonic masculinity is that it is heterosexual, being closely connected to the institution of marriage; and a key form of subordinated masculinity is homosexual (Connell, 1987, 186).

To identify as gay is accordingly to take on a stigmatised form of masculinity. Homosexuality is perceived as a failure to attain hegemonic masculinity or an opposition to hegemonic masculinity. The prohibition of man/boy sex must be understood in this context.

THE RESEARCH: METHODOLOGY AND METATHEORY

This paper addresses issues that arose out of a study into voluntary and positively experienced intergenerational sexual experiences. A sample of nineteen interviewees was obtained. I and the other interviewer made it known that we were interested in hearing accounts from younger parties who were or had been involved in voluntary intergenerational sex. Interviewees were consequently drawn from the social networks of the two researchers. These were all people who had been younger parties in an intergenerational relationship of this type. Within the study, the term "intergenerational" has been used to refer to relationships where the younger parties were less than 16 years old and the older parties were more than 16 years old. The sample cannot claim to be representative and the study must be considered a pilot study in view of the paucity of interview material that deals with positively experienced intergenerational relationships (Wilson, 1981; Sandfort, 1982; Rossman, 1985). Nine of the interviewees were male and eight of these had been involved in relationships with men. The experiences that were described occurred between the ages of eight and sixteen years.

Although all the interviewees characterised their experiences as 'positive' this does not mean that they did not experience ambivalence. Ultimately, interviewees summarised their experiences positively in reference to a dominant discourse that defines intergenerational sex as necessarily an abusive exploitation of the younger party. They were keen to distance their own experiences from this characterisation.

The study takes its context from recent poststructuralist approaches to social action (Weedon, 1988; Davies, 1989; Davies & Harre, 1990; Smith, 1988). I have taken it that people make sense of their lives and take action within the frameworks laid down by various socially con-

structured and socially available discourses. Following a number of writers I have taken it that poststructuralism is not incompatible with the view that people are agentic; they choose between discourses and discursive positions, they *take up* subject positions (Smith, 1988; Silverman, 1985; Davies & Harre, 1990).

THE DISCOURSE OF SEDUCTION AND THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF MASCULINITY

It may be considered that hegemonic masculinity is a discourse that implies the prohibition on man/boy sex for two fundamental reasons. Firstly these activities are themselves homosexual. They defy the prohibition and stigmatisation of homosexuality that is a key aspect of the current version of hegemonic masculinity. Secondly, the discourse of homosexual seduction suggests that such relationships create the danger that the boy will be seduced into homosexuality. This discourse is aptly referenced through a point of view expressed in a program on gays and kids hosted by Caroline Jones in 1979. A typical caller made this comment:

But everyone naturally in the beginning are (sic) heterosexual – aren't they ... It has been proved that some lifestyles do convert people to this ... Young people have been introduced to homosexuality by older men who have offered them favours (quoted in Bennett, 1982, 67).

Survey data reveals the prevalence of concerns about homosexuals as seducers of youth. In a United States nationwide survey in 1974, 81 per cent of the interviewees felt that homosexual acts between adults were wrong and 73 per cent in the same study believed that homosexuals were dangerous as teachers because they try to become sexually involved with children (Allgeier & Allgeier, 1988, 503-504; see also Plummer, 1975, 107).

In this context this paper examines the discourses that were available to the younger parties to *validate* their participation in man/boy relationships. The analysis has shown that it makes sense to divide these interviewees into two groups; those who at the time of the interview identified as homosexual and those who at the time of the interview identified as heterosexual.

THE GAY INTERVIEWEES: THE DISCOURSE OF SEXUAL ESSENTIALISM

There were five interviewees who identified themselves as primarily or exclusively homosexual at the time of the interview. At the time

when they were interviewed they ranged in age from late adolescence to mid fifties. The most striking initial response to the discourse of seduction was a discourse of sexual essentialism. Interviewees claimed that they had been homosexual prior to these events, that their homosexuality was an essential part of their sexuality and their selfhood and that there was no possibility that their exposure to homosexual activities through intergenerational sex had determined their sexual orientation. Instead these events were seen as *coming to terms with* their homosexuality.

