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ABSTRACT

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF A GAY MALE COMMUNITY

By

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This is a study of young adult gay male groups in a medium-sized city "Midwest City," (SMSA of 378,000 population). Unlike gay males in the largest metropolitan areas who have gay neighborhoods and developing social institutions, gay males in Midwest City do not have sufficient numbers to form a residential concentration, to maintain fully developed or complete institutions and as a result must participate in the city's institutions. The study, using the methods of participant observation, interviews, network analysis, and the semantic differential, explored in what ways these men constitute a community for themselves.

The ecological approach which is used to conceptualize the development of community is limited in its explanatory ability. Two processes bearing on the constitution of community were examined: How ecological settings contribute to the sense of community and how cognitive labels, e.g., "gay community," contribute to the perceived salience to community members of certain places. The label "gay community" is powerful in only certain ecological settings. Some places come to be known as "gay places," even though heterosexuals may be present. However, the places require actions and attributions by gay males to transform such places into gay places. When a place comes to be perceived as a

gay place, and an actor emits cues read off as gay by others present, the responses of the audience affirm the perception of the place as a gay place. Several kinds of messages assign meaning to the place as a gay place where a gay identity is salient. The gay community, as a set of gay places where a gay identity is salient, is constructed by the repeated interaction of the participants in the places.

This ethnography of a gay community focuses on interactional patterns, the criteria of membership in the group, and the extent of shared cognitive orientations. Interactional patterns are complexly related to segmentation in the community. The sharpest divisions or segments within the community are based on sex (lesbians versus gay males) and age identities. Other identities serving as bases of interaction and segment groupings among gay males are "drag queen", "leatherman", "chickenhawk", and Gay Lib member, while the identities of "chicken", "hustler", and bisexual do not as clearly demarcate interactional patterns. These identities can be presented in very few settings. Because sexual relations among most young gay males are with strangers and are infrequently repeated, open and changing friendship networks are important in the social organization of the community. Membership in these networks is one basis for inclusion in the community. A member of the community is recognized by being seen in gay places with other gay

people and by emitting "gay cues" toward others. One asserts membership verbally by stating that one has "come out" or by claiming a "gay" identity. Within the community, as well as outside of it, the identity categories "heterosexual" and "homosexual" are reified conceptions and viewed as inevitable. Many believe that alternation between the categories is impossible. These reified beliefs about "coming out" promote the stability of the gay male identity and membership in the community. Data from the semantic differential showed that a sample of gay men did not differ from a sample of heterosexual men on evaluations of a set of general cognitive categories, but gay males did share distinctive evaluations of categories that are salient within the gay community. Other evidence of a gay community is seen in the implicit gay annual calendar of ceremonies. Particular ceremonies are of greater interest to some of the segments, but the calendar is meager and most holidays are shared with the larger society.

PREFACE

In the pages that follow, I hope that I have conveyed to the reader, the excitement of studying a group of people who refer to themselves as a "community," but do not reside in a shared and clearly bounded territory. The elusive and fragile nature of community found in this study contrasts sharply with most community studies, and yet it shares with them a concern for the interaction of the micro-level of analysis, with individuals interacting in patterned ways, and the macro-level, with concern for the effects of social structure on interaction.

This study also shares with other community studies a certain crucial problem: In order to fully grasp the patterns of interaction among the members, the criteria they use for determining membership in the group, and the cognitions that they share as a unique group, one is forced to use participant observation as the preferred method. This method requires considerable volumes of time just to understand the one community under study. Hence, the researcher can make many conclusions about one group in one place, but is severely limited thereby in the ability to compare the group with other communities. A crucial issue raised by this study is the comparability of this group with gay communities in both larger and smaller cities. Only by comparison of communities in different-sized cities can such concepts as "institutional completeness" (Breton, 1964) of the community be fully

grasped. Yet ultimately, the comparison of this group with communities in larger and smaller cities must be left to be made in another place and time. One can only hope that this study will contribute to that comparison by the reader.

Many of the events and conversations described in the dissertation occurred between 1972 and 1976. In many cases, they have been supplemented by frequent visits to Midwest City since 1976. Nevertheless, the ethnography was written in another city and removed in time. I had read that "leaving the field" was often a problem, even before this study was begun. Yet, the anguish, loneliness, and boredom felt after moving away from Midwest City and leaving the large number of friends that had been cultivated during the participant observation makes me realize only in retrospect in just how many different ways the respondents have been more important to me than I have been to them. I feel distant now from those gay friends in Midwest City, both in time and place. At the same time, I am aware of the many debts and obligations owed both to those left behind and those who have now also moved elsewhere. In Chapter Three are several examples of the tolerance shown me by gay male friends, and examples of their friendship are sometimes implicitly given in Chapters Four and Five. I can only hope that this dissertation, by contributing to the ongoing exploration of homosexuality and of the gay community, will in some small way rectify the debts that were incurred to the many gay male friends during the course of the participant observation.

A brief overview of the dissertation is to be found after the statement of the theoretical problem at the end of Chapter One.

However, it should be mentioned here that the selective review of the literature on the gay community in Chapter Two was written during 1978. Several important additions to that literature (Bell and Weinberg, 1978; Delph, 1978; and Lee, 1978a and b) are not included in the review but are cited at relevant places elsewhere in the text.

By far, the greatest contribution to this dissertation was made by Peter K. Manning. Not only has he supplied many of the ideas that have proven useful in the analysis, but also the clarity of the criteria at the basis of his professional standards has sustained me through several crises engendered during the course of the participant observation. A "thank you" is hardly sufficient for the many hours of conversation engendered over the many years necessary to complete this study.

Many thanks are also owed to the other members of the dissertation committee: Donald Olmsted, John Gullahorn, and Bill Ewens. Their patience through several delays and extensions is much appreciated. Several sociologists at other universities have also made important contributions through correspondence; chief among these is Edward Sagarin of the City College of New York, whose continuing interest and suggestions are much appreciated. I also appreciate careful readings of the dissertation proposal made by Joseph Harry of Northern Illinois University, Randall Jones of San Francisco State University, and Pepper Schwartz of the University of Washington. Some of the ideas suggested in correspondence with Robert A. Stebbins of the University of Calgary and George Psathas of Boston University, which predate the writing of the dissertation proposal, may have survived in the writing of the dissertation; in any case, their time and interest during the earliest phase of the research is appreciated.

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CHAPTER ONE. INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Introduction

There are two basic explanations for the emergence of community: The ecological (e.g., Park and Burgess, 1925) and the social psychological or cognitive (e.g., Toennies, 1887). This study is an attempt to combine these approaches; this is a two-sided question: To what degree do ecological settings influence or make possible the social psychology of community, and to what extent does the social psychological influence the ecological settings? In a sense, ecological settings are preconditions for interactions; obviously, interactions always are situated in a location or setting. However, some ecological settings are viewed with some preconceptions for some people, so that the perception of community is based on particular known ecological settings and the interactions that are known to typically occur in those settings. This dissertation is primarily a study of community as perceived and acted on by young adult male homosexuals. The methods used to study this are participant observation, interviews of key informants, and some paper-and-pencil tests; the study has been in progress since 1972. The main purpose is to explicate the meaning of community for these people, and to understand the relative contribution of the concept of "community" as an overall integrative mechanism for them. To what extent does the concept of "gay community" (widely used among them) serve as equivalent to such terms as "my home town" and "my country," having a symbolic value for them? That is, instead of assuming that the term, "gay community" has an integrative value, one would want to see if it does, and when and how.

If community, as a sense of integration, is based on territory and interaction, then one would want to specify a denotative meaning, such as the verbal label plus the basis of the use of the label, "gay community." Hence, this study is concerned with two interrelated processes: How the ecological settings contribute to the sense of community (or more generally, how structure contributes to perceptions), and conversely, how cognitive labels (as, the "gay community") contribute to the perceived salience of certain territories and places. The main argument is that the label of "gay community" is most powerful in certain ecological settings; certain accepted places (as the gay bar, the College Center, and certain public washrooms) come to be known as "gay places." Most of these places are in public so that heterosexuals may also be present. Hence, most "gay places" are liminal - they are transition places which may be transformed by the actions of gay persons into "gay places."

Basically, this is an ethnographic study of young adult male homosexuals in a medium-sized metropolitan area (the SMSA has a population of approximately 400,000). As such, it appears to be unique because the few previous ethnographies of male homosexuals have all been done in the largest metropolitan areas in the country. This study will focus on the social organization of homosexuality by viewing social organization as situationally created in the activities of members. By asking how much of the lives of members is implicated with others who are also gay, the study seeks to determine if homosexual activities should properly be viewed as a "central life interest," and by implication as a subculture, or simply as a recreational activity. Certain aspects of interaction that tie the members together will be focused on: 1) The interactional patterns (the core members and shared

activities in the networks); 2) the criteria of membership in the group; and 3) the extent of shared cognitive orientations. These aspects are examined so as to determine to what extent and in what ways the members constitute a community.

From this study, evidence will be considered on the way the concept of community is used in and made viable by institutions and interaction patterns. In doing this, a large body of interview and observational data will be mobilized to provide a detailed description of these institutions, interactions, and identities. This descriptive material with its analytic focus is the only study available in the literature which gives a full description of the different territorial sets of groups acting together in a medium-sized city. The study will show that the concept of community is symbolically real, but manifested by and in certain "representative figures" and activated only in certain locations.

The Ecological Perspective

Before considering the cognitive perspective on the emergence of community, the ecological perspective will be briefly considered, especially as seen in the Chicago school. Robert Park and the Chicago school emphasized "natural areas" of the city as the ecological locations of types of deviant behavior as these cluster in various subcommunities of the metropolis.[1] In the largest cities of the present day, homosexual neighborhoods become established whereby the predominant residents of the area, the majority of employees, the main recreational forms, etc. all assume a homoerotic sexual orientation on the part of the participants in the area.[2] Levine (1977) suggests, following Wirth's criteria (1928), that some gay neighborhoods in the

largest cities now qualify as "gay ghettoes." For example, the Castro area of San Francisco, in which a predominance of homosexuals reside, work, and recreate, can be considered as a "natural homosexual area" or a "gay ghetto" of San Francisco.

However, such natural areas of deviant communities are not to be found in the smaller metropolitan areas of America. Certainly, in smaller cities, certain areas come to have a reputation among participants as good areas for public sex; certain places come to be known as gay recreational establishments; and certain neighborhoods and apartment complexes may have clusters of homosexuals residing in them. But these do not overlap in the same ecological area of the city, so that one cannot speak of natural homosexual ecological communities in medium-sized cities. For example, a male homosexual may typically look for sexual partners in particular public washrooms ("tearooms") which are several miles distant from the gay bar, both of which may be several miles from his residence. This raises the question: In the medium-sized metropolitan area, in what sense is the concept of community as used by gays (e.g., Hoffman, 1968), a community in the structural and institutional sense as used by sociologists.

The general ecological approach to urbanism can be subdivided into three distinct approaches (Fischer, Chapter 2, 1976): 1) The <u>determinist</u> approach (Wirth, 1938; Park, 1916; and Simmel, 1905) emphasizes that increasing urbanism (larger city size) induces differentiation of the social structure and greater division of labor, but with the consequence of isolating individuals. Impersonal procedures moderate the resulting individual anomie by formal social control and formal (secondary) integration. Fischer's description here really

just emphasizes the independent variable of population size of the city, with the dependent variable of the social psychology of the individual (feeling isolated and suffering from anomie), while the intervening variables of formal social control and formal integration are believed to moderate the effects on the social psychology of the individual. 2) The compositionalist approach (e.g., Gans, 1962; Oscar Lewis, 1965) is also derived from the Chicago school which emphasized the view of the city as "a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate" (Park, 1916, p. 126). This approach sees small primary groups as of continuing importance in the city, no matter how large the city population may become. In this approach the dynamics of social life depend on the non-ecological factors of social class, ethnicity, and stage in the life cycle. These attributes which individuals bring with them to the city determine who their associates are and what social worlds they live in. In other words, "social worlds" is the intervening variable between the demography of the city and the intensity and quality of interaction. 3) The subcultural approach (Fischer, 1975) contends that urbanism independently affects social life by helping to create and strengthen social groups. The ecology and demography are independent variables which encourage the emergence of distinctive subcultures in the city. This approach recognizes that increasing population size produces the structural differentiation and elaboration of the division of labor, which was stressed by the determinists, but it does more: Increasing population size intensifies subcultures by two distinct processes. The most useful process (for our purposes) is in the achievement of a "critical mass"; sufficient numbers allow people to support institutions that serve the group

(such as newspapers, clubs, and specialized stores); sufficient numbers also allow them to interact extensively with each other, and to have a visible and affirmed identity. The second process of intensification results from contacts between subcultures in the city which contrast. "People from one subculture often find people in another subculture threatening, offensive, or both" (Fischer, 1976, p. 28). In other words, the contrast and "recoil" intensifies and helps to define the urban subcultures. In each of the ecological approaches, the demography of an area (the city size) is an important independent variable affecting the social organization and sense of "community" in the city because the size of the city is crucially related to the amount of specialization within the city. However, this set of distinctions is not very useful for the present study. The three ecological approaches explain extant groups and subcultures in the city; as such, the approaches assume that the "group" is visible and can be explained. In this study, the variables in the ecological approaches contribute but do not fully explain. For example, the concept of a "social world" in the city implies a cultural dimension to the groups, which is not necessarily the case here. This study is concerned to determine if the subjects do constitute a "group" or a "community", and if they do have a subculture.

The demography of a city fits into a regional pattern with a hierarchy of cities and functions the cities play in the region.[3] That is, there is a hierarchy of cities, with a dominant city and subsidiary cities in a hinterland; this is just a function of the size of any consumer group (or "critical mass") in an area. In this sense, the city under study is one of several intermediate cities in a region

dominated by a large metropolitan area. The most specialized and smallest groups (e.g., gay leather clubs) are located only in the large metropolitan area, and residents of the moderate-sized city under study who are "into leather" must go to the leather bar in the large metropolitan area, while people in yet smaller cities are served by facilities such as the gay bar to be found in the moderate-sized city under study.

One could also consider a political aspect to the ecology of the "community": The escalating effects of more visibility of the gay institutions of the community in the last ten years (Humphreys, 1972). This aspect is, however, debatable. It is true that patrons of the gay bar do not worry now about being raided by the police for dancing by couples of the same sex, nor for public "drag shows." It is also true that the Gay Liberation Movement (Gay Lib) at the local college openly advertises its meetings and dances in the student newspaper.

However, it is debatable if there really is more visibility of gay institutions in this medium-sized city than ten years ago. A problem for resolving such a question is that participants in the gay "community" have no sense of a history of the community except as personal biography. For example, an older gay male, who "came out" (allowed others to assume he was gay in certain settings) years ago could tell what bar was gay when he came out and his circumstances when he came out, but he would not talk about how the community has changed apart from his personal sense of his own changing life circumstances. This lack of a sense of the history of the community except as personal biography is related to the importance attached to identity as a criterion of membership in the community. This lack of a

perceived history of the community is in sharp contrast with the sense of history found in traditional community studies (Chicago school; Middletown; Yankee City Series). The lack of a sense of history of the community is promoted by the high turnover into and out of the area by college students and staff, who comprise a portion of active participants in the city's gay bar scene (and of course, in Gay Lib, which is a student organization on the college campus).

The Cognitive Perspective

The cognitive perspective is grounded in interaction. That is, shared cognitions about the world are assumed to come about through interaction. Using this perspective, one could say that interaction, along with the shared symbols and cognitive views, underpin the "quasi-institutions" (the bar, gay couples, and Gay Lib) to be found in the gay community. This perspective reverses the tradition of the Chicago school; it was concerned with the links between ecology and social institutions; the concrete, ecologically bounded institutions 'caused' the cognitive views of the participants. Here, the adaptations of individuals in ecological locations are considered, and it appears that the cognitive views and interaction organize institutions also, as well as being affected by them.

Networks and the Interactional Boundary

Various sorts of dyadic relationships (friendships, roommates, sexual relationships) coalesce into cliques and groups at certain times and places. This means that "community" can be viewed in terms of three components: 1) Shared cognitive orientations (or, shared world views), 2) interactional scenes and rates, which are 3) public and consensual, or private. In one sense, "community" can be viewed as

composed of a set of interacting networks of people, tied together at least by their mutual sexual orientation toward the same sex (indeed, Leznoff and Westley, 1956, view their community in just this way).

It should be clear that the network would usually define the boundary of the community, that is, an interactive boundary, rather than a territorial boundary (Suttles, 1972, p. 55). However, the desire (by males) for new sexual partners not previously known makes the interactive boundary problematic. This highlights the questioning found in groups of gay males when another male walks by, typically taking the form: "Look at him. Do you know him?" Typical positive responses might be: "I've seen him in the johns, and he's the biggest whore in town," or "I've seen him down at the bar," or "We've been friends for years." With a positive response to the inquiry, the male walking by is included in the questioner's network, but a negative response ("I don't know him") does not necessarily imply that the questioner is not connected to the stranger, nor that the stranger does not share the sexual orientation of the questioner. The point is that the network is open and the interactive boundary is problematic: Who is a member and who is not? The consequence of a wrong guess can be severe for the individual (e.g., propositioning a vice cop), unlike in non-deviant communities. In certain ecological locations (e.g., the bar), members assume that all others present are members of the "community," but recognition of those others outside the settings may be denied by the other. For example, sometimes a person does not want to be recognized as gay when with a business associate or with a member of his family of origin, so that approaching someone known to be gay when outside an explicitly gay setting (as, the gay bar) is also sometimes problematic.

This raises certain questions: What constitutes membership in the community? How is a person recognized as being a member by others? What are the minimum requisite actions necessary to qualify as a member? Is the determination of another's membership itself problematic for a member and if so, under what conditions?

The problematic nature of the interactive boundary is not found in communities where the shared basis of the community is obvious: A little town clearly has all, except the newest members, known to each other, based on extended residence in the area. Obvious symbols (e.g., skin color, hair length) could also be used to demarcate the boundaries of a community and who is and who is not a member. With a deviant "community," the individual often wants to "pass" as a non-deviant (also true of con-men and certain thieves such as check passers and box men), so that no symbols likely to be recognized by outsiders can be used. Instead, reliance is placed on the type of response of the unknown other, especially as seen in the art of "cruising," a term used "to denote going out to look for a sexual partner" according to Bell (1974, p. 13) (briefly described in Hoffman, 1968, p. 45; Mileski and Black, 1972, pp. 193-5; also see Delph, 1978).

It is not just the interactional boundary that is defined by the interaction of participants, in the view to be used in this research. The social organization of the "community" can best be understood as situationally created in interaction, and in the factions of networks of friends. Coordinated collective activities and sequences of action (such as responses of others in "cruising") are started or "touched off" by the presentation of identities and responses to the presentations. In this sense, "community" is a complex thing, created and

again re-created by the members by their deliberate behavior. Unlike the general view in the literature, "community" and its social organization is not a single, static, and monolithic thing. The view of social organization of the "community" to be used in this research is much like Evans-Pritchard's use of the segmentary principle (1940) to describe the social organization of political relations among the Nuer, who do not have a "chief" nor other form of political leadership. There he saw complementary tendencies toward fission and fusion at each inclusive level of interacting groups; tribes segment into sections and their sections segment further, so that any local group is a balanced relation between opposed segments (1940, p. 255). He showed that for some situated activity, as a dispute, one section would define itself as opposed to another section of the tribe, but in another situated activity (as cattle raiding), a member of a section would see himself and his section as unified with the other section in the whole tribe's opposition to another tribe. (Also see Nicholas on "Factions," 1965). It is in this sense that social organization can be viewed as situationally created in the activities of members.

Analysis and Implications

The concept of community has traditionally implied a shared territory, shared norms and values and cognitive orientation, and shared institutional patterns (of work, religion, family, entertainment, politics). The most basic issue of this study is whether homosexuals in one moderate-sized city can best be characterized empirically as a community, or as sets of networks.[4] So, a basic question is how much of these people's lives are implicated with other people who are gay: Are there interconnected institutions? What degree of overlap and

integration is there between institutions? What is the degree of cognitive similarity in world view among participants? What is it that is shared? If, as is usually assumed, the sexual tie is powerful, is it sufficient to bind people together as an acting unit, in and of itself?

Certain conventions of ethnography will be followed. The name of the moderate-sized city, which will henceforth be called Midwest City, the names of places, and the names of all participants are pseudonyms. The reader may assume that the use of pseudonyms is consistent, so that a pseudonym used in a second place in the text is the same person or place as used on the first occasion. For example, Bob B. is a pseudonym consistently referring to a real person who is quoted in several places in the text. Also, terms from gay argot will be set in quotation marks and defined when first presented, but it will be assumed that the reader has followed the definitions and noted its place in gay argot when the same term is used without quotation marks subsequently in the text.

The general description of Midwest City and the methods of study will be presented in Chapter Three. However, some observations and inferences from the fieldwork will be used to set the scene when reviewing the previous studies of gay communities in Chapter Two. The ethnography to be presented in Chapters Four and Five uses Kenneth Burke's discussion (1945) of the ratios among the scene, act, and agent. Chapter Four begins with a consideration of membership in the community and forming a career as a member of the community. The Chapter will thereafter examine the institutions and ecological settings ("gay places") of the area, especially with concern for Breton's

concept of "institutional completeness" (1964); in Burke's terms, concern will focus primarily on the scenes. Chapter Four will also consider the most basic segments of the community, in particular, those segments based on age and sex. Data from the semantic differential will be presented in this chapter to establish the cognitive reality of the sexual segments for the members. However, the main emphasis of the chapter will be on the ecological settings, and a description of the sexual places will be presented here.

Chapter Five considers further segmentation of the gay male community in terms of identities, in addition to that of gay male (such as "drag queen," "chickenhawk," "leatherman"). The chapter will also contain an ethnographic description of activities in the public (the gay bar, College Center, and Slave Auction) and private settings (parties, dates, and couples). The ceremonies and rituals connected with the implicit gay annual calendar and their relation to the segments will be described. By considering the content of the interaction in terms of displayed identities and mobilized roles, emphasis will be, in Burke's terms, on the agents and acts, while the scenes will then be assumed background to the chapter. This will be followed by a summary chapter.

Having presented an overview of the problem to be explored, attention will now turn to the ethnographies and studies of gay communities that have been done in order to see what is already known about the social organization of the gay community.

Footnotes to Chapter One

1. For a good statement on the concept of natural areas, see Harvey Zorbaugh (1926); also see Paul Hatt (1961). Park (1916, pp. 128-30) also refers to them as "moral regions."
2. In Carol Warren's major ethnography of a gay community (1974), she says, "In many cities, including Sun City, gay bars and homes are clustered in the same areas.... In Sun City there are several major areas of gay residence: Downtown among the city's gay and straight night life, an upper-middle class suburb, and an adjacent beach area, all of which have gay bars" (pp. 20-21). The population of the SMSA of "Sun City" is about one million.
3. This goes beyond the Zipf rank-size rule of expected population sizes of ranked cities in a nation, and suggests that the ranking of a city by its size indicates the degree of specialization of functions to be found in that city in the region. For discussions of the Zipf rank-size rule, see B. Berry and W. Garrison (1958) and Harley Browning and Jack Gibbs (1961). On the functional specialization of services by some cities for other nearby cities, see Gibbs (1961, p. 396). Specialization of functions by sizes of cities has been shown for types of gay bars; only larger cities have more specialized types of gay bars, such as leather bars; see Joseph Harry (1974) and Bolin (1974).
4. There are a variety of meanings of community in sociology (see, for example, Stoneall, 1978, Chapter One, or Hillery, 1968, for the range of meanings). In this dissertation, I want to specify a particular denotative meaning, and ask to what degree that definition

can be empirically verified. Alternative definitions and meanings of community cannot thereby be rejected; they may be studied by others. Also, one should note that community is not zero-sum, either present or absent; rather, one should say that a group of people are more or less a community.

CHAPTER TWO.

GENERAL ISSUES BEARING ON THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY

Because the question of the appropriateness of application of the concept of community to homosexuality in a moderate-sized city has been raised, consideration of the concept will now be made as it is found in the major sociological studies. The most useful empirical studies, most of which have been published, were done in large metropolitan areas: Leznoff and Westley (1956, Toronto?), Martin Hoffman (1968, San Francisco), Laud Humphreys (1970, St. Louis), Carol Warren (1974, San Diego), Weinberg and Williams (1975, New York and San Francisco), Bolin (1974, Denver), Tom Weinberg (1976, Buffalo), and Lee (1978 a and b, Toronto). These constitute the major source of sociological knowledge about gay communities.[1] These few studies will be reviewed in terms of what appear to be the main dimensions of community in order to see what is already known about the gay community. The general issues bearing on community raised by these studies are: The institutions of the community; the public and private places and the interactions transpiring in them; the intimate structures that develop in the more privatized places; and finally, the presentations of identities in the places. The specific characteristics of the city under study will be presented in the next chapter.

A. Institutions

Miller and Form (1964, p. 74) suggest that a community can be conceived as composed of five major institutions: The economy, politics, family, religion, and recreation (this is identical with the Lynd's Middletown, 1929). Yet, none of the above studies of the gay community has considered what institutions are to be found in the gay community.

What we have are segmentalized studies, e.g., of the bars as an institution (Achilles, 1967), of gay baths (Weinberg and Williams, 1975), and of interactions by the young male promiscuous segment primarily in gay bars (Hoffman, 1968), but not studies looking at it as an ecological system or community with institutions. Nobody has made such a study because researchers have reacted to the "sick" label of homosexuality, and hence, have tried to answer the question: "What is the difference of homosexuality from heterosexuality?" Instead, the view to be taken here is that the significance of any behavior and the subjective interpretation of its meaning for participants results from the situation in which it takes place (cf. Mileski and Black, 1972, p. 192).

Rather than proposing a list of institutions which should be found in the gay community, this will be turned into an empirical question: What do the respondents say are the key institutions? Clearly, leisure in public places (the bars, baths, cruising areas, and the ceremonies which take place in them, such as the Miss Midwest City Drag Contest) constitutes one important institution, while social control (e.g., gossip) and integration constitute another. Gay couples living together can be considered an analogue to the institution of the family. And the Gay Lib organization is one focus of a political quasi-institution. These institutions, along with the segmentation of the community by age and sex, and the ecological places, will all be considered in the fourth chapter of the dissertation.

B. Public versus Private Places

The importance of the general distinction between behavior in public and private situations is fairly well established sociologically (Douglas, 1971, pp. 226-43; Goffman, 1963; Lyn Lofland, 1973, especially

Chapter 8). Most discussions of the general distinction focus on rules (and also laws) relevant only to behavior in public places. Douglas says, "the essence of the public situation is strangeness and a resulting untrustworthiness..." (1971, p. 237); hence, public rules, such as tolerance, courtesy, respectability and presentability, facilitate achievement of one's purpose in public situations (1971, p. 237).

The studies of the gay communities have implicitly and sometimes explicitly used the distinction between public and private places to describe their communities because some places (the public) are important for meeting potential sexual partners. Hoffman says:

> "The homosexual community is a kind of community which is not defined so much by geographical factors (although homosexuals tend very often to live in certain sections of the city rather than others) as by certain common values and behaviors, and by shared public places" (1968, p. 8).

Except for the gay bars, the shared public places are used almost exclusively for explicit sexual purposes (p. 58; e.g., baths, restrooms). In Hoffman's view, the bars are a marketplace for finding short-term (one-night stand) sexual partners, and conversations there tend to be short and superficial (p. 54) because sexual partners tend to be selected primarily on the basis of physical appearance (p. 56).

Hoffman does not see friendship among male homosexuals as important, and so the view that he presents of the San Francisco gay male community is one of loneliness, punctuated by anonymous one-night stands. He sees both a "tendency toward promiscuity and an inability or severe difficulty in forming lasting paired relationships" (p. 169) as the emergent problems felt by the homosexuals he interviewed. This indicates that he has only studied a segment of the gay community (the young, promiscuous, bar-going segment).

Hoffman's explanation for the pervasiveness of one-night stands among males is based partly on the observation that female homosexuals have much less difficulty than male homosexuals in the formation of stable relationships (p. 165). In other words, there is something about males and masculinity in general that promotes promiscuity among gay males. He holds that in the common conceptions of the male sex role, there are greater prohibitions against intimate feelings, tenderness, and dependence toward one's own sex, than for the female (p. 183). This is the phenomenon of "homosexual dread," and makes it a greater problem for males than for females, and this is his explanation for the greater reactivity and sanctions by others to male homosexuality than lesbianism. He posits that male homosexuals accept this view of homosexuality from the larger society, and so feel guilty as well as fearful of detection and apprehension in their sexual relations. All of these factors, the male sex role (de-emphasizing intimacy, tenderness, and dependency), the dread of homosexuality, and the guilt and fear of public exposure for homosexual acts, then lead to furtive and anonymous sexual relations in public places for gay males.

Weinberg and Williams (1975) also consider the social organization of sexual behavior in a public place, gay baths. (Although owners of baths try to restrict entrance to gays by asking questions of newcomers, the behavior is nevertheless semi-public, even when only self-defined gays are present, because most participants are not known to each other.) Contrary to Hoffman, Weinberg and Williams note that participants in gay baths are present in the location because they <u>desire</u> an impersonal, bounded sexual encounter (also see Lee, 1978a). Their description of the social organization of the baths is based on statements by gay

respondents of ideal conditions for impersonal sex, such as security from legal interference, opportunities from which to select an accessible sexual partner, a known and shared set of rules to follow in order to consummate and end the sexual encounter, and a comfortable and clean physical setting.

The baths obviously more closely approach the ideal conditions facilitating impersonal sexual encounters in public than bars, which are useful only for selecting a partner and arranging for a subsequent sexual encounter in a private setting, and than public washrooms, which do not offer security from outside interference nor a comfortable and clean physical setting. (Humphreys' study of public washrooms, 1970, will be considered in a later context.) However, it should be noted that there are no gay baths in Midwest City, unlike the large metropolitan areas which have several gay baths.

In contrast with studies of gay public places, Warren (1974) primarily studied behavior in private places. Although her study will be considered further later, it should be mentioned in this context that her study of middle-aged gay male couples, sharing rounds of private dinner parties in their homes with their clique of friends, is a segment of the community different than that studied by Hoffman (1968), Weinberg and Williams (1975), and Leznoff and Westley (1956). She mentions that even though "the long-term sexual relationship is vital for the maintenance of community" (1974, p. 71), the relationship is usually not characterized by fidelity between the partners (p. 72) because short-term sexual relationships (especially one-night stands) are expected. Because the short-term sexual relationships would be formed in public places, such as bars, baths, or public restrooms,

while the long-term relationships (couples) are within cliques in private settings, the type of location in which the relationship is formed has importance in explaining qualities of the relationship. In other words, the significance and the interpretation of the meaning of homosexual behavior for the participants is derived from the qualities of the situation in which it takes place.

Leznoff and Westley's study (1956) is primarily concerned with behavior only in public settings, especially gay bars. They distinguish cliques of "secretive" and "overt" male homosexuals on the basis of their mode of adjustment in the larger society, but mention that each clique has its "own" gay bar where it regularly assembles.

The distinction between public and private settings should perhaps best be viewed as a continuum, rather than dichotomous, so as to allow for the quasi-public nature of some settings (e.g., tearoom encounters described by Humphreys, 1970, which can be disrupted by intrusion of another stranger) and the quasi-private nature of other settings (e.g., the baths described by Weinberg and Williams, 1975). Even a gay bar, the most public setting in the gay community, may only vaguely be known, or even not recognized at all, by the "general public." But perhaps a more fundamental problem here is, given that some aspects of the community are public, how is a transition from private identities to public identities accomplished? The private level, structurally does not have a public transition. The costs and risks of a public identity as a homosexual are large because of stigma from the larger society. The social organization of the gay community appears to mitigate against integration of private and public biographies.

C. Interactions

The private nature of interactions limits their meanings and makes their public debate and legitimation less likely. The kinds of interactions are largely a result of their enactment in public or private settings (Mileski and Black, 1972, p. 192). "Cruising" or seeking new sexual partners (primarily with the expectation of a short-term sexual encounter) can only be done in public settings where unknown potential partners are to be found. But the nature of the public setting further determines the kind of resulting relationship and organizes the nature of the interaction; that is, "cruising" is performed differently in a bar or a bath, or a public restroom. The anonymity of a sexual relationship consummated in the public setting itself (bath or restroom) is more easily assured and the relationship more easily bounded and ended, than a relationship begun in a bar, which must be carried over into the private domain.

"Cruising" in bars has been described by Hooker (in Gagnon and Simon, 1967, pp. 195-6), Hoffman (1968, p. 45), Mileski and Black (1972, pp. 193-5), and Delph (1978, chapter 6), while the process of selecting a sexual partner in a public washroom has been described by Humphreys (1970). Apparently, "slave auctions" in bars have not been previously described.

In contrast, interactions in private settings, such as parties and dates have a different nature because the interactants are previously known to each other, and they generally assume that they will continue to be known to each other subsequent to the event. Although Warren has dealt with these in depth, discussion will be deferred to the next section to consider how the interactions she observed in private

settings are intimate structures.

One form of non-sexual interaction is the friendship clique sharing situated activities. Leznoff and Westley (1956) consider this in some detail with regard to their secretive and overt cliques. But from Leznoff and Westley's description, it is difficult to see what activities differentiate the cliques. They say that interaction in secretive "cliques is frequent, with members meeting at each other's homes and in bars and restaurants" (p. 261), which the overt groups also do. They also mention that each kind of group has its own bar in the city (p. 261).

The social organization of Leznoff and Westley's community is more complex because of what they describe as the "incest taboo" among friends within the clique (evidently, none were in stable couples, as in Warren's community). They suggest that the homosexual develops a deep emotional involvement with his group because it provides the only context in which homosexuality is normal and moral behavior, so that a major form of recreation within the friendship group is the narration of sexual experiences and gossip about the sexual exploits of others, thereby allocating prestige among the members because of the high evaluation placed on physical attraction and sexual prowess. Another function of the gossip about sexual encounters, as well as "camping" (exaggeration of feminine behavior and affectation of speech), is the dramatization of the affirmation of homosexuality in the group, showing that it has the collective support of the group (p. 258). One of their interviewees said, "you might have sex with somebody you just met and then he might become your friend. But you won't have sex with him any more as soon as he joins the same gang you hang around with" (p. 258). Clearly, one would not because the group would gossip about it. Finally,

they suggest that the emphasis upon friendship rather than sexual relations within the clique preserves group unity by eliminating excessive competition (p. 263).

Because of this "incest taboo" within the groups, sexual relations occur between the secret and overt group members, on a casual and promiscuous basis, and in the spirit of anonymity (p. 263). In their view, this is what ties the two kinds of cliques together in their community.

D. Intimate Structures (Private Settings)

From other studies, it is clear that identities and interactions are the basis for intimate relations. But among homosexuals, what kind of variations are there in private settings? What have been described are bits and pieces from a couple of studies.

In her study of secretive middle-aged homosexuals in Sun City, Carol Warren says "the long-term sexual relationship is vital for the maintenance of community" (1974, p. 71, emphasis in the original), i.e., it is "couple-oriented." This kind of relationship is usually not characterized by fidelity between the partners (p. 72) because as mentioned, short-term sexual relationships (one-night stands) are also expected. She says that "eligibility for a short-term sexual relationship is based on different criteria than eligibility for a long-term sexual relationship" (p. 75) and that "in most cliques, the norm is that the members find short-term sexual relationships outside the group, either among strangers in bars or from connected cliques" (p. 75). Further, "the main group sustaining community interaction is the clique, and the form of relationship between clique members is the relationship of obligation" (p. 77, emphasis in the original), especially the obligation to reciprocate in giving cocktail parties and dinner parties in the

home. The general picture that she paints of the community in Sun City is of cliques of couples in some flux, inviting each other to their homes for entertainment, and individuals separately finding short-term sexual partners in the bars while their long-term sexual relations are with the other members of their couple within their clique.

Further, Warren says that

> "in the gay community, there are two levels of criteria [for sorting persons into suitability categories for forming relationships]: membership in the gay world itself, and, within that membership, criteria specifying who is accessible or legitimate as a sexual, sociable, friendly, or other type of relational partner" (p. 80).

Although she notes that most "members of this community" were gay males, there were also a minority of gay and straight females.

Not only is the size of Sun City over five times larger than Midwest City, which does not have a geographic residential base to its "community," but also the segment of the gay community that she studied is very different than that under study here. Here, nearly all gay males are not in stable couples; the one-night stand and impersonal sex in certain public washrooms are the most common forms of sexual relation, with dating between two males for more than a couple of weeks exceedingly rare. For example, after an extended period of time participating in a non-couple clique, two males began a sexual relationship with each other and after several weeks decided to live together as a stable couple. They then stopped participating in the friendship clique and stopped going to the gay bar. Although they are known by the clique members to still be living together, they are virtually never seen by their old friends in the clique. The point of this example from my field notes should be clear: It is the <u>only</u> example of the formation

of a stable couple relationship extending over a year, and the stable couple stopped participating in the friendship clique composed of single individuals.

In Warren's segment of the gay world, the clique and the "relationship of obligation" based on reciprocating home parties is viewed by her as the principle sustaining a sense of community, whereas in the younger segment which does not regularly engage in home parties, no such obligation to reciprocate such events can bind people together.

Unlike the light sociability and lack of discussion of work and occupations in the home parties described by Warren, and perhaps just because the segment of the "community" under study here is younger and not middle-aged and securely established, both the short-term (present) work and long-term work career goals connected with their present educations are viewed as major topics of appropriate conversation both in the College Center and afterwards in bars. A common question on seeing someone after an absence of weeks would be "what are you doing these days?" Sometimes the person would initially reply humorously, "<u>who</u> am I doing?" but would then proceed to describe his present work. The students are, of course, concerned about going on in school, getting degrees, and plans for starting a work career, but those who are out of school and started on their work career talk freely, sometimes for hours, about the nature of their work, promotions, applications for other jobs, and other matters related to their work careers. Such conversations in the cliques of friends often include comments about (straight) co-workers, bosses, clients, and so on. Such topics of conversation are found as well among those who have not gone to college, but usually attenuated. For example, Tim, a high school graduate, worked in a shoe store which

was "okay," but told everyone when he changed to work in another shoe store, which was an improvement for him.

It is for this reason, that is, the apparent contrast between the light sociability and lack of expressed concern about work at the dinner parties described by Warren versus the serious concern exhibited about work in conversations among gay males in Midwest City, that makes it difficult to apply many of Warren's ideas to the gay world in Midwest City. Indeed, it seems possible that Warren has exaggerated her own description. For example, she says

> "stigmatization and secrecy, the closing in of the community as the centrally defining aspect of life, the spending of leisure in highly structured (indeed institutionalized) gay settings and interactions, and the development of gay relationships all promote affiliation and identification with the community, underpinned by the learning of a new world of knowledge... [plus] the homosexual desire itself" (1974, p. 157, emphasis added).

Or again, she says,

> "gay identity is a master-status for those who commit themselves to the secret community; it is the most important and defining characteristic of the members' selves" (p. 89).

Warren's concept of gay identity as a master-status will be considered further in the section, "Identity."

The main issue that has been raised is: If it can be described as a gay community, then it should have a shared territory, shared norms and values, and institutional patterns (work, religion, politics, home life, and entertainment, as in the Lynd's Middletown). Then the question becomes: How much of these people's lives is implicated with other people who are gay? Warren would have her readers believe that most of their lives are shared with others who are gay, but she gives

evidence only on entertainment time and residential patterns of living in gay couples, in a shared territory. Warren would have her readers believe that, because of "the secret," interaction with non-gays at work, church, parents, etc. is somehow not important and not an aspect of the "genuine" self (or in her terms, "the true identity" is hidden behind a mask then, p. 122).[2] One would also ask: Are there interconnected institutions? The gay "community," at least in a smaller city cannot be self-supporting. Therefore, members must continue to maintain relations with others who are not gay.

E. Identities

Identities are the basis of interaction in the sense that the presentations of most identities and the mobilization of the corresponding role provide "cues," thereby "touching off" and steering the interaction. What is important to consider, then, is the range of identities which are presented in the range of situated contexts. Other studies, such as Warren's, as will be seen, have only limited conceptions of identities which tend to ignore the contexts. In this connection, one can consider "salient" and "latent" identities (Becker and Geer, 1960; Gouldner, 1957; Goodenough, 1969).

With regard to decreasing generality, or salience across situations, one can say that the identity of male is most general (in terms of work, school, family, sexual entertainment, etc.), followed by the identity of gay male, followed by: The identity of drag queen (a cross-dressing gay male), or the identity of leatherman (a gay male usually into bondage or S & M),[3] or the identities of chickenhawk (a gay male who purchases sex with a younger male) and chicken, or tearoom participant, or member of Gay Lib. As one goes from consideration of the former

to the latter, the identities are salient in more and more specific situations and bounded for their presentations more and more in terms of time and place; most of the time the latter are not salient and are "latent" (in the sense used by Becker and Geer, 1960).

Presenting an identity is the same as including and excluding information about the self (i.e., some aspects of the self become relevant when an identity is presented, while other aspects drop out of relevance to the presentation), so that presenting an identity is a dramaturgical problem (cf. Goffman, 1959). The person wants and looks for confirmation of the presented identity from an audience.

In this sense, social organization can be determined by the categories of a person's identities (i.e., identities as a key to social structure). For example, the identity of drag queen is less often salient than the identity of gay male. In order to present the identity of a drag queen, the gay male must further take on the appearance of a woman using props (wig, clothing, jewelry) at a certain time, go to a certain ecological location of his choice (gay bar, on the street, straight bar, etc.), to present his appearance of self to an audience, in order to get a response from the audience confirming his presented identity.

With this model of salient and latent identities, the social organization of the gay "community" can be described, at least at one level, as composed of "segments" of interacting people sharing salient identities. For example, there would be a leather segment, drag, Gay Lib, etc. and also various lesbian segments (separatists, lesbian/feminists, etc.), each bounded as to time and place. These segments could be, and sometimes are in the same general ecological location; e.g., "regular"

gay males, drag queens, and lesbians often are all in the gay bar at the same time, but one would expect as an implication of this line of analysis of salient and latent identities, that the different segments would have different role behavior associated with the salient identity of the segment, even when in the same ecological location. (It is only in a large metropolis that the segments can segregate themselves into separate ecological locations, such as a leather bar, a lesbian bar, etc. (Harry, 1974; Harry and DeVall, 1978; Bolin, 1974)).

One can see now that Warren uses a very limited conception of identity. Her ethnographic presentation assumes throughout, citing Becker (1963, pp. 32-4), that homosexuality as a master-status is "the centrally defining aspect of life" for the homosexual. But in fact, Becker was emphasizing how he thought others (non-deviants) reacted to revealed knowledge of a deviant status, i.e., "that is what the person really is" with implications for his other (lesser) statuses. (Becker extended Hughes' (1945, p. 147) usage of master-status as part of the reaction by others).[4] But from the point of view of the gay person, one should hold this as an empirical question, i.e., it is possible that sex -- being male (for example) is more basic than sexual orientation, and occupation is more important in organizing and patterning the life of the gay. That is, work could be a more central life interest than leisure activities connected with sexuality (see Dubin, 1956, on work as a central life interest) and in this, the gay person would be no different than anyone else of the working and middle classes in America. Homosexuality is the symbolically shared difference from the larger society, so to focus on and emphasize that difference, a writer (such as Warren) runs the danger of imputing it as more central to the

life and self-identity of the gay person than it is subjectively viewed.[5] One should hold the empirical possibility further, and consider that the gay sexual orientation is less central than other identities in organizing a person's life for some gay people than for others.

Warren says further,

> "gay people in our society inhabit multiple worlds, only one of which is gay; since the rest are straight, the gay must use various strategies and tactics of concealment in his relationships with non-gay people" (p. 93).

This is a curious conjecture for her to make because she did not study and gives little evidence about gays in non-gay settings (with the sole exception of the behavior of groups of gays at 'straight' parties). This assertion of Warren's violates the sense of multiple identities and multiple roles that all people have and play, recognizing which identities and roles are relevant and appropriate in certain settings and at certain times of their day (cf. William James, 1890, p. 264). For example, just when is a gay public school teacher or a gay college student <u>conscious</u> of being gay? A strategy can be played out only consciously and with intent. Warren assumes that homosexuality as a <u>master</u> status makes the person <u>always</u> conscious of it, but this is doubtful, if not an absurd exaggeration.

In this connection, she says one strategy of secrecy

> "is the schizophrenia of separating straight and gay people into separate settings as well as separate worlds. This is one of the basic strategies adopted by most secret gays, and it has important implications,"

including progressive attenuation of relationships with straight people over time (p. 97). This is surely an absurd description of modern urban life. <u>Most</u> urban people interact with others in only certain

settings and for limited purposes.[6] There is nothing "schizophrenic" about the segmentation and compartmentalization of roles and identities in different settings and at different times. Warren's description assumes that a gay person at work consciously views his sexual orientation as relevant to his work role, that he consciously adopts a strategy about this relevance, and further, that a gay person can afford to progressively attenuate relationships in the straight world, such as work.

On the contrary, it seems that sexual orientation is not relevant to many aspects of a person's life, and one should instead speak of a restriction of personal information, rather than the holding of a secret. This should be clear from an example in the straight world: A co-worker need not know one's religious affiliation (that is, for doing most jobs, it is simply not relevant), and the fact that a person does not voluntarily reveal such innumerable bits of personal information to a co-worker should not lead the observer to conclude that a secret is being withheld. Of course, this should not be carried to the opposite extreme of equating sexual orientation with any other bit of personal biography. A co-worker may make a joke about gays (as well as about Jews, Catholics, etc.) and the person may have to hide his indignation and accept the (unbeknownest) imputation of stigma, whereas the Catholic or Jew would likely openly object and reveal that self-identity. But the point should not be lost: In non-gay settings, when interacting with known straights, the sexual orientation of the "secretive" gay person would not usually be relevant. (How many gay jokes could co-workers say in an eight-hour day, and still get the work done?) Further, people who are not themselves deviant and who are not familiar with recognized deviance (e.g., those who are not "wise" about homosexuality) tend to

impute normalcy to those around them. More specifically, when no suspicion has been aroused in a 'straight' audience, they will tend to assume and impute heterosexuality to those around them. Warren has highlighted aspects of the problems of "passing" as straight by gays (e.g., 1974, p. 96), but she has ignored the opposite process, the imputation of heterosexuality by the straight audience, which must be as disconcerting as experiencing a problem in passing and have as many implications for the stability of the gay identity.

Humphreys' study (1970) is a good example of how different identities are acted out in one setting, the public washroom. Each type of identity (e.g., ambisexual, gay, trade, etc.) has its own mode of presentation but individuals with different identities can nevertheless successfully interact, following the rules of the "game." Humphreys further tries to show how the larger society impinges on the individual in determining his choice of identity in the setting; Humphreys uses the distinction between dependent and independent occupations, first proposed by Leznoff and Westley, and shows that the kind of occupation of the individual in the larger society is significantly related to the kind of identity enactment in the tearoom. However, his concern with occupation is not relevant to this study, as the larger institutions of society, such as the economy and occupations will not be considered.

Focus of the Study

The above review has shown that writers on the gay community in large metropolitan areas basically have assumed that it is both a community and a subculture, rather than attempting to show the extent to which that is the case. The above writers are much like the proverbial blind men examining the elephant because the community is segmented by

age and sex, with quite different patterns of behavior in the different segments and different locations. This holds true in Midwest City also as will be seen; the segment of young, promiscuous males does not by and large interact with the middle-aged, stable male couple segment, nor with the Black, male homosexual segment, nor with the lesbian segment. Recognizing this limitation of the earlier studies, we can acknowledge it, but can do little more; this study will be confined primarily to the young adult, promiscuous male and predominantly white segment. But the question asked remains the same: Is it a community, and if so, what is it that is shared?

A community traditionally implies a shared territory, shared norms, values, and cognitive orientations, and shared institutional patterns of work, religion, politics, home life, and entertainment. Some of the studies that have been reviewed have mentioned a shared territory, that is, a gay neighborhood (e.g., Warren, 1974; Hoffman, 1968, quoted, page 8; Levine, 1977). Some shared normative behaviors connected with "cruising" have been shown (e.g., Weinberg and Williams, 1975, on gay baths; Hoffman, 1968, and Delph, 1978, on gay bars). In fact, the studies reviewed have said a great deal about entertainment time of gay males (e.g., cruising by the younger segment, Warren's description of dinner and cocktail parties in the homes of middle-aged gay male couples). However, except for Warren's description of the home life of gay couples, the studies are not helpful in delineating the institutions of the gay community, nor the shared norms, values, and cognitive orientations. Of these traditional aspects of community, male homosexuals in Midwest City do not have a shared residential territory (i.e., there is no gay neighborhood in Midwest City), nor shared patterns of work,

religion, and politics, while the home life of gay couples in Midwest City obviously can not be located in a gay neighborhood. In order to test if the gay "community" in Midwest City is nevertheless really a community, the aspects of interaction that tie the group together will have to be examined. The several aspects of interaction can be summarized as: A) interactional patterns, B) criteria of membership in the group, and C) shared cognitive orientation.

A. Interactional Patterns

A consideration of interactional patterns would try to answer such questions as: Who spends time together with whom, doing what? what are the groupings within the community? In this view, some members can be seen as core members of networks, while others are on the periphery of the community, who share some special interests as well as sexual orientation, such as "leather" or doing "drag shows." The latter are still within the "community" (and purview of this study), while some individuals are on the margins of the community by their conventionality (specifically, males who do not go to the gay bar, do not know any gays as friends, but do engage in sexual relations in public johns, and who may consider themselves "straight").[7] The latter are excluded from this study.

An analysis of networks and interactional patterns should ideally be designed to show how much of the subjects' lives are shared with others who are gay. This implies a measure of the complement: How much is not shared with others who are gay (i.e., how extensive are relationships and activities with non-gays). An analysis of interactional patterns should show the amount of time spent and the activities engaged in with others who are also gay.

B. Criteria of Membership in the Group

The criteria used to designate membership in any group have obvious importance because they demarcate the boundary by reference to individuals (who are inside and who outside); also, the criteria indicate to the members which of their behaviors and qualities distinguish them as a group from outsiders. The study of the criteria of membership in the gay "community" as an essential feature of the networks includes three aspects, which will be elaborated below: "Coming out" as a career stage, "cruising," and "Look at him. Who is he?"

"Coming out" is gay argot referring to when the person first began to think of the self as homosexual and began to know other homosexuals. As such, it refers to the time when the person considers that he first became a member of the group. Of course, "coming out" is just one stage in the "career" as a homosexual. The patterns of "coming out" and beliefs held by members about the nature of "coming out" at least partially get at the criteria for qualifying for membership in the group. To study this aspect, one can use a model for the development of commitment to the social identity of homosexual composed of the subjectively expressed rewards and penalties for taking on the identity, and the rewards and penalties for changing from the old identity (as a heterosexual). Coming out and becoming a member will be considered in Chapter Four.

The study of "cruising" (looking for a sexual partner, usually for a short-term sexual encounter) exemplifies membership criteria also because cues, such as directed glances, are used to indicate a sexual interest. Such cues, although subtle to the outsider, are fairly standard and recognized among members. (Of course, not all cues in all situations

are subtle; some, such as showing an erection to another male in a public washroom, would be recognized by anyone). Cruising in different contexts will be considered in Chapter Five.

When a group of gay males is together in public, a common question addressed to the group about a male passerby is: "Look at him. Who is he?" The answer by a person in the group is identity attribution to the other and establishes the membership of the other. Although this question can be found in any group, in groups of gay males, the question can usually be viewed as verbally expressed "cruising" in the group because the question is usually asked about a male who is evaluated by the questioner as physically attractive and hence, a potential sexual partner.

C. Shared Cognitive Orientation

If networks of homosexuals actually constitute a subculture, then one would expect them to share a common outlook on the world around them. The categories of thought and evaluations made of the categories (i.e., the connotations) should be more similar within the group than in comparison with nonmembers. (Several empirical studies have been made of shared cognitions; see, for example, Tyler, 1969; Agar, 1973; Psathas and Henslin, 1967; Spradley, 1975; and Faris, 1973.) Of course, a subculture would share some cognitive orientations with the larger culture, but the categories of thought which have greater salience to the group and to its unique activities should differ.

Shared cognitive orientations are seen in a mapping of "sexual places," and in a cognitive mapping of the "social world." Gay "sexual places" are places where a gay identity is most salient. Even though any one gay male may choose to display a gay identity and enact

a gay role in only some of them regularly, he presumably knows that the other places exist and are sexual places for other gay males because knowledge about sexual places is shared in conversations. A description of the sexual places for gay males will be presented in Chapter Four. Cognition can be defined briefly as the ways of recognizing and giving meaning to the objects and conditions around a group. In this view, people construct, or negotiate in a group, a picture of reality. Just as negotiation occurs with others about the meaning of specific events, so also negotiation (through talk) occurs about the relevance of places to an identity and the meanings of places for the identity. The cognitive map of gay sexual places is part of the ecology of the gay community.

The object of the study of shared cognitions will be to see how much agreement there is among gay males on how they view an aspect of their world, and would imply that other aspects of their cognitive world are probably shared as well. A high agreement on the relevance of certain places as "sexual places" implies that a view of the world is shared; this view of the world is an aspect of gay culture, and would differ from the cognitions of "sexual places" by heterosexuals. Hence, agreement on cognitions about gay sexual places would lend support to the idea that the gay community has a distinct subculture. One would assume that the underlying principles used to categorize the sexual places are implicitly shared in talk about sexual places among gay males. However, one would not expect complete agreement on how to categorize sexual places among gay males nor any other shared cognitions because: 1) Any negotiated "picture" of the world is subject to re-negotiation in a group, 2) a negotiated picture may be only partially transmitted to new enlistees

in a group, and 3) likewise, those who are less centrally involved in a group may only partially grasp the negotiated picture which is agreed upon in the group. Low agreement, however, would indicate that each individual is alone in figuring out how to structure his view of his world; it would imply that there is little content to gay "culture."

A cognitive mapping will be made of categories of the social world, using the semantic differential of the objects: Gay males, lesbians, men in general, women in general, and self. The responses of a sample of gay males will be compared to the responses of a sample of straight males. High agreement on these categories of the social world by gay males would imply that aspects of the "world views" of gay males are shared, and gay "culture" has a content to it which is distinct from the larger society.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the major ethnographies of gay communities. All of the ethnographies were based on studies of male homosexuals in the largest metropolitan areas of the country, and many of the studies indicated that there existed a shared territory (a gay neighborhood) in the metropolitan area under study. Certain short-comings of the studies have been noted: Each study only dealt with a segment of the gay community (e.g., the young adult, male promiscuous segment, or the middle-aged, male couple segment), each only considered a few identities in addition to that of gay male (for example, Bolin's 1974 ethnography of Denver only considered "regular" gay males, "leathermen," and "drag queens"), and each only gave an apparently incomplete description of the various sexual places in the ecology of the community. Each study appears to have assumed that the group under study was a community and

a subculture, rather than trying to show that such was indeed the case. The studies do not clearly answer how one becomes a member of the community, how one recognizes another member, what is shared in the community, how the boundary of the community is recognized, nor how many and how complete are the institutions of the community. In general, one can only assume from these studies that males with the same sexual orientation come together at some times and in some places, but the studies do not even indicate how frequent this is, nor what activities are engaged in (besides the study of "cruising" in gay bars and gay baths).

Because of these short-comings in the earlier studies, this study will focus on the aspects of interaction that tie the members together to determine if the gay community in the moderate-sized Midwest City, without a shared territory (i.e., without a gay neighborhood), is nevertheless actually a community. The aspects of interaction to be focused on are the rates of interactional patterns in shared activities, the criteria of membership in the group, and shared cognitions about the world. But first, the general characteristics of Midwest City must be considered, as well as the methods of study that were used in Midwest City.

Footnotes to Chapter Two

1. Of course, there are many other studies of homosexuality which use other perspectives, such as the psychoanalytic, psychological, biological, historical, survey research, and so on. For example, one would classify John Money's work as biologistic psychological. For a good overview of the range of studies, see the annotated bibliography by Weinberg and Bell, 1972. These other approaches to the study of homosexuality are not relevant here because they only bear tangentially on community.
2. The reader is cautioned in these criticisms of Warren because she has studied a different segment of the gay community in a larger city: Perhaps when a person has made a long-term commitment to another person, owns a house in common, together shares a clique of friends in a round of home entertaining, then the "secret" of it being a homosexual relationship may become more valuable to the individual, and he would come to value his world of work, parents (if they are still alive for the middle-aged men), religion, etc. less in comparison. Nevertheless, her description does not hold true for the younger segment of the gay world in this smaller, more typically sized metropolitan area.
3. For an excellent description of appropriate philosophy, techniques, roles, and psychology of the gay male "into leather," written for the naive gay male, see Townsend (1972).
4. Becker correctly uses Hughes' distinction between master and auxiliary status traits when he writes: "Possession of one deviant trait may have a generalized symbolic value, so that people [not

the deviant!] assume that its bearer possesses other undesirable traits allegedly associated with it" (1963, p. 33; emphasis added). Becker says further: "The status of deviant (depending on the kind of deviance) is this kind of master status. One receives the status as a result of breaking a rule, and the identification proves to be more important than most others. One will be identified as a deviant first, before other identifications are made" (1963, p. 33; emphasis added). My criticism of Warren is that she says she follows Becker's master status concept, but throughout, she assumes that the gay person accepts that self-identity as more central than his other identities (even without any actual reactions by non-deviant others); obviously, the subjective comparison of the importance of different identities that a person has, is very different than the association of auxiliary status traits with a particular status. McIntosh (1968) asserts that the general public associates certain traits with the role of the male homosexual: Effeminacy, exclusively homosexual, and sexual in relations to all men. If gay males accept the view from the larger society that homosexuality is a master status, then it logically follows that they would also accept from the larger society these auxiliary traits. (They do not, but the point is that these are the kinds of traits that are supposed to be less central and associated with the central status and identity, according to Becker's and Hughes' writings.)

5. Many examples of this over-emphasis by other writers could be given. Perhaps one example from the writings of Gagnon and Simon will suffice: "Minimally, the gay community provides a source of social support, for it is one of the few places where the homosexual may

get positive validation of his own self-image" (1973, p. 151). When stated this way, a gay male has many "self-images" (as worker, voter, citizen, son, movie critic, etc.) and the gay community minimally only validates one facet of the self-image.

6. It is precisely because of the compartmentalization of urban life that becoming a member, or "coming out", will later be conceptualized in terms of a social career.

7. Likewise, the two male (pre-operation) transexuals who were in effect interviewed are excluded from consideration here because they defined themselves as heterosexual women in men's bodies, whose work as prostitutes serving males would be construed as homosexual only by an outsider's perspective, and because they apparently had virtually no contact with people who considered themselves gay. The interested reader may note that they thought gay males were intolerant of their desires for the sex change operation because the gays thought they were unwilling to "admit" that they were really engaging in homosexual acts. One of the two transexuals had never had sexual relations with a female, but the other had had sex with a female at the age of sixteen but "didn't like it." The only other transexual (post-operation), who was seen in the gay bar (pointed out by a mutual friend, a drag queen), was killed by her new husband during their honeymoon, so she could not be interviewed. It is quite problematic whether male transexuals are inside or outside the gay community; indeed, it is problematic just what groups give them emotional support before the operation, but as they are a rarity in this area in any case, they will be excluded from consideration here.

CHAPTER THREE: THE SETTING AND RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Introduction

This chapter will first give a brief description of the setting of the research, Midwest City. Thereafter, it will describe the techniques used to study the gay community in Midwest City and will follow with an attempt to estimate the numbers of gay males in the metropolitan area.

Midwest City

The tri-county Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA) of Midwest City is nearly surrounded by SMSAs in every direction. Within seventy miles lie five other SMSAs with central cities of 100,000 to 200,000 population. The ring of cities is dominated, at least economically, by a large metropolitan area of over two million, which lies eighty-five miles from Midwest City.

The total population of the Midwest City SMSA was 378,000 in the 1970 Census. While the central city held 132,000, an additional 131,000 of the population resided in places above 2,500 population. Hence, nearly 70 percent of the SMSA population was classified as urban by place of residence.

In 1970, the Midwest City SMSA had 149,000 employed workers. In terms of sources of income, 100,000 (67%) were private wage and salary workers, 40,000 (27%) worked in a large government complex, and 9,000 (6%) were self-employed. The area is heavily industrial, with 37,000 workers (25%) employed in manufacturing industries. Table 1 shows the occupational distribution of employed persons in the SMSA, and compares this with the national averages. The over-all distribution of occupations in Midwest City is very similar to the U.S. average; Midwest City

Table 1.--Percentage of Employed Persons by Occupation, Midwest City SMSA, 1970, and National Average, 1970 Census.

Occupations	Midwest City		U.S. Average
White-collar Workers	51.7%		48.3%
Professional, Technical & Kindred	17.5		14.2
Managers and Administrators	6.7		10.5
Sales Workers	7.4		6.2
Clerical Workers	20.1		17.4
Blue-collar Workers	32.8%		35.3%
Craftsmen and Foremen	12.8		12.9
Operatives	13.4	16.7	17.7
Transportation Equipment Operators	3.3		
Non-farm Workers	3.3		4.7
Service Workers	12.8	13.5	12.4
Private Household Workers	0.7		
Farmers and Farm Laborers	2.0		4.0
TOTAL	100.0%		100.0%
N	149,000		78,627,000

has a slightly higher proportion of white-collar workers and a slightly lower proportion of blue-collar workers and farm workers than the U.S. average. The per capita income of the Midwest City SMSA averaged $4,500 in 1970; this translates into about $11,000 per worker in 1970. The national per capita income in 1970 averaged $3,911, so the Midwest City SMSA had a significantly higher average income than the rest of the nation. By 1976, the per capita income of the Midwest City SMSA had risen to $6,400.

Of the 116,000 housing units in the SMSA, 72 percent were family

homes, while 13 percent were apartments, and the remainder were mobile homes and all other types of housing units. Seventy-one percent of the housing in the tri-county region was owner-occupied in 1970. By contrast, 57 percent of housing in all of the SMSAs in the U.S. in 1970 were owner-occupied. The average number of persons per household in the Midwest City SMSA was 3.10 (this compares with 3.14 for the national average).

Of males aged fourteen years and older, 64 percent were married or widowed in Midwest City SMSA in 1970. Although the gay male community is not restricted to single and divorced males, nevertheless it is of interest that the total SMSA contains 48,000 single and divorced males of fourteen and more years of age. This is 13 percent of the total population in the SMSA.

The median age of the population in the SMSA of Midwest City in 1970 was 23.6 years of age. This is significantly younger than the national average of 28.0 years (U.S. Census, 1970). Of those 25 and more years of age, the median school years completed by those residing in the SMSA was 12.4 years; 63 percent had completed high school or more, while 15 percent had completed four years of college or more. Of the total population in the SMSA, 140,000 were currently enrolled in school (at all levels) in 1970.

Of the 378,000 population in the Midwest City SMSA, about 9,000 (2%) were foreign-born, 15,000 (4%) were Black, and 8,000 (2%) were persons of Spanish language. These three groups are underrepresented in comparison to the national average (for example, 4.7% of the national population was foreign-born in 1970, and Blacks comprised 11.1% of the U.S. population). Most of the Blacks and Spanish language persons reside in

distinct neighborhoods in the central city. The remainder of the population is in a diversity of ethnic groups, no one of which is visibly dominant in the city. However, Midwest City has Italian, Greek, German, Chinese, and Mexican restaurants, and there are other ethnic service outlets (e.g., ethnic food outlets).

Geographically, Midwest City has large factories located on the west and north sides of the city, the government offices are primarily in the downtown area, apartment buildings are found in the downtown and on the east side, while the wealthier suburbs are on the eastern and southern outskirts of the city. Expressways link the central city across farmland with the neighboring SMSAs and the large metropolis.

Although many SMSAs of the size of Midwest City may be economically dominated by one industry or one major corporation which serves as the primary source of employment, Midwest City and its surrounding territory is unusual by having three different major sources of employment: Industry, government and education. This means, for example, that a strike in one area of employment is not terribly disruptive of the economy of the area, unlike cities with one large employer. In this regard, Midwest City is perhaps not typical of its size. In other respects, it appears to be typical, for example in occupational distribution and average number of persons per household.

Techniques

The main method used in this study is participant observation. It is supplemented by interviews (some tape recorded or written during the time, and some covertly written afterwards, being disguised within conversations), by recordings of the interaction networks (using table diagrams and matrices to show which persons were involved in what

activities on given observed dates), and by a testing instrument. The instrument is the semantic differential to get at the cognitive mappings of the social world.

Fieldwork

In December, 1971, I learned that the network of friends who had regularly been eating supper in the College Center cafeteria were gay. (It was not then known that the building has a wide reputation among students on campus as being a homosexual meeting place.) From 1971 until August, 1976, I ate supper in the cafeteria daily during the week and would study in the College Center Lounge or Grill until closing time. This became my habitual hangout on weekends also. This was done to make my own usual daily round of activities place me in locations known to be frequented by gay males.

From September, 1972 until April 1976, a two-bedroom apartment was shared with a succession of four gay male roommates. This was done as a deliberate research strategy as it allowed meeting gay friends of the roommate and also increased my legitimacy in the several networks (e.g., "Oh, he's Bob's roommate.").

I usually tried not to reveal that I am "straight" until I was fairly good friends with a gay male. In itself, this was not difficult to do: On being introduced to a stranger, one usually does not directly announce one's sexual orientation anyway, but I went further than this and often implied that I was gay. For example, if the topic of the conversation in the group was a gay one, to which the person new to me responded, then I deliberately tried to imply that I was also gay, for example, by talking about the last time I was in the gay bar, or mentioning my gay roommate.

During those years of most intensive participation (1972-1976), that is, during the time with a gay roommate (who knew that I defined myself as 'straight'), I was for many other gays, in effect, "passing" as gay. In other words, I tried alternatively to define myself to close friends as straight, and to pass among acquaintances as gay. Several friends, at different times, expressed great tolerance of my self-definition in front of those acquaintances. A few friends expressed the idea that I would eventually "come out," and define myself as gay. For example, one evening I sat in the Lounge with Joe, Tom, Karl, and a young adult male I didn't know. Joe said: "Oh, I saw a guy in a bar in [the large metropolis] that looks just like you. But he had his hair cut fairly short and had his beard trimmed. He looked real good. (RCO starts laughing at the implicit teasing of RCO's appearance.) Rich, you're going to come out one of these days. (To the others:) Didn't you know he is straight?" (No answer from the others.) RCO (laughing): "Maybe so." Joe: "Yeah, you'll come out. It might take twenty years but it will happen. I believe it." RCO (laughing loudly now): "Does it show? How can you tell? What did I do to give myself away?" (Notes recorded March 20, 1974). Another good friend became fond of saying: "If you walk like a duck, and talk like a duck, and are seen with ducks, then you must be a duck." These examples illustrate that there was no role available to play, comparable to Humphrey's "watch queen" or Carol Warren's and Anne Bolin's "fag hag," other than to pass as gay. Although as indicated above, some of "passing as" or "being" gay rely on verbal statements, other subtleties are beyong verbal description, as they are body motion "cues," such as a slightly different motion with the arm and elbow.

This passing as gay while revealing my straight orientation to more intimate friends and roommates occasionally led to awkward moments. For example, at dinner with several gay males one evening, I became bored with the conversation and began to watch a waitress. Jef noticed the direction of my repeated glances and said, "Richard, you're not going straight on us, are you?" Someone else at the table said, "He is straight" and they laughed, as both Jef and I sat feeling uncomfortable at the knowledge, which had not been revealed to him during the six months that we had eaten dinner together in the group.

On another evening over dinner, I sat with my roommate (Bruce) and another gay male, each of whom recounted their coming out experiences. Thereafter, Ken turned to me and asked: "When did you come out?" I sat dumbfounded for a moment, and then replied: "I'm not out yet." Ken (incredulous tone): "You mean you're straight?" RCO: "Yeah." Ken: "Oh, wow! That just blows my mind!" RCO: "Well, I told you I'm trying to do my dissertation on gays, didn't I?" Ken: "Yeah, but you've just been sitting there day after day taking it all in. What do you really think of gays?" RCO: "Oh, that's hard to answer." Bruce: "Well, you know some straights are okay." Ken: "Yeah, I guess so, but I usually don't like them." (Recorded August 22, 1974).

These awkward moments of revelation of my self-definition were rare. Because I tried not to mention, for example, difficulties with a girlfriend and other bits of information that would emphasize my "straightness," many who knew, seemed to forget that I was not gay. Hence, on several occasions, I was privy to statements such as, "There are no straights that I like" and "I wonder why straights decide to get married." It was difficult to keep track of just who I had told that I was straight,

and of course, I could never be certain who had been told by others and who did not know my sexual orientation. Ultimately, it did not seem to matter.

Because I have been aged twenty-nine to thirty-four during the participant observation, I fit into the cliques of gay males as a somewhat older male student. My age was an advantage because the preferred sexual partner is usually in late adolescence (about eighteen to twenty). This means that I tended not to be viewed as an interesting sexual object for those who did not know my sexual orientation. This made me more comfortable in the groups, of course, but also meant I rarely had to be concerned with the ramifications of declining a sexual proposal on my participation. It also meant that I tended not to be viewed as a serious sexual competitor (again, only for those who did not know my sexual orientation).

The friendships formed in the College Center building were the basis of other kinds of participation in the gay networks. I sometimes went to the gay bar, sometimes to "straight" bars, and sometimes to other activities, such as movies and restaurants. For several years, nearly all of my own entertainment in public places was done in the company of gay males.

My activities in the networks of gay males were not limited to dinner and entertainment. The initial gay male roommate and the three subsequent ones were found within the networks of gay friends in the College Center. Also, at one point, I bought a car from a gay friend, and later was offered another car for sale. One Thanksgiving vacation, I helped a gay male drive his car to Connecticut and back. At one point, I borrowed a total of about forty dollars from nearly a dozen gay friends,

and at other times loaned money. My participation was intensive and multifaceted, extending over a long period of time.

Throughout the participation with gay males, I have been limited to a certain segment of the gay community, primarily college-aged and slightly older gay males -- that is, the age range of late adolescence and early adulthood (twenty's). But, with the exception of a few older gay males who ate regularly in the cafeteria, and a few who frequent the bars regularly and know many college-aged males, the networks of friends simply did not connect with the networks of gay males who are: 1) in their thirty's and beyond, and also 2) in stable gay male couples. Also, the networks of young adult gay males did not connect with lesbians. The few lesbians that have been interviewed in order to contrast with the gay males were met quite fortuitously and completely independent of the gay male friends. Perhaps primarily because of the age-range of the segment of the community studied, very little of the participant observation included entertainment in private homes and apartments, such as dance parties and cocktail parties.[1]

The participation in the networks of young adult gay males had a quality of emotional gregariousness to it. Individuals were generally very friendly and open to new friendships. Early in the research, I reciprocated this friendliness and was glad to be treated as a friend by so many males. After some time, it began to dawn on me that I was spending a considerable amount of time in the College Center and at the bar simply saying "hello" to dozens of males. By the Summer of 1975, this open friendliness became oppressive, as I continued to meet more and more gay males. For long periods during the Summer and Autumn, 1975, I began to withdraw from "the field" because of a feeling of

desperation for friendship that I began to detect. As I came to think of it as a "desperation for affiliation," I recognized that it was also a sexual feeling, much like Rechy's (1963) "sexhunger." By then I knew over a hundred gay males, at least enough to say "hello" to them, and yet, I got caught up in the desire to know even more people, as if there were not enough friends to satisfy a longing. Part of this desperation is due to the males being unattached and searching for sexual partners; that is, "cruising" and saying "hello" to friends are connected.