As Foucault has suggested the use of the discourse of sexual essentialism to defend homosexuality is a reversal of a dominant discourse that has socially constructed homosexuality and heterosexuality as conditions of selfhood (Foucault, 1980, 43, 101). Hegemonic masculinity identifies homosexual practices with a sexual essence, a whole personality type that is the inverse of the personality type implied by heterosexuality. Within the discourse of hegemonic masculinity it is heterosexuality that is valorised by this polarity. Within the discourse of gay identity the personality type – homosexual – is taken up and validated as a sexual essence.

Tristan's interview provides a good illustration of this discourse of sexual essentialism which was common to all the gay interviewees. He scoffs at the idea that his experiences with men influenced his sexuality:

INT: Some people might think that because of you're experience with paedophiles, you've been turned gay.

TRISTAN: No, because ... No that's rubbish. See I can't honestly say I've ever tried to have sex with girls, but I'm not attracted to them, I mean, I'd be the first to admit, if a good looking girl walks down the street to say she's good looking. Or God, she's ugly. But I don't ever think, like ... I never dream about girls. I look at a Playgirl, I mean a Playboy. I think, how boring, umm so I know, I mean if that's ... it's rubbish.

INT: And men?

TRISTAN: Yeah, they fascinate me.

In this he adopts a common view of private fantasy as a key sign of sexual identity (Seidler, 1987, 92) It is the discourse of homosexuality as an essential inner condition that decisively refutes the discourse of homosexual seduction in Tristan's answer to these questions. In statements which may be taken to supplement this position he refers to his experience of sexual games played with other boys in his childhood. He talks about the way that these other boys did not grow up to be gay but that these games had a special significance to him in later recollection.

Tristan sees his first self recognition as homosexual at the age of 14. He made an attempt to discontinue his sexual contacts with men at the gym which he had begun in the previous year. It was the failure of this attempt that convinced him of his gayness:

TRISTAN: Yeah, probably just on the edge of fourteen was when I said I was gay except, I mean I was having sexual experiences when I was four. So I mean, back then it was just like a game sort of thing you know. But about thirteen, fourteen, was when I actually knew I was different and that I wasn't interested in girls and that I never would be.

INT: And why was it then? Was it some event?

TRISTAN: Um. Umm. Well I mean when I was thirteen I went through a stage where I went 'I'm going to stop this!' and you know, go out with girls, and I couldn't. And I mean I knew there were homosexuals, but they were people who did it all the time and I was just, you know, having fun sort of thing. And when I couldn't that's when I realised.

In retrospect he does not regret this and says that he is glad this happened as early as it did because otherwise it may have taken him much longer to sort out his sexuality. When Tristan says that he realised he was gay and that he would never be interested in girls he expresses the idea that gayness is a lifelong condition. The sexual enjoyment he experienced with men at the gym did not seduce him into gayness. That was already present. Instead, when he was unable to stop these relationships he discovered the truth about himself. In other parts of his interview, he argues that his contacts with these gay adults also helped him to establish himself within the gay community.

This discourse of sexual essentialism was common to all the gay interviewees. In some cases, the suggestion that these relationships might have determined sexual orientation was so alien to the interviewee that the suggestions were refuted in answers that *presumed* an inner homosexual essence and launched into a discussion of some related issue. For example Derek began to speak about the normalcy of sexual desire arising in adolescence and compared his situation to that of heterosexuals of the same age.

It is also worth noting that in the case of most of these interviewees this gay identity was linked to a greater or lesser degree of proclaimed effeminacy, albeit parodic in some instances, and often to a sense of alliance with women. For example Keith, in explaining his later gay identity, speaks of an earlier childhood effeminacy and companionship with girls, his lack of sporting prowess, his effeminate appearance, and his enjoyment of pursuits such as singing, defined as feminine. Derek sees himself currently as a 'queen' and discusses the

an antagonism that his effeminate dress and makeup provokes in macho men. Even Tristan, who in no way represents himself as effeminate, reveals a sympathy with his mother and an antagonism to his father. He also makes an analogy between the harassment of gays and sexual harassment of women. In such ways these interviewees participate in an *explicit* rejection of hegemonic masculinity.