Besides the above form of participation, a half dozen meetings of the Gay Liberation Movement (GLM) were attended, as were two of their dances, and during the few months of its operation in 1972, I went to the gay community center (a rented house) frequently.

Based on data from participation in the networks, a network analysis has been made showing the extent of time and involvement of individuals in certain activities shared with other gay males. The most extensive and systematic set of data on this is the recordings made of which gay males ate dinner with others in the College Center cafeteria from January 1974 to August 1976. This data is based on three hundred eleven observation days of a total of one hundred fifty-six people who were seen to eat at several tables in the cafeteria. People were included in the recordings if they were lesbians or gay males or were seen to eat at the tables with gay males in the cafeteria. (The cafeteria can seat two hundred diners simultaneously, so most diners were not gay.) During the period of observation, thirty-two people (including RCO) were observed to eat in the cafeteria seven or more times. Of these, twenty-nine were gay or bisexual males (two explicitly presented their identities as bisexual to the groups) and two were straight females. Hence,

one hundred twenty-five other people were observed to eat with the regulars, but less than seven times during the three-year period. Of these one hundred twenty-five people, fifty were males known to be gay (i.e., known by their conversation or from statements by the regulars), eleven were females known to be gay or bisexual, eleven were males known to be straight, and seven were females known to be straight. There were thirty-seven males who were seen to eat with gay males at least once but their sexual orientation was not ascertained, and seven females were also observed whose sexual orientation is unknown. One married couple was friends with a gay male and were seen to eat with him on two occasions. Hence, of the total of one hundred fifty-six people, one hundred twenty-nine were males while twenty-seven were females, which shows that the groups were predominantly male, both among the regulars and the less frequent participants. There were ninety people known to be gay, while twenty-two (including RCO) were known to be straight.

Table 2 shows the mean numbers of people observed per day for three month intervals over the period of observation. The observations were limited to weekday evenings; the cafeteria is open only at noon on Sundays during the weekends, but gay males did not regularly attend the Sunday dinners. Likewise, although the cafeteria also served luncheon during the week, they were not regularly attended by gay males. The average numbers of participants in table 2 include myself, not only because I necessarily had to be present to make the observations, but also because my regular presence became increasingly important in maintaining the groups as the numbers of gay males in the cafeteria declined during the later period of observation. By the time I left the city towards the end of the Summer of 1976, the cafeteria was no longer being

Table 2.--Mean Numbers of People Per Day Eating in the College Center Cafeteria Who Defined Themselves as Gay or Ate With Gay Males

Time Interval	Mean Number of People Per Day	Number of Observed Days
Jan. 24, 1974 - Mar. 31, 1974	5.1	8
Apr. 1, 1974 - June 30, 1974	8.1	27
July 1, 1974 - Sep. 30, 1974	5.8	24
Oct. 1, 1974 - Dec. 31, 1974	5.9	23
Jan. 1, 1975 - Mar. 31, 1975	4.8	31
Apr. 1, 1975 - June 31, 1975	5.9	28
July 1, 1975 - Sep. 30, 1975	4.5	21
Oct. 1, 1975 - Dec. 31, 1975	3.9	31
Jan. 1, 1976 - Mar. 31, 1976	5.3	54
Apr. 1, 1976 - June 30, 1976	4.5	37
July 1, 1976 - Aug. 20, 1976	3.1	27
	Range: 3.1 to 8.1	Total: 311

used as a regular meeting place by gay males. It is now no longer used regularly as a gay place by gay males. It is not clear why the groups disintegrated during the Summer of 1976.

On the other hand, the cafeteria served as a gay meeting place and the groups existed before the period of recorded observations. I had been sitting with the groups regularly for two years before beginning the systematic recordings, but the groups' existence predated my joining them. The numbers of gay males using the cafeteria when I began the participant observation were roughly similar to the numbers of participants in the early period of the recordings, that is, early 1974 in table 2.

The network data from the College Center cafeteria will be considered further in chapter 5 along with the sociable, non-sexual activities in the College Center. Certain points should be clear from the description presented which will be important for the later analysis and discussion. There were large numbers of gay males interacting with each other in the cafeteria. However, only about thirty formed a core of regular participants in the cafeteria setting. Further, the networks were open; new and occasional participants, sometimes acquainted with only one regular member, were welcome to join the groups. In their openness, the networks of gay males allowed entrance by male and female heterosexuals to the groups; this means that they were not really "secretive" gay groups, even though the presence of a heterosexual at a table sometimes affected the content of conversations. Rather, the gay participants interacted in view of heterosexuals, both those sitting elsewhere in the cafeteria and sometimes also those sitting among the groups as occasional participants. The functions of the dinner groups will be considered in chapter 5. Also later, a network analysis of the data will be made; this will include considering the total frequency of appearance of each of the regular participants, and the clustering of paired appearances of regular participants who represent for others (the low attenders) the core group within the College Center.

In addition to the recordings of the cafeteria seating patterns, some less systematic recordings of interaction patterns have been made in other areas of the College Center and at the gay bar. Together with the cafeteria observations, these data yield networks of individuals involved in these activities. These data are augmented by short interviews to determine the extensiveness (as, the amount of time per week)

of other non-observed but shared activities in the networks, so as to suggest the degree to which the subjects' lives are shared with others who are gay. This data will be considered further in chapter 5.

Interviews

Interviews were always arranged with people with whom I was already somewhat acquainted, not strangers. Sixteen formal interviews have been conducted; fourteen of these were in depth (over an hour in length) and eight of these were tape recorded. Of these sixteen interviews, three were with women (two lesbians and one bisexual woman) for purposes of contrast. Of the thirteen male interviewees, one was primarily into the "leather" scene, one into "drag," and one was an elderly "chicken-hawk."

The interviews, in retrospect, were apparently seen as part of the acquaintance process by the interviewees, so that after the interviews, the people interviewed were more friendly. This had a non-sexual quality to it. This greater friendliness after the interviews is because some of the topics covered in the interviews (such as one's "coming out" experience) would often be part of the acquaintance process between gay males becoming friends. Hence, the interviews usually promoted quite close friendships. Also, sometimes the person interviewed told others in the clique that I had interviewed him, as if I had "honored" him especially by listening to his life-story.

The thirteen male interviewees can be viewed as key informants because most of them were interviewed more than once. Besides the interviews, conversations with and among them were also recorded after the fact (that is, covertly). This was also done with about fifteen other male participants over a series of different conversations. Sometimes

these covert recordings were made of typical cafeteria conversations, others dealt with problems and solutions in gay life, and still others dealt with some of the topics of the interviews, such as "coming out" and the person's career into homosexuality.

The Instrument

The semantic differential was used to make a cognitive mapping of the "social world" so as to indicate the degree of shared cognitive orientations. The nine scales of the semantic differential (as initially employed by Bryan, 1966) were used to give a cognitive mapping of the categories of the social world, including the objects: Gay males, lesbians, men in general, women in general, and the self. The responses of a sample of fifty gay males to this paper-and-pencil test will be compared to the responses of fifty "straight" males on the three dimensions of the semantic differential (evaluation, activity, and potency) in chapter 4. A significant difference between the two samples would lend support to the idea that there is a gay subculture with a distinctive view of its social world. If, however, gays on the average do not answer differently than straight males, then one would conclude that, at least on this measure, gay males do not view the social world any differently than conventional males, and one would infer that there is little content to a gay "subculture" in a moderate-sized metropolitan area.

Estimates of the Gay Male Population in Midwest City

In chapter 1 the concept of "institutional completeness" (Breton, 1964) was briefly mentioned and will be elaborated in the next chapter. The degree of institutional completeness of a community tends to vary by the numbers of members in the community. The demography of a city

can be important to the degree of institutional completeness of a community within the city because a larger city is likely to attract and contain more members of the community. This would more often be true of a community based on stigmatized behavior than an ethnic community. A "critical mass" of members (Fischer, 1975) concentrated in a recognized territory are part of the necessary criteria for a "gay ghetto" (Levine, 1977). This raises the importance of the question of the numbers of gay males in Midwest City.

Any estimate of the number of gay males in an area (or contained within a larger population, as a city) is highly sensitive to the definition of gay male that is used. For example, Kinsey used a measure which takes into account the variation in an individual's sexual outlets during the person's lifetime. He estimated that four percent of males are exclusively homosexual throughout their lives, while eight percent (twice as many) are exclusively homosexual for at least three years of their lives after the age of sixteen (1948, p. 651). This is an estimate based on sexual behavior, and not on the person's sexual orientation identity. As Humphreys showed (1970), some males define themselves as heterosexual, even though they engage in homosexual acts in tearooms (i.e., those he calls "trade"). An estimate that relies on a definition of homosexuality based on self-identity would be expected to vary considerably from Kinsey's figures.

Some (such as Delph, 1978; cf. Omark, 1979) have emphasized the importance of sexual fantasy to sexual orientation identity. Apparently, it is possible for some heterosexually married males to maintain a homosexual identity even though their predominant sexual outlet is with their wives. It is maintained by their homosexual fantasies during

heterosexual intercourse (Miller, p. 243 in Levine, 1979).

Three different estimates will be presented of the numbers of gay males in Midwest City. The first is the estimate made by several of the gay male respondents in the area; this approach avoids the whole issue of a rigorous definition of the commonality of the people included in the estimate because the estimate has self-defined face validity. A second estimate can be made on the basis of Kinsey's percentages (1948). A third estimate is based on a social organizational definition of male homosexuality: How many males were observed in the several explicitly gay settings in the metropolitan area? The third approach has the same problem considered with the data on participation in the College Center Cafeteria: Some are regular and frequent participants in the setting, while others are infrequent and marginal to the groups.

Five sexually active gay males were asked the question: What is your estimate of the number of gay males who are sexually active in this area? Among them, the minimum estimate was one thousand and the maximum mentioned was ten thousand. David, who is active in the tearooms, estimated that there are two to five thousand, while Bob B., who claims to have had over a thousand different male sexual partners (primarily but not exclusively found in Midwest City in the eight years that he has been "out") most of whom were met in the gay bar, estimated that there were a minimum of four thousand and a maximum of eight thousand "who are active and out." Brad estimated a minimum of one thousand and a maximum of five thousand. A bisexual male, Leo, first said that he had personally met more than three hundred, so he placed his first estimate at a minimum of six hundred; of these, he estimated that eighty are "steady bar goers" and twenty are recognized by him in the College Center;

however, thereafter, he raised his estimate, saying that there must be ten thousand gay males, of which one thousand are active sexually. Finally, Jef, a "leatherman" who participates on weekends in the leather bars in the large metropolitan area eighty miles away, said, "Kinsey said one in seven males are gay, but that is high because Midwest City is not a major metropolitan area. So, perhaps one in ten males are gay. The 'sexually active' are aged fourteen and above and less than eighty-two years old." RCO said: "In the 1970 Census, there were forty thousand unattached males aged fourteen and above." Jef: "That is the prime population but not all would be gay. Also, some may be married but also gay. Ten thousand is probably too high. But there must be more then one thousand at the bars, and so on."

Kinsey's study (1948) can also be used to estimate the numbers of homosexuals in Midwest City. At all ages past adolescence, single males have a higher incidence of homosexual experience (including those with a sexual history of only one homosexual experience to orgasm) than married males. Kinsey reports that fifty percent of single males have had at least one such homosexual experience by the age of thirty-five (p. 625), and from age twenty up to thirty-five, the percent rises from about forty percent up to fifty percent of the single males (Figure 156, page 625). Using the Census figure for the Midwest City SMSA in 1970 of forty-five thousand single males and three thousand divorced males aged fourteen and older, these figures mean that between nineteen thousand and twenty-four thousand single males in the SMSA have had at least one homosexual experience. However, Kinsey notes that those rated as five or six, with more or less exclusively homosexual experience throughout their lives average less than twenty percent of all single males for all age groups after the onset of adolescence (Figure 166, page 645).

Kinsey estimates that about ten percent of all males are more or less exclusively homosexual in their reactions and experience (i.e., rated five or six) for at least three years between the ages of sixteen and fifty-five (page 651). Because the total number of males aged fourteen and older in the 1970 Census for the SMSA was one hundred thirty-four thousand, this means that about thirteen thousand males would be expected to have more or less exclusively homosexual experiences for three years of their lives. Of these, Kinsey estimates that four percent have exclusively homosexual experiences throughout their lives (page 651), which translates into about five thousand males in the metropolitan area. Based on the Kinsey figures, the latter figure can be taken as the very minimum number of exclusively homosexual males in the metropolitan area. It should be revised upward to include those who are predominantly but not exclusively homosexual for some period of their lives. Hence, at any one time, an estimate based on Kinsey would perhaps roughly be ten or fifteen thousand males in the SMSA.

This minimal figure closely approaches the maximum estimate given by the respondents, which indicates that the respondents' figures are by no means exaggeration. On the contrary, the respondents' estimates appear to be based on the numbers of males that are regularly seen in the gay settings of the metropolitan area. One would not expect all gay males, even those who have exclusively homosexual experiences, to appear regularly in the gay settings in the area. Bell and Weinberg, for example, report that only two-thirds of the white homosexual males in their sample of gays in San Francisco had sought partners in bars or nightclubs at least once during the past year (1978, p. 75). Of the homosexual males who did cruise in any setting in the last year,

one-fourth did so on the average of once a month or less, and only about two-fifths had cruised at least once or twice a week over the year (1978, page 75). One may suspect that gay males cruise more often in a large city like San Francisco, which has more opportunities, than in Midwest City.

The third way of estimating the numbers of gay males in the metropolitan area is based on the numbers of participants in the gay settings in the area (Becker, 1970, pp. 35-37 in Habenstein). (These settings are described in the next chapter and only the estimates of the numbers of participants in them will be considered here.) As indicated previously in this chapter, twenty-nine regular participants in the College Center cafeteria were self-defined gay (or bisexual) males; in addition, fifty infrequent participants were self-defined gay males, while thirty-seven other males were seen in the gay groups in the cafeteria but whose sexual orientation is not known. There were about fifty other gay males who came to the College Center during the three years of observations but were not seen in the cafeteria. As will be described, the bar system expanded in 1976 from one gay and one mixed bar to two gay and one mixed bars. The first gay bar has a legal capacity of one hundred seventy-five but usually had at least twenty-five women (mostly lesbians) in it. The mixed bar is small, and never had more than fifty gay males in it at one time. The new gay bar has a legal capacity of two hundred and when filled, would have perhaps fifteen women in it. The Adult Movie Theater and Adult Bookstore in the vicinity of the gay bars are frequented on weekends mostly by gay males who also attend the gay bars, but might attract fifty gay males who do not attend the bars. Likewise, most gay males who enter the College Center also

frequent the gay bars; perhaps fifty do not attend them. Also, perhaps fifty self-defined gay males cruise in the tearooms in the area without also frequenting the gay bars. These numbers yield an estimate of about five hundred thirty-five different participants during any one week. (This estimate contrasts sharply with the assertion by Bob B. that "The bars on a good Saturday night have a thousand gay males in them." This estimate is much too high because the bars are active for only about three hours on a Saturday night and this short time span allows very little replacement of participants.) Using Bell and Weinberg's estimate that two-fifths of gay males cruise an average of once or twice a week yields a total of 1,337 gay males, including both those who cruise and do not cruise regularly.

This estimate (1,337 gay males) is considerably lower than the other two estimates, and there is some evidence that it is too low. For example, Bob B.'s assertion (based on personal records) that he found over a thousand different male sexual partners, primarily from the bars in the area over the eight years that he has been "out," indicates that there must have been considerably more than that many gay males to appear in the gay bars at least once during the eight years. At the same time, Jef's statement that the Kinsey percentages are too high because Midwest City is not a major metropolitan area is valid to the extent that some gay males are attracted to the institutionally more complete gay communities in the largest metropolitan areas, and so, some gay males leave Midwest City for the larger cities. (For example, four of the twenty-nine regular cafeteria diners permanently moved to large cities during the three years of observation.) Hence, the estimate based on participants in gay settings is too low, while the estimate

based on the Kinsey percentages is probably somewhat high. The conclusion seems warranted that Midwest City has about five to ten thousand gay males sharing predominantly homosexual experiences.

The problem of interest is not really in estimating the actual numbers of gay males in the area, but rather with estimating the potential numbers. The latter is important to the generality of the findings in the dissertation. Because of the numbers of self-defined gay males in the different gay settings in the area, a minimum estimate of self-defined gay males is at least one thousand. Great confidence can be placed in the reliability and validity of this and the other findings of the dissertation for this community, but this does not allow one to generalize to other, especially larger cities. Of course, it is presently virtually impossible to estimate the numbers of people in a population with a potential or propensity to engage in homosexual acts. One could consider a "true homosexual" or a person who has fully "come out" as having: 1) A propensity to engage in homosexual acts, 2) actual engagement in homosexual acts by the person, and 3) self-identification as gay or a homosexual. However, this convergence of the three elements to define one as a homosexual is not sufficient, as one may have a self-identity as gay without yet having any interpersonal sexual experiences. Also, some people who both practice gay sex and call themselves gay never felt that they had a "propensity" because they felt that they were gay from birth. Convergence of the three elements, however, is an analytic distinction that still includes bisexuals, who also identify as heterosexual and act with the opposite sex as well. This issue will be examined again in the next chapter along with the process of "coming out" as a stage in the career of becoming a member of the gay community.

Footnote to Chapter Three

1. As Carol Warren says, "Younger gay people [males] do a lot of their socializing in gay bars; when they get older they entertain more in their own homes" (1974, p. 29). Although a "trick" or "one-night stand" may easily be brought home, the home is rarely used to entertain a group of gay friends, and hardly ever as the setting for a planned event (this does not apply to younger lesbians, but only younger gay males). The home may be used to play a record or watch television with one or two gay friends, but such events would be impromptu and not organized in advance. This in itself sharply distinguishes the present study from Carol Warren's ethnography, with its emphasis on home entertainment by middle-aged gay males.

CHAPTER FOUR. THE CONCEPT OF THE GAY COMMUNITY

Introduction

This chapter will be concerned first with the criteria that members use to determine membership in the community. Related to this is a concern with entrance into the community and the stages connected with a "social career" in the community. This set of concerns is interrelated; the criteria used to determine the membership of others in the gay community are the same as the criteria necessary for one to become a member. Because the meaning of the term, "the gay community" as it applies in Midwest City, has not yet been delimited, a phrase such as "becoming a member of the gay community" should, for the time being, be understood to mean: Becoming recognized as appropriately present in a gay context (as, at a gay bar) by others present in the setting.

The chapter will later consider the institutions, the major segments of the community based on sex (being male or female) and age, and the ecological settings ("gay places") of importance. The ethnographic description of the gay community in Midwest City will be concerned with its institutions, segments, and the ecological settings of importance because the community is neither a clear, territorially demarcated unit (such as the "city limits"), nor does it have an administrative central authority (such as a mayor) which would set and maintain the territorial limits of the community and define membership within it. Rather than explicitly defined geographical boundaries and centralized authority, the behavior of individuals, acting in concert and repeating their actions in a patterned way, is what gives substance to the gay community. It is behavior that determines the boundaries of the

community, and behavior that leads one to see institutions; the amounts of interaction give substance to the segments observed in the community. Behavior unique to the community takes place in only certain ecological settings which are dispersed and not geographically centralized in one particular district or neighborhood. As will be explained later in the chapter, the institutions of the gay community in this moderate-sized city are only "quasi-institutions," which cannot completely encapsulate the members within them; these quasi-institutions are dependent on the larger city for their continuation.

"Coming Out" and Membership in the Community

Several authors have been concerned with the process of "coming out" as the initial stage in becoming a member of the community. These studies will be considered shortly. However, a problem that has to be addressed first is the problem of "reification" of the identity based on sexual orientation (that is, reification of the identity of homosexual or heterosexual), As Erich Goode writes (1973),

> "Reification means, quite simply, an inappropriate concreteness. It is thinking of something which is actually a concept as if it were a hard, definite, concrete object. Reification is a basic fallacy. It occurs by taking something with which one is familiar, giving it a general name, and assuming that everything called by that name shares the same basic characteristics.... Reification is the imposition of an artificial inevitability and inexorability upon a reality which is, in fact, far more variable and kaleidoscopic" (pp. 36-7, emphasis in the original).

Common speech patterns in our society reify the identity associated with sexual orientation. That is, even though many recognize the range and mixture of sexual behavior between the extremes from completely heterosexual to completely homosexual behavior (first pointed out by Kinsey, 1948), people still commonly assume that a person has a sexual identity

of heterosexual or homosexual. Some evidence for this will be presented in the next chapter when the problematic nature of the presentation of a bisexual identity is examined.

It is clearly separate issues to ask if the history of one's sexual behavior has been predominantly heterosexual (or homosexual or bisexual), or if one's identity is heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual. It is the self-definition of sexual orientation identity that tends to be reified in our society. People appear to assume that self-defined identity is fixed for life, inevitable, and shared with others with the same self-defined identity. It is not. Reification has been neglected by most writers on homosexuality, with the exception of Sagarin (1976), who addressed the issue in somewhat different terms. For example, Sagarin wrote "we speak of people being certain things when all we know is that they do certain things. The result is an imputed identity, or rather a special kind of mistaken identity" (1976, p. 25). And further,

> "The 'inherited-abnormality' idea has been long abandoned but in its place there has appeared something equally resistant to change -- the idea of identity. The idea presumes that one realizes what one is, that one discovers an identity rather than becoming it through behavior" (1976, p. 26).

One should continue to recognize the reification of the identity in considering "accounts" (in the sense defined by Lyman and Scott, 1970) of taking on the identity of homosexual. One would not expect a person who holds the identity of homosexual to be able to "explain" or account for the process of taking on the identity any differently than explanations commonly held in the larger society. Indeed, the question, "Why are you a homosexual?" is as baffling as the question, "Why are you a heterosexual?" It is not a question often asked. Respondents tend to

be confused and bewildered because the identity connected with sexual orientation has been reified, and thereby, "mystified" (Goode, p. 37). There is no ultimate explanation that can be given other than those commonly held and having a currency in our society.

Of course, an individual may give an "account" which answers how he arrived at his current self-definition (rather than why), and this chapter will shortly be concerned with just such accounts by respondents. An account answering how the person "discovered" his identity as a homosexual is one way of failing to recognize the indeterminancy of the identity. The respondent typically tells his "story" - "this happened, and then that happened, and so now I am a homosexual." Gay males (as well as lesbians) have a variety of such stories which are all tales describing events leading the person to "come out" (gay argot for taking on a gay, that is, a homosexual identity at certain times and places).

One can consider such accounts within the framework of a "social career," in that such accounts clearly present a series of stages and contingencies leading up to and including the event designated by the term "coming out." The key event in coming out is sometimes taken to be the first homosexual act, but this is not invariably so. Some respondents report several (and sometimes even many) sexual acts with partners of the same sex (i.e., homosexual acts) before they "came out." The latter respondents usually refer to their past, before coming out, as a "closeted" or "closet queen" past, and view their coming out in social terms, such as first entering a gay bar and making friendships with self-defined homosexuals for the first time. Hence, as will be seen, the accounts of events and of stages connected with the result of coming out are by no means uniform.

This lack of uniformity to the accounts is as one would expect with the reification of the identity connected with sexual orientation. The variations in accounts of stages toward the "discovery" of the identity of homosexual, as well as the variations in the meanings assigned to "being" a homosexual are all glossed over, so as to affirm the unitary nature of the reification. In this sense, one sees a cultural myth shared not only among homosexuals, but among heterosexuals as well. This myth serves several functions, perhaps the most important of which is to promote and make more rigid the dichotomy between homosexual and heterosexual (or, in gay argot, between "gay" and "straight").

Few respondents in the gay community question their sexual orientation identity. Of course, continued participation in homosexual acts in gay places, as well as friendships with other homosexuals promote this stability of identity. The myth of the reified dichotomy between homosexual and heterosexual itself, however, is an important source of stability of the identity of homosexual.

Because the larger society stigmatizes the self-identity of homosexual, rather than that of heterosexual, the fear in the larger society is of homosexuality.[1] The stigma attached to the self-identity of homosexual if revealed to heterosexuals (that is, as a discreditable identity) promotes gay friendships, homosexual acts in gay places, and the gay community itself. Hence, the reified dichotomy of identity categories of homosexual and heterosexual are not equal in their consequences. Yet, the functions served by the myth of the reified dichotomy operate equally for both homosexuals and heterosexuals; both homosexuals and heterosexuals tend to view their self-identity of sexual orientation as stable and not likely to change.

Berger and Luckman (1966) considered the transformation of subjective reality, whereby the individual "switches worlds" (p. 157). They note that the most important social condition is the availability of an "effective plausibility structure" (p. 157), which can be mediated to the individual by means of significant others. They say,

> "The most important conceptual requirement for alternation is the availability of a legitimating apparatus for the whole sequence of transformation. What must be legitimated is not only the new reality, but the stages by which it is appropriated and maintained, and the abandonment or repudiation of all alternative realities.... The old reality, as well as the collectivities and significant others that previously mediated it to the individual, must be reinterpreted within the legitimating apparatus of the new reality" (p. 159).

And finally, they say, "Prealternation biography is typically nihilated in toto by subsuming it under a negative category occupying a strategic position in the new legitimating apparatus..." (p. 160). One should note that the category of "closet queen" serves as the "negative category" in the legitimating set of ideas toward "coming out." The identity category of "closet queen," along with the several other identities in addition to that of "gay male" will be considered in greater detail in the next chapter.

The point to be stressed is that sets of ideas about the nature of the identity of sexual orientation (heterosexual or homosexual) have currency in our society, and these sets of ideas reify and make more rigid the identity connected with sexual orientation than one would otherwise expect it to be. For example, a person can take on and give up the identity of student in cycles: A person can be an undergraduate student, graduate and work several years, and later decide to enter a university again to study for a Master's degree. In such a case, the

person takes on, gives up, and again takes on the identity (and role) of student. Another example would be a heterosexual male who marries and has children, gets a divorce, re-marries and has children in the second marriage; both the identities of husband and father are taken on, given up, and taken on again. Because the identity categories of heterosexual and homosexual are a reified dichotomy, many people believe that alternation between the two categories of sexual orientation identity is not similarly possible. Furthermore, examples of those who, in fact, have alternated between the two categories during their lifetimes are not visible: A person who becomes gay for a time and later becomes straight, would tend to give up his gay acquaintances in the process of identity change so that the latter (the gay acquaintances) do not have the example of alternation available to them. Also, the person who alternated the identity from gay to straight would not likely reveal the past identity of gay to a heterosexual audience because of the stigma, and because he would fear that they would take the past identity of gay as still relevant. Hence, alternations back and forth between the two categories (heterosexual and homosexual) are not revealed to either a gay audience or a straight audience. This helps to perpetuate the myth connected with the reification of the identities of homosexual and heterosexual.

Gebhard (1966) appears to be the first to consider "career stages" in becoming a homosexual and becoming a member of the gay community. He notes that some "may sample community life and then drop out for various reasons" (p. 1029). He suggests that gay community members who reach middle-age may decrease and even completely stop their participation (p. 1030). Further, he notes that "community membership makes for

increasing homosexual commitment and almost precludes a change toward heterosexuality" (p. 1029).

Curiously, more recent authors who have concerned themselves with the process of "coming out" and taking on both a homosexual identity and membership in the gay community have ignored the opposite process of taking on a heterosexual identity after extended participation in the gay community with a gay identity (see, for examples, Dank, 1971, 1972, and 1974; Thomas Weinberg, 1976, 1978; Warren and Johnson, 1972; Farrell and Nelson, 1976; Monteflores and Schultz, 1978). These studies (especially Dank, 1971, 1972, and Weinberg, 1978) have taken samples of self-defined gay males and asked about their retrospective interpretations of the process of coming out. Dank (1971), for example, summarized data on coming out from a sample of 180 self-defined gay males and reported that the average when the questioning of a possible gay identity began was at age thirteen and the process of accepting a gay identity took six years, so that the average age for the sample when <u>they</u> <u>considered</u> that they came out was nineteen years old (p. 183).

The problem inherent in such studies as Dank's should by now be obvious; he selected a sample of people who had undergone the process of identity alternation and asked a series of questions which fit within the framework of the common conceptions of the reified identity. For example, to ask a self-defined gay male just when he began to think of himself as a homosexual is a question that fits within the framework of the reified process of "discovery" of the "true" self. To ask a self-defined gay male "when did you stop thinking of yourself as a heterosexual?" does not escape the same problem. A question such as "What would be the rewards and penalties for giving up a gay identity and

becoming straight?" is a question outside the framework of the conceptions about the reified identity; such a question tends to leave most interviewees momentarily speechless, followed almost immediately by the assertion that the question is hypothetical and implausible. It is implausible precisely because of the reified conceptions of the sexual orientation identity held in the larger society. For most gay males to consider "becoming straight" is usually framed as a question about "going back into the closet" (the negative category), which is not the equivalent of "becoming straight" at all.

The following definitions and accounts of "coming out" provide a sense of the range of experiences covered by the term as used by respondents in Midwest City. In contrast with such studies as Dank's (1971, 1972, and 1974) and Weinberg's (1976, 1978) which had large samples, the present study of coming out is limited to sixteen interviews and recordings of some conversations. The material is presented here only to illustrate the range of definitions and accounts that are used.

David gave a two-part definition of coming out: 1) Being

> "willing to talk to other gays in public, like when we talk in a large group in the College Center Lounge; also feeling free to look at people who you think are attractive and not care too much what others who see you look, think of your looking;"

and 2)

> "accepting yourself - getting rid of the fear of what you are" (Interview, June 7, 1973).

The latter element, self-acceptance of one's homosexual desires rarely forms the core of the definition of coming out. Self-acceptance by itself was given as the definition of coming out by only one respondent

(Tony, interview, July 8, 1978). In contrast, several respondents gave definitions and accounts of coming out that emphasized the social element of associating with other gays in a gay context.

Joe gave an account of his experience:

> "'I remember when I came out. I was twenty-one; I turned 21 on a Thursday and on Sunday night, I went to a gay bar.'
> RCO: 'Did you go by yourself?'
> Joe: 'Yes.'
> RCO: 'How did you know where it was?'
> Joe: 'Well, you know, friends would say things about certain bars as we drove by them before I turned 21.'
> RCO: 'Do you mean straight friends?'
> Joe: 'Yeah, they would make comments about the bars that were gay, and I noticed which ones they were, so I waited until I was 21 and then went in. I was real nervous the first time I went.... But I hardly talked to anybody the first six months that I went there - I mean I hardly picked up a trick - I had tricked a few times before I turned 21 by picking up people along [a main street] in [the large metropolitan area] where I cruised [with a car] - and hardly got to know anyone socially. But after about six months, I met a few people, who were friends - you know, they were real friendly and nice to me and would pay my way in and buy me drinks and all, so it didn't cost me anything, and they weren't after sex, but were genuinely friendly, and anyway, they started introducing me to their friends in the bar and it seemed like all of a sudden I got to know a lot of people, and they were all friendly to me, and it has been that way ever since'" (recorded conversation, January 7, 1974).

An important element in the above is the willingness to go to an explicitly gay setting and to make friends with gays in the setting, that is, "coming out" is a social act. A similar social element is seen in the following accounts. Bob B. had a number of homosexual experiences extending over years, but "coming out" for him was his first trip to the gay bar, with a friend who had recently revealed himself as gay to Bob.

Bob said, "That was when I came out; I started hanging around with other gays then" (conversation, December 8, 1973). Here one sees the implicit use of a completely social definition of coming out. The same is seen in an interview with a lesbian.

> RCO: "'What does it mean to say that you came out last week? I knew you last week. What happened last week?'
> Mary: 'Well, I decided that it was time, or I finally got it together enough, to be able to allow myself to come in contact, or <u>try</u> to come in contact with, hum, other gay women. Up to this point, I hadn't known any'" (taped interview, October 4, 1973).

For her, coming out meant going to her first meeting of an organization of self-defined lesbians. One sees the social element again, being willing to associate with other people who define themselves as gay, but of course, one reason for associating with others who are gay can be to find suitable sexual partners.

John's definition of coming out focused completely on the first homosexual act, without regard for sociability with other gays. John defined coming out as "the first gay sexual experience, and the decision to act on one's desires." In his own account, there was a "gradual acceptance of sexual desires as legitimate and worthy of gratification, plus the decision to act on them" (Interview, June 11, 1973). In the interview, John viewed homosexuality as an innate condition that one simply got used to and accepted in oneself, while coming out was the first homosexual act. After his first homosexual act at the age of 23, he found the mixed (gay and straight) bar by phoning the crisis intervention telephone service, and eventually got to know other gay males as friends, but in his view, this was <u>after</u> he had come out, and not an aspect of it.

Ken's definition of coming out combined both the sexual and social elements when he said:

> "'Two categories: Physically and socially. The physical is the first sexual experience with another guy; socially is getting into the active gay crowd, parties, and such.'
> RCO: 'How old were you when you came out?'
> Ken: 'Thirteen on the physical and 23 on the social, ten years in between.' (When 13, he had started having sex regularly with a neighborhood boy of the same age.)
> RCO: 'What happened when you were 23?'
> Ken: 'Well, usually you get to know somebody and he introduces you to others, but that didn't happen with me. I walked into a bar by myself and made my own introductions on my own.'
> RCO: 'How did you find out about the gay bar?'
> Ken: 'Straight friends called Wentworth, the old gay bar downtown, and Carl's bar, 'queer bars,' so that is how I found out about them, but I thought they were filled with dirty old men so I wasn't interested in going in. I finally went in, and Christ! half the [college] campus was there.'" (Interview recorded, August 10, 1973; Ken was aged 28 at the time of the interview).

The definition of what coming out means to a person tends to be directly related to the person's own experience in forming a social career in gay contexts. A person with extensive homosexual experiences before contact with a gay setting would tend to emphasize the social aspects of getting to know other gays. On the other hand, a person with a biography that did not include any (or only very few) homosexual experiences would tend to emphasize the importance of the sexual experience itself. The term "coming out" is used flexibly to relate to one's own experiences and sexual biography. In that sense, the term is a gloss for a range of behavior that does not have a great deal in common, except for beginning a career as a member of the gay community (that is, being recognized by others in gay settings).

The interviews quoted show one or more of three elements: Engaging

in sexual relations with others of the same sex, "self acceptance" of the gay identity, and associating sociably with others in gay settings (as, the gay bar). The above discussion has considered the progression in terms of a social career. However, the processual ordering of the elements used in the quoted definitions and accounts is not the most important, nor the most useful way of conceptualizing this material. Rather, as suggested in the last chapter, one can make the analytic distinction that a "true homosexual," as one who has fully come out, has a potential or propensity to engage in homosexual acts, has actually engaged in homosexual acts, and has a self-identification as gay. This analytic distinction, however, overemphasizes the centrality of the homosexual act. The social element of first entering a gay setting (as, a gay bar) and being willing to associate with gays in such a setting, which was emphasized by respondents in most of their definitions of coming out, is not directly nor necessarily causally connected with any homosexual act. The sociable element is, however, obviously important because one would tend to be more stable in an identity if one shared that identity with others in settings where the corresponding role is salient.

The flexible use of the term, coming out, to relate to one's own biography makes the study of coming out difficult. For example, Dank says "The term 'coming out' is frequently used by homosexuals to refer to the identity change to homosexual" (1971, p. 181). Presumably in Dank's view, the person coming out changes his identity <u>from</u> heterosexual. Dank elaborates,

> "The fact that an actor continues to have homosexual feelings and to engage in homosexual behavior does not mean that he views himself as

> being homosexual. In order for a person to view himself as a homosexual he must be placed in a new social context, in which knowledge of homosexuals and homosexuality can be found; in such a context he learns a new vocabulary of motives, a vocabulary that will allow him to identify himself as being a homosexual" (1971, pp. 182-3).