ADOLESCENCE, SEXUAL EMERGENCE AND MALE ADULTHOOD

A second type of answer to the discourse of seduction was based in a dominant discourse of adolescence which is itself tied to the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. As Hudson puts it:

All our images of the adolescent ... the restless searching youth, the Hamlet figure; the sower of wild oats, the tester of growing powers – these are masculine images (Hudson, 1984, 35).

This is related to the understanding that this growing maturity, this developing adulthood will be expressed as sexual initiation and sexual self discovery, a break with the absence of sexuality in childhood (Jackson, 1982, 170). This discourse of masculine adolescence also became a reply to the discourse of homosexual seduction. The younger party is not constituted as a victim to be seduced but as an active agent pursuing the blossoming sexual desires of adolescence and discovering his homosexuality.

Along with this, one can also find in the interviews a discourse of the emergence of male sexuality in adolescence and an associated political discourse of 'adult male sex right'. Wood characterises a common understanding of male sexuality in adolescence as 'an innately formed miniature primed by nature to explode in the hot climate of adolescence' (Wood, 1984, 73). This is related to what Weeks calls the 'hydraulic model' of male sexuality (Weeks, 1985, 81). There is an image of male sexuality as an 'overpowering urge in the individual', as 'an unbridled almost uncontrollable force' (Weeks, 1985, 80-81).

This conceptualisation of male sexuality is connected to what Pateman refers to as 'the law of male sex right' (Pateman, 1988, 2). The link between the sexual and political rights of men is of key importance in understanding the experience of male adolescence in this society. According to Pateman the social and sexual contract work according to a mythology of the overthrow of paternal power. The sons rebel against the father to gain access to liberty or political power but also 'to secure women for themselves' (Pateman, 1988, 2, 109). So to enter adulthood is, for men, to be recognised both as citizens with

political rights and also as men with sexual rights. In terms of this analysis it makes sense that interviewees conceived their right to sexual expression as a right owed to them by the very presence of the sexual desire that indicated their maturity as men.

These positions were very common in all the interviews. Derek describes his first sexual encounter with a man in the following way. He is at the park at six o'clock on the swing. A man rushes towards him and begins to strip off:

I just sat there looking. I didn't know what to do but sort of thrilling. I looked, gawked, sort of ... I didn't mind, I just kept on swinging on the swing. And I wasn't scared or anything and he just come up to me and said 'Oh, how are ya?' and I said 'Oh, not too bad'. In other words, conning on to me. And he turned around and said, 'Oh, what's your name?' And I'd tell him my name 'cause I wasn't scared or anything because it was in a park and it was about six o'clock, really early, six, you know what I mean. And he just said, 'Would you like a drink?' and I said 'No'. Then I started getting a bit nervy, nervous sort of thing. I knew, I must ... I knew in a way that he'd do something. So I just sat there, you know, and he said, 'Oh, would you like to come for a drive?' Well I rushed him! So I just went for a drive with him and there we got off. First time, we got off ... I wanted to try it out. So I tried it. It was a really good feeling. Ever since then I kept on going.

Here the narrative of this event begins with Derek sitting innocently on the swing. A man appears with obvious sexual intentions. Derek is instantly thrilled and takes voyeuristic pleasure in seeing him undress. He is not scared to go with the man and in fact 'rushes' him. The sex is great and he has an orgasm. Even anal sex, though a bit uncomfortable at first, is enjoyed. All this has happened because he wanted to try it out and having done so he is eager to repeat the experience. This is typical of the discourse of male adolescent sexuality – spontaneous, adventurous, sexual pleasure is guaranteed, and casual contact is exciting. Derek presents himself as an active and initiating party. The events that take place are in response to his emerging self constituted sexual desire. All this works against any interpretation of Derek as a victim of homosexual seduction. Summarising his attitude to these sexual encounters on another occasion he concludes:

I mean to say, sex is sex, you gotta, you know, well ... The way I feel, what would you do without it? It's just something normal. Sex is just normal for everybody. Not just for me, for everybody and to do without ... I reckon it would be pretty hard to do without it so you're just going to have to think.