Evidence from interviews has been presented which shows that these statements apply to only some gays, and not to others. Some homosexuals do not use the term to refer to a change in identity (as, from heterosexual to homosexual) at all. For some gay males (as, John, quoted above), having a homosexual experience itself is sufficient for him to say that he has "come out," while for others, coming out means finding and becoming friends with other gays, especially in a gay context, as a gay bar or gay organization. It is not at all clear that a new vocabulary of motives is necessarily learned by befriending other homosexuals.

Tom Weinberg (1978) considered the relation between sexual behavior and taking on a homosexual identity. He found several patterns for males; the most common pattern was for the men in his study to first engage in homosexual relations, then begin to "suspect" that they were gay, and finally accept that they were gay. A second pattern which was common was for the men to suspect that they were gay, then engage in sexual relations with other men, followed by accepting the label of gay. He identified two other patterns (other combinations of suspicion, homosexual acts, and accepting the identity of gay) as well. This perhaps gets better at the complexity of the different sequences toward taking on the identity of gay, than Dank's study. Weinberg's study, like Dank's, however, fits within the reified conception of the homosexual identity - that is, that one "discovers" his sexual orientation identity, and this

is considered to be a one-way process of "discovery." One need not be concerned that the "discovery" is a false one, nor that the person can revert back or change to a successful heterosexual pattern, after coming out and accepting the self-identity of homosexual. The reified nature of beliefs about coming out and accepting the label of homosexual is crucial to membership in the gay community because the beliefs imply that the person who has come out will be stable in the identity and therefore, membership in the community is believed to be continuous from that point of "discovery" onward for the individual. Because the person who is active in gay places and knows a number of other gay males sees examples of those who have come out since he did, while the person does not see anyone undergo the opposite process (becoming straight after defining oneself as gay), the beliefs about the one-way nature of coming out are seen as verified by individual experience.

In the process of befriending other gays, one takes a position within gay contexts (that is, one goes to gay settings on some repeated occasions) and is recognized by others in those contexts upon the person's return again to the gay setting. This is all that is meant by a "social career" as a homosexual; by repeatedly going to some gay settings and being recognized by others in those settings, one becomes a member of "the gay community." The term, coming out, is important because reference to it by an individual in a gay setting (or with gay friends) is sufficient to "recognize" the individual as a member of the group. The assertion by an individual in a gay setting that he came out some time in the past is sufficient to grant him legitimacy in taking a place in the setting. In some settings, as the gay bar, where everyone present assumes that all others share a gay identity, an assertion that one has

not come out would be highly anomalous. (Some evidence for this was seen in the last chapter in the description of the participant observation; several examples were given there of conversations among gay males, in which I was asked when I came out, and my reply, "I'm not out yet" was taken as a statement that I am straight, rather than gay, and was reacted to with incredulity.)

The assertion that one "came out" some time in the past is equivalent in function to the assertion that "I am gay" (or, "a homosexual"). Both are statements in the present implying a motive (desire) to pursue certain sorts of sexual relations in the future (that is, homosexual relations). Such statements are important, not for any potential sexual relations, but rather function to indicate membership in a gay group. Statements about one's coming out experience and statements such as "I am gay" were never seen to be disputed nor challenged by another member.

Becoming a member of the gay community can be viewed as a "social career" in the community. Because of the reification of the homosexual identity, the person forming a career within the gay community tends to re-interpret his past biography so as to see his participation in the community as inevitable and "fated." Taking the step of becoming a member in the community is subjectively viewed as the most important aspect of the social career, while membership itself does not necessarily imply any further steps to complete the career. In this sense, the social career of membership in the gay community is not like a bureaucratic career "in which the steps to be taken for advancement are clearly and rigidly defined, as are the prerogatives of each office and its place in the official hierarchy" (Hughes, 1937, p. 140). However, the reification of the initial step in the career (coming out) and its "fatefulness"

is captured by Hughes,

> "It may be that there is a tendency for our social structure to become rigid, and thus for the roads to various positions to be more clearly defined. Such a trend would make more fateful each turning-point in a personal career" (1937, p. 140).

One reason for the extensive research that has been done on "coming out" is a reaction to the importance attached subjectively by gay members to that stage in their careers. Yet, the subjective importance usually attached to that biographical point for the individual member comes precisely from the reification and the "fatefulness" of the process of coming out. That is, if people did not believe in the rigid dichotomy between the identities of heterosexual and homosexual, then the importance attached to coming out and its fatefulness would be subjectively felt as less important than it is presently taken to be by members of the gay male community.

Quasi-institutions, Major Segments, and Ecological Settings

Introduction

Membership in the gay community has been considered with the process of coming out. Further aspects of the community will now be examined. As previously indicated, the gay community in Midwest City is neither a clear, territorially demarcated unit, nor does it have an administrative central authority (such as a mayor) which would set and maintain the territorial limits of the community and define the membership within it. The institutions of the gay community in this moderate-sized city are really only "quasi-institutions," which cannot completely encapsulate the members within them.

The rationale for this approach is seen in the contrast made by

Meyer Fortes and E. E. Evans-Pritchard ("Introduction" to African Political Systems, 1940; reprinted in M. Fried, 1959) between African societies with a centralized administrative system and authority (that is, a government, as among the Zulu) and societies which lack government (as the Nuer and Tallensi). In the first group of societies that Fortes and Evans-Pritchard consider, the administrative unit is a territorial unit and political rights and obligations are territorially delimited. The chief, as the administrative and judicial head of the given territorial division is vested with final economic and legal control over all the land within its boundaries. The right to live in the area can be acquired only by accepting the obligations of a subject.

In the second group of "stateless" societies, the lineage principle (including fictional and adoptive relationships) takes the place of political allegiances, and the interrelations of territorial segments are directly co-ordinated with the interrelations of lineage segments. In such stateless societies,

> "divergence of interests between the component segments is intrinsic to the political structure. Conflicts between local segments necessarily mean conflicts between lineage segments.... and the stabilizing factor is not a superordinate juridicial or military organization, but is simply the sum total of inter-segment relations." (1959, p. 287).

Further,

> "members of an African society feel their unity and perceive their common interests in symbols, and it is their attachment to these symbols which more than anything else gives their society cohesion and persistence. In the form of myths, fictions, dogmas, ritual, sacred places and persons, these symbols represent the unity and exclusiveness of the group which respect them." (p. 290)

The symbolic serves to maintain the social structure.

Finally, they say

> "In societies lacking centralized government, social values cannot be symbolized by a single person [the chief] , but are distributed at cardinal points of the social structure. Here we find myths, dogmas, ritual ceremonies, mystical powers, etc., associated with segments and defining and serving to maintain the relationship between them.... Ritual powers and responsibility are distributed in conformity with the highly segmentary structure of the society." (1959, p. 294.)

Sociologists and anthropologists studying an administratively delimited community readily consider the social institutions found within it (the Lynd's Middletown, 1929, is perhaps the classic institutional analysis of an American community). Each institution (religion, economy, politics, education, and the family) is then described in terms of its roles, norms, values and assumptions, as these are delimited by standard (recognized) markers of age, sex, status, prestige and positions of some kind. A complete institution would have formal organizations, leaders, clients; and age, sex, and class segments distinguish the qualities of participation in the social institution.

In this chapter, one cannot consider such complete social institutions because they are not to be found in gay communities within moderate-sized cities. Instead, there are "quasi-institutions," which are partial, submerged, and not independent of the larger city and its institutions.[2] One can say that the larger city has completed institutions, so that an individual can be encapsulated in his interpersonal relations within the city's boundaries. For example, the economy of the larger city includes many organizations in which an individual takes a position as worker, client, or consumer of its products. The work world of members of the gay community necessarily includes positions within the institution of

the economy of the larger city. At most, only a half dozen members of the gay community can find positions of employment within the quasi-institutions of the gay community, primarily as bartenders in the gay bar. For most members of the gay community, the gar bar serves as just one among many recreational settings and not also as an employment setting, so that they must seek employment in the larger economy of the city. It is in this sense that the institutions of the gay community are only quasi-institutions; they do not serve to completely encapsulate the members within them, and members must necessarily take positions in, and rely on the completed institutions of the larger city.

One could argue that recreation, at least, forms a completed institution within the gay community, but here again, this is not the case at all. A gay male may choose to go to the gay bar for entertainment and recreation, but then again, he may choose to go to a movie theater or restaurant, and as a patron in such a setting, is not explicitly defined as a gay member of the city, but rather one among the many other citizens using the movie theater or restaurant. Behavior and interaction in such non-gay places may lead the person to be recognized as gay, but this is not assured, nor is it necessarily desired by the gay patron.

Although the partial and submerged "quasi-institutions" of the gay community clearly serve needs of members of the community, they are not independent of the larger city and its institutions. This should be clear by comparison with Raymond Breton's study of the "institutional completeness" of ethnic communities in Montreal (1964; also see Harry and DeVall, 1978, pp. 134-6; Lee, 1978b, Chapter 3; and Roberts and Boldt, 1979). Breton suggests the range of social organization and institutional completeness of urban ethnic communities:

> "At one extreme, there is the community which consists essentially of a network of interpersonal relations; members of a certain ethnic group seek each other's companionship; friendship groups and cliques are formed. The immigrant who is a member of such a group will establish all his institutional affiliations in the native community since his ethnic group has little or no organization of its own" (p. 194).

On the other hand,

> "Institutional completeness would be at its extreme whenever the ethnic community could perform all the services required by its members. Members would never have to make use of native institutions for the satisfaction of any of their needs, such as education, work, food and clothing, medical care, or social assistance" (p. 194).

Most important to his definition of institutional completeness is the presence of formal organizations serving the needs of the ethnic group members. Although a great range of formal organizations could have been considered, Breton limited his study to churches, welfare organizations, and ethnic newspapers; that is, the latter serve as an index of institutional completeness for each ethnic group. From the ethnic groups (with a range of institutional completeness from high to low) a sample of respondents were asked if they had visited others, gone out for entertainment with others, or met co-workers socially during the previous week, and if so, what the other person's ethnic membership was (same as respondent, other ethnic group, or native group). Breton's most startling conclusion is that

> "A drastic expansion occurs when the ethnic community ceases to be an informal system and acquires some first elements of a formal structure [an organization]. This expansion continues as the formal structure develops but in increments smaller than the initial one" (p. 201).

The proportion of individuals with a majority of in-group relations

increased substantially if the ethnic group had at least one ethnic church, or one ethnic newspaper, or one ethnic welfare organization, regardless of whether or not the individual himself belonged to the ethnic church, subscribed to the newspaper, etc. Breton explains

> "once a formal structure has developed it has the effect of reinforcing the cohesiveness of already existing networks and of expanding these networks. This expansion is achieved mostly by attracting within the ethnic community the new immigrants. A community with a high degree of institutional completeness has a greater absorbing capacity than those with a more informal social organization" (p. 202).

A comparison of the gay community in Midwest City with a large ethnic neighborhood in a metropolis like Montreal or Chicago would show how institutionally incomplete the informal networks of gay friends in Midwest City are. A gay person cannot live his life exclusively with other gays. In this sense, the quasi-institutions of the gay bar, gay couples and Gay Lib (a student political organization) are all dependent institutions. That is, as organizations, they depend for their continuation on the larger city, and they are dominated by heterosexual interests and themes.

In the same sense, a gay career cannot be enacted completely within gay institutions. One can be a gay lawyer or gay barber, but the person cannot go to a gay law school, nor have a completely gay clientele. Again, this contrasts with an ethnic professional in a large city who can indeed have an ethnically homogeneous clientele (see, for example, Solomon, 1961; and Lieberson, 1958). It also contrasts with a gay professional in the largest cities.

It should be recalled at this point, that the main interest of this dissertation on the gay community of Midwest City is precisely in the lack of studies done on gay communities in moderate-sized cities. In

an interesting discussion of the social organization and institutional completeness of gay communities as they vary by city-size, Harry and DeVall (1978) note that 74% of the 98 cities of 100,000 to 250,000 population have at least one gay bar, while all 55 cities of 250,000 and above have at least one gay bar; of course, cities of less than 100,000 tend less often to have even one gay bar (p. 137). They note that

> "Gay life in [small towns] appears to be largely lacking in specialized gay institutions. Such communities are at the opposite pole of social organization from that of institutional completeness" (p. 140).

Further,

> "due to the lack of exclusively gay settings and institutions in smaller towns, most gay socializing occurs either in the anonymity of public settings, such as parks or beaches, or in private settings, such as private parties" (p. 141).

However, when a gay bar opens in a nearby city, gay residents of the smaller towns quickly acquire the habit of visiting the bar on weekends (p. 142). The opposite extreme, as they note, is the "gay ghetto" (Levine, 1977), found in a few of the largest cities, and characterized by social isolation from the larger city, residential segregation, and the development of a special subculture. Levine, as well as Harry and DeVall, note a number of traits found in the gay ghettoes of West Hollywood and Castro Village, such as the local gay newspaper, predominantly gay residential neighborhoods, gay-owned stores with window signs using gay argot, gay-oriented movie theaters, gay churches, restaurants whose owners and patrons are predominantly gay, concentrations of gay bars, gay travel agencies organizing gay tours, as well as welfare organizations catering to male homosexuals, and even gay caucuses of the Democratic party (Harry and DeVall, p. 145; Levine, pp. 12-14; also see

Lee, 1978a). Harry and DeVall suggest that once gays have aggregated together in sufficient numbers in a residential area of the largest cities, the set of gay institutions approximate to institutional completeness (p. 151). This is much like the "critical mass" suggested by Fischer (1976). A gay member in such a complete community could be encapsulated in it. By contrast, the community in the moderate-sized city under study here does not have such institutional completeness in its quasi-institutions, and a member cannot be encapsulated within it.

Even though the gay community is highly segmented (as will be described) and its institutions are dependent and really only quasi-institutions, this should not lead one to conclude that norms of behavior and symbols are unimportant. Members in the setting know and abide by the rules of the game of interaction (Bailey, 1969, p. 1).

> "Research has uncovered and made sense of societies which have no authorities and are not states and yet enable their people to live orderly lives. Furthermore, given the anthropologist's strong interest in small communities encapsulated within larger societies....who seem to operate political structures in spite of the fact that the State authorities are only occasionally involved, he has no choice but to consider these as political structures, which are partly independent of, and partly regulated by, larger encapsulating political structures" (Bailey, 1969, p. 12).

It is precisely because the gay community has only a few quasi-institutions that symbolic interactional cues given in certain known ecological settings are <u>more</u> crucial for participants than for heterosexuals, who live their lives in the completed social institutions of the city. Further, it is because of this that one can consider the relations between the gay community and the larger city as asymmetrical: A gay person can and does (indeed, has to) participate in "straight"

institutions, but the gay bar and other gay scenes are "cool" to invasion of the ecological settings by straights (who are viewed at least at the bar, as "tourists").

Even though the gay quasi-institutions are dependent and submerged, the heterosexual institutions of the larger city encourage overlap between the institutions, especially in the amount of information about the gay quasi-institutions. For example, in one interview, a respondent who travelled a great deal, said he relied on cab drivers to find the gay bars in a strange city. He would simply order a cab and tell the driver to take him "to the best gay bar in town," directions which no cab driver apparently ever failed to fulfill. (Taped interview, July 16, 1978). Also, periodically the city newspaper has revealed where the gay bar is located. Such revelations (usually written as exposes of "sin strip") are not appreciated by many of the regular bar patrons because such articles tend to increase the numbers of heterosexual "tourists" in the bar for a period. Nevertheless, in this way, knowledge about the gay bar and its location becomes common knowledge.

This chapter will describe the segments of the community, at least those in terms of sex and age, and the quasi-institutions (the gay bar, the quasi-familial relations, and the quasi-political organizations). A segment can be defined much as Theodorson and Theodorson define role insulation:

> "A state of relative isolation of the occupants of a role that results from the tendency for persons occupying a given role...to have more informal social interaction with each other than with persons occupying other roles. This tends to reinforce their own particular role perspective and decrease their understanding of other points of view" (1969, p. 355).

A segment is seen in the relative amounts of interaction; those in one segment tend to have much greater interaction with each other than with those in other segments. The cognitive reality of the sexual segments will be shown using data from the semantic differential. Thereafter, the ecological settings will be described.

The Segments

The most basic division of the community is between men and women. This division was expressed by Al, a bisexual male:

> "A penalty [of coming out] is that in exclusively gay situations, you never associate with females at all - I don't like cutting off 50 percent of the population. I don't do it. It's like I have two lives: One with no women; the other, I have female friends and go to straight parties, and so on. I would like there to be an integration of the two." (Interview, February 8, 1974).

This basic division is seen in different activities engaged in by males. For example, the pattern of eating supper in the College Center cafeteria shows the sexual segmentation in that it was primarily a male activity, with a few "straight" women occasionally present. With the exception of one woman who knew many gay males and occasionally ate with them (a bisexual woman), other women such as lesbians did not regularly eat in the cafeteria.

Again, cruising in the College Center and seating in groups in the College Center Lounge in the evenings showed the same pattern; gay males sat together. Women were rarely present and those who were, tended to be "straight" friends, not lesbians.

In the bar, men sat and talked together in small groups or wandered around individually. The women in the bar (that is, lesbians) usually sat together, pushing several tables together to make one large table.

Sometimes, the numbers of lesbians in the bar reached a sizeable number (up to about twenty-five on a "good" weekend evening), but they always constituted a small proportion of the total number of people in the bar. Hence, the lesbians tended to all be acquainted with each other, while this clearly was not true of the males. Further, the lesbians danced with each other, and the men danced with each other in the bar. It was rare to see a male and female dance together, although nobody would remark on it when it did occur. Occasionally, a gay male would be seen to talk with a lesbian at the large table, but such conversations were brief, with the male standing while talking with the seated lesbian. Although a gay male might be acquainted with one or two lesbians, it would be rare for him to know more than that many. For example, in one interview, Tony, a gay male, was asked:

> "'Do you know any lesbians?'
> He replied: 'Not really. Not on a close basis.
> I know a couple of them by name.' (He had difficulty recalling their names!)
> RCO: 'But they're not really friends?'
> He replied: 'No, I don't associate with them.'"
> (Taped interview, July 8, 1978.)

Further, the impression remains that some gay males do not know <u>any</u> lesbians.

Most gay males are not adverse to friendships with women; on the contrary, most gay males are acquainted with several, and sometimes form close friendships with them. However, these are with straight women and not with lesbians. Hence, it is not unusual to see a woman sitting with a group of gay males, at dinner in the College Center, in its Lounge, or even at the gay bar (that is, brought to the bar by a gay male). Such friendships are viewed as inconsequential for sexual intimacy. The role of a straight female in a gay male group (as "fag hag" or "fruit fly")

is the basis of the participant observation studies reported by Carol Warren and Anne Bolin.

To some extent, the sexual division of the gay community is the result of closure by some lesbians against forming friendships with men, including gay males. Lesbians tend to be strongly oriented to the Women's Movement, and some have taken the ideological position of "separatism," wishing not to have any relations with men. Hence, rather than emphasizing the similarity with gay men (shared sexual orientation), lesbians tend to emphasize their dissimilarity from gay men, as men. Further, gay males sometimes expressed contempt and stereotypical images of lesbians, thereby verbalizing this basic division in the community.

Data from the semantic differential collected from fifty gay males shows that they view gay males and lesbians very differently (see table 3). Lesbians are viewed by gay males as the least "good, kind and valuable" of the four groups on the evaluation dimension, while they view gay males and men in general as equally good, kind and valuable. Women in general are viewed as the most good, kind and valuable of the four groups. Lesbians are viewed by gay males as very similar to men in general on the dimensions of activity (fast, active and sharp) and of potency (hard, large and strong). Again lesbians are viewed very differently than women in general, who are seen as the least active and potent of the four groups. Lesbians are especially viewed differently than gay males on the dimension of potency (being viewed as harder, larger, and stronger than gay males). From this data, one can see that the distinction between gay males and lesbians has a cognitive reality for gay males.

Table 3.--Mean Responses on the Semantic Differential of Fifty Gay Males and Fifty Straight Males

	Gay Males			Straight Males		
Objects	Evaluation[1]	Activity[2]	Potency[3]	Evaluation[1]	Activity[2]	Potency[3]
Gay Males	4.98	4.87	4.08	3.94	3.61	3.44
Lesbians	4.74	4.66	4.92	4.08	4.21	4.09
Men in general	5.00	4.64	4.93	5.05	4.81	4.84
Women in general	5.28	4.16	3.51	5.63	4.31	3.58
Self	5.75	5.03	4.23	5.90	5.27	4.78

1. The positive ends of the scales are: good, kind, and valuable.
2. The positive ends of the scales are: fast, active, and sharp.
3. The positive ends of the scales are: hard, large, and strong.

The responses on the semantic differential of fifty straight males differ most sharply from those of gay males in the average scores on the objects of gay males and lesbians. In particular, the straight males gave significantly lower scores on the evaluation, activity and potency dimensions of the objects gay males and lesbians. Straight males score women in general higher on the evaluation dimension, but the other scores for women in general and men in general do not differ between gay and straight males. The self score on potency is higher for straight males than for gay males, but the scores on the other two dimensions for the self do not significantly differ between gay and straight males. Because the objects men in general and women in general are scored similarly by both gay and straight males, one can say that gay males share their evaluations of men and women with straight males, and in this regard do not appear to differ in their evaluations from males in the larger society. Hence, the sharpest cognitive differences of gay males from straight males (and presumably from the larger society) are precisely in those cognitive areas which are more salient to gay males.

The gay community is also segmentalized by age. Both men and women in the gay bar were usually in their late teens, twenty's and early thirty's. It was rare to see either a gay male or lesbian in the bar who was in the forty's or beyond. Part of this is explained by the heavy emphasis in the gay bar on youthfulness when seeking a sexual partner. For example, one evening three of us took Pete, a sixty-four-year-old male to the bar. At the bar, the latter complained that he doesn't like the way young people at the bar act towards him. He pointed out that the guy at the door who collected our dollar entrance fee knew

him, but had said "hello" to each of the three of us, but not to him. (Field notes, November 25, 1977). In an interview, Tony (a 27-year-old gay male) claimed that he knew only one gay male who was beyond forty years old, but he was met in the College Center cafeteria, and not at the bar. (Taped interview, July 8, 1978).

In the College Center cafeteria, several of the gay male frequenters were in their fifty's and sixty's, and the younger males were acquainted with them in that setting. Although these older gay males were accepted in dinner conversations, where they sometimes 'flirted' with younger gay males, they were not seen to cruise for sexual partners nor to sit in the groups of younger gay males in the College Center Lounge after supper, nor to visit the bar regularly.

There are other segments in the community besides those based on sex and age, but these depend on elaboration of the gay male self-identity, and the description of these will be deferred to the next chapter, which will consider the range of kinds of identities to be found within the community.

The Quasi-Institutions

Three sorts of organizations can be viewed as quasi-institutions: The gay bar, the stable couples, and the student political organization (Gay Lib). The next chapter will consider the continuum and the differences between the gay bar as public, while the couples tend to be private and concealed. Here the history of these quasi-institutions will be considered.

1. Gay Bars

Achilles (1967) considers the gay bar as an "institution" because it is a system that supplies goods and services, as well as social interaction. Like any other bar, it provides alcohol and entertainment as a leisure-time activity. Until very recently (July, 1976) there was only one gay bar in the Midwest City area, but it has not always been the same bar. During the 1960's, the gay bar was the Wentworth, located in the downtown area, but it was torn down by urban renewal around 1970. By 1971, the Man's Place on East State Street became the gay bar. But in June, 1972, the owner decided to make it into a topless bar and literally kicked the gays out. During that Summer, some gays began going to Ray's bar on East State Street, and it has subsequently gained a reputation as a "mixed" (both gay and straight) bar; it has also been important as the bar regularly featuring drag shows, which are entertaining to both a gay and straight audience.

Also, during that Summer of 1972, Carl encouraged gays to come to his bar, also located on East State Street. Being larger than Ray's bar, it was the preferred bar until the Summer of 1976. But the two bars are located within two blocks of each other, so they both often enjoyed the patronage of the same participants in an evening. During this period of 1972 to 1976, "the bar" was always understood to be Carl's bar. As with other leisure-time bars, it was most crowded on Friday and Saturday evenings, even though it was only on those evenings that there was (and is) a nominal cover charge to enter.

Located in the block of East State Street called "sin strip" by the city paper because of its several adult bookstores, Carl's bar was

inconspicuous. It was marked only by a small neon sign advertising "drinks and dancing." Although quite inconspicuous at street level with an unmarked door as entrance, the owner nevertheless advertised it, using match covers, as "the gayest spot in town." Finally in 1977, the owner put a permanent sign next to the door. The bar's physical arrangements will be described in the section on ecological settings.

In the Summer of 1976, a second bar opened on "sin strip" as a gay bar. For several months, Tom's bar attracted most of the customers away from Carl's bar. However, since Tom's initial opening, both bars are adequately supported by patronage, especially on Friday and Saturday nights, when both have a cover charge. On the weekends, one is free to go between the bars (that is, one is allowed back into one bar after paying the initial cover charge), and as they are only a few doors away, many do change bars during the course of an evening.

Gay bars differ from straight, leisure-time bars as to when participants plan to "go to the bar." Most gay bar frequenters do not arrive at the bar before eleven or eleven-thirty on weekend evenings. Whether one is interested in meeting friends or picking up a sexual partner for the night, the person is not likely to go to the bar before eleven because there likely will be very few people present. This means that both sociability and seeking for a sexual partner occur during the relatively brief period from eleven to two in the morning, when all bars are required to close. This may in itself partly explain why relatively little drunken behavior is to be seen in a gay bar in comparison to a straight bar, although the importance of "appearance" for cruising in the bar is probably a more important factor. One other striking difference from many straight bars is the almost total absence of fights

and violence to be found in a gay bar.

2. Stable Quasi-familial Relations

There are several different sorts of quasi-familial relations. One can distinguish roommates, superior and subordinate relations, and equal relations ("couples"). The category of roommates does not differ from its counterpart in the larger society; norms include equal sharing of household expenses and duties, and norms concerning privacy. The latter is seen in the desirability of having one's own bedroom, so that sexual partners can be brought to the home; one would expect non-interference in such sexual activities by a roommate. Reciprocation of obligations between roommates must usually be in kind, rather than a more complex reciprocation with other services. "Having a roommate" implies that there is no sexual relation between the household partners.

Any departure from an equal sharing of household duties and expenses usually requires an explicit agreement between the roommates. For example, when John moved in with Bill A., the former agreed to pay less rent because he had the smaller bedroom; nevertheless Bill eventually complained that John was a poor roommate because he was "too sloppy." When Tony and Marty agreed to get an apartment, Tony got the use of the carport "because" Marty wanted the larger bedroom. David was glad when he found out that his roommate, Steve, planned to move away, and listed several complaints against him: 1) David had to pay the full deposit on the apartment, 2) David thought it was unfair that he had to complain to induce Steve to clean up the cooking pots; and 3) David sometimes bought food, which was not reciprocated by Steve (recorded conversation, November 12, 1978). As a potential roommate is usually selected from one's network of friends and acquaintances, there is usually some

overlap of friends between the roommates.

Superior and subordinate sexual relations usually result from a difference in age between the partners. For example, Don (a hustler) formed a relation with Robert, a law professor (aged 47), when he was seventeen; he moved in with Robert, several hundred miles away, and tried to "play Susie Housewife" for several months, while Robert continued his career. (Recorded conversation in the bar, October 18, 1978.)

Another example of an unequal sexual relationship was that between Pete, a self-defined "chickenhawk," and Frank. When Pete was about fifty years old, he got to know Frank, who was sixteen. Pete owned a house, which he shared with his sister. About six months after he initially met Frank, the latter moved in with him, and they lived together for five years. During that time, when Frank was working, he would put in money for groceries, but he often was not working and would then "borrow" money that was not expected to be re-paid. According to Pete, "the sex had been primarily one-sided. He [Frank] had never really reciprocated, too much." During those five years, Frank had sexual relations both with a girlfriend and with guys his own age, but Pete only had sexual relations with Frank until he found out that Frank was "tricking out" with other guys. (Taped interview, July 16, 1978.)

Equal relations can be distinguished by the degree of intimacy and commitment between the partners, but the terms to designate the degree of commitment do not differ greatly in meaning from those used in the larger society. Most important are the distinctions among a "date," an "affair," and a "couple." A "date" is an arranged meeting between two men who have in the past had sexual relations, and they expect to have sexual relations repeated again during the arranged time, which

may also include other forms of entertainment as going to a movie, out to a restaurant, etc. For example, at the bar, Brad joined me, and I said I was surprised that Bob B., a mutual friend who lives near Brad, wasn't also in the bar.

> Brad: "'He had a date tonight; also last night.
> RCO: 'Anybody I know?'
> Brad: 'No. He's 19. Somebody new that Bob met in the College Center. Bob is the first guy he's done it with. He's really not out. He has a girlfriend in Kalamazoo and was going to see her this weekend but he decided he had too much studying to do, so (laughs) he's at Bob's both nights this weekend.'" (Conversation recorded, Saturday, April 26, 1975.)

Some prefer not to designate such arrangements by the term "date," but there does not seem to be any alternative term. The use of the term, "date," sometimes causes semantic confusion. For example, after Tony and Marty (roommates) and I went out to eat at a restaurant, Marty left to go in the College Center to cruise, while Tony and I returned to their apartment. In the apartment, Tony repeatedly looked out the window, and expressed some worry that Marty would bring a trick home (necessitating different behavior for Tony). Tony was obviously relieved when Marty got out of his car alone. Marty reported to the two of us that the College Center was nearly empty, that he only briefly talked with one person, a previous trick, who was going on a date and just passing through the College Center. RCO: "A date? What does that mean?" Marty: "With a fish [girl]." (Recorded November 11, 1978.) The confusion in the use of the term here was precisely in whether it designated a homosexual or heterosexual relationship; significantly, Marty used a gay slang term to clarify that a heterosexual date was meant.

An "affair" implies more emotional involvement and commitment

between the partners than a "date," but like a date, it also implies that the two males are living separately and getting together only at pre-arranged times. For example, Brad (aged 31) described his third affair, with a guy (aged 24) who lives a block away. They talk on the phone regularly and go out to a movie or dinner about once a week. After three months, Brad reported that the affair was "developing gradually"; there were no commitments about fidelity, but Brad saw some minor symbolic increases in involvement, as when the other left his record collection with Brad. Brad initially met the person in the College Center:

> "I took him home with me, and we exchanged phone numbers. That is quite unusual. I explained to him that I was leaving in a few days for a week and a half in Dallas. But when I got back, I called him, and we got together again. And we've been getting together about once a week ever since then."

Significantly, Brad had ended his second affair which had lasted a couple of months when the partner had tried to insist on complete fidelity. Even though Brad is evidently faithful now, there is no agreement, and so Brad feels free to cruise, or to "trick out," if he wants to. (Recorded conversation, August 20, 1978.)

Having a "lover" or being in a couple generally implies that the two men are living together. However, it does not also imply that the two are sexually "faithful" to each other. Rather, there is a norm of open relations, where the person is allowed to "trick out" with other sexual partners. This is usually a formal agreement between the partners, and it usually includes the agreement that the sexual activities outside the couple relationship will also take place outside the shared living space. For example, David and Gary lived together for a year

and a half; when they started living together, they agreed that it was okay for David to continue to have oral sex with partners in public washrooms. (Taped interview, July 10, 1978). Bill C., who has been living with his lover for a couple of years, regularly comes through the College Center looking for someone to "trick with," and this is considered okay with Phil, his lover. (Recorded conversations, March 20, April 6, and May 4, 1974.) Larry, who has lived with his lover for six years (both are aged 34 now) has an agreement with his lover, Edward, that either partner may "trick out" but there is a tacit agreement between them that they will not bring a sexual partner to their home. In other words, it is okay to have a sexual relationship with someone else in a one-night stand or in a short-term sexual relationship that does not interfere with their long-term relationship. Both Larry and Edward have regularly been seen at the bar, both talking separately with friends, and each cruising for a potential sexual "one-night stand." (October 7 and 13, 1978). Such an agreement clearly contrasts with the relationship between roommates, who each have the "right" to bring sexual partners into the shared residence.

Because of the potential stigma from the larger society on having a homosexual lover and living together, lovers are often "hidden" and appear disguised as roommates. Sometimes, this is done deliberately; for example, David often implied to other students that Gary was his roommate, and not his lover. (Taped interview, July 10, 1978.) This means that there is a certain amount of ambiguity, even when two guys present themselves as roommates. For example, Tony was invited to sleep with Charles and his roommate in the same bed, while spending the night at a mutual friend's apartment. Tony was reluctant and

repeatedly refused until Charles explained that they were "just roommates," and not lovers. The next day, Tony explained to me that "I wouldn't have done anything with him [Charles] if they were lovers because that is too important." (Conversation recorded February 12, 1977; this example will be described more fully in the next chapter.)

Because long-term sexual relations are somewhat unusual among young adult gay males, one can ask how couples start their relations, and if there is a difference from the usual, casual "one-night stand." It appears that it does not start any differently than a one-night stand, except that one partner expresses some interest in seeing the other person again at some future time. For example, Brad started his "affair" with the exchange of phone numbers, which he indicated "is quite unusual." David was introduced to Gary by a mutual friend, they went to dinner and to the bar in a larger group, and then the two of them went home to Gary's apartment where they had sex; in the same evening, they agreed to meet the next day. (Taped interview, July 10, 1978.) Except for agreeing to see the other person again in the near future, there is no difference from a one-night stand. This implies that one does not know if the next trick will lead to a long-term relation.

Support for this idea, that a long-term relation does not start any differently than a casual sexual encounter, is seen in data collected by Randall Jones (1978) on twenty-eight gay male couples in Indiana (personal communication). The question he posed was: Where did you first meet your lover?

Table 4.--Where Lovers First Met

Place	
University Union (coffee area)	= 3
In a park	= 6
On the street	= 2
A bar	= 4
School, or a class	= 4
A party	= 2
Through friends	= 5
A restaurant	= 1
A tearoom (public washroom)	= 1
Total	28 couples

Source: Randall W. Jones (personal communication, August, 1978.)

Table 4 shows that meeting a lover through friends or at a party (presumably given by mutual friends) accounts for the start of seven of the 28 couple relationships. On the other hand, meeting one's future lover in a public place, such as a park, on the street, in a bar, a restaurant, or bathroom, that is, places which are usually used for casual sexual encounters, account for the initial meeting of half of the couples.

Although one "never knows" if the next trick will lead to a long-term relation, in fact there are a number of constraints acting against the likelihood of forming a long-term relationship. One sort of constraint is in the notion of "a trick": When the sexual encounter is expected to be casual and to end, then neither partner looks for the encounter to develop any further than that. Most sexual relations

formed in the bar are defined by both partners as "one-night stands" and so that is how they are likely to result. Further, some gay males delight in "keeping score" and racking up "numbers" of sexual partners (cf. Rechy, Numbers, 1967). Those interested in scoring numbers of partners are ultimately playing a game against themselves, that is, seeing if they can get more partners than they did in the past. (Recorded conversation with Bob B., January 13, 1974.) However, this "game" in itself can cause some depression, as one "goes through" and "uses up" potential sexual partners, who are ultimately not important to the self except as momentary gratification. (Recorded conversation with Bob B., April 20, 1974.)