The hydraulic model of sex as an internal urge that seeks outlet and manifests itself in adolescence is much in evidence in such comments.

Tristan makes the political content of this discourse very patent in the following comments:

Can you imagine, if I was forced to have sex with people my own age I wouldn't be happy, I wouldn't be who I am. And that's ridiculous, people should be who they are. When I'm at home which is very rarely ... I'm not me and I'm really unhappy because I'm not me. I'm someone else, like till I move out I've still got two separate lives and, you know, mum might say, 'You should've come down to this party, there were beautiful girls there,' I mean and I just say, 'big deal,' sort of, but I mean I'm two separate people ... And I mean people should realise that if they are asking me to be like that all my life that they're asking me to be unhappy and why should I be unhappy. Just because they're straight and they're not interested in people older than them that they've got the right to be happy. I mean it's ridiculous.

Tristan starts by speaking of his sexuality as a central aspect of his essential self; who he is. To deny expression of this sexuality is virtually forcing him into a sexuality that is not really his, namely heterosexuality. It is 'people' in general who are responsible for this oppression and later and more particularly, people who are straight and not attracted to older people. The dominant hegemonic majority of straight people and adults are restricting the sexual rights of children and those with a different sexual orientation. Another statement links his situation to that of gay people more generally and also comments on its *unfairness*.

Such comments are framed within the liberal discourse of democracy and freedom. It is no accident that Tristan uses the phrase 'the right to be happy'. This is an example of what Dorothy E. Smith refers to as a 'textually mediated discourse' (Smith, 1988, 41-43). Classic statements, or 'texts' such as 'The Declaration of Independence' with its reference to rights to 'Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness' have become mediators for a liberal political discourse that is available for Tristan's use. He takes up a subject position within this discourse; as the citizen deprived of his right to happiness. He is also deprived of the right to equality with other citizens. They are free to express their sexuality; why isn't he? This deprivation applies to him both as a person under the age of consent and also as a gay person.

The link between male adulthood and rights to engage in sexual relationships is made quite explicit in Twink's interview in response to a question about popular opinions of man/boy sex:

INT: Most people find sexual relationships between boys and men a real shock, horror. They can't understand why boys would want to fuck with men.

TWINK: Well why do *men* want to fuck with men? That's what I say. I am a man. Look, I've got the structure of a man. Jesus look I've even got

hairs on my toes and I paint my toe nails. Sorry about that! Shit. Look, I've got hairs on my knuckles. As a kid I wasn't too sure but now I am. I am a man. I say to myself. I even shave, I'm a man. And how dare someone say you are a child. I can't stand it. I don't care if they call me a youth. I don't care if they call me a stupid goddam fuckwit but just don't call me a child. I hate that. I say I know what I want and if I'm wrong I'll turn around and I'll change.

Here Twink is speaking as a sixteen year old and retrospectively claims the discourse of sexual adulthood and male sexual rights to cover the whole period of his intergenerational relationships – from the age of ten. Although the question is specifically concerned with all of these relationships and not just those that followed these signs of adult masculinity, Twink's reply ignores these earlier events and concentrates on the signs of his adult male sexuality.

THE HETEROSEXUAL INTERVIEWEES AND THE DISCOURSE OF SEXUAL ESSENTIALISM

There were three interviewees who identified as heterosexual at the time when they were interviewed. Whereas the gay interviewees spoke of a range of contacts from the extremely casual to the deeply committed, these heterosexual interviewees were all involved with adults in *relationships* and by implication these singular relationships were constituted as exceptions within their more usual sexual patterns.

As in the case of the homosexual interviewees, these interviewees made use of the discourse of sexual essentialism in their replies to the charge of homosexual seduction. As heterosexuals, they were heterosexuals by nature and it was their inner heterosexuality that was primary, not their temporary excursion into homosexual activities. There was no danger of them being seduced into homosexuality since they were not in their essential being homosexuals. Hegemonic masculinity, stipulating that homosexuality is not centrally a sexual practice but instead a sexual essence, leaves open a space in which homosexual practices can be viewed as incidental to a defining heterosexuality.

Christopher's interview provides a thorough discussion of these issues. At the time when he was interviewed he was in his mid thirties. His relationship with an adult gay man, George, began when he was about nine years old and lasted till he was eighteen. In a wry comment on the discourse of seduction he offered this remark:

So I suppose then, you want to know now if I'm fucked up now sexually because of this terrible trauma of my childhood? Well – no. Umm. My main thrust – pun! – is heterosexual but ahh, I still occasionally sleep with males but when I say occasionally I mean very occasionally.

Christopher poses this question in terms of the hegemonic discourse of intergenerational relationships and masculinity; that is that boys become 'fucked up' sexually by these relationships and that this damage is expressed as a homosexual eroticism. He denies that the relationship with George influenced his sexuality. This is consistent with other aspects of his interview in which he stresses his heterosexuality as a constant throughout the period of his relationship with George and beyond it. Explaining the way in which the relationship came to an end he claimed: 'Eventually I got bored with it in that I got – reached a point where I probably decided that I was basically heterosexual.' Here the phrase 'I was basically heterosexual' suggests that heterosexuality is a condition, an intrinsic part of his personality that was present before the age of nineteen and still continues to the present day. The term 'basically' is used in acknowledgement of the fact of Christopher's homosexual activities, both in adolescence and more recently.

There are a number of ways in which Christopher establishes his basic heterosexuality within the interview. He describes his relationships with girls in the same period of his adolescence. He speaks of 'two or three girlfriends' during those years and the ways in which he sees these relationships as typical of adolescence. He also refers in some detail to his sexual career subsequent to his relationship with George. He mentions a number of long-term and sexually fulfilling relationships with girlfriends. He speaks about his sexual interests in women film stars and so validates his sexual orientation by reference to private fantasy. He talks about his current interest in marriage and a family. These statements are all volunteered as part of a general history, they are not specifically presented as *evidence* of heterosexuality but they function as that within the terms of dominant discourses of sexuality.

In making sense of these issues Christopher makes a distinction between his sexuality and his sexual practices in this period. He refers to an incident when his mother tried to find out whether he was homosexual. She made inquiries through friends and Christopher denied any homosexuality despite his relationship with George:

She was right, I was basically gay at that stage – in practice certainly. But I never, I didn't feel ... Actually there was a distinct difference in my sexual practice in that as a boy growing up in a boy's world I would go out and try and score to go to bed with a woman, not with a bloke, but I would also at the same time maintain my relationship with George and Fred but without that seeming to me to be in any sort of contradiction. Yeah.

In this passage the term 'practice' occurs twice. The unfinished sentence implies that he was gay in practice but that he never *felt* gay. The 'distinct difference' in his practice that he refers to here is unclear.

He may mean that there was a difference between his gay sexual practice and his sexual orientation – he never felt gay. Alternatively he may be pointing to a difference between one set of sexual practices – 'going out to try and score to go to bed with a woman' – and another set of sexual practices – maintaining his gay relationship. The phrase 'without seeming to me to be in any sort of contradiction' refers to the dominant discourse of sexuality which assumes that sexual desire and sexual practices *are* in accord and are either homosexual or heterosexual. In other words this discourse *defines* Christopher's situation as being in a state of contradiction.

In this discourse strategy, Christopher makes a distinction between *sexuality* – which he sees as a constant (basically heterosexual) – and *sexual practices* – which fluctuated according to availability and contingencies. This is a recognition that within the dominant discourse of sexuality in the West sexual practices take second place to sexuality, though of course they are *expected* to go together. It is sexuality as inner desire which is taken as the key to sexual identity (Seidler, 1987, 92).