Such impersonal sexual relations are not the most important aspect of cruising and searching for a sexual partner. Rather, interest centers, as one gay male expressed it, "in the hunt" - another male is more exciting if he is "hard to get" or if one has to "work" to get the person. This will be developed later when the art of "cruising" is considered. In the hunt, heterosexual males are considered "fair game," as in the expression, "most straights can be had." For example, one evening after Joe, a gay auto mechanic, had worked on my car, we went to a straight bar for a drink. Joe said that the straight bar is quite cruisy, and that when he sits at the bar, there is a lot of "eye contact," and at 2:30 in the morning (i.e., when the bar closes), it is easy to pick a guy up, especially when he hasn't picked up a chick by then.

> RCO: (agreeing) "'Yes, the problem [for straight men] is that the girls in [this town] are so prissy.'
> Joe: laughed, agreed and then said, 'What the straight guys want is very different than what

> gays do together. The straight guys just want to get their rocks off and don't really care how they do that.'" (Recorded conversation, January 14, 1974.)

Heterosexual males are believed to be interested only in "getting their rocks off" and not in reciprocating sexually, but there is always a potential that the person who defines himself as straight will change sexual orientation. Ultimately, this commonly held notion rests on the indeterminacy of sexual orientation as an "identity." Sexual orientation as an identity tends to be stable until change is brought about with a different cognitive interpretation of the self.

In this context, the possibility of sexual relations with friends should also be considered. Several authors, such as Leznoff and Westley, have asserted that gay male friends do not have sexual relations together, and have posited a mechanism comparable to an "incest taboo." Some respondents would agree with this assertion that friends cannot have sexual relations together. For example,

> Jef: "'You know, like if I go down there [to the gay bar], I talk to Bill A., I talk to Dwight, Bob B., I talk to the same people we talk to at dinner. You know, this is just a circle of friends. I wouldn't think -- I wouldn't go to bed with him [points to a gay male friend sitting on another couch in the lounge]. First we'd probably giggle.'
> RCO: 'It would seem silly to...'
> Jef: 'Even attempt it with a very good friend.'
> RCO: 'Yeah.'
> Jef: 'Hum, and the people I go to [the gay bar] and chat with, none of us would go to bed. Unless it started from a relationship of the bed, to friendship.'
> RCO: 'Yeah, okay.'
> Jef: 'Like it happened with one person downstairs [in the cafeteria]. I met him at the bar; we went home and we fucked all night; and we did that for about three weeks running. Then it kind of developed into something bigger, and now it's

> become friendship. When we go home and go to bed, we sleep.'" (Interview, taped March 14, 1974.)

Another example makes the same point.

> Brad: "Cruising has some funny things about it. Like there's a guy, Robert, who's in here [the College Center] sometimes... I find him attractive but we're friends now so nothing could happen between us. If I went up to him and asked him if he wanted to do something [sexual], then I would feel so rejected if he said 'no' that it would screw up the friendship. And he would probably feel so embarassed toward me after that, that it would be difficult to stay friends. So, people who are strangers are more likely to make it together. That seems kind of strange to me."

However, some gay males would disagree with this.

> David: "'It's something that just sort of happens. I met a person once at the College Center and went with him to another building for sex and went out to dinner after and then we went back to his apartment and had sex again. And we became very close friends and periodically, you know, we would have sex together.'
> RCO: 'But he wasn't a lover?'
> David: 'He didn't like the term lover, so I won't say that he was.'" (Taped interview, July 10, 1978.)

A better example follows:

> David: "'I had a friend when I was an undergrad that I had sex with on occasion during my senior year. We started out as a friend relationship before we had sex. In fact we didn't know that the other one was gay.'
> RCO: 'And you became friends?'
> David: 'And we became friends. We were both in music and the subject just sort of came up and a few nights, weeks or whatever later, we had sex together and had sex every once in a while.'"

And further,

> "'The one friend that I've known for about seven

years, I've had sex with once... And with Steve, oh, maybe four or five times in five years.'
RCO: 'Why is it so infrequent?'
David: 'I don't know. It's this bit about spontaneity, I guess. I mean you just have to be in the right mood and the situation (emphasized), you know. If you're putting someone up and you have one bedroom and one bed, there's more opportunity to just do things. (laughs)'
RCO: 'Would it usually be like that where it would start purely physically (emphasized) rather than somebody saying, 'let's go to bed together'?'
David: 'Yes.'
RCO: 'You'd start touching each other.'
David: 'Yeah. That's good enough, I think.'
(Taped interview, July 10, 1978.)

Obviously, there is great variability in the verbalizations of different respondents in the possibility of having sexual relations with a friend. It should be clear that for some, especially those into "scoring" and "racking up numbers" of impersonal sexual partners, the challenge of "the hunt" including getting a strange male into bed is viewed very differently than friendships, which are perhaps, more important to the self. In any case, it should be clear that some gay males want and desire a long-term sexual relationship, while others do not want any relationship that limits or restricts their continuation of impersonal sexual encounters.

3. Political Quasi-Institutions

Gay Lib began as a student organization in the Spring, 1970. In 1971, Radical Lesbians was formed as a separate organization, but it existed in name only, so that Gay Lib had both sexes in it. In the Autumn, 1973, the women organized an active group called the Lesbian Feminists, that met completely separately from Gay Lib, which became exclusively for gay male students. But during 1973 and 1974, both organizations cooperated in certain joint ventures, including co-sponsoring

gay dances for Halloween and Valentine's Day.

During this early period, Gay Lib was involved in a variety of activities. One of the most important and most time-consuming for members, was giving "panels" to classes and to interested students on the college campus. (Several members together would talk about their "coming out" experiences and such, and answer questions about their homosexuality.) Another activity was gay "counseling," especially over the phone; several members received training from people at the telephone crisis intervention center, and would counsel people who called the Gay Lib office with questions about their own sexual feelings. Also, Gay Lib was heavily involved in city council meetings in Midwest City; this activity resulted in the passage of a gay rights ordinance in Midwest City in 1973.

During this period, Gay Lib took an "activist" stance and sought publicity for the organization, for example by "zapping" straight public establishments in the metropolitan area. (For example, on February 20, 1974, fourteen members went to the South Seas Bar and were evicted when they tried to dance together in gay couples). One other organized activity was the renting of a gay "community center" (a house in Midwest City), which began in August, 1972. The community center rented rooms to Gay Lib members and tried to organize a coffee-hour for the after-bar crowd on Saturday nights, but eventually it went broke and had to close in January, 1973. Also, in June 1972, Gay Lib organized the first Gay Pride Week to commemorate the Stonewall events in New York City in June, 1969. This has become a tradition which continues and includes an organized picnic in a public park.

The six organizational meetings of Gay Lib that were attended in 1973 and 1974 were small, with from eleven to nineteen males present (including myself). However, some of the sponsored events during this period were very popular, such as the Halloween dance held in the American Legion Hall in Midwest City in 1973, which had more than 40 people present. During this early period, many gay males were repulsed by Gay Lib's activist stance and publicity-seeking and did not attend any of its meetings.

By 1975, the organization had evolved through replacement of early members and leaders, into a more conservative and respectable student organization. One of its main activities became discussion groups on specific, announced topics (such as "homosexuality and religion," the "drag queen," etc.). These were well-attended; for example, the meeting on drag queens in November, 1975 had 25 people (of both sexes) present. The organization continued some of its earlier social activities, such as sponsoring dances (e.g., a dance sponsored in a church in Midwest City in March, 1975 was well attended again), while its political activities have become unimportant. However, even by just advertising its social events, such as discussion groups and dances on campus, it continues a political purpose of presenting a respectable front to heterosexual students on campus.

The Ecological Settings

The general point of view being developed is that social organization of the community can best be understood as situationally created in interaction and is not a static thing. Coordinated collective activities and sequences of action are started or "touched off" by the

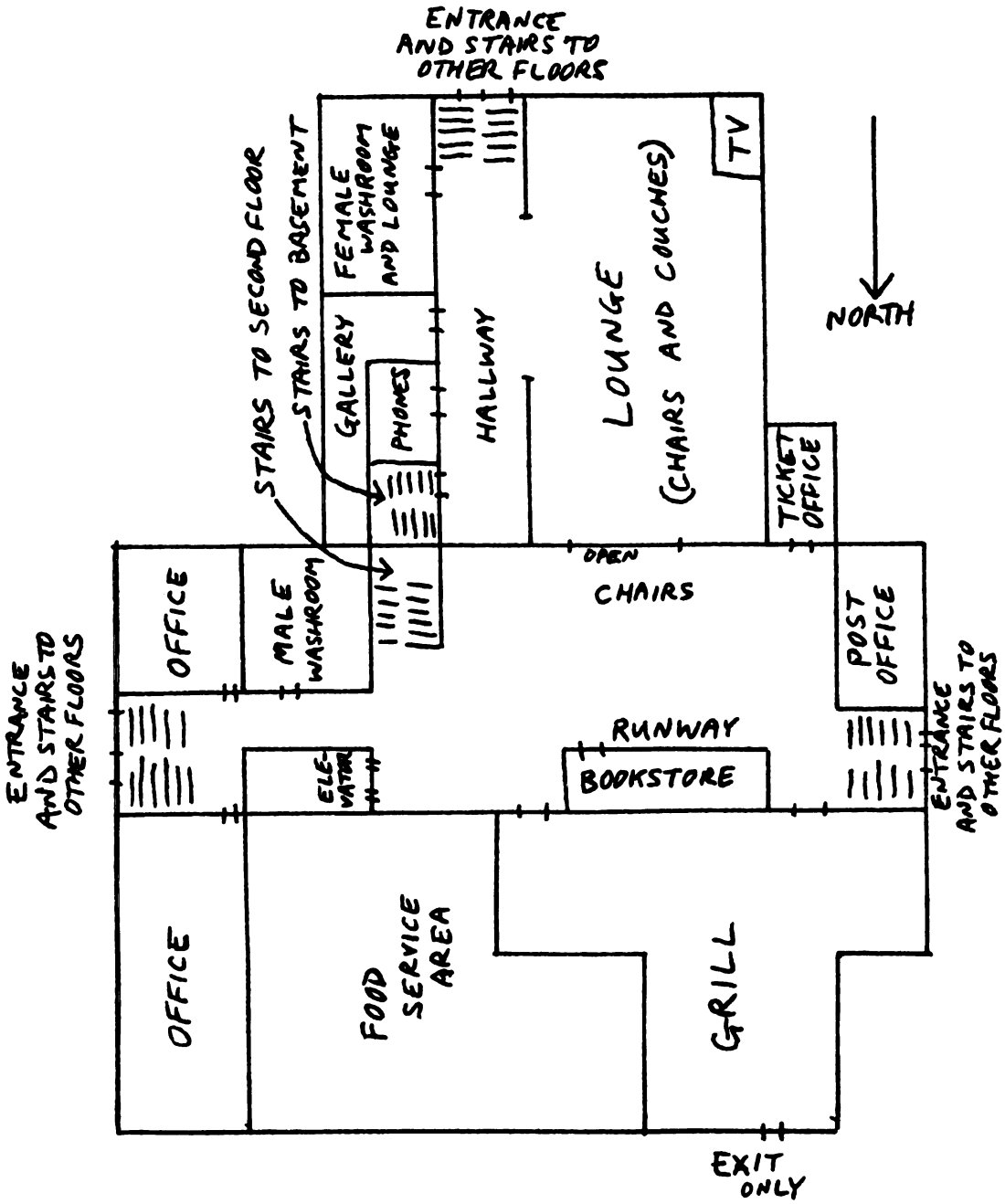
presentation of identities and responses to the presentations in specific ecological locations. Here will briefly be described the ecological settings of importance. These are: The College Center building, the bars, public restrooms, adult bookstore, adult movie theater, gay baths, and private areas (individuals' homes and apartments).

The College Center

The College Center building can be considered as divided into different areas, which have different uses. The College Center cafeteria has a conventional use for gay males, and serves as a meeting place among friends for supper during the week. The lounge area, composed of many chairs and couches not only serves as a meeting place for gay friends, but also to some extent as a "cruising" spot to look for sexual partners in the evenings. The area directly in front of the College Center bookstore (the "runway") is more advantageous as a "cruising" spot because one can sit in front of the bookstore and see who comes in the building and also who goes into the first floor men's washroom. However, because the first floor washroom has so much traffic, at least at certain times of the day and evening, one often attempts to get the partner to follow one to a washroom on another floor. The sexual activities in the men's rooms are always oral sex (or rarely masturbation), but are not always limited to two males; occasionally, other gay males may walk into a washroom "in use" and join the pair.

"Cruising" in the College Center building is not limited to the objective of oral sex. When a gay male cruises another male for anal sex, then (as with the public washrooms), one follows the other and attempts to get the other to follow, thereby expressing an interest in

Figure 1.--Floor Plan of the First Floor of the College Center



the stranger. For anal sex, eventually one person must suggest going to his home. (The same suggestion may also be made for oral sex, for greater privacy.) Hence, a large area of the College Center building is used for this "following" and "being followed" behavior, to ascertain an interest by the other. Two males may be seen, one discreetly following the other, walking up or down stairs, into and out of washrooms, and sometimes out of the building.

The College Center building is also used for meetings of Gay Lib, although the organization has an office in another campus building. Such meetings are announced ahead of time in the college newspaper, and are held once a week in a particular, scheduled room.

By 1974, the reputation of the College Center building as a meeting place for gay males was so well established, that it was listed along with the gay bar as a gay place in a national directory of gay places (Damrun's Guide). Over the years, the management of the building has attempted to suppress the sexual use of the building by gay males by requesting uniformed and non-uniformed police to patrol the washrooms, but law enforcement has been sporadic and quite ineffectual. When patrols become more regular, a rumor starts that somebody has been arrested, and individuals then become more careful in their "cruising" for a while.

It is somewhat difficult to estimate the number of gay males to be found in the College Center building at any particular time. Part of the problem in making such an estimate is that the building has a reputation on campus, so that a number of male college students who would not call themselves "homosexual" come to the building and participate with gay males in sexual activities in the washrooms. From January,

1974 through July, 1976, the numbers of gay males observed to eat in the cafeteria averaged between three and eight, but ranged with wide fluctuations, up to 16 on some evenings. Except for a Gay Lib meeting, it would be unusual to expect even two dozen gay males to be in the whole building at any one time. About half of them would be students.

The College Center, unlike gay bars and gay baths, of course is not an exclusively gay setting. Just as the College Center cafeteria always had many more non-gay diners (many being retired elderly people from the community rather than students or faculty from the College) than gay diners during the weekday evenings, the other areas of the building also often have large numbers of non-gays in them. The lounge and grill are both used by students during the weekdays and evenings as places to study, to discuss school work, and to otherwise socialize in small groups. Hence, the lounge and grill tend to be scattered with male and female students sitting alone reading and also small groups of males or females or mixed groups. The basement of the building has bowling lanes, rooms with pool tables and pinball machines, and a barbershop, all of which are popular and attract students to the building for considerable periods of time. It is only later in the evening, as these others leave the building, that the building may have a majority of gay males in it. Even this is not likely except occasionally.

The building is also used extensively both by groups having formal permission to use designated facilities, and sometimes by groups not having such permission from the building's administration. In particular, the second and third floors have many small and large rooms used for meetings of various sorts. Because the building has a central location on campus, it is used extensively by many different student

organizations, both during the day and also in the evenings. Hence, Gay Lib is just one of many student organizations using the building's meeting rooms. In addition, these rooms are frequently rented and used by non-university groups; for example, several high schools in Midwest City annually rent one of the two large ballrooms on the second floor for their proms. Likewise, one ballroom is used annually for the Israeli Independence Day celebration and is annually picketed by the campus Arab Student Organization. Especially in the Spring and Summer, areas of the second floor may repeatedly be used for wedding receptions. A few times during the year, most of the first and second floors are used for artfairs and display artwork such as paintings, pottery, and home-made jewelry. During the Autumn, the first floor often becomes quite crowded after football games with people from out of town.

The groups described above are scheduled to use the particular facilities by the building's management. In addition, other groups that are not affiliated with the College often use the building without permission from the management. For example, for several years different fundamentalist religious groups of young people (e.g., the Children of God) would enter the building and individually or in small groups approach individuals sitting in the lounge, on the runway, or in the grill to proselytize and to distribute their literature. Although the religious groups were perhaps the most frequent of the non-student groups informally using the building for their own purposes, occasionally groups with political purposes also used the building informally (e.g., Communist and Socialist Party members requested signatures on petitions). Likewise, student political organizations found the building a popular place to distribute literature. (However, the latter political

organizations could get permission for their activities just by asking because they were registered student organizations.)

From this description, it should be clear that gay males sometimes constitute only a small portion of the people in the building. However, from the perspective of gay males sitting in the lounge or runway, the non-gays appear to just be passing through the building as they go to their meeting room and later are seen to leave the building again. The gay males who frequented the building regularly were quite aware of these other activities in the building, but exhibited little interest in those activities and their participants. Likewise, these other participants appeared to be oblivious to the presence of gay males in the building. Of course, the gay males were usually not recognizable as such except by verbal statements or behavior (e.g., cruising, to be described in the next chapter). Becuase most of the gay males were young adults, others probably assumed that they were college students, although only about half of them actually were.

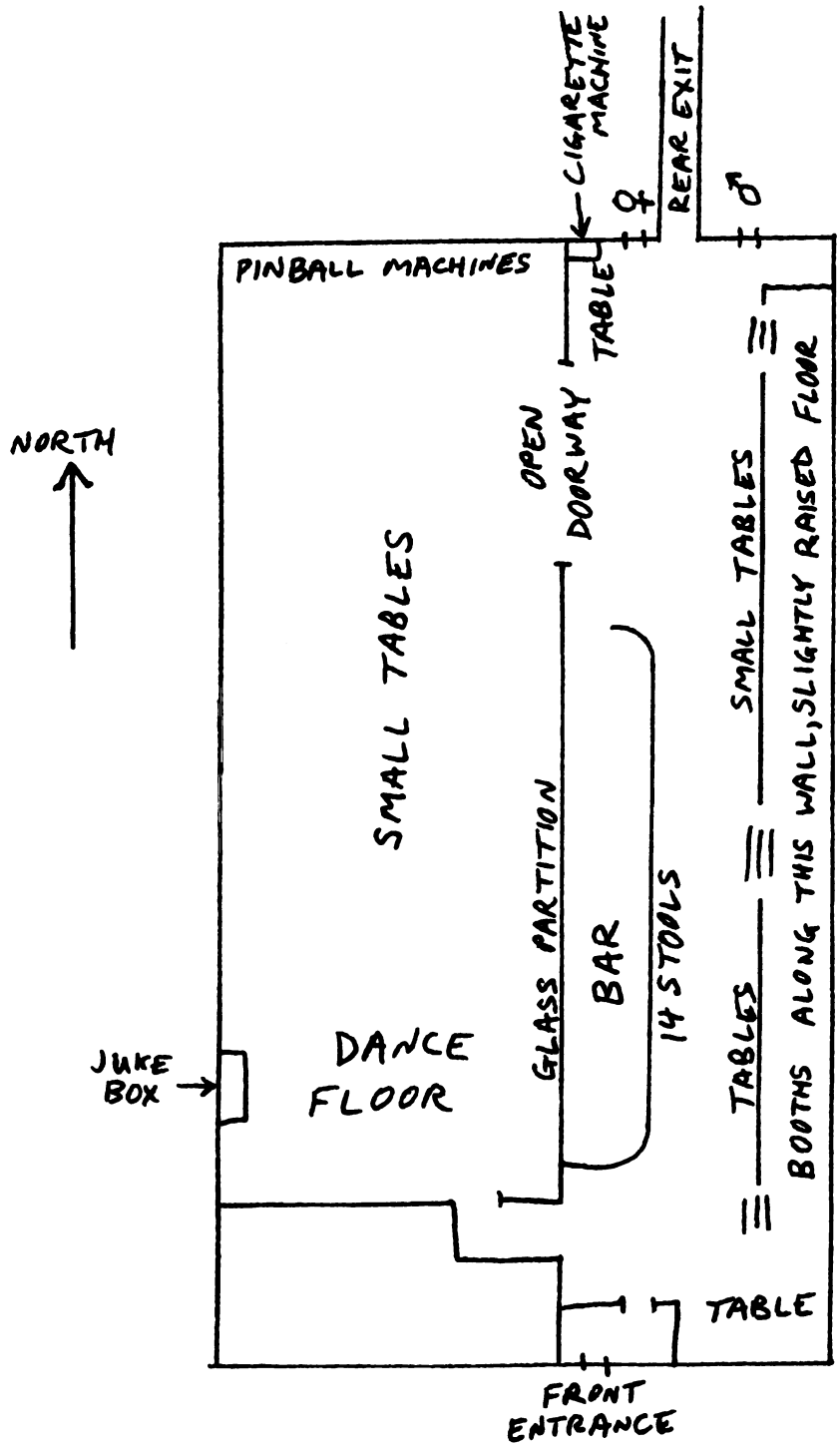
The College Center is unusual and is perhaps unique in Midwest City because of the many different groups potentially occupying the same public space. These different groups have only a minimum of shared agreement about conduct in such a public place (Douglas, 1971, pp. 226-43; also cf. Goffman, 1963). One would perhaps expect a great deal of mistrust, fear of crime, and misunderstandings between strangers in such a setting as a potential consequence of the minimum of shared standards and norms between the groups. However, rather than conflict occurring, individuals and groups appeared to uphold their own group's norms and standards of conduct and seemed to be quite oblivious to the different standards and purposes of other individuals and groups in the

setting. Being oblivious to the different norms and standards of conduct of other groups in a public setting is one way of avoiding a fear and mistrust of strangers.

The Gay Bars

Until the Summer of 1976, "the bar" was always understood to be Carl's bar. It is divided into two parts: One side has a dozen booths along one wall, a few small tables, and a long bar; the other side has a small dance floor (accomodating at most, two dozen dancers) with a jukebox and a couple of dozen small tables. As mentioned earlier, the lesbians typically form a large table from several small ones and sit together on the dance floor side. The gay males tend to distribute themselves on both sides of the bar. A gay male who is alone and not in a group of friends will typically stand or sit at the bar, but as the bar gets crowded (especially after eleven on weekend nights), there is considerable "milling" and movement of males back and forth between the two sides. As the entrance to Carl's bar is on the side with the bar and booths, one entering the bar will move through the bar side to the dance floor side and perhaps back again to join friends at a booth or to sit alone at the bar. But the "milling" extends further than this because many individuals leave their table of friends to cruise, to get a drink from the bar, or to join another table of friends. On a typical weekend evening after eleven, most tables and booths are occupied and those entering later may stand or walk around the rest of the evening. The most popular spot to stand (besides at the bar itself) is in the large doorway between the two parts of the bar; from here, one has the vantage of most of the bar. On a good weekend evening at its peak, the bar may have 125 gay males and 25 lesbians in it. (It's

Figure 2.--Floor Plan of Carl's Bar.



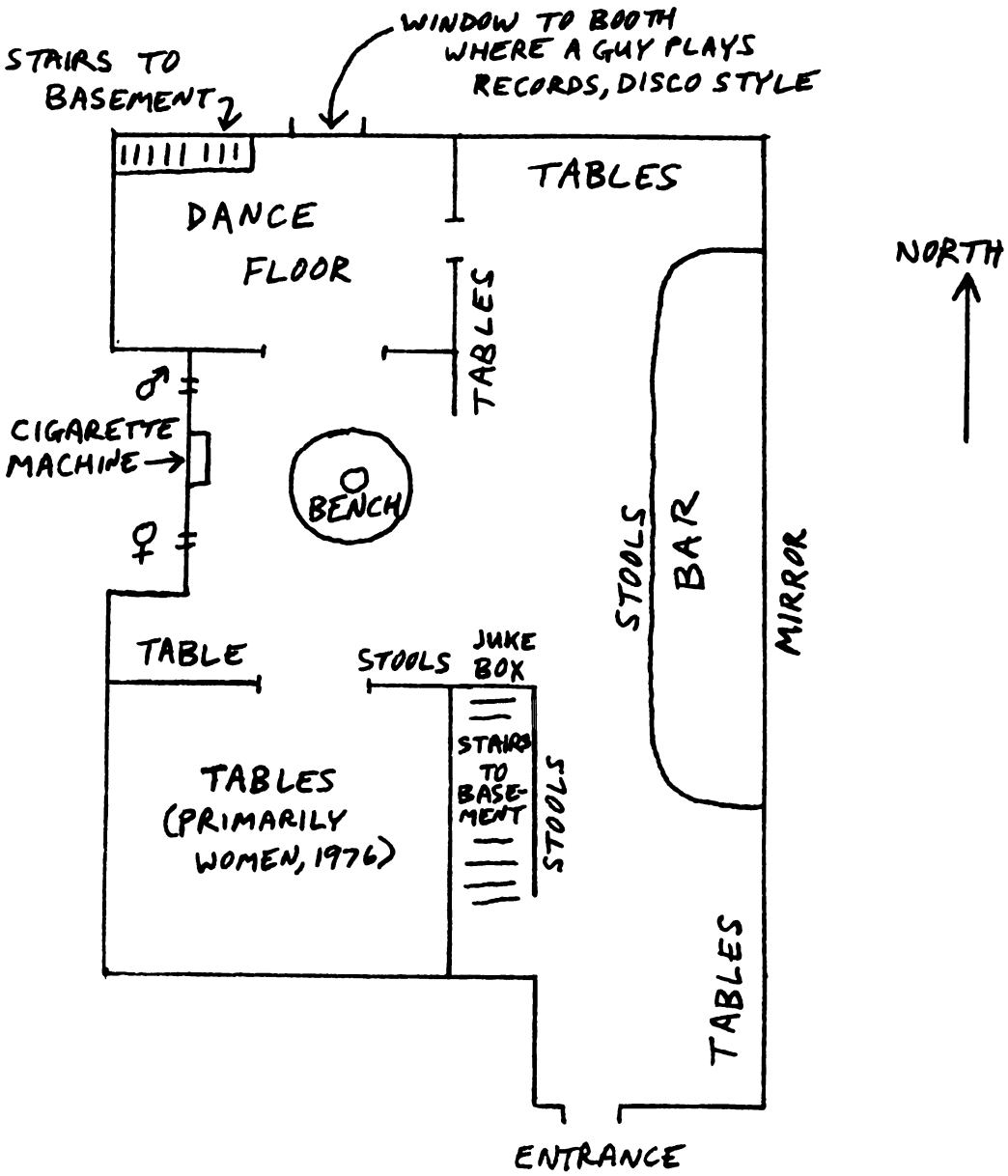
legal capacity is 175.)

Although Carl's bar is poorly lit, it differs from gay bars in the large cities in that (with the exception of minor touching, kissing, or "groping") no sexual behavior as such takes place in the bar. Perhaps surprisingly, this is also generally true of the men's washroom in the bar.

Tom's bar opened in the early Summer of 1976, having been redecorated by new owners from its previous state as a topless bar. At that time, there was some confusion by its former patrons, who could still see the neon sign advertising it as "topless." Eventually, the new owners posted a little sign on the door, which read "this is not a topless bar." Tom's bar is much larger and for the first year was better lit than Carl's bar. It is roughly divided into three rooms: One enters one end of a very long room with a long bar facing a large mirror on the wall and many small tables; a second room is a large dance floor with a strobe light in the ceiling which serves as its only lighting; a third room is composed completely of small tables; a large open area in the very center of the bar separates the three rooms and has a large round bench seating a dozen on it. In addition, there is a stairway to a small room in the basement which has a few pinball machines and a few other mechanical games and cigarette machine.

During the Summer of 1976, the lesbians took over the room with the small tables in it, and it became informally reserved for them. Except for the dance floor room, which might have both gay males and lesbians dancing in it, the bar is roughly divided into the room for lesbians and the much larger room with the long bar for gay men. (In 1977, most lesbians returned to Carl's Bar and pinball machines were installed in

Figure 3.--Floor Plan of Tom's Bar



their former room.) Tom's bar could legally hold two hundred, but it did not usually appear to be filled to its capacity. (This evidently did occur for a while on weekends during the first Summer that it opened, before many returned to Carl's bar.) As mentioned previously, the two bars are only a few doors apart, and it is common for one to go to both bars during the evening, no matter whether one is looking for a particular friend or looking over the possibilities for a sexual partner for the evening.

Public Restrooms

The male public washrooms in the College Center building and their use have previously been described. Other public washrooms in the metropolitan area are also popular for impersonal oral sex. One of the most popular is the rest stop on an expressway on the edge of the city. Although some gay males report deliberately driving out to it, its use is not very frequent.

"Sin Strip"

Located in the same block as the two gay bars are a number of businesses that give the block its reputation, as reported in the city newspaper, as "sin strip." These include an adult movie theater which shows heterosexual pornographic films, a massage parlor, and several adult bookstores, which each charge a dollar entrance fee. Of these, only the movie theater and one of the bookstores are known as gay sexual places, that is, as places where gay sexual encounters are possible on the premises.

Adult Movie Theater

The movie theater shows films continuously from 1:00 P.M. to 1:00 A.M., and for the entrance fee, one is allowed to leave and re-enter the premises during that afternoon and evening. (This means that one might go to the movie theater for awhile, then get something to eat in a nearby restaurant, go in one of the gay bars, and again later return to the movie theater.) The only homosexual acts in the movie theater involve oral sex. According to Pete, a sixty-four-year-old informant, the theater tends to attract quite an age range of males (women are rarely present). A male who is interested in giving oral sex (a "blow job") will sit in the back row of the theater. A male interested in receiving oral sex will walk behind the last row of seats, remain standing and perhaps lean against the back wall. The male sitting in the last row would turn around and unzip the pants of the standing male. Apparently, some oral sex also takes place in both washrooms of the movie theater. (The women's washroom door locks from the inside, so it is sometimes preferred for greater privacy by two males.)

Adult Bookstores

Although all of the adult bookstores on "sin strip" sell some gay pornography, only one bookstore holds the possibility of a gay sexual encounter within it. In the Summer of 1977, this bookstore put in a row of ten "booths," each about the size of a phone booth. Each booth shows a half-minute segment of a pornographic film for a quarter. Each booth can show either of two films, depending on which of two slots one deposits the quarter. The titles of the two films for each booth are displayed on the wall opposite the row of booths. The last two booths in the row (numbers 9 and 10) both show only gay pornographic films,

while the other booths only show heterosexual pornographic films. In the wall between booths 9 and 10 is a "glory hole" at waist height of about four inches in diameter. This hole-in-the-wall allows two gay males to engage in oral sex while watching the pornographic films. As a light comes on above each door visible from the hall outside the booths saying "in use" when a quarter is deposited and a film is being shown, a gay male would know when one of the gay booths is occupied. However, he would not necessarily know anything about the occupant of the booth, unless he saw the other person enter the booth. Hence, the oral sex obtained through the "glory hole" can be quite impersonal and anonymous.

For a short time, Midwest City had its own gay movie theater, when a small theater on the far north side of the city began showing gay films. However, it apparently was not an economic success, perhaps because it was located so far from both the campus and "sin strip." In any case, after a few months, it reverted to its former fare of heterosexual pornographic films, and is not now known as a gay place.

Gay Baths

The Midwest City area has never had a gay bath. However, the large metropolis (85 miles away) has several, and most Midwest City gay males are familiar with them, having gone in groups of friends on weekends to visit them. A gay bath typically has the minimum of two sorts of areas: Small, private rooms with a covered table like a bed in each of them; and a large, dimly lit "steam room." Impersonal sex (either oral or anal) may be had in either sort of room.

Private Areas

By private areas is meant an individual's house or apartment. These are necessarily distinguished from the above "public" settings because, of course, entrance to another's private area is effected only by invitation. As indicated when describing some of the public areas above (such as the bars), private areas are often important for consummating a sexual act after a partner has been selected in a public setting. Although sexual activity in a private area such as one's home may imply a high degree of intimacy to most readers, nevertheless the male sexual partners often remain quite impersonal, as in the "one-night stand."

Summary

With this list of ecological settings as gay sexual places, one begins to see the centrality of the sexual act. With the exception of the gay bars, there is considerable overlap of heterosexual and homosexual interest in the places; that is, both gay males and heterosexual males are likely to be in the same places at the same time. This is true not only of the College Center building, but also of the adult bookstore, movie theater, and public washrooms. Even the "profoundly heterosexual" institutions of the larger city encourage the overlap; this implies that information about gay places is compatible, and not sharply demarcated from the heterosexual institutions. One example is knowledge of gay places conveyed in the city newspaper, while another example is the use of the telephone crisis center and cabdrivers to initially locate the gay bars.

Also, with the list of gay ecological settings, one begins to see the significance of impersonality in the gay community. For sexual

acts in public places, there is only at most a facade of intimacy. The impersonality of many gay sexual acts is important to explaining just why so many of the gay places are public. Both the impersonality of the sexual acts and the public nature of the gay places insure redundancy of information about the places. That is, everything is consistent with the message that "this is a gay place." Knowing that a public place is a "gay place" assures that other things will follow, and one knows what to expect in the setting.

But again, it should be emphasized that symbolic interactional cues are crucial to the interaction in the ecological settings. Before considering this aspect of the gay community in chapter 5, it will be necessary to elaborate on the different identities to be found in the gay community because each identity is consistent with the self-presentation in the ecological setting. Hence, the next chapter will consider the several gay male identities and the ceremonies and rituals connected with these identities.

This chapter has attempted to show the nature of the gay community in one medium-sized city. The community is not capable of encapsulating its members because the social organization of the community is best described as composed of quasi-institutions which are poorly developed and dependent on the completed institutions of the larger city. The chapter has also shown the two most basic divisions in the community: Those segments based on sex and age. Crucial to the sense of community are the ecological locations that are recognized as "gay places." As shown, most "gay places" are in public; from this, one sees that most gay sexual acts are impersonal.

A major implication of the impersonality of sexual acts is that this shows why the standard ecological theories (such as Fischer, 1976) and the social career theories (which reify the sexual orientation identity) do not fully reveal the basis for the use of the concept of community. The sense of community is embedded in processes and relationships, and so, it is fragile and resistant to static, structural explanations. The next chapter will consider how intimate sexual relations are formed.

Footnotes to Chapter Four

1. One common view is that the stigmatized identity category of homosexual is "contagious." For example, this seems to be the fear of gay school teachers expressed by Anita Bryant (cf. Schur, 1965, p. 107, who considers "contamination" of the public). Because the identity category of homosexual rather than heterosexual is stigmatized by the larger society, the greater fear (in the larger society) is that one will "catch" the homosexual identity by contact with those who have the identity. Although it is rarely considered a possibility, obviously the converse "contagion" is also an inherent (logical) aspect of the myth; that is, those with the identity category of homosexual may also "catch" the heterosexual identity by contact with heterosexuals. The fact that gay males in a moderate-sized city must necessarily participate with known heterosexuals (usually without revealing the discreditable identity) in their round of daily activities, and are nevertheless stable and usually unquestioning of their sexual orientation after "coming out" belies the myth and the fear of "contagion."
2. The term, "quasi-institution," was selected because it implies that the organizations and structures to be considered under the term could potentially develop into completed institutions under certain conditions (in particular, the growth and territorial segregation of the gay population in the city). The term is preferable to Hughes' "bastard institutions," under which he subsumes either the illegitimate distribution of goods and services or the distribution of illegal or disreputable goods and services (1951, pp. 99). In

this connection, Schur writes, "Above all, it is the very nature of their particular deviance for homosexuals to be drawn into interaction with one another. The 'services' the homosexual demands can, it is true, sometimes be provided by nonhomosexuals, but this will not always be a fully satisfactory solution. In any case, the homosexual can find a solution among like-minded individuals.... The homosexual is, in a sense, the source of supply as well as the locus of demand.... It is partly this particular type of supply-demand nexus, then, that generates the homosexual community" (1965, p. 86). Schur, like Hughes, is only considering the supply and demand of sexual services by homosexuals. While some of the organizations to be considered, such as the gay bar, are important in the supply and demand of sexual services, others, such as Gay Lib, are not directly concerned with supplying sexual services. Besides being pejorative, the term, "bastard institutions" does not satisfactorily emphasize the differences among sets of institutions in their ability to encapsulate members within the institutions. The term, "quasi-institutions," nicely contrasts with the concept of "institutional completeness" (Breton, 1964), which will be examined shortly.