This discourse strategy was also adopted by the other interviewees who identified as heterosexual. Both presented evidence of their heterosexuality in the form of indications that private sexual fantasy took a heterosexual form. Both spoke of more or less casual liaisons with girls – one of these interviewees was ten years old at the time of the interview and the other twelve years old. Both indicated a firm belief that they would proceed with heterosexual relationships in the future. Michael, who was involved in a quite committed and important relationship with his adult lover, Toby, was reluctant to say that he was 'in love' with Toby. He suggested that he had less libido in relationship to Toby than vice versa since his, Michael's, essential sexual predisposition was heterosexual. Michael summarises his position on this issue in the following interchange:

INT: Do you see yourself as gay?

MICHAEL: No. I see myself as by nature heterosexual but doing gay acts at the moment.

INT: That doesn't make you gay at the moment?

MICHAEL: No.

INT: What is it that makes people gay then?

MICHAEL: Nothing really. If you want to identify yourself as gay then you are gay. It's got to do with what you think.

In this reply there is the same distinction that is manifest in Christopher's discussion. One's sexual identity – 'what you think' – is not the same thing as one's practice at any particular time 'doing gay acts at the moment'. The comment that he is 'by nature heterosexual'

suggests the discourse of sexuality as an intrinsic and central part of the person. Since Michael believes that he is by nature heterosexual he cannot be gay, even 'at the moment' as the interviewer wryly suggests; instead he is merely 'doing gay acts'.

ADOLESCENCE AND MASCULINITY

As with the gay interviewees, these interviewees validated their relationships in terms of some discursive positions that were available from within hegemonic discourses of masculinity and adolescence. For example interviewees saw their relationships as indicating a natural growth away from parental authority and influence. The relationships were also validated as sexual emergence, a response to the sexual desires that appear in adolescence and seek outlet. As indicated in reference to the gay interviewees such a discourse is related to the ideal of masculine adolescence as 'sowing wild oats' – sexual self discovery and adventure – and to the hydraulic model of masculine sexuality.

THE OLDER PARTY AS MENTOR OR FRIEND

The need for children to break away from the influence of their parents and to seek role models for adulthood outside the family is something that is often referred to in discussions of adolescence, as is the possibility that such young people may form an intense affection for such adults – a 'crush'. Such a perspective is common in popular social psychology (for example Suehsdorf, 1954, 68; Havighurst, Robinson & Dorr, 1960, 583; Allgeier & Allgeier, 1988, 420). The same conception of adults as role models and the object of crushes is evident in much popular discussion of intergenerational sex (e.g. Offspring, 1990). Such a conception is an aspect of the way adolescence is constructed within the framework of hegemonic masculinity – as growing autonomy and citizenship.

Ideas of this type inform the responses of all the heterosexual interviewees and are most fully articulated in Christopher's interview. He refers to an early period of his intergenerational relationship as follows:

What he did was encouraged me to spend my Saturdays over there, working in the shop, doing things which I did which on, you know, on the one hand was an excuse for him to get close to me, but on the other hand I got tons out of it too. It wasn't just him trying to get me in there. I mean I ... he shared his knowledge and did take a sort of patron role with me, I s'pose. 'Patron' is not the right word. In that Greek sense of, you know, a father figure who's not necessarily your

real father but who – there is a word, I can't actually think what it is ...
He certainly filled a lot of the roles my own father couldn't for me.

As in the social psychology texts referred to above, Christopher relates this mentor role to his need to go beyond what was available to him from his parents. He claims that his turning away from his parents in this period was an instance of 'normal adolescent disagreements, probably, and shifting feelings of closeness, or affection or love, whatever, towards one or the other'. This sense that breaking away from one's parents is a normal and beneficial part of adolescence informs his presentation of the attractions of his relationship with George:

And it was certainly not a totally, not only a sexual relationship, in that, this is in those early days, in that he umm, uhh, supplied me with something which I didn't get in my family life which was a sort, which was an outside existence. In a world that had to do with something that my immediate family and school world had nothing to do with at all, like an art world in other words. Specifically a sort of world of *culture* with a capital C. Which I knew nothing about and had no contact with. In that my parents were poor, we didn't go to theatre or anything like that much ... He became a second father figure to my own father figure. And for a period I certainly turned against my family and was in favour of *him* if you like, but umm, the way that I think now is quite differently to that. In terms of ... what I was doing was a classic case of a child rejecting the family and he provided an easy vehicle for me to do it with.

In the above statement the normality of this situation is what is stressed in Christopher's account. It was a 'classic case' of a child rejecting his parents. It is a stage that adolescents go through and later in life one comes to get a more balanced view of what happened – 'the way that I think now is quite differently to that'. To have a second father figure, a mentor, is an enriching experience for an adolescent and does not imply any fault on the part of one's *first* father.

This theme is also carried over into a discussion of the ways in which George helped Christopher to develop an independent and autonomous moral position on issues such as sexuality, religion and politics. He makes the following statement to describe the ways in which he came to develop a new view of sexuality through his relationship with George:

There was definitely anti-poofter, sort of poofter bashing mentality around at the time. And I didn't want anyone to know [about his relationship] but at the same time that was to some degree balanced against a tendency in me to not necessarily want to conform to society's notions of what I should be and some sort of inherent sense inside me that this was not right, you know .. within the terms that I had been educated in, the Christian ethic, it was not right. So that's I suppose how I would see

the relationship now and how I instinctively felt about it at the time; that sure, despite all my guilts and despite the religion and despite my, you know, the pressure on me from peer groups and society in general to poofster bash that it just wasn't right, you know.

The above comments are readily placed within the discourse of male adolescence – the questing Hamlet figure, resisting parental and other social pressures, carving out his own point of view (Hudson, 1984), the young man becoming a citizen with the obligation to think deeply and come to independent moral conclusions, the democratic and Christian ethic of equality in opposition to prejudice and stigma. In all of this Christopher interprets his relationship with George in terms of his need during adolescence to develop an independent and adult political position. As in the case of the gay interviewees there is a link made between adult sexual expression and the rights and duties of male adults as citizens.

As also in the case of the gay interviewees, it is clear that Christopher was able to make use of discourses circulating within the gay subculture to defend and validate his actions. It was George's view that in matters of sexuality 'anything non-violent, but caring and loving goes. And the sexes, the genders are irrelevant'. It was this view that Christopher combined with the moral discourses already available to him to validate his actions.

Both Michael and Kane present views of their relationships that fit within this overall discursive strategy. Michael speaks of his conflicts with his mother over the relationship and Kane of his consciousness of deceiving his parents. Both assert a right to develop these relationships despite parental disapproval. Although the concept of the adult as mentor is not elaborated to the extent that it is in Christopher's interview they certainly present the adult as a wise and benevolent friend.

ADOLESCENCE AS SEXUAL EMERGENCE

As with the gay interviewees a key discourse used to validate these relationships is the discourse of adolescence as a time of sexual awakening and entry into adult sexual status. Within this framework the heterosexual interviewees saw these relationships as an expression of sexual desires that arose naturally in adolescence and were not fully satisfied in the heterosexual relationships that were actually available.

Christopher's position on this issue was revealed in response to a leading question along these lines. As both the interviewer and Christopher acknowledge, the idea that a male adult takes advantage

of the sexual frustration of adolescent boys can be an argument against man/boy sex. The critique takes it that the boy is diverted from his true sexuality by a predatory adult. Christopher acknowledges the *factual* claims of this attack on intergenerational sex but refuses the moral point of view that usually accompanies it:

INT: If someone put to you the view that you were involved sexually with George, not because of any sexual interest but (1) because he wanted you to do it and (2) there were no sexual outlets in women what would you say?