CHAPTER FIVE. INTIMATE SOCIAL STRUCTURES: IDENTITIES AND ACTIVITIES

Introduction

In the last chapter the quasi-institutions and the most important ecological settings of the gay community in this moderate-sized city were considered. Now those will be viewed as background in which certain identities are presented or displayed. At this point, a more symbolic frame of reference is needed to provide a vocabulary. The principle sources for the symbolic frame of reference to be used are Burke (1945), Stone (1962), Goffman (1959), and Gouldner (1957). One valuable way of viewing the present endeavor is based on K. Burke's discussion (1945) of the ratio among scene, act, and agent. The act can be defined as what was done, while the scene is when or where it was done, and the agent is who did it (Burke, 1945, p. XV). The last chapter was concerned primarily with the scenes (ecological settings) and acts (what was done), but now the focus will be changed to concentrate on the agent and act. That is, in the last chapter it was emphasized that the act is consistent with the scene; as Burke says, "Both act and agent require scenes that 'contain' them" (p. 15). We have looked at the scenes, while now the focus will be on the agents and their acts. Later in the chapter, these will be put together to analyze the interaction in terms of the public and private places (that is, the settings again) and identities.

In this chapter, a description of the kinds of identities to be found within the community will be presented. This will be followed by an

ethnographic description of activities in the public settings (the College Center, the bar, the slave auction, and drag shows) and private settings (parties, dates, and couples). The ethnographic description will necessarily assume an understanding of the identities; that is, the ethnography is concerned, in Burke's terms, with the agent-scene ratio, rather than the scene-act ratio. Finally, the chapter will consider the implicit gay annual calendar of ceremonies and their rituals as these relate to the identities that are to be found in the community.

Presenting an Identity and Segments

Certain crucial concepts organize the chapter. This starts with a quote from William James:

> "A man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him and carry an image of him in their mind... But as the individuals who carry the images fall naturally into classes, we may practically say that he has as many different social selves as there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares. He generally shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups" (1890, p. 294).

To "show a different side of himself" can be taken as the same as presenting an identity, in that information about the self is selected, and only some information is included in a presentation, while other information is excluded from that presentation. Some aspects of presenting an identity are nonverbal cues; some of these cues are subtle and not easily controlled by the actor. Goffman suggests that cues that are not easily controlled by the individual are nevertheless easily recognized by others, and are therefore taken (by the others) as more important in conveying information about the self (Goffman, 1959, Chapter 1). But also, "each participant is allowed to establish the

tentative official ruling regarding matters which are vital to him but not immediately important to others, e.g., the rationalizations and justifications by which he accounts for his past activity" (1959, p. 9). The initial presentation of identity (or, social self), as Goffman emphasizes (1959, p. 4), is crucial to the responses others make, and may be crucial to achieving the goal or plan that the individual brings to the interaction, so that joint action can be built up by the co-participants. Goffman says "The individual's initial projection commits him to what he is proposing to be and requires him to drop all pretenses of being other things" (1959, p. 10), but this should be understood as occuring with each presentation in each encounter, and one would expect the individual to select and present other definitions of the self in other encounters with other individuals. So, some aspects of the self become relevant when an identity is presented, while other aspects drop out of relevance to the presentation. Presenting an identity (or social self), then, is a dramaturgical problem for the individual because the person wants and looks for confirmation and acceptance of the proffered self from the others present (the audience to the proffered self), in order to achieve his goals in the group.

Just as the individual actor recognizes different audiences and "shows a different side of himself to each of these different groups," so also does the individual (as an audience to the presentation of self by others) recognize and act on the types of self-presentation made to him. In this sense, social organization as coordinated behavior between actors is based on the cognitive knowledge of types of available identities. Identities are the cognitive "keys" used by actors to construct a social structure.

It is perhaps obvious that the power and effect of a deviant label originating in the larger society, as well as the fear of its application, are more determinant of behaviors and self-identity than the gay community. Ironically, because the gay quasi-institutions are more limited in this moderate-sized city than in a larger city, this makes them more crucial for maintaining a gay identity. This chapter will again use the concept of segment, but now, it will not just refer to the amount of interaction (that is, greater interaction within the segment than outside), but also to the kinds of identities, which will be used to further distinguish the segments in the community. The chapter will not be concerned with the degree of total segmentalization of the community because this could only be ascertained by comparison with other communities. Rather, the point is that the segments are a subjective reality because they are based on a shared self-concept and identity. Because of the subjective reality of the segments, one cannot use census-type data in an ecological approach, such as constructing an index of segregation. Instead, one can only use the concept of segments as rough clues to the construction of the social organization of the community. If one could do comparative ecological research, then one could develop rules of thumb, like Harry's (1974) study relating the size of cities with specialized bars (e.g., lesbian bars, leather bars, drag show bars, etc.). However, an implication (or hypothesis) of the ethnographic description of identity segments in this medium-sized city is that, with larger city size, each identity segment would become more segregated from other identity segments, and hence, the individual would be more "encapsulated" within the segment (Lofland, 1969, pp. 50-60).

Nadel (1952) has suggested the significance of the multiple determinants of identity (i.e., any position is multivalent), so that sanctions against some behavior in, for example, politics is likely to be linked with sanctions in the family, religion, and so on. This is not true of gays in segments (except for arrests and subsequent public exposure) because there are separate hierarchies in, for example, work, church, and the gay world, and the consequences of some behavior are not equally important. Behaviors in different spheres of an individual's activity are segregated both in time and space, and this is as true of gay activities as of other activities. Contrary to Nadel, one would not expect a uniform effect on the individual from participation in all of the institutions of the city. That is, because the gay community has quasi-institutions which are dependent and the gay community is segmentalized, one would not infer an effect from participation in some aspect of the gay community on other aspects of the individual's life; for example, a successful lawyer may also be a "leatherman," but participation in each area may not have any effect at all on the other area of his activity.

In the last chapter, it was suggested that the sharpest division in the community was between gay males and lesbians. As each of these is also a subjective category of self-identity, as well as exhibiting high amounts of interaction within the category and low interaction between them, different criteria are not being used here than previously by referring to each of them as a segment of the community. Previously, it was emphasized that the distinction between gay male and straight male, or between lesbian and straight female, is less sharp than the division

between gay males and lesbians. This implies that even though sexual orientation is shared between these two segments, the respective identity of male or female is more important than the identity based on sexual orientation (see Omark, 1978, for an extended argument on this issue).

Stone says that "One's identity is established when others place him as a social object by assigning him the same words of identity that he appropriates for himself or announces" (1962, p. 93). Presenting an identity for affirmation by an audience is the dramaturgical problem for the actor, but just as Burke emphasizes the three elements of agent, act, and scene, one should again notice the importance of the scene to the actor and his act; that is, the presentation of an identity is always situated in some scene. A particular kind of audience is likely to be found in only certain settings, and so an identity can only (appropriately) be announced in certain settings. The congruity of these elements is important. This raises the question of the extensiveness of the settings in which an identity can be presented.

When the identity is relevant to the situated interaction (i.e., to interaction in a certain setting), this can be called a "salient" identity, following Gouldner (1957, p. 284; also see McCall and Simmons, 1966, p. 67, and Brittan, 1973, pp. 149-50), while the identity category would be "latent" if the identity is not relevant. With this distinction, a segment could be defined simply as composed of people who share a salient identity, except that this needs to be qualified yet further. Becker and Geer (1960) extended Gouldner's initial distinction by relating manifest and latent identities to manifest and latent cultures;

they say that manifest culture results

> "from the common assumptions for adjusting to similar problems and contingencies faced by the group members. It is a culture that grows around the roles and identities relevant to the specific setting, rather than those that are irrelevant or inappropriate" (p. 306).

Further, they suggest that an informal group may tend to cluster around a latent culture, the members of which share a latent identity (p. 310). This means that members of an informal group in a setting could share a manifest identity (appropriate to the setting), but further share a latent identity (i.e., the setting is one in which it is not viewed as appropriate to announce the second identity). This reiterates the question of the extensiveness of the settings in which a particular identity can be presented.

One implication of the above set of concepts has to do with role behavior. With an analysis of salient and latent identities, one would expect that the different segments would have different role behavior associated with the salient identity of the segment, even when the different segments are in the same ecological location. For example, gay males and lesbians, being in different segments, would have different role behavior, even when both are in the same gay bar.

The Identities

Besides the identities of male, gay male, female and lesbian that were considered in the last chapter, several other identities are to be found in the community.[1] Gay males may also have the identity of drag queen, leatherman, Gay Lib member, chickenhawk or chicken, hustler, bisexual, or closet queen. Just as a person can have both the identity of male and gay male (the latter identity having fewer settings in which it

can be presented than the former), so also, a gay male could present the identity of drag queen, leatherman, Gay Lib member, etc. However, some of these identity categories appear to be mutually exclusive in practice. For example, the identities of leatherman and drag queen apparently are never held by the same gay male. Also, the identity of closet queen precludes having any of the other identities. Finally, one should note that a gay male need not have any of the additional identities listed above.

One issue considered in the introduction with regard to these identities is the issue of the extensiveness of the settings in which any one of these identities can be presented. Presenting an identity for affirmation by an audience is necessarily situated, to the extent that an appropriate audience tends to be found in only certain locations. To see in more detail how social organization can be considered by the categories of a person's identities (i.e., identities as a key to social structure), an analysis of the identity of "drag queen" will first be considered. Thereafter, the other seven identities will be considered.

1. Drag Queens

For most gay males who in addition have the identity of drag queen, the latter is only a part-time identity and activity. (For an excellent description of the life of the full-time professional female impersonator, usually found only in cities larger than Midwest City, see Newton, 1972.) However, as will be shown, a "part-time" identity simply means that the identity is usually latent, and so the identity can nevertheless be important in informal groups (Becker and Geer, op. cit.). For example, the part-time drag queen may go to the bar "out of drag," but at the bar nevertheless spend most of his time talking with other drag queens, who are themselves either "in drag" or "out of drag." In this

case, one would say that the person with the "latent" identity of "drag-queen-out-of-drag" is participating in the drag queen segment at the bar.

Two elements of "play" (Stone, 1962, p. 109) are seen clearly in the (part-time) drag queen: 1) That the player leave himself behind (e.g., from an interview: "When I get fed up with just being a guy I'll cross-dress"; "It's just that I'm sick of playing Harry for about a month and I want to play [act] Helen for a change"; and "to get out of my every-day man life"); and 2) the element of non-serious fun in play (e.g., "We were just carrying on [in drag] . Having fun, you know; looking for a laugh"; or

> "... see what kind of fun I can have. You know, if I can pass [as a woman], or if people are going to realize I am gay, that I'm a guy in women's clothing, or what. And if they realize that I'm a guy in women's clothing then I give 'em a show, you know." (Taped interview, May 17, 1975.)

Clearly, some of the "fun" involves seeing the response of an audience.

Unlike the spontaneous play of children, going out in drag (either to the gay bar or in the straight public) is planned - usually a week ahead. Plans involve primarily the preparation of props: What to wear, hair style, and other elements of appearance that need be prepared. The props are all signs and symbols usually associated with the socially defined category of "woman" in our society (Newton, 1972, p. 5). Except for show performances, <u>when</u> the drag queen decides to go out is usually independent of anyone else - he decides and goes out alone usually.

<u>Where</u> he decides to go out in drag indicates what kind of audience he wants for his "fun." It is clearly most easy to go to the gay or "mixed" (both gay and straight) bars in drag, alone. In an interview,

one drag queen said, "I started going to places that were in [straight] public but I realized gay people were going to be there and that I wouldn't feel scared." Later, "all of a sudden I realized I've got this courage within me that I can go places in drag" (taped interview, May 17, 1975). It takes "courage" to go out in (non-gay) public because the reactions of the audience are always uncertain. With a strange gay audience (e.g., in the gay bar), he can count on their responses being at least indifference or tolerance, rather than hostility or outrage.

Where he goes out in drag implies the kind of audience and this implies the likely responses of the audience to his appearance. Stone says (1962, p. 93) that "identity establishes what and where the person is in social terms"; i.e., with an identity, the person is "situated." Further, "one's identity is established when others place him as a social object by assigning him the same words of identity that he appropriates for himself or announces" (p. 93). The fact that the drag queen chooses the general type of audience by selecting where to go in public means that he can calculate in advance the likelihood of his announced identity being confirmed by others. When the drag queen goes in the (straight) public, the response of the audience is uncertain; they may think he is a woman (i.e., he passes), or that he is a man in women's clothing, or gay. Only two of these match what he thinks his appearance announces about his identity. But in a gay setting, others place him in the same identity category that he announces, that is, "a gay man in women's clothing." But the collusion found in play is also involved here; a gay acquaintance will address Harry as "Helen" (at least, this is preferred by the drag queens). Two men in the gay bar could say to

each other "oh, there's another drag queen," but still would likely address him as "her"; certainly, another drag queen would use feminine words of address. Such interaction clearly is pretend play.

When one speaks of the "latent identity" of the drag queen, this means that his membership in the category of gay males who cross-dress is not salient to the situated interaction (Gouldner, 1957, p. 284). At work, Harry would have two latent identities (i.e., two of interest in this context): Gay male and drag queen. If a gay acquaintance came into his place of work, his own identity of gay would no longer be latent, but his identity as drag queen might still remain latent. But if he started talking with his friend about a drag show, then neither identity would any longer be latent. When Harry is dressed up in drag with a gay audience, neither being gay nor being a drag queen is latent, but the audience responds as if his appearance is his real identity (i.e., the audience pretends with him that he is a woman).

However, the drag queen complains that the audience does not respond to him sexually (i.e., does not find him to be interesting sexual object) - from the point of view of the audience, this is precisely because he appears to be a woman. (Several gay males have said of sex with a drag queen, "If I wanted sex with a woman, I'd get a real woman.") Further, the drag queen does not find other drag queens interesting sexually because he wants a "real man." The best way to explain these curiosities is to look at the identities "gay" and "drag queen" as separate. Although everyone knows that the term "drag queen" (as distinct from the more general term "transvestite") is included <u>within</u> the set of objects designated by the term "gay males," the complaint of the drag queen can

be viewed as a complaint that his identity of "gay male" is viewed as a latent identity while he is in drag. (While he is in drag among a gay audience, his appearance as a well-dressed woman, that is too well-dressed to pass as a woman, makes his manifest and salient identity that of "drag queen.")

In this kind of analysis of the drag queen, one sees that he takes on the appearance of a woman using props at a certain time, goes to a certain ecological location of his choice, to present his appearance of self to an audience, in order to get a response from the audience confirming his presented identity. One also sees the mixture of pretend ("woman") in the presentation and audience response, and the real, though weak association between the two identities, "drag queen" and "gay male."

With this model of salient and latent identities, the social organization of the gay community can be described, at least at one level, as composed of "segments" of interacting people sharing salient identities. E.g., there would be a leather segment, drag, GLM, chickenhawk, and so on, each identity being bounded as to time and place for its salience. These segments could be, and sometimes are in the same general ecological locations; e.g., "regular" gay males, drag queens, and chickenhawks can all be in the gay bar at the same time, but one would expect as an implication of this line of analysis of salient and latent identities, that the different segments would have <u>different</u> role behavior associated with the salient identity of the segment, even when in the same ecological location. (It is only in a much larger city that the segments could segregate themselves into separate ecological locations,

as a drag show bar, a leather bar, a lesbian bar, and so on.)

2. Leathermen

Gay males who in addition have the identity of "leatherman" are usually in one of the two gay male "leather and western" clubs in the large metropolitan area. Hence, being a "leatherman" tends to be an organizational identity, as these clubs have formal membership requirements. To become a member, one must file an application which includes the signature of five current members, acceptance by a membership committee, a three month probationary period for the new member, after which all members present at a club meeting vote on the probationary candidate, and also payment of dues. One club recognizes associate membership with lesser dues for those who live at a distance from the large metropolitan area, such as members living in Midwest City, because they are presumed to participate less often in club activities. Each club has "its own bar," but this just means that the bar owner allows and encourages club meetings and other events in the owner's bar.

In some respects, the leather and western clubs have been modeled after heterosexual motorcycle clubs, both in clothing worn (to be discussed) and in certain nomenclature. For example, a "run," originally meaning an organized race or hillclimb in which cyclists from different clubs compete, now means an organized weekend, advertised to leather clubs in other large cities, of a package of activities including dinner, drinks in a gay bar, the use of one floor of a gay bath, and other activities for registered guests who are met at the airport, housed for the weekend, and otherwise catered to.

Most of the participants for organized events, such as the Slave

Auction (to be described), the Do-A-Fool "run" (so named because the one club that organizes it, has it near the April First weekend; the name is a pun: To "do someone" is to have sex with him), and organized parties in members' homes are members of the two clubs or members in leather and western clubs from other large cities.

The typical dress of a club member at a club meeting, organized party, "run," or the Slave Auction is modeled after members of a motorcycle club: A black leather jacket often decorated with silver studs in it, jeans and engineering boots. Alternatively, a member may choose to go "western," with a leather vest over a shirt, black leather chaps tightly worn over jeans, and cowboy boots, often complete with small spurs (no cowboy hats were seen). From this, one can see that the emphasis is on appearance or image of a particular masculine role - indeed, one member in an interview did not object when these were referred to as "costumes." Quite incidental to membership is either ownership of a motorcycle or love of the feel of leather in general.

Certain other "costumes" are to be seen in the leather bar such as cloth uniforms which look much like some kind of military cadet (sans insignia) and others look like a police uniform (but again, without badge, insignia, or gun holster). Two club members were seen wearing light blue uniforms with gold braid; these uniforms belong to the club and are used only for official functions.

However, a good club member need not necessarily wear nor even have a costume. For example, one interviewed member (Jef) does not have a uniform or other costume and goes to all club functions in slacks, sport shirt, and loafers. The basis of good membership is cordiality and

friendship with other club members and enjoyment of club activities, which include for some the wearing of male costumes, as well as the enjoyment of homosexual activities. When interviewed, the associate member from Midwest City (but active in the club and its bar on weekends) said that membership made him feel that he was in a select, "elite group" within the gay community, but he emphasized that his friendships with many in the club extended back to a couple of years before the club was formally organized about 1970.

Some (e.g., Townsend, 1972) claim a direct connection between an interest in leather (as defined above, that is, being a "leatherman") and homosexual interests in bondage and/or sado-masochistic practices. In an interview, the leatherman disputed this, claiming that many members had quite ordinary homosexual practices, and yet he was able to describe the elaborate, symbolic dress code involving wearing key rings from one side of the belt or the other. A key ring worn on the right indicates that one is a masochist, or "bottomman"; while on the left indicates a sadist, or "topman", and colored handkerchiefs worn visibly from one or the other back pocket (dark blue in the right pocket indicates that one likes to be fucked in anal intercourse, and in the left, that one likes to fuck; red indicates that one is into fist fucking, with the left pocket indicating that the person likes to do it to the other; light blue in the left pocket indicates that the person prefers to blow the other in oral intercourse, while in the right pocket, that one prefers mutual, simultaneous oral sex; and finally, yellow indicates "watersports" or urination, with the left pocket indicating that the person likes to be urinated on).

In this connection, Joe, who had been "sold" as a slave in the annual Slave Auction, was asked what had happened after he was sold:

> "Not much. We went to the baths, and he put a dog collar around my neck. I got pretty nervous and said I wasn't into S & M. He said, 'Yeh, I know.' He screwed me once. Then I screwed him several times, and then we went to sleep. In the morning he released me. And that was all." (Recorded conversation, December 1, 1975.)

One can see in this interaction that the dog collar is at least symbolic bondage, even though the sexual preferences of Joe had been described by the auctioneer before he had been "sold," as simply a preference for anal intercourse.

Some of the explanation for the costumes and elaborately color-coded handkerchiefs is made plain by Townsend: "... your success in attracting the partners you seek will depend on how well you manifest the characteristics of the other guy's fantasies" (1972, p. 128). Apart from the various esoteric preferences in sexual activities which all members do not share (in any case, many with peculiar preferences are flexible with a partner and his preferences anyway), the emphasis in the leather and western clubs is on images of hyper-masculinity and authority.

The uniform and other costumes are props for a dramaturgical presentation of the self, which have the "play" and pretend elements in common with drag. As with the props of the drag queen, the costumes of the leatherman are a considerable financial investment. As explained in a conversation by two club members from Midwest City, one usually begins with western style clothing because it is cheaper and much of it commonly is already owned, e.g., jeans, a western sports shirt, and perhaps a pair of boots. One of these members (who was, however, fairly new to

the scene) said he would stay with the western style because he felt "comfortable" in it. A third, peripheral member revealed that his black leather motorcycle jacket cost $110. When asked if he ever wore it to work in an office, he looked disgusted with the question and answered snidely, "of course not." Because this is undoubtedly true with the other elaborate costumes as well - where else could one wear leather chaps and spurs besides to the leather and western bar? - one sees that there is an "ecological clustering" of identities and their presentations.

Leather and drag are similar in terms of wearing costumes, but are opposite in emphasizing pretended masculine or feminine roles. In both the leather scene and drag shows, what is shared is in addition to sexual orientation. Although membership in a leather club or in a friendship network of drag queens may make the member feel that he is in a select and "elite" group within the gay community, both are better considered as being on the periphery of the community because of the special elements (props) and interests added to sexual orientation.

At this point, it should be emphasized that these two public identities of leatherman and drag queen, one associated with a formal club, the other with informal friendship networks, are not completely closed in their membership. Also, neither group recruits new members in a formal sense. It is true that one need go through a formal process to join the leather club, but "their" bar, the Slave Auction, and some of their parties are open to the public. It is also true that one would have to be fairly well known to other drag queens to be invited to appear in one of their drag shows.

However, any gay male can "try out" one of these identities just by

taking on the associated props. For example, one gay roommate (Bruce) played at being a leatherman one evening by going to the bar in Midwest City dressed in a vest, black pants, cowboy hat, and handcuffs dangling from his belt. He said that it was fun to see the many stares, shocked looks and avoidance that he got at the bar. Again, this merely illustrates the dramaturgical problem of presenting an identity in an ecological location, but here, the roommate chose a bar that does not serve to present an identity of leatherman. (At the leatherman's bar in the large metropolitan area, he would likely have received scorn for his amateur efforts.) In much the same way, one could "try out" going to the bar in drag by assembling the necessary props. Although one person could "try out" both identities, they are viewed as antithetical by the two groups: The drag queen is shunned and avoided by most leathermen, while a drag queen would taunt the apparent supermasculinity of a leatherman, for example by addressing him with a female's first name (e.g., at one point, Harry, a drag queen, insisted that Bob B.'s name was really Betty, at which Bob walked away, showing signs of disgust and anger.)

3. Gay Lib Member

The identity of Gay Lib member is an organizational identity, salient primarily in organizational meetings and with other organization members. Like the other identities considered here, it is in addition to the identity of gay male, and would be more limited in situations where it is salient than the identity of gay male. Membership in Gay Lib is fairly fluid and open. In any one year, probably not more than a dozen males could be considered active members, although many more

could show up for a scheduled meeting and many more would show up for a sponsored dance. Most of the latter would not consider themselves, nor be considered by others as members of Gay Lib.

4. Chickenhawks and Chicken

A "chickenhawk" can be defined as a gay male who is interested in having sexual relations with teen-aged boys; the latter are "chicken." The sexual exchange between them may involve the payment of money by the chickenhawk to the boy, but this is not invariably the case. When money is exchanged, then the boy could be called a "hustler," but the latter term is usually used for the older (post-teen) male who engages in sexual relations for money.

Contrary to the article by Reiss (1961), the boys do not necessarily define themselves as heterosexual. The sexual orientation of the boy can only be determined by a self-referring statement (i.e., "I am gay," or "I am straight"). For example, Leo, who now defines himself as a bisexual chickenhawk, described learning from other boys how to hustle when he was fourteen years old in New Orleans; at that time, he considered himself to be gay. (Notes at the bar, October 28, 1978.)

A chickenhawk defines himself as gay (or sometimes bisexual). He is, for example, likely to frequent the gay bar, but is not particularly likely to find someone there as sexually desirable because potential partners there are usually viewed as too old.

As Reiss (1961) has described, the sexual exchange between the chickenhawk and chicken is usually effected in public. For example, Pete, a 64-year-old chickenhawk was asked:

> "'How would they (chicken) makes themselves available?

> Pete: 'Either they would be hitch-hiking in those particular areas (of the city) as you came along, and you could stop and pick them up [and in] certain other areas if you'd park, they'd practically come over and talk to you, particularly if you noticed them...'
> RCO: 'You would drive your car to X Park and suppose you saw a young man, or somebody 16 or 17, how would you do it? What would you do?'
> Pete: 'Oh, (laughs) there's all sorts of things, you could just set there. They paraded, a lot of them would walk around and around. If you stayed parked in your cars, they'd walk around the sidewalk...'
> RCO: 'The sidewalk to the park?'
> Pete: 'Around the sidewalk of the park, a block square. And as they came by they would eye you and if you eyed them, then probably the second time around, they might come over and ask for a light or a cigarette or something and maybe ask if they could get in and sit down a minute or something like that, and then you made the arrangements...'
> RCO: 'What would be a typical kind of...'
> Pete: 'Well, I'll tell you. One kid, an example of one kid that I picked up one time. He was hitch-hiking through that part of town, I came along the park, stopped, and I picked him up and asked him where he wanted to go, and he just had some time to kill and was out to ride around. And so I said that's more or less what I was doing and we rode for a ways. He was wearing short-shorts and I sort of eyed over towards him eventually.'
> RCO: 'Toward his pants.'
> Pete: 'Toward his pants, yeah, his crotch, which I knew he would catch. And then a little bit later I rubbed myself like this (his own crotch) and just zingo - he was over starting to open my pants. (Taped interview, July 16, 1978.)

The chicken may make himself available by standing on the street near the gay bar, or at the exit to nearby public parking areas, or also in a nearby restaurant. For example:

> "'There was a spot in [the large metropolis] called the Hub Restaurant, which is now a parking lot. And that used to really be the, oh, those too young to go to the bar used to go to the Hub...

Here was the Hub, here was a black bar, there was a white bar, and there was another white bar. Um, all three of these were gay. You could either go down to the Hub, or, almost anywhere within a two block area.'
RCO: 'So, you used to go regularly to the Hub?'
Jef: 'That would be one place. You know, uh, that was the only one that I was familiar with...'
RCO: 'You never did it twice with the same person?'
Jef: 'No.'
RCO: 'Why not?'
Jef: 'Because I never developed a relationship. You know, I was in looking for somebody to suck my cock, and you know...'
RCO: 'Was that what happened consistently?'
Jef: 'Yeah.'
RCO: 'Did you ever reciprocate?'
Jef: 'Um, no. (pause) I was still chicken and considered desirable. Cause the Hub used to be, um, a place where people, you know, those who were interested in chicken, used to go. It used to be, you know...'
RCO: 'Oh, I see. It was always older men, then.'
Jef: 'Right.'
RCO: 'I see, I see. It wasn't teen-agers doing it to themselves.'
Jef: 'No.'
RCO: 'I see. Did they ever pay you?'
Jef: 'No.'
RCO: 'Did they ever offer you money?'
Jef: 'Not that I remember.'
RCO: 'Did you know the other teen-agers?'
Jef: 'I knew about four of them, you know, enough to chat with them.'
RCO: 'But you never talked to them about what you were doing sexually?'
Jef: 'No.'
RCO: 'They'd never tell you anything like, 'Stay away from that guy, he's, he wants to do something strange' or anything like that?'
Jef: 'Not that I remember.'
RCO: 'Were you fairly sure that the other guys were doing the same thing?'
Jef: 'Yeah.'" (Taped interview, respondent is 30 years old, March 14, 1974.)

The chicken may make himself available by standing on the street near the gay bar, but there are many other locations that can be used. For example, one fourteen-year-old has "his" place in Midwest City in

the men's washroom in a busy shopping mall; presumably, most men would not recognize just why he stood at the sinks nor notice how long he stood there.

Such relationships are not only developed in public places, however. For example, Jef was asked:

> "'What happened when you were fourteen?'
> Jef: 'The neighborhood queer. Didn't every neighborhood have their own, you know, have their queer? A married man who used to like to see, who used to be a chicken queen and try to grab everybody.'
> RCO: 'What do you mean, that's what happened to you?'
> Jef: 'Yeah.'
> RCO: 'That you met...'
> Jef: 'The neighborhood queer. A nice, old married man who used to like to suck (me)...'
> RCO: '...how long did he suck your cock?'
> Jef: '...over a time span of four years.'
> (Taped interview, March 14, 1974.)

It is clear that only some chicken are organized into groups where everyone knows everyone else in the group; this tends to be the case whenever the chicken congregate in a certain public area, such as a parking lot near the bar, or a restaurant.

The chickenhawks are more often and more clearly in a segment of the gay community in the sense that they tend to meet and talk together, for example, in the gay bar, or also in their homes. For example,

> "RCO: 'I guess what I'm really interested in trying to ask you, you know there were other people, like at the bar, who were also interested in chicken. And I was really curious: Did you have friendships with them?'
> Pete: 'Some of them. I had friendships (in the gay bar) with ones who were not interested in chicken. Sometimes we'd trade information on chicken. Other times, we wouldn't - be very closed mouthed about it.'
> RCO: 'Ah, would you exchange pornography on chicken?'

> Pete: 'Sometimes. Sometimes to a certain extent.' (Taped interview, July 16, 1978.)

Another example from the same interview, Pete was asked:

> "'While you were going to the bar, to the Wentworth, and picking up chicken, going out for chicken (RCO laughs), did you know other people who were chickenhawks?'
> Pete: 'Oh, yes, a lot of them by sight.'
> RCO: 'At the bar?'
> Pete: 'Some went to the bar, sure. I knew a lot of them by sight. But very few of them by name.'
> RCO: 'You mean, you would see other people regularly at X Park, driving around?'
> Pete: 'Yes. There were some I knew by name, and...'
> RCO: 'How would you know them by name?'
> Pete: 'Well, at the bars, got acquainted with them, and so on. There was one fellow, who was very much so (chickenhawk), had an apartment. We used to have some little sessions there. He had a stud house full of kids running around the place.' (Taped interview, July 16, 1978.)

Another example is from fieldnotes at the bar. I sat with David, Leo and Pete (the latter two are chickenhawks). Pete told Leo about a film of three boys that he had recently bought. Leo said he would never buy any films without using a credit card to insure that he got the film. Pete agreed that that was a good idea, but that the best films now are coming from Holland and Denmark, and one can't use a credit card to buy them. Leo indicated that he had never bought a motion film but would consider it, and wondered why he had never bought a film projector. (Conversation recorded November 25, 1977.) This example shows that information is exchanged between chickenhawks who are acquainted.

Although some chickenhawks do not know others (as presumably was the case with the married "neighborhood queer" above), others do know each other, greet each other, and talk in the gay bar and in their homes.

Although chickenhawks do not seem to be as extensive (nor as recognizable) as the drag queen segment, chickenhawks nevertheless form a segment of their own, based on interaction with a distinct self-identity and a particular sexual preference which sets them apart.

5. Hustlers

Hustlers can be distinguished from chicken in that they engage in sexual relations with a partner for money. The term, hustler, is defined as a sexual relationship within the gay community. This differs from the larger society, where "a hustle" or "to hustle" merely means that one has a way of making money. Unlike Rechy's City of Night (1963), most in the gay community appear to assume that a hustler is gay, rather than straight.

It is unusual for an older male in Midwest City to try to survive just by being a hustler; hence, there is some confusion between chicken and hustlers. For example:

> RCO: "'How usual was it for these guys, kids, the chicken, to be hustlers? I think a hustler, to me, always means that they want some money.'
> Pete: 'A good share of them were, who were making themselves available.'
> RCO: 'In the 1950's and 1960's.'
> Pete: 'Yeah. But very cheap hustlers.' (Soft laugh.)
> RCO: 'Like?'
> Pete: 'Well, the $5 type, at the most. And usually less. Some of them, and as I say, some of them were and some of them weren't...'
> RCO: 'Some of them didn't ask for any money?'
> Pete: 'Yeah. The ones that didn't ask for any money were usually the ones that were very ready to reciprocate.'
> RCO: 'Oh, so there was a difference in sexual practices, then?'
> Pete: 'Quite often with the hustlers there are. Because while many of them are basically gay and will end up being gay, when they start out they are telling themselves they are doing it only for

> the money, and it's all one-sided. You can suck them off or they'll fuck you, or something of that sort, but no reverse on it...'
> RCO: 'But there were still a number of chicken, some would not charge, some would reciprocate.'
> Pete: 'And some would still want to charge, that would reciprocate, too. The price varied with what they did. They had a price schedule on everything.'
> RCO: 'Oh? How did that work?'
> Pete: 'Well, okay. If you were going to suck them, this was one amount. If they would fuck you, this was another amount and then if they were expected to do anything in return, why, that was much higher.'
> RCO: 'Hum, but $5 was tops.'
> Pete: 'Well, no, usually if they put out a price schedule like if they were to be fucked, it would be $10, or if they sucked you off, they'd want $15 or $20. That would be the asking price. Usually they'd go for much less.'
> (Taped interview, July 16, 1978.)

Hustlers, usually being a little older than chicken, can sometimes be found in the gay bar. For example:

> Pete: "Oh, occasionally I would pick up people at the bar, but they were again usually gays who were on the hustle a bit. At the old Wentworth, they used to, some of them, get in there before they were 21, too. They were tolerated a little bit." (Taped interview, July 16, 1978.)

Another example makes the same point: Don (aged 19) had been a hustler, hitch-hiking on the street beginning about the age of fourteen. I asked Leo (aged 33) how he had met Don: He met Don at Carl's bar while playing pinball. Don had joined him and "I let him pick me up. We went to a motel, and he's very good (in bed)." I had to probe to get Leo to say that he paid him, he thought, $30, adding that the minimum price is usually $20. Leo said he could trust Don not to rip him off, and usually avoids hustlers (for that reason?). He said Don has "a good mind,

at least when he wants to use it." Leo said he has subsequently gone to bed with Don three or four times, usually paying him. Leo explained,

> "That's how he makes his money, and he's good. We are friends now and I probably wouldn't have to pay him, but if you have a friend who sells shoes, you don't expect him to give you the shoes. He usually needs the money, and if I have it, I don't mind giving it to him."

Leo said he thought Don wanted to pick him up tonight, by his affectionate behavior in the bar. (Field notes, July 30, 1978.)

Don, Harry, and some of the other drag queens sometimes hustle outside the gay bar in drag; this means that they pretend to be female prostitutes, when in drag. Sometimes they also hustle in male clothing, or at least try it. Hence, there is sometimes an overlap between being into drag and hustling.

Hustling is also something that can be done on the spur of the moment as a way of de-personalizing a sexual relationship. For example, Bill C. (an executive in an insurance company and aged about 28 or 30) said one day,

> "'Oh, I made ten dollars this week' (he smiles).
> RCO: 'What? Oh, no! You didn't!' (We both laugh.)
> Bill C.: 'Yeah, I did. See, there's this guy, Dan, who I never met, and he calls up, he's been calling up for a year or two, and beats off on the phone while telling me all the things he would like to do.'
> RCO: 'Wait. You never met him?'
> Bill C.: 'No, I never met him. It was getting so that he would call up in the middle of the night, and I would say 'hello, Dan' and set the phone down and go back to sleep. After a while, the beeping of the phone would wake me up and I'd hang it up. Anyway this last week, I told him, 'You can't go on phoning like this. We never go out, or anything.' So, he said 'Okay, let's meet at the post office.' Well, I didn't have anything to do and I was going out shopping anyway, and Phil (his lover, who he lives with) was

> out. So, I drove by, and here's this guy walking up and down. He looked like a mess - well not really a mess, but not all that good. Anyway, I call out 'Dan?' and he jumps in and wants to go to his place. Just as we got there, I said to him, 'You know, this is the way I make my living.' And he says, 'Oh, I wouldn't want it any other way,' and pulls out a $10 bill from his pocket and hands it to me. So then I went in and put it all on like I was a hustler. I stripped all my clothes off right away, and leaned against the bed (gestures, with his hands on his waist, posing). It was really fun.'" (Conversation recorded, December 5, 1974.)