CHRIS: Oh, I'd say it's probably true. (Pause) I mean for me that's fine because it was a good relationship. But probably that's true, that's the reason it started ... was because puberty was arriving or had hit or whatever and I had nowhere to direct it and someone came along and either sensed that or wanted or fancied me for his own ends. I mean I don't really care if he fancied me for his own ends – that's alright too.

The discourse of emergent adolescent sexuality is present in many other places in the interview as well. In particular, in discussing the various sexual activities in which he was engaged, Christopher stresses the physical pleasures of various acts and argues that his initial reservations about particular practices (oral sex, anal sex) were broken down as he received physical pleasure from these activities and came to feel that it was only fair to reciprocate.

Kane also suggested that sex with his adult partner was available in a way that heterosexual relationships with peers were not. Like the other interviewees that I have described in this article he makes a link between his involvement in these activities and a claim to sexual rights. He speaks about an incident in which he was interrupted by a teacher when he was kissing a girl at school:

INT: Why don't you have sex with girls at School?

KANE: I don't know, maybe because they're not into it.

INT: When do you think you'll probably have your first girlfriend?

KANE: I've had, I've only had one.

INT: Have you ever tried to have sex with her at all?

KANE: Oh, I have kissed.

INT: Oh yeah.

KANE: Teacher thinks it's stupid at our age – kissing.

INT: Does she, what does she say about it? How do you know she thinks it's stupid?

KANE: She caught us once. She said 'YOU SHOULDN'T BE DOING THAT. THAT'S NOT RIGHT' and all this bullshit.

Kane's angry reaction to this charge that he is too young to have sex also informs his defense of his rights to intergenerational sex: 'Kids should be allowed. Nobody should stop you if you want to do it.'

It is significant that the same discourses animate Kane's terse replies at ten years old and Tristan's lengthy and considered statements at seventeen years old. The discourse of masculine sexuality as emergent and masculine adulthood as implying sexual rights is fundamental to political and sexual discourse in modern society.

CONCLUSION

Both the gay interviewees and the heterosexual interviewees replied to the discourse of seduction through an available discourse of sexual essentialism. Their sexuality was an inner part of their being that was not likely to be influenced by these experiences of intergenerational sex. In this the interviewees exploit an incoherence in the discourse of homosexual seduction itself. The discourse of homosexual seduction condemns intergenerational sex as a route into homosexuality. However in this very construction, homosexuality is not just a set of sexual practices but a whole way of being that offends against hegemonic masculinity. This way of being is considered intrinsic to personality. Accordingly, the discourse of seduction is vulnerable to the reply offered by these interviewees. How can an intrinsic and essential part of one's being be determined by something so external as a set of sexual acts in adolescence?

Other validating discourses that were taken up by the interviewees can be readily related to common conceptions about male sexuality, masculine adolescence and male political rights. In the case of the heterosexual interviewees the older partner was viewed as a mentor or friend and someone who helped the younger party to break free from parental authority and claim independence. In the case of the gay interviewees there was a similar understanding of these events as helping them to establish their adult identity – in this case in the context of an underlying gay sexuality.

In both sets of interviews there was an emphasis on these events as sexual emergence, as discovering sexuality in adolescence and initiating sexual relationships as a response to the manifestation of inner sexual needs. There was a similar claim to sexual rights in the context of a liberal discourse of masculine adulthood as citizenship and civil rights.

The use of aspects of the discourse of hegemonic masculinity to validate these man/boy relationships suggests the truth of Foucault's dictum:

There is not, on the one side, a discourse of power, and opposite it, another discourse that runs counter to it ... there can exist different and even contradictory discourses within the same strategy; they can, on the contrary, circulate without changing their form from one strategy to another, opposing strategy. (Foucault, 1980, 101-102).

On the one hand the discourse of hegemonic masculinity stigmatises man/boy sex as homosexuality and seduction into homosexuality. On the other hand various aspects of the dominant discourse of masculinity were taken up by these interviewees to validate their participation in man/boy sex. These interviewees also made use of discourses of gay identity and gay liberation that were available from within the gay community and are constituted in explicit opposition to hegemonic masculinity. Frequently these two strategies were intertwined.

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