6. Bisexuals

As an identity, a "bisexual" is not likely to present the identity to others in the gay community, except to those who are good friends. That is, a person with a bisexual identity is not likely to tell others that he or she has a bisexual identity. This is so because others are likely to view the assertion as a "cop-out," or to assume that the person has only recently come out and has not yet fully accepted his (or her) identity as gay.

7. Closet Queens

Being "out" (or having "come out") usually means being willing to present a gay identity in certain ecological settings, making oneself available for homosexual relations, and being willing to have friends who share a homosexual identity in the setting. Because of the intersection with the straight world and the potentially discreditable nature of the presentation of a homosexual identity in the public domain, some gay males choose to make their identity presentations in only some, and not other, locations. Some prefer to "cruise" (to look for a sexual partner) only at the gay bar because they can assume that most others present are also gay, and, if successful in cruising, go

to a private space for actual sexual relations. Others avoid the gay bar and prefer the greater subtlty and anonymity of cruising in the College Center, even despite (or in some cases, because of) the risk of police apprehension in the public washrooms. In this varied sense, a "closet queen" (a derogatory term rarely applied to the self) is one who has adopted a strategy toward the ecological locations where a gay identity may be presented.

Unfortunately, the term "closet queen" is used by gay males to designate anyone who has not "come out," as defined above. Hence, someone who has had some incidental homosexual experiences and may think of himself as possibly having a bisexual or homosexual identity, but does not know about the several ecological settings for presenting a homosexual identity and forming friendships with homosexuals, would be called a "closet queen" by gay males. This is not a conscious strategy of avoidance, but rather ignorance. Also, gay males in conversations sometimes refer to "trade" (Humphreys, 1970) as closet queens, and occasionally imply that most males in society, or particular prominent males, are "really" closet queens. Such a view by gay males is self-serving, by asserting that the homosexual minority is really a majority. This misperception is also seen in Gay Lib posters in the College Center advertising their dances with the slogan, "Come out of the closet." A closet queen (in their terms) would not have enough social contact with gay males to know what the slogan means! Hence, there is an identity of "closet queen" but it is not claimed nor presented by anyone as an aspect of the self.

Having considered the several identities that comprise segments of

gay male community, activities in the public and private settings will now be considered. The several identities were considered first because some of these identities become salient with some activities in public. In particular, the annual "slave auction" which is organized by one of the leather clubs will be described. Also, drag shows and drag contests have greater salience to those with the identity of drag queen. The consideration of activities in public places will begin with the activity of "cruising," which can simply be defined as the public searching for a sexual partner. This will be done because cruising can be viewed as the "central event" (Agar, 1973, p. 21; also see Lee, 1978a) of gay male sub-culture not only for gay males with one of the several additional identities which have just been considered but for "regular" gay males including those in couples as well.

Activities in Public: College Center, Bar, Slave Auction, and Drag Shows

1. Cruising in the College Center

Cruising for a sexual partner is done somewhat differently in the various public domains (College Center, bar, and public washrooms). As described earlier, following and being followed by another in the College Center building are important aspects of cruising, prerequisite to actual sexual behavior. However, usually one would not follow another (nor be followed) without initial "eye contact" or some other minimal expression of reciprocated interest. These preliminary expressions are usually very subtle and go completely unnoticed by a naive observer. In fact, the cues at the initial stage of cruising another male are so subtle that errors in perception often occur even among those with great experience in cruising. A gay male cruising a strange male in

the College Center does not know the sexual orientation nor sexual interests of the stranger, but because the gay is hoping for an initial expression of interest from the other, he can mistake this in the blink of an eye, and subsequently follow the other around the building fruitlessly. A straight male often does not even recognize that a sexual interest is being expressed in him when he is initially "being cruised" and so he often does not respond in a fashion that could be taken by a gay male as a cue reciprocating interest.

As mentioned, "eye contact" is the usual initial cue in cruising. Straight males who are strangers to each other often glance once at each other, thereby acknowledging the other's presence. Eye contact is simply a somewhat longer than normal glance which is repeated. At the same time it is not staring into the eyes of the other for a prolonged period (Ashcraft and Scheflen, 1976, pp. 28-30, note norms against staring). Rather than staring, one cruising would typically try to establish eye contact several times over a few minutes. (Lee, 1978b, p. 54, also briefly mentions the importance of repeated glancing to cruising.) This, of course, means that the male cruising has to situate himself so that he can make repeated glances at the other, hoping for the more prolonged and repeated eye contact from the other. At the same time, he must situate himself close enough to the other to be sure exactly where the other's glance is directed, and within the other's field of vision to hope to "catch the other's eye." Obviously it would be rare to try to cruise another person across a large room.

One typical pattern in the College Center building occurs in the Lounge, a large room (about one hundred feet long) filled with chairs

and couches. On a typical evening the room may have a couple of dozen people in it, sitting scattered about the room. Some of them would be small groups of men or women or mixed groups, typically studying together, while others would be sitting alone, reading. A gay male, for example, Bob B., would enter the Lounge carrying a newspaper or book, and would look all around the room, as if looking for a friend. If in fact, he sees a friend and joins him, then he is no longer cruising. More likely (even if Bob does see a friend, whom he does not join), he will select a possible lone male to cruise, and he will sit down in a chair or couch which faces the stranger. The chair selected may not place him directly in front of the stranger, but this does not matter as long as Bob is within the other's field of vision. The chair selected would usually be outside the boundary of the personal space of the other, and this distance prevents any conversation between the two while they remain sitting (cf. Sommer, 1969, p. 27). Bob might not look directly at the other as he sits down, but instead would open his newspaper, thereby establishing his legitimate purpose in sitting there. Indeed, if the other acknowledged Bob's presence as he sat down, for example by a nod or a "hello" this would probably be taken as a bad sign, as the other may be straight or too friendly. Bob, facing the other, would open his newspaper or book but would hold it below the line of sight of potential eye contact.

Cruising can also be effected while sitting down, while the other is walking by, but again, initial eye contact (the prolonged glance) is the crucial thing. In either case, the initial objective is "good" eye contact, which means frequent prolonged glances which "catch the eye"

of the other briefly.[2] A subtle way of expressing greater interest after good eye contact has been established (that is, subtle to an observer), is, while the other looks at Bob's eyes, Bob would glance down at the other's genital area and then quickly back to the other's eyes. This is an expression of sexual interest communicated to the other only if the other sees and recognizes where Bob has glanced. If the other breaks eye contact during the glance at his genital area, then either communication of sexual interest has not been made, or the other may not be interested in a sexual encounter. During this process of repeated prolonged glances over several minutes, one or both males may unintentionally exhibit signs of the development of an erection beneath the clothing. If this occurs in the other, it would be taken as a favorable cue to the one cruising, but is not viewed as a necessity for subsequent events. Good eye contact in itself justifies following the other if he gets up from his seat. The cruiser may get up from his seat and leave the Lounge area in order to see if the other will follow him; this may merely amount to getting up to get a drink of water at a fountain near the Lounge. If the other does not follow but eye contact has been "good," the cruiser would likely return to his seat and continue the repeated prolonged glances. Eventually, one or the other must get up and be followed to effect a subsequent sexual encounter. If this does not occur (typically) within a half hour, the cruiser is likely to leave and go to another area of the building to cruise someone else. No conversation with the other during this cruising would usually occur because the two would maintain distance between each other so that the personal space of each is not violated, and this

distance precludes conversation.

Once one is being followed or following, walking in the building, the choice to be determined is whether to have oral sex in a washroom or to go to one's home, typically for anal sex. (Inviting someone home does not exclude the possibility of oral sex there as well. Some simply prefer the greater comfort and privacy of the home for oral sex. It should be emphasized that most gay males are fairly flexible in their repertoire of sexual acts with a partner.) Certain contingencies should be obvious at this point. For example, the one being followed may go into a washroom in the building, and the follower will either follow him into the washroom with the objective of having oral sex there (if the washroom is not occupied by others, or waiting until others leave), or the follower will walk around outside the area of the washroom. The follower may follow the other into the washroom just to continue to express a sexual interest. If the choice is to have sex in the washroom, very little if anything will usually be said (cf. Humphreys, 1970, and Delph, 1978).

If the objective is to take the other home for a sexual encounter of an hour or two, the cruiser must have a car or live nearby. Once sufficient interest through eye contact and following by the other has been expressed, an invitation home is easily made, for example, by inviting the other home "for a drink." Even then, the exchange of biographical information is usually minimal, often limited to the exchange of first names. The relative anonymity of the one-night stand is typical, not only (as Humphreys, 1970, has suggested) to forestall the possibility of blackmail and extortion, but more importantly so as not

to shatter any fantasies about the other that are possibly present (on the importance of fantasy in a silent sexual encounter, see Delph, 1978, pp. 26-8). For example, one male who regularly cruised the College Center lounge, although not particularly muscular, enhanced the masculinity of his appearance by typically wearing tight jeans and a black leather jacket. For him to reveal that he works in a suit in an office could shatter fantasies that his partners may have about him, and destroy the possibility of the sexual encounter before it took place (Delph, 1978, pp. 26-7 gives a similar example). There is little reason to exchange biographical information after the sexual encounter in the one-night stand, unless one of the partners wants to repeat the performance at a later time. In that case, phone numbers are all that need to be exchanged.

The preliminary expressions of interest toward a stranger are usually, but not always, very subtle, and are not always non-verbal. For example, I sat in the lounge with a drag queen (Harry) and a gay friend of his. Harry noticed Rick (an acquaintance of mine, who I knew was straight) and started making quite loud comments, like "oh, is he nice looking." When Rick walked by us, Harry invited him to join us. (Harry did not know that Rick and I were acquainted, so Rick was not reluctant to join us.) Rick learned that Harry is a drag queen, which he found interesting. Harry (to Rick): "Why don't you come home with me and I'll tell you all about it?" Rick replied: "No, I can't. I have to meet my girlfriend in here in a few minutes." Harry exclaimed immediately, "Oh, ditch her!" At that point the other gay male and I were laughing uproariously at Harry, who turned away from Rick and toward

us, and hid his face in his hands dramatically for a few seconds. (Field notes, December 13, 1974.) However, this example is by no means typical cruising - indeed, most gay males would find Harry's behavior to be very obnoxious exhibitionism typical only of a drag queen. Harry was, in effect, putting on a show for his friends, the two of us sitting with him. His attempt at verbal cruising could have succeeded, and in that sense, it was not pure theater for our amusement. However, he would not likely have exhibited such unsubtle behavior if we had not been present.

One could say that cruising in the College Center building has a norm of non-interference by other gay males, except that it is referred to only in its breach, which occurs fairly frequently and leads to antagonisms between gay male acquaintances. For example, one gay male may sit down near a stranger to cruise him, and another gay male may not recognize the situation and sit down nearby and also cruise the stranger, seeking eye contact. If the latter gay succeeds in getting eye contact, and perhaps subsequently is followed out of the building, the first gay male is likely to complain to friends that the other gay male "interferred," and the offender may be avoided for some days. Although some of this "interference" may sometimes be competitive or be a consequence of lack of other interesting strange males to cruise in the building at the moment, more often it results by mistake in perceiving the ambiguity of the seating arrangement and the subtlty of cruising itself.

A norm of non-interference also applies to following someone into a washroom (which can occur without preliminary eye contact). This situation is more complicated, however, because even when one has established

eye contact with a stranger and is following him into the washroom, another gay male may already happen to be in the washroom and also find the stranger interesting. In such a situation, it is possible for both gay males to view the other as interfering. Some gay males, upon entering a washroom being used for sexual purposes by two males will quickly and discretely leave; this will sometimes not disrupt the action if he is recognized by one of the participants as being gay. (Field notes, November 14, 1975.) Yet another although apparently rare possibility in the washrooms is for several males, each entering separately, to join together in an orgy of mutual masturbation in a chain. I have only heard of one time when six males happened into the same washroom (some presumably following others into it), but believe that three participants together might be somewhat common; but again, the latter holds the possibility of being viewed as interference.

2. Non-sexual Activities in the College Center

Before considering cruising at the bar and behavior at the annual Slave Auction, other sorts of non-sexual activities originating in the College Center building should be mentioned at this point. Besides cruising, a great amount of time is spent by gay males in talking with each other in the College Center building. In my efforts to both study and participant observe gay males, I spent many hours reading in the College Center Lounge or Grill. In fact, many students study in the building, but the assumption seemed always to be made by gay friends that my reading was not a serious activity and could be interfered with freely. Over and over again, I found myself sitting on a couch reading, and having a friend join me, a friend of his join him, and so on,

until I looked up from my reading to see six or eight gay males sitting and standing around me all talking to each other, but not all known to me nor each other.

While talking in groups (from two to larger numbers) in the College Center, cruising may still be going on, and one may leave the group to follow a strange male, perhaps later returning to the group and reporting what if anything transpired (Field Notes, November 14, 1975). Also, members in the group indicate their cruising by commenting on strange males walking by. This commonly takes the form of a question to the group: "Hey, look at that one. Do you know him?" Of course, such a question can be and often is asked in any group about a stranger. The answer from one in the group is usually identity attribution to the stranger; that is, a member of the group attributes an identity of relevance to the group to the stranger. The answers given in the groups of gay males in the College Center about a stranger were usually relevant to cruising because the answers (that is, when someone in the group recognized the stranger) tended to be of sexual relevance. For example, a fairly common answer was, "I think I've seen him down at the bar," which would lead the questioner to conclude that the stranger is most likely also gay.

Before considering other forms of non-sexual sociability in the College Center and their functions for gay males, a network analysis of the groups eating in the College Center cafeteria will now be made. The first aim here is to show the frequency of appearance of the regular members in the dinner groups, and second, to look at the clustering of paired appearances. The analysis is not sociometric because the

choice of partners to eat with in the cafeteria could not usually be assumed by the participants; that is, one bought dinner in the cafeteria, thereby committing oneself to that line of action, before knowing which gay friends were already eating in or would shortly come to the cafeteria. (However, sometimes gay friends would meet before dinner on the runway or in the lounge.) Rather, the point to be established on an individual level is that there was a core of gay males who regularly ate in the cafeteria and who appeared with other gay males. Because of the regularity of the appearance of a core group of gay males in the cafeteria, the core group came to represent for others (the less frequent gay male diners) a gay presence in the cafeteria and in the College Center in general. In this way, even though most people in the cafeteria were not gay, the cafeteria became established as a gay place and the identity of gay male was made salient, even for those who attended only infrequently. However, what is important to establish in the present context is the nature and functions of the gay cafeteria networks.

Table 5 shows those diners in the College Center cafeteria who were observed seven or more times in the cafeteria during the three year period of 1974 to 1976. (In other words, the table excludes those who were seen less than seven times in the cafeteria.) As was seen in chapter 3 (table 4 on page 55), the average numbers of participants fluctuated somewhat, averaging 3.9 to 8.1 participants for three month intervals over the period of observations, until they declined to an average of 3.1 participants (including RCO) during the Summer of 1976. However, table 5 makes clear that there was considerable change

Table 5.--Frequency and Per Cent of Appearance of Participants Who Ate a Total of Seven or More Times in the College Center Cafeteria, By Year, and Per Cent of Total Frequency.

Person	Year						Total	Per Cent
	1974	%	1975	%	1976	%		
RCO (days observed)	82		111		118		311	100.0
Jef	55	67.1	76	68.5	32	27.1	153	49.2
Michael	26	31.7	53	47.7	58	49.2	137	44.1
Doug	19	23.2	50	45.0	65	55.1	134	43.1
Curtis	4	4.9	63	56.8	3	2.5	70	22.5
Bob B.	40	48.8	21	18.9	2	1.7	63	20.3
Bruce	43	52.4	14	12.6	-[a]	-	57	18.3
David	3	3.7	2	1.8	49	41.5	54	17.4
Kitty (female)	1	1.2	1	0.9	36	30.5	38	12.2
Mark	30	36.6	1	0.9	-	-	31	10.0
Bill A.	22	26.8	8	7.2	0[b]	0	30	9.6
George	3	3.7	16	14.4	11	9.3	30	9.6
Leo	1	1.2	2	1.8	23	19.5	26	8.4
Brad	6	7.3	13	11.7	4	3.4	23	7.4
Marty	8	9.8	4	3.6	11	9.3	23	7.4
Bob D.	15	18.3	7	6.3	0	0	22	7.1
Colin	-	-	1	0.9	20	17.0	21	6.8
Peter (Black)	3	3.7	17	15.3	-	-	20	6.4
John	17	20.7	-	-	-	-	17	5.5
Duncan	1	1.2	1	0.9	15	12.7	17	5.5
Dwight	16	19.5	-	-	-	-	16	5.1

Table 5.--Continued.

Person	Year						Total	Per Cent
	1974	%	1975	%	1976	%		
Brian	1	1.2	9	8.1	5	4.2	15	4.8
Jill (female)	-	-	-	-	15	12.7	15	4.8
Karl	11	13.4	-	-	-	-	11	3.5
Sam	0	0	7	6.3	4	3.4	11	3.5
Joe	10	12.2	-	-	-	-	10	3.2
Al	10	12.2	-	-	-	-	10	3.2
Tom	7	8.5	1	0.9	-	-	8	2.6
Sean	6	7.3	2	1.8	-	-	8	2.6
Tod	6	7.3	1	0.9	-	-	7	2.3
Walter (Black)	7	8.5	-	-	-	-	7	2.3
Glenn	3	3.7	4	3.6	0	0	7	2.3

Total Participants: 32 (all are white males, except as indicated)

a. A dash (-) indicates that the person moved away from the city.

b. A zero indicates that the person was known to be in the area, but was not seen in the cafeteria during the year.

in the composition of the regular participants, as some moved away from the area and others began or increased their participation. Those who are known to have moved away from the city are indicated in table 5 by a dash, but the precise dating of their move from Midwest City (when it was accurately known and recorded, which was not always the case), is not always apparent in the table. For example, the table seems to

show that Tom ate in the cafeteria seven times in 1974 and once in 1975, during which he moved away from the city. In fact, Tom ate in the cafeteria six times from February until April, 1974, when he joined the Navy; he returned once more to the cafeteria in 1974 while on shore leave. He returned to the cafeteria once on a visit to Midwest City in 1975 after he was released from the Navy for "homosexual tendencies." Although Tom was only seen on 2.6 percent of the observed days over the three year period, his participation in 1974 (seven times) constitutes 8.5 percent of the observation days for 1974. Participation in the cafeteria groups by the members in table 5 tended to be on a fairly regular basis and was often more concentrated in time than is apparent from the summary figures for each participant by year. The yearly time intervals in table 5 (as in table 4 on page 55) are not equal because the observation for 1976 came to an end in August; yet, the numbers of observation days are greater in 1976 (118 days) than 1975 (111 days) and than 1974 (82 days). The figures by year in table 5 are just a convenient way of summarizing the participation of the regular diners.

Table 5 shows that twenty of the thirty-one regular participants (excluding RCO) attended the cafeteria dinners on more than five percent of the observed days. Seven of these twenty regulars were no longer attending the dinners or had moved away from Midwest City by 1976, while only one (Colin) began attending the dinner groups after 1974. However, as seen in table 5, some (such as Doug, David, Leo, and Duncan) increased their participation in the later period.

Table 6 simply re-organizes some of the data from table 5 to display it more graphically. In particular, table 6 shows the percent of

Table 6.--Diners Attending the College Center Cafeteria More Than Ten Per Cent Per Year (the "High Attenders"), by Year.

1974	Per Cent	1975	Per Cent	1976	Per Cent
Jef	67.1	Jef	68.5	Jef	27.1
Bruce	52.4	Bruce	12.6	----	
Bob B.	48.8	Bob B.	18.9	----	
Michael	31.7	Michael	47.7	Michael	49.2
Doug	23.2	Doug	45.0	Doug	55.1
Mark	36.6	----		----	
Bill A.	26.8	----		----	
John	20.7	----		----	
Dwight	19.5	----		----	
Bob D.	18.3	----		----	
Karl	13.4	----		----	
Joe	12.2	----		----	
Al	12.2	----		----	
		Curtis	56.8	----	
		Peter (Black)	15.3	----	
		George	14.4	----	
		Brad	11.7	----	
				David	41.5
				Kitty (female)	30.5
				Leo	19.5
				Colin	17.0
				Duncan	12.7
				Jill (female)	12.7

attendance of those who were observed to eat in the cafeteria on ten percent or more of the observation days in any one year. These will be referred to as the "high attenders." Just as was seen in table 5, the composition of the high attenders in the cafeteria changed considerably over the course of the three years. Thirteen gay males attended on ten percent or more of the observed days during 1974, but only five of them continued to participate at such a high level during 1975, while four other gay males joined the five in being observed in the cafeteria more than ten percent of the days during 1975. None of the four new high attenders of 1975 continued eating in the cafeteria at such a high rate during 1976, and only three of the original high attenders from 1974 and 1975 continued to attend so frequently during 1976. However, in 1976, six others also became high attenders in the cafeteria; of the latter, two were straight women. The table shows that even the most frequent of the core set of participants was in considerable flux. Also, the core set of high attenders decreased from thirteen in 1974 to nine in 1975 and 1976.

Table 7 considers all of the participants ever observed in the cafeteria by year, and groups them by the amount of attendance per year. The high attenders, as previously defined, attended ten percent or more per year. The medium attenders appeared in the cafeteria on three to ten percent of the observation days per year, while the low attenders appeared in the cafeteria on less than three percent of the observation days in any one year. As in table 6, table 7 shows that the number of high attenders decreased from thirteen to nine from 1974 to 1975 and 1976, but it also shows that the average amount of

participation of the high attenders did not change appreciably among the three years, averaging between twenty-nine and thirty-two percent per year. The average participation of the medium attenders also did not vary greatly from year to year (averaging between 5.7 percent and 5.3 percent per year), but it is clear that the numbers of medium attenders dropped significantly from twenty in 1974 to seven in 1975 and ten in 1976. The variation in average rates of attendance of the low attenders is also not great between years, averaging between 1.3 and 1.1 percent of the observation days per year (this average is just barely more than one appearance in the cafeteria per year). The numbers of low attenders show considerable variation from year to year, ranging between thirty-seven and fifty-seven people per year. The table shows that the numbers of both high and medium attenders declined from 1974 (thirty-three participants) to 1975 (sixteen participants) and increased only slightly in 1976 to nineteen participants. (It should be noted that there is considerable overlap of the total participants between years, just as was seen among the high attenders in table 6. The total participants observed over the three years totaled one hundred fifty-six different people.) The most important conclusion from table 7 is that a majority of the participants were low and very infrequent attenders. This indicates that the groups of regular participants in the cafeteria were very open to admission of new participants. While sitting with high and medium attenders in the cafeteria, it was usual to meet and eat dinner with a new person every few days.

Table 7.--Average Per Cent Attendance Per Year of Participants in the College Center Cafeteria, by Year.

	1974	N	1975	N	1976	N
High attenders[a] (10%+ per year)	29.4%	13	32.3%	9	29.4%	9
Medium attenders (3 to 10% per year)	5.5	20	5.7	7	5.3	10
Low attenders (less than 3% per year)	1.3	42	1.2	37	1.1	57
Total participants per year		75		53		76

a. Excluding RCO.

In tables 8, 9, and 10 (in the appendix), column A (number of pairs) shows the total number of pairs (including RCO) that the high attender was actually in during 1974. Column B (total with high attenders) is the total number of times that the person was paired with other high attenders. Column C (% B/A) shows the total paired with high attenders (B) divided by the total number of pairs that the person was actually in (A), expressed as a percent; in other words, column C gives the proportion of the person's actual pairs that were with other high attenders. The number of possible pairs (column D) is the same as the total number of other people (that is, other gay males and those who were observed to eat with gay males) who were present in the cafeteria on the days

when the person was in the cafeteria. Because everyone did not sit at one table, the number of possible pairs is always higher than the total number of actual pairs for each high attender. Column E expresses the total number of pairs that each high attender was in as a percent of the number of all possible pairs (i.e., column A divided by column D, expressed as a percent). The last column (E) of percents expresses how inclusive the groups in the cafeteria were. For example, in table 8 Michael was paired with only 35.1% of the possible pairs because he and Doug tended to sit alone together. In contrast, Jef was paired with 76.6% of the possible pairs because he tended to sit with most of the people, other than Michael and Doug.

Tables 8, 9, and 10 show that the high attenders in each year tended to be paired with the other high attenders a very high proportion of the time (column C). In other words, the high attenders tended to eat dinner with each other frequently. The tables also show that the actual paired dinner relations of the high attenders were a high proportion of all of their possible paired relations (column E). This indicates, not only that the high attenders tended to eat with each other, but that the medium and low attenders tended to eat dinner with the high attenders as well (i.e., the dinner groups were open to being joined by new people; for example, a high attender could and often did bring a friend to his dinner group and this was acceptable to others in the group). However, the numbers in column E dropped steadily over the three years; the average percent for 1974 was 66.2%, for 1975 it was 60.4%, and for 1976 the average dropped to 45.0%.

From tables 5 through 10, it should be clear that there were a

number of gay males who frequently ate dinner together in the College Center cafeteria. The core group among them (the "high attenders") tended to eat together often, so the same people were seen frequently (i.e., the high attenders tended to eat with the other high attenders). Although the core group was in some flux from year to year, nevertheless they represented for others (the low attenders) a core gay group in the College Center. Moreover, the networks of friends who ate in the cafeteria clearly formed an open rather than a closed system; hence, one of the functions of the core group in the cafeteria was a shared interest in meeting new people.

Internally, the continuity of participation in the group served several functions for the individual member. Generally, the continuity of participation allowed friends to provide emotional and other support and information. For example, one typical evening, eight of us sat together (Jef, Bill A., Bob D., Bruce, Leo, and Michael, who introduced his new acquaintance, George, to the rest of us). During the course of the dinner, Jef asked Bob D. about the chair that Jef had given him to be repaired and Bob D. told him that it would be too expensive to fix. Bob D. talked about a class that he was teaching at a community college. Michael talked with Bill A. about how to get his damage deposit returned (both had recently moved out of the same apartment complex). Jef said that he and a friend planned to see a (heterosexual) pornographic film later that evening. Leo talked about the classes he was taking at the College. Finally, the conversation ended with a discussion among Bill A., Bob D., Bruce, Leo and RCO about the threat of loss of ozone in the atmosphere. (Field notes, January 30, 1975.)

Except for a couple of jokes, the conversations on most evenings did not emphasize gay topics. Rather, as seen above, the topics often focused on work and classes, and also included frequent exchanges of information (such as damage deposits) and exchanges of favors (such as repairing a chair, above).

The continuity of participation allowed individual members of the groups to receive assistance from others. One could bring personal troubles and embarrassments that are not particularly gay to the group. For example, it was common for someone to have forgotten to bring money for dinner and the money would be readily loaned. Many of the students regularly borrowed small amounts of money, usually from those who were working full-time. The money was not always borrowed for only a short period of time; for example, in 1975, RCO borrowed a total of forty dollars from eight different people in the cafeteria for a three-week period. Early in 1975, several of the high attenders each decided to buy a new car because of manufacturers' rebates, and they compared cost, performance, extra features, and so on, of the cars that they looked at; this exchange of information became the main topic of the dinner conversations for a couple of months until three members had made their decisions. Hence, the dinner groups had a consistent and strong moral dimension, providing a place for personal troubles and embarrassments as well as emotional support and the exchange of information and of favors that did not have to do with a uniquely gay lifestyle.

Gay topics of course were also introduced in the dinner conversations. Some of these also were introduced for emotional support and

information. For example, Joe told of meeting an attractive male who said he was "impotent," and Joe asked the group to explain what that meant. Jef told the group to look at the new Playgirl, which had a nude male centerfold, when it first appeared on the newsstand (recorded conversation, February 6, 1975). Also, members in the dinner groups sometimes commented on attractive strange males walking by or sitting elsewhere in the cafeteria, with the question, "Hey, look at that one. Does anyone know him?" As with groups sitting in the lounge, the question indicates verbalized cruising. In the cafeteria, if someone knew the strange male and he was sitting alone, it was not unusual for the stranger to be invited to join the group.

Having examined the nature of the networks of gay males who ate in the College Center cafeteria, attention will now turn to some of the other non-sexual activities of gay males in the College Center to show the nature of the networks. The College Center building is a good place to go after suppertime and before the bar becomes active during weekday evenings, just to see "who is around," as well as possibly for a sexual encounter. It is also a good place to meet friends on weekend afternoons and evenings. Because I was so regularly in the building, several gay males came to rely on me to tell them if I had seen a particular friend (e.g., "Hi, Richard. Hey, have you seen Bob in here tonight?"). This sort of question could of course be asked of any other friend as well. The point is that gay friends use the building for a meeting place in two different senses: a) To talk with whatever friends happen to be in the building, and b) to meet particular friends.

Most activities in groups of gay males involve talking, usually

biographical (about work, school, perhaps problems with one's personal life such as looking for another apartment, and so on), but also include politics and world events, books, and any number of other topics. Hence, most of the talk has little to do with homosexuality, though each conversation may have at least a few homosexual anecdotes (something that happened at the bar, a strange "trick," etc.). Because these groups tend to be open and fluid, with some leaving the group and others entering the building and joining the group, it seems that a gay topic is sometimes brought up just to "test" if strangers in the group are themselves gay.

Only very rarely does a group of gay males do something as a group in the building other than talk (or eat in the grill). On one occasion, someone in the group of about six or eight in the lounge suggested playing charades. A few chairs and couches were pushed around a bit to make two rows of seats facing each other, and people sitting in the opposite row had to guess the person, place, or quote being acted out by the person from one's row. While the game was in progress, three or four more gay males entered the building and, recognizing a friend among the players, joined the game. However, such activities are very rare.

In 1976, a color television was added to the lounge. Occasionally, one will see a few gay friends sitting together watching the television, but it has, if anything, decreased the sociability among gay males in the lounge because the television can be heard throughout the lounge area. Hence, gay groups are recently more likely than previously to form in the grill or on the runway.

Sometimes, a group of several gay males has been seen to eat in the cafeteria together, sit together afterwards in the lounge or on the runway, and still later be together at the bar (field notes, May 28, 1975.) However, it is rare for a group not to lose or gain members through an evening. An important point here is that the College Center is a place to go before the bar becomes active, and it is used like the bar, for both sociable and sexual purposes by gay males in the evenings and on weekends. It is rare to see more than a few gay males in the building during the week day, as many are not students and are at work.

A group in the College Center may decide to go to a movie, to dinner in a restaurant, or to a straight bar. Occasionally, these may involve plans for the future, e.g., to see a particular movie on a certain evening in a few days, but such planning would be rare. Likewise, the composition of the group depends on who is present in the College Center at the time the decision is made to undertake the activity, and invitations might be made to others in the building to join the group. In such a situation (departing from the College Center), it would be exceedingly unusual for one to phone someone else at home to invite him to join the group in the activity. (Of course, friends phone each other at home for such activities also, so that a pair or group of friends may arrange, usually that same day, to meet at a certain place in public for an activity. None of this would be called a "date.")

Two examples here may suffice to show the fluidity and openness of the networks of friends that assemble in the College Center for

activities outside the building. (Bott defines a social network as a "set of social relationships for which there is no common boundary" and considers the mesh of the networks as "closely-knit," where many members have direct contact, or "loosely-knit," where few members have direct contact, 1957, p. 59. An open network here means the same as a loosely-knit network. See, also, Stebbins, 1969; and Noble, 1973). One evening, RCO sat in the lounge with Joe, Tom, Karl, and a male whom RCO did not know, when David (who did not have a car) came up and said he was going to the airport to meet Steve. RCO was surprised that Steve was outside the city as his absence had not been noticed. RCO asked David where Steve was flying in from, what he had been doing in the other city, and how long he had been gone. Eventually, all present (except RCO) decided to meet Steve at the airport, going in Joe's car. Presumably, Steve had just asked <u>one</u> person to meet his flight and bring him back to the city; yet, he was met by a carload of people, not all of whom knew him, because going to the airport was "something to do." (Field notes, March 20, 1974.)

Another example, in which RCO was more centrally involved, makes the same point about the open networks. Joe, a gay auto mechanic, did a great deal of work for friends on their cars just for the cost of parts, after-hours in the garage of a large chain store. One noon soon after Joe did considerable work on my car, it was two miles from the College Center in the parking lot of a restaurant popular in the evenings, and the car would not start. I waited until the evening when I "ran into" Joe in the College Center, and he suggested we use his car to push mine out to his garage to work on it further. I explained that

the particular parking lot would be very crowded and we would have to hand-push the car around the lot to get it into a position where his car could get behind it. We decided that we needed a few other people to help hand-push the car. I asked Bob B., who drove somebody else in his car, and I asked Jane, a bisexual woman, who drove several gay males that she knew. Joe also asked one or two people who asked others. Ten minutes later, four or five cars converged on the parking lot with more than a dozen people ready to push - in the snowball of friend asking friend, too many people had been asked! (Field notes, March 15, 1974.) A week later, a strange male walked up to me in the gay bar and asked if my car was running again. With surprise, I asked how he knew that I had trouble with it, and he explained that he had helped push it out of the parking lot (field notes, March 21, 1974).

The College Center building then, serves a multitude of functions for the open networks of gay friends: One can find a sexual partner, get something to eat, talk with friends and meet new people (friends of friends), borrow money, buy a car, find a roommate, get advice for an emotional problem, watch television, read discarded newspapers, and go out for entertainment elsewhere with friends.

Because the sexual acts performed in the building's male washrooms and sexual acts at home with a partner met in the building are between relative strangers and usually are not repeated with the same person again, it is clear that the open networks of gay friends who meet and talk in the building are the basis of the non-sexual sociability. Hence, the friendship networks exhibit little, if any, envy and jealousy (except when the norm of non-interference has been broken).

Although some of the conversations between friends may include anecdotes about recent sexual partners ("tricks") or about current "affairs," status distinctions are not made on the basis of sexual prowess. Also, although distinctions are recognized between the friends in their preferences for particular sexual acts (that is, some are known, for example, to like to give blow jobs in the building's washrooms, while others prefer the variations on anal intercourse with partners who are taken home), and indeed, some conversations between friends include such statements of preferences in sexual acts as well as preferences in various physical qualities desired in sexual partners, nevertheless, none of these are used in making status distinctions among friends, and none of these are used as the basis of the friendship networks.

In fact, it must be clear to some gay males that others are more often successful in cruising and obtaining sexual partners from observing the others in the building. Yet, being known as <u>too</u> successful in cruising can lead one to some <u>loss</u> of status in the friendship groups because one may then be referred to, in his absence, as a "whore." For example, friends could say of an acquaintance who cruises too successfully as "whoring around too much" with the implication that the person gossiped about does not exercise enough discrimination in selecting a sexual partner.

Other sorts of possible status distinctions that could be made in the friendship networks also do not seem important. For example, distinctions in terms of age (that is, among the young adults), income, student versus non-student, and race are not used as the basis of the friendship networks. Hence, the open friendship networks in the

building tend toward equalization of statuses. Perhaps the only distinction of any importance in the friendship networks is that between drag queen and leatherman. The latter tend to look down on and avoid the former, so that gay males with one of these two additional identities tend not to be close friends. However, these two identities are latent when gay men with these additional identities are in the building; for example, it is very unusual for a drag queen to enter the building dressed up in drag. (This was observed only once, when two drag queens came in the building after a drag context at the bar, still in drag. Observed February 2, 1975.) Although usually not close friends, drag queens and leathermen who frequent the building often, become acquaintances, so that even these latent identities are not important criteria for making status distinctions among friendship groups in the building.

Perhaps the only distinction of importance has to do with frequency of presence in the building and type of participation in sexual acts. As mentioned previously, a number of male college students who do not consider themselves to be homosexual know the reputation of the building as a gay meeting place and occasionally come to the building to receive a "blow job." Although some of these males are considered to be attractive as sexual partners, they are never included among the gay male friendship networks. Although they participate in homosexual acts, they do not consider themselves to be homosexual and do not seek friendships with either their sexual partners or other gay males in the building.[3]

Hence, the open networks of gay male friends are not based primarily on sexual acts between the friends. Sexual acts tend to occur

between strangers, one of whom may not define himself as gay, while friendships share the common denominator of a gay self-identity, but only rarely also gay sexual acts.

However, one should note that there is a borderline of ambiguity between stranger and friend which contains the potential for a sexual relationship. Two gay males who are only slightly acquainted because they are in different friendship networks in the building (or one of the two is rarely in the building) are potential sexual partners, as well as potential friends. More than any other factor, this potential for either a sexual partnership or a friendship among these who are only slightly acquainted best explains why the friendship networks are so open and why regular participants in the building tend to be so gregariously friendly toward bare acquaintances.

3. At the Bar

At the bar the objective for most gay males, including most sitting in groups of friends, is to find someone to take home or go home with. It is of course true that not all the males there are cruising, but most are. The bar is not only a sexual marketplace because one can go with or meet friends there (i.e., there are mixed motives). The sexual objective means that, even in conversation among friends, there is a preoccupation with looking around at others and especially with watching to see who will next enter the bar. Because of this, conversations tend to be "light" and often truncated by the distraction of someone else sitting or walking nearby. It is possible to find a sexual partner at any time during the evening (initiated again, usually by repeatedly "catching the eye" of the stranger; in this connection,

see Delph, 1978, p. 124). However, the probability increases as closing time nears. Indeed, the casual observer in the bar can often see the increase in the frantic milling and searching as 2:00 A.M. approaches. It is more likely that someone will be "found" the closer it gets to closing time, as people become less particular then, feeling that it will be then or not at all for that evening. Also, other motives, such as visiting with friends or drinking, become less important at closing time.

Although clearly not preferred by most gay males, the approaches made near closing time tend more often to be very direct and without the preliminary "eye contact." For example, while sitting at the bar near closing time with a gay male friend, Ron, another male who had not previously been "seen," walked up to him and asked, "Would you like to do something this evening?" (Field notes, December 27, 1974.) However, it is not always so obvious that arrangements for an assignation have been made, as the two may not leave the bar together, nor even at precisely the same time, and instead may choose to meet outside the bar or in the parking lot across the street from the bar, so that friends in the bar do not see them together, and so, have nothing to gossip about.

As in the College Center, the possibility of mistaken perception is high. One may only have established eye contact with the other, and upon following him outside, discover that it was not defined as an expression of sexual interest by the other at all. Even when arrangements have been made (e.g., "I have a blue Plymouth. Follow me home in your car."), mistakenly following the wrong car or getting lost in traffic

occurs. Even when directions are explicit, one person may change his mind or "lead on" the other without communicating this.

As in the College Center, there is also concern about "interference" in the bar. For example, Harry, a drag queen, described what he considered to be interference at the bar. (Harry was not in drag on this occasion at the bar.)

> "'I saw a neat guy at Carl's [the bar] the other night, and another guy was with him but kept on leaving and I wasn't sure if they were really together or not. So, I bought him a drink. And Mark pointed me out.'
> RCO: 'What? What did Mark do?'
> Harry: 'He told him who the drink was from.'
> RCO: 'Oh, Mark was bartender.'
> Harry: 'Yeah, he was working as the waiter. And I don't believe in horning in on somebody, but Betty [Bob B.] does, and he just went right up to him and started talking to him. And a slow number came on the juke box and I thought about asking him to dance, but then Bob did. I was so angry! Later, I went into the john, and he [the neat guy] followed me in and we talked. I expected him to thank me for the drink, but he didn't. He did say something (pause) like 'did you buy me the drink?' and I said 'yeah.' And he said Bob had told him I was a drag queen, so I said he [Bob] was the biggest whore around, and he could choose between a drag queen and a whore, and which did he want? (pause) Later I saw him and Bob leave together and get in Bob's car.'" (Conversation recorded December 20, 1974.)

Achilles (1967) considered the gay bar as an "institution" because it serves the sociable and leisure-time activities of members of the community, permitting but still controlling the formation of sexual relationships. Further, she says that, because the bar is open to the public, it is "both the center of the private activities of the Community and its liaison with the larger society" (1967, p. 232). Although she implies something important here, the quote is misleading: As

seen in chapter 4, the bar is by no means unique as an ecological setting for forming sexual relationships, nor is the bar the center of the private activities of all segments of the gay community; gay male couples living together should better be considered as the most private and concealed aspect of the community. Although (as Warren, 1974, has noted) members of a gay male couple may on occasion frequent the bar (or the College Center) as individuals, it is somewhat unusual to see a gay male couple together at the bar. In fact, seeing a gay couple together in the bar might raise suspicions that they were present to jointly pick out someone for a "three-way" sexual encounter.

Because the bar is so important for forming short-term liaisons, a couple would not come to the bar together for fear that one partner might find an interest in a stranger there, thus producing jealousy in the partner. For example, when Brad started an affair with a young college student who he met in the College Center and who had just "come out," Brad was deliberate in not taking him to the bar. When the young student asked about the gay bar, Brad told him, "Oh, you wouldn't want to go there," even though Brad was going regularly.

A sexual encounter in a public washroom (as in the College Center building) is certainly more public than a homosexual couple (which is often concealed as roommates), but nevertheless less public than the bar. Achilles is correct in pointing to the bar as the liaison with the larger society. Further, because the gay bar is open to the public, it mediates between the gay and straight worlds. As a quasi-institution, the gay bar grows out of contact with the straight world. The bar represents the gay world to straights. Behavior in the bar

is played out in public, in at least potential view of the straight world, and this in itself partly explains the emphasis on dress and appearances in the bar.

Further, one sees again one of the major dilemmas of male homosexuality found in the settings of public washrooms and gay bars: The settings are the nexus of public and private spaces. Seeking for a sexual partner is done in public, even though sexual behavior as intimate behavior is considered to be a private matter between two individuals, and normally to be reserved for a private space. Cruising for a sexual partner at the bar, as well as in the College Center building, is a public searching for intimacy.

4. The Slave Auction

The public domain also includes the annual "slave auction" in the leather bar in the large metropolis eighty-five miles from Midwest City. It is perhaps the extreme of sexual exchange: It is buying and selling sex as a commodity. Sex as a commodity to be sold is the moral organization of the auction. However, as was noted in chapter 4, most of the people who attend the auction are spectators, and neither "slaves" nor bidders. In one slave auction, fifty-one males were registered to bid, but many of them never made a bid during the evening. In that auction, about a dozen "slaves" were "sold" for between $45 and $125 (the money going to a charity); only one of the "slaves" was from Midwest City. As there were somewhere between two hundred and two hundred and fifty males in the audience (only two females were present in the bar during the evening), it should be clear that the auction is better seen as a kind of show for most people present, and not a sexual exchange, even though the sexual exchange is the moral

organization for the focus of attention for the spectators.

In one auction, the focus of interest of the audience initially was on looking at the "slaves" being auctioned, with individuals standing on their toes and creening their necks for a better look over the heads of those standing in front. There were repeated calls to the "slave" on the "auction block" (a raised stage area) to take his shirt off, which some "slaves" obliged. Later on, the focus of the audience shifted to an interest in how high the bidding would go for each "slave." Throughout the auction of three hours duration, there was much milling about by the audience, with small groups of friends forming and re-forming. Friends talked among each other about the slaves: 1) The physical attributes (e.g., "Oh, he's cute."), 2) if known, about their personal qualities (e.g., "he works as a model, and was the star of Ice Capades."), and 3) comments on the description and preferences of each "slave" which were read from a card by the auctioneer (tape recorded, November 28, 1975). Because the "slave" and the bidding are so much of the audience's attention, the auction is not a good time to cruise for a sexual partner - the bar has a different meaning for the audience than on other occasions, as they watch the formation of an impersonal sexual exchange between slave and bidder.

The Slave Auction is organized by one of the two gay male leather and western clubs in the large metropolis. These clubs have formal membership requirements as described in chapter 4. Many in the audience for the Slave Auction are members of the two clubs or members in leather and western clubs from other large cities. However, the Slave Auction is open to the public for a nominal admission fee. This means

that some in the audience would not have the identity of "leatherman" nor be a member of one of the clubs. However, it is difficult to estimate what proportion of the audience was "into leather."

5. The Drag Show

As with the Slave Auction, one cannot easily cruise at a drag show in the bar. The drag show is a form of entertainment. Visually, it typically resembles a night club show: The lights are dimmed and a "female" (the drag queen) walks onto the dance floor which serves as a stage, dressed in an elaborate gown with a fancy hair-do; a spotlight may be turned on "her," and "she" appears to sing several songs (actually, "she" mouths the words to a recording by a female singer). Several variations on this are possible: The performer may also dance; "she" may do a number accompanied by other drag queens or by a male; or "she" may appear as a very poorly dressed woman and/or pregnant for a humorous number. The show usually consists of several drag queens who each do several numbers in succession. The show is put on for an audience usually consisting of gay males, but may also include lesbians and also (if held in the "mixed" bar) heterosexual couples, who sit watching the show and applauding at the conclusion of each song, much like in a night club show.

Drag shows are announced ahead of time by posters in the bar, usually listing the "star" of the show, who organizes it and asks typically two to four other drag queens to also do numbers in "her" show. A "set" of a dozen numbers by the several drag queens may take an hour or an hour and a half, and is usually repeated a second time after an "intermission" of an hour. The participants are paid only a nominal

fee ($15 to $20 in 1975) by the bar owner, but are also tipped by members of the audience who do this by walking forward during a number and handing a dollar bill to the performer. Because the shows are advertised by posters in advance, those who like drag shows or who are friends of the drag queens are more likely to be in the bar for the drag show.

The songs in a drag show usually focus on forming, or problems in maintaining a heterosexual relationship (from the perspective of the female singer). Some also make fun of sexual relationships; for example, one song with the refrain that "my lover has left me" was presented by a drag queen with a mophead for a hair-do, in a dirty dress, and appearing to be very pregnant. Hence, because the lyrics of the number focus on sexual relationships (as most popular songs do), they are not just making fun of female sexuality or parodying women. However, because the number in the drag show does not focus on sexual orientation, the drag queen can be considered peripheral to the gay community. This in itself partly explains why many heterosexuals find amusement and entertainment in drag shows and the female impersonator, and why the "mixed" (gay and straight) bar hosted so many of the drag shows over the last several years.

The identities of leatherman and drag queen are perhaps the most specialized identities to be found in the community because they can be acted out in such limited places and times. Although it has been argued that they are both peripheral to the community, they nevertheless very clearly show the dramaturgical problem of seeking intimate sexual relations in public places.

One further point should be made concerning identities in the public domain, before turning to identities and activities in the private domain. As previously asserted, there are ecological clusterings of identities in the College Center building, the public washrooms, and the bars and these settings mediate between the gay and straight worlds. Behavior in the College Center, the washrooms, and the bars are played out in public, in view of the straight world, but the intersection of gay and straight worlds is sometimes more profound than a gay actor dramaturgically presenting his identity before a straight audience. As indicated at several points above, interaction of a gay actor is often with a straight actor: The individual being cruised in the College Center Lounge is sometimes straight; some straight male students seek out a quick and impersonal "blow job" in the washrooms of the College Center (in Humphreys' terms, they are "trade"); and some of the audience of a drag show (especially in the mixed bar) is often composed of heterosexual couples. Although most gay males prefer the gay bar to the mixed bar as a location for cruising because they can assume that all present are gay, even in the gay bar, a heterosexual couple has occasionally been seen to mistakenly enter (usually withdrawing rapidly). This intersection and sometimes interaction with the straight world in the public domain makes the dramaturgical presentation of the gay male identity and its several possible additional identities of leatherman, drag queen, etc., even more problematic than the simple dilemma of public seeking for private intimacy. These identities are discreditable of the self when disclosed to the wrong audience, even when presented in the "right" ecological setting.

Private Domain: Parties, Dates, and Couples

1. Parties and the Home

Among young adult gay males, parties are rare. They are much rarer than heterosexual student drinking and dancing parties. Apparently, the segment of drag queen friends frequently had parties in drag, to which a few gay males and straight women were invited, but information on these is quite indirect. Over several years, only one gay party was attended, and only very rarely was reference made by young adult gay males to going to a gay party in town. One could be tempted to explain their rarity by the limited facilities of the small apartments in which most young adult gay males live, except that similarly situated heterosexuals seem to manage them so frequently. A more likely explanation is in the notion of a gay party. Young adult gay males hold parties to celebrate the common house (apartment) warmings, birthdays, etc. but invite co-workers and straight friends, rather than having a gay party. One explanation for this relative lack of gay parties is in the openness of the friendship networks, so that many strangers would likely come to an announced party, and the related relative anonymity of some friendships, which reduces responsibility for behavior and raises fears of theft and such. Also, unlike a heterosexual party with its emphasis on "getting to know" members of the opposite sex, a gay party tends to take the form of cruising, but even a relatively well-attended gay party would not hold the possibilities for cruising comparable to the gay bar on a weekend evening.

By contrast, lesbians hold and attend large numbers of gay (that is, lesbian) parties and dances. This difference between few parties

for gay males and many for lesbians reflects their different behavior in the bar, where males cruise strangers while alone or in small groups of friends, whereas the lesbians sit at one large table and are well known to each other. Also, the relative instability of young adult gay male couples in contrast with the relative stability of lesbian couples (including living together with a lover) may contribute to the relative frequency of giving parties in the home by lesbian couples.

In contrast with the rarity of a planned gay male party, it is very common for gay males to use the home for informal and unplanned activities by small groups of gay male friends. Inviting a gay friend or several gay friends to one's home for some activity (besides "for a drink," although in fact, drinks may be furnished, or purchased on the way there) does not carry sexual connotations. The commonly held stereotype (mentioned by McIntosh, 1968) of gay males being sexual in relations to all men is quite misleading. But the opposite notion (suggested by Leznoff and Westley) of the equivalent of an "incest taboo" among gay friends is also too extreme. It would be rare for two gay friends to go home and have sex, as explained in chapter 4.

The sorts of activities two or more gay friends can engage in at one's home are too many to cover completely; listen to a new record, watch TV or a particular TV program, play card games and other board games, occasionally share a dinner, hold an extended conversation, see one's new apartment or new furnishings, look at one's pornography collection barely start the list of possible activities.

The number of friends who assemble in one's home varies greatly, but invitations are made quite spontaneously, usually in the context

of a conversation in public, and in this sense they are very different than a planned party. If some members of the assemblage are not well-known to others, a sexual relationship is a possibility.

For example, Bob B. sometimes played card games and board games in his apartment with Brad, a gay friend who lives across the hall in his apartment building, and two other gay friends, Dean and Charles, who are roommates in a small town near Midwest City. One Saturday evening about 6:00 P.M., RCO ran into Bob B. and Tony in the College Center and Bob invited both of us to play the games at his place two hours later. Tony and I went in his car to Bob's apartment, where Tony had been once before; on the way, we stopped to buy some beer and wine. Neither Tony nor I knew Dean nor Charles, although Dean looked familiar to us both (from the bar). Everyone began both playing and drinking seriously. About 11:00 P.M., Charles asked "how many have plans to go to the bar?", but surprisingly everyone wanted to continue playing, drinking and talking. Bob said he had been to the bar the evening before and didn't want to go again that weekend. During the games, a great deal of humor was expressed. Because both Tony and Dean are Polish, the rest of us tried out our repertoire of Polish jokes at their expense. A lot of the humor was camp: Charles was exaggeratedly upset whenever Bob attacked him by a move in the game, and said "Oh, you bitch!" and called Bob, "Betty"; the two of them horseplayed like adolescent boys, jabbing and poking each other in the ribs and once wrestling briefly onto the floor. Also, Charles teased Brad by trying to squeeze his nipples through his shirt with his fingers, saying "oh, titties!", especially whenever it was Brad's turn at the game.

About 2:00 A.M., Tony asked me if I wanted to go (as we had both come in his car), but I said I was having too much fun. About 3:00 or 4:00 A.M., Brad went home. About 6:00 A.M., we slowed down, and Dean and Charles asked if they could stay and sleep in Bob's apartment, to which he agreed, offering them his bedroom while Bob would sleep on his couch. I indicated to Tony that I wanted to leave and sat with my coat on, waiting, but they went on talking lightly. Bob got out extra bedding, I layed down on the couch and Bob on his floor. Charles told Tony that he could join him and Dean in the bed as it was a king-sized bed, but Tony declined and layed down on the carpeted dining room floor, with all of the lights out. Shortly, Charles came out from the bedroom, and Tony went in and had sex with Charles.

Throughout all of this later part of the evening, I had been confused why Tony did not want to leave (having his own apartment in town) and how it came about that he ended up having sex with Charles, who had directed most of his comments and humorous barbs at Brad and Bob, and had said little to Tony.

The next day, Charles and Dean had left, Bob was asleep in his own bed, and Tony was awake, laying on the bedding on the living room floor. Tony and I left together for breakfast in the College Center. Tony spontaneously started talking about the previous night, apparently in explanation or apology for why we had not left when I had wanted. He explained that Charles and he had been playing "footsie" (touching feet and legs with the feet) under the gaming table most of the evening. When Brad had left, Tony had moved to sit next to Charles, and they had "felt each other up" with their hands, again unobserved under the table.

While the games were being played, nothing flirtatious had been said nor even eye contact had gone on between Charles and Tony.

Over breakfast, Tony explained that he had initially refused to join Charles and Dean in bed because he thought they might be lovers and said "I wouldn't have done anything with him if they were lovers because that is too important." (In other words, he feared having sex with Charles might break up their relationship.) Tony explained that he went in the bedroom only after Charles came out (nude) and explained to Tony that he and Dean were not lovers and that he had talked it over with Dean, who said he really did not mind if they had sex in the same bed with him.

Tony explained that Dean appeared to sleep through all the noise, which was audible throughout the apartment.

> RCO: "'Who did what, to whom?'
> Tony: 'First, I screwed him, and then he screwed me.'
> RCO: 'Oh, then it was reciprocated; that was nice.'
> Tony: 'Yeah. Usually I don't like to get fucked and just like to fuck, but I figured that he was so nice, that I would let him do it. He asked me later if Bob had my phone number and I said I wasn't sure but that Brad had it. But Charles said, 'oh, I wouldn't ask him.'"

Tony said he thought he liked Charles but he thought that Charles was not taking it (the sexual relationship) seriously, and he wondered if Charles would call him.

Importantly, Tony said he really enjoyed the evening because that was the first time that he had done anything like that [playing games] in a group of gays. RCO expressed surprise at this and asked: "Didn't you ever go to a gay party?" Tony replied, "Well, I went to a gay party once, but there it was just dancing, and everyone was trying to

pair up and that was all." (Field notes, February 12, 1977.)

This example is unusual in that it extended over so many hours and so many people ended up sleeping in the one bedroom apartment. It is not unusual in that two strangers ended the evening having sexual relations together, with the others accomodating them so much. It is also not unusual in the flexibility of sexual performances over a clear sexual preference, as expressed by Tony.

On another occasion, I sat talking with John in a straight bar when we were joined by a gay acquaintance of mine (but not known to John). The acquaintance, Ron, invited us to his room to look at his pornography collection, where we talked and drank and looked at the magazines a couple of hours. I became engrossed in some of the literature but noticed that the two of them sat together on the bed touching each other. When Ron suddenly turned out the light, I swore vehemently and awkwardly found the door. The next day, Ron made it clear that I should not have made such a fuss about leaving.

The sexual relations described above occurred between relative strangers, and this element is usual. When several gay males who are all friends of each other get together for any one of many possible announced purposes at the home of one of them, there is little potential for any sexual activity. Bringing and drinking beer or wine would be usual, but the content of the ensuing conversation is quite variable, from "camping" humor to serious discussions and arguments. Such informal get-togethers of groups of gay male friends more often occur on weekend evenings after supper, and often last until the group goes to the bar at 10:30 or 11:00 P.M.

In summary, the home is used frequently for relatively unplanned activities by groups of variable size of gay males, typically for various non-sexual activities, in contrast with the rare, planned gay male party. Unplanned activities of many other sorts are also done by groups of gay males, but these take place in public settings, as already described.

2. Dates and Couples

As explained in chapter 4, both a "date" and an "affair" imply that the two gay males are living separately, while the terms, gay "lovers" or gay "couple" usually imply that the two gay males are living together. All of the terms (date, affair, lover, and couple) share the implication that partners engage in sexual relationships in the context of an ongoing relationship and the sexual activities occur in private places (such as a residence). The contrast term is a "trick," which implies an impersonal and usually anonymous sexual engagement with a stranger which may occur in a private space, as the home of one of the partners, and often literally means that the two men spend the whole night together, having sex and then sleeping together. For example, one could say that he picked up a trick in the bar and took him home for a one-night stand. (Trick is also a verb form, e.g., "I tricked in the john this afternoon." Trick does not imply any particular kind of sexual act by itself, in either the noun or verb form, but rather the kind of relationship with the partner.)

As was indicated in chapter 4, a "date" is not identical in meaning with the heterosexual usage because a date is an agreement or arrangement for the future between two males who have already engaged in a

sexual act with each other. (A heterosexual "date" is ambiguous with regard to any previous sexual acts between the partners.) The implication of this socio-linguistic analysis is that a "date" is made between two males who have "tricked" together; that is, a trick can be transformed into an on-going dating relationship simply by agreeing to meet again in the future. The agreement to meet again in the future always implicitly means that an agreement has been made to engage again in a sexual act, but in a private place. (For example, it would violate the verbal rules of gay argot to call an agreement to meet a washroom trick again in the washroom in the future by the term, "date.") A date can include other activities besides the sexual act, and these other activities may certainly take the partners into public places; for example, a date could include going to a restaurant (or meeting in a particular restaurant) for supper, before going to the residence of one of the partner's for the sexual act. Also unlike heterosexual usage, a "date" between two men does not necessarily imply that the two do anything else besides have sexual relations in private. This was seen in the last chapter in the example where Brad, at the bar, said that Bob B. had a date with a young man two evenings in a row on the weekend, and this meant only that the man had come over to Bob B.'s apartment, where they presumably had sexual relations each evening. They did not have to go "out" to any public event or public activity for their time together to constitute a "date."

This perhaps also explains another distinction from heterosexual usage in the term "couple." Having a date with another man does not mean that the two constitute a couple at all. Heterosexuals on a date

constitute a couple for the duration of the date (at least), while a gay couple is understood to be two men who are living together (or plan to move together in the near future) and are having sexual relations on a regular basis with each other.

The Annual Gay Calendar

Like the ritual ceremonies among segments of the Nuer, where each lineage celebrates its own ceremonies, the several segments of the gay community each have their own ritual ceremonies, especially as between the drag and leather segments. A ceremony can be defined as a formal, established sequence of behavior, that is, a standardized series of ritual acts, that symbolically expresses the importance of a particular event or occasion. Not only does the segment have "it's own" ceremony, however, because the ceremonies associated with the segments define and serve to maintain the relationship between the segments (Fortes and Evans-Pritchard, 1940, p. 294 in Fried). That is, a ceremony "for" one segment distinguishes it from the other segments and thereby demarcates its relationship to the other segments.

Ritual ceremonies make a calendar that embodies a social memory. Hughes argues that there is a direct connection between the ritual calendar of a group, and problems of the life-cycle of the individual (1950, pp. 128-9), and gives examples of ceremonies and rites connected with birth, puberty, marriage, retirement, and death. For him (p. 128), a rite is set off by a "trigger" (an event), and to observe it is to know that the event may happen again in the future, as it has in the past. That is, the problem in the life-cycle of the individual is not unique, and is bound to be repeated by others.

One would expect that the calendar and ceremonies of the larger society are recognized by those within the gay community, while other ceremonies are unique to segments within the community. Just as the quasi-institutions of the gay community in this moderate-sized city are only poorly developed and dependent on the larger city, so also, the ceremonies unique to the gay community are not the only ones recognized by its members. Rather, there is considerable and varying overlap between the calendar and ceremonies of the larger society, and those recognized within the gay community. It is not an accident that Gay Lib has annually scheduled and advertised a Gay Valentine's Day Dance. (Often, it occurs days or even weeks after February 14th, but is advertised thus, anyway). A gay couple or gay roommates would be more likely to deliberately choose to have a dinner or party for invited (gay) guests on Christmas or on New Year's Eve (or, as will be discussed, Halloween). Perhaps most extreme is the occasional wedding between a gay male and a lesbian, attended not only by their beaming parents and relatives, but also by their good friends from within the gay community - who conjecture about the motives involved, even while the legal marriage ceremony takes place. (As a bisexual woman said of her lesbian lover's marriage to a gay male, with considerable irony, "I am to be the maid-of-honor tomorrow at my best bed-partner's wedding.")

This should make clear that the ceremonies and ritual calendar of the larger society are often transformed and "used" among gay friends to make an explicitly gay occasion. However, the obverse is more often true: For many of the holidays (such as Christmas, New Year's, Easter),

gay males, especially those in the younger segment, are likely to visit relatives or straight friends, rather than doing anything with other gay males. Then, the ritual calendar of the larger society does not have a special meaning among gay males and does not indicate special events or rituals unique to gay males. In fact, it would be a "special case" for the calendar of the larger society to be transformed into an explicitly gay occasion, and in this sense the calendar of the larger society dominates and pre-dominates over the meager calendar unique to the gay community. Although the annual calendar of major holidays has been considered, the same is true of the "minor" ritual ceremonies. For example, in an interview, Tony described going out drinking at a particular bar with most of his seventeen co-workers every Friday afternoon ("T.G.I.F.," common among many work groups). Although he suspected that two or three of the co-workers were also actively gay males, the drinking ritual represented a ceremony for the work group and did not have anything to do with the gay community and its unique calendar. His sexual preferences and activities were not made relevant nor explicit in the drinking group of co-workers. (Taped interview, July 8, 1978).

There is nevertheless an implicit gay annual calendar of ceremonies and rituals in the area. These are: Memorial Day, Gay Pride Week, the Miss Midwest City Drag Pageant, Halloween, and the Slave Auction. The Memorial Day weekend is generally recognized as the best weekend (or at least the first good weekend) to go to the gay resort town, located about 150 miles away. Although only a few may go from Midwest City in any given year, plans for the weekend are discussed and arrangements

made weeks ahead of time, and accounts of the weekend are often repeated for weeks afterwards. Plans for the weekend have to be made ahead of time, so that transportation and housing can be reserved. Not only is the bar of the resort considered to be good for cruising during the evenings of the weekend, but one can cruise for sexual partners on the beaches and in the woods near the area. (Events in the resort town were not observed.)

The Miss Midwest City Drag Pageant was first organized as an event for Gay Pride Week (commemorating the Stonewall rebellion of 1969 in New York City) in June, 1972. It was held again during Gay Pride Week on Sunday, June 17, 1973. But by 1974, it was no longer held during the same period, and instead was held on a Sunday in late September. In 1976, it was held in late July, and in 1978, in September.

Anyone can enter the drag pageant simply by filling out a printed application form available in the bar. This means that many contestants who enter are less well-known drag queens who are not involved in the regular drag shows. Indeed, most of those who enter the contest hope later to be asked to participate in the regular drag shows (recorded conversation with Harry, September 27, 1974). The winner of the contest often becomes important in organizing shows for the rest of the year. In 1972, the winner (Aretha) participated in the Gay Pride parade in the large metropolis. Unlike participants in regular drag shows, the contestants are not paid by the bar owner for their performance.

In the Pageant in 1973, there were eleven contestants, and in 1974, fourteen contestants. Both years, the Pageant was held on a Sunday afternoon (when the bar would not normally be busy), and each time, the

bar was crowded with people to see the show. Each year, the "mistress of ceremonies" was the winner from the previous year. About five judges selected the winner and the runner-up. Except for the large number of contestants, the Pageant is much like a regular drag show: Each contestant comes out onto the "stage" area (in Carl's bar it is the dance floor in the bar), the lights are dimmed and a spotlight is shown on "her." A popular recording by a female vocalist is played and the contestant pretends to sing the song into a microphone. During pauses in the singing of the record, the contestant may dance around the stage area. During the performance, individuals from the audience may approach the stage area and hand dollar bills to the contestant, as in regular drag shows. The Pageant differs from drag shows in that each contestant only performs one number. The Pageant is a topic of discussion among gay male friends, both before it takes place (especially as to when it will be held) and afterwards, especially about who won the contest and whether it was justified by the performance.

The association between Gay Pride Week and the Miss Midwest City Drag Contest only lasted for two years (1972 and 1973). Gay Pride Week is still commemorated by Gay Lib members with a picnic in a public park during the week in June. The picnic is advertised in the school newspaper, so that many gays who are not regular members of Gay Lib are also likely to go to the picnic. (It was not observed.)

With the expansion of the bar system from one gay and one "mixed" (gay and straight) bar to two gay and the one mixed bars, the Miss Midwest City Drag Pageant may be held during the Summer in any one of the bars. Besides the Miss Midwest City Pageant has been added a

series of drag contests, each held in each of the different bars on an annual basis, but without an unvarying date for the contest. Now a drag queen can win in one bar and would be known as the Miss (name of the bar) of 1977, 1978, etc. The only regional drag contest in 1978 took place in a gay bar in a city one hundred miles away. Some drag queens from Midwest City are likely to enter it; however, again, that contest does not have an exact annual day that does not vary from year to year.

The three bars are each separately owned but there is not usually any competition between the bars concerning the drag contests. For example, the second gay bar opened on June 30, 1976, and it prominently displayed a poster announcing the Miss Midwest City Drag Contest in the mixed bar on July 25, 1976.

Halloween has added significance, beyond what it means to the general population, because it is a popular time for costume parties, and especially for gay males to go to parties or to the bar in drag. For many gay males, this is the only time in the year when they will be seen in drag. Often on this weekend, the parties are held early in the evening, and the participants later go down to the bar from the party, still in their costumes. As with the Drag Pageant, discussion often centers afterwards on what one did on Halloween. Perhaps surprisingly, nothing unusual was normally scheduled at the bars on Halloween weekend - people in drag or other costumes merely went to one of the bars. For example, there was no contest for costumes at any of the bars.

In both 1974 and 1975, a "drag ball" was held on Halloween in the Midwest City Civic Center. (This event was not observed.)

On the Halloween weekend (Sunday evening) of 1978, both gay bars scheduled their own Miss 1978 drag contest at the same time. In addition, the newer gay bar scheduled a costume contest. This, of course, put them in direct competition with each other for customers. The costume and drag contest were observed in the newer gay bar, Tom's. A drag queen (Miss Midwest City of 1973) was the "mistress" of ceremonies for both the costume and drag contests. Directly before the costume contest, "she" introduced another drag queen, who did one number. The "mistress" of ceremonies then announced each of the costumes and the person in costume walked across the "stage" (one end of the bar which was well-lit and had a curtain across the wall behind the area) for about two minutes, exhibiting the costume. There were 22 costumed entrants in the contest. These included a medeival King or Prince, one male with a silver cape and nothing under it except a silvery g-string, one dracula, one Martian master chained to his slave, 2 white furry things with carrot noses (a guy and girl), one black pretending to be Joanne Little being raped, with torn blouse (this may have been a black male), and several contestants were males in drag but wearing either moustaches or beards.

After the costume contest the "mistress" of ceremonies introduced Miss Tom's of 1977, and "she" sang two songs.

Eighteen had entered the female impersonation contest and each was judged by "modeling," just walking across the stage area and back, and then the top five finalists were selected to each do a number, from which the winner was selected. The winner, thereafter known as Miss Tom's of 1978, was given a prize by the bar owner. The judges for the drag contest included a drag queen and the owner of a gay bar located

in a medium-sized SMSA a hundred miles away.

Like the Drag Pageant, the annual Slave Auction has been organized for only a few years. It takes place in a gay bar in the large metropolis eighty-five miles away on the Friday evening after Thanksgiving. The particular bar is, as previously described, the center for meetings of a male homosexual "leather club." The club organizes and publicizes the Slave Auction every year, and it is open to anyone who wants to attend, for the price of admission. A person volunteers to be a slave, and to do the bidding of the "master" for the night and the next day. One can bid for a slave by showing identification to club members who register the bidders. (In 1975, fifty-one people registered to bid.) To avoid the metropolitan prostitution laws, the club collects the money paid for the slaves and contributes it to a charity. Hence, a successful bidder knows that what he pays to "buy" a slave is a legitimate tax deduction. In addition, the club members provide a dinner in a restaurant to each master and slave at the end of their 24 hours. Apparently to avoid the possibility of the master and slave having incompatible preferences in sexual acts, the sexual preferences of the slave are elaborately described by the auctioneer during the bidding. For example, the auctioneer read from a card:

> "This is Steve. He wants to stay new to the scene. No heavy stuff. Depending on what you do, he does. He likes to get fucked."

A second example is:

> "He's known as T.J.'s Sunday night regular, and you know that he has been around here for a while, at least T.J. has. He likes to cook, so if you have any baking to do (pause). He likes Saran Wrap, and plastic, and rubber. He likes clothes." (Recorded November 28, 1975.)

Most people attend the Slave Auction to watch the presentation of the slaves and the bidding. Because this event takes place at a considerable distance, the amount of participation of people from Midwest City (as slaves, bidders, club members, and also as spectators for the auction) is rather limited. Nevertheless, the upcoming Slave Auction is a topic of conversation during November, with most gay males quite aware that it will take place. Also afterwards, those who attended and watched, or those who were slaves, are likely to describe the event to others who did not attend.

Of course, gay males in Midwest City share with the larger society many other holidays (Christmas, New Year's, Easter, etc.), but these do not have a special meaning among gay males and do not indicate special events or rituals unique to gay males. For many of these holidays, the gay males are likely to visit relatives, rather than doing anything with other gay males. Hence, the five events described above constitute an implicit annual gay calendar of special events. (The annual gay calendar is implicit in that nobody refers to it as such.) It should be noticed that the events appeal to different segments of the gay community: People into leather would not likely wear leather to the bar during the drag pageant (if they did attend), and drag queens would not be welcome to the metropolitan bar in drag during the Slave Auction.

Conclusions

This chapter has considered the several identities, in addition to that of gay male, that are to be found in the gay community in this medium-sized city. It was seen that these identities are important to the social organization of the gay community because some of them are

the basis of segments. Drag queens, leathermen, and chickenhawks (and less clearly, chicken and hustlers) form distinct segments. These segments of the community are more than just a differential rate of interaction (i.e., more interaction among those within the segment than with those outside it) because the segments are a subjective reality, being based on a shared identity, in addition to the more general identity of gay male.

The chapter presented an ethnography of cruising in public places, contrasting cruising in the College Center and the gay bar. Cruising is a subtle art. The possibility of error and the misperception of cues is fairly high in both settings. In contrast with the bar, a male cruising another in the College Center cannot usually assume the sexual orientation and sexual interests of the other. Hence, cruising in the College Center is both more subtle, relying more on eye contact, and also more elaborate, with much walking and following of the other after the initial eye contact and before any verbal exchange, than in the bar. In contrast, a sexual assignation may be arranged by quite direct verbal statements in the bar, especially as closing time approaches.

Most sexual relations among young adult gay males tend to be among strangers or acquaintances rather than friends. However, evidence from interviews was presented showing that some gay friends do have sexual relations on a continuing basis without defining the relationship as one of "lovers." This qualifies Leznoff and Westley's study (1956), which posited a mechanism comparable to the "incest taboo." Such a taboo among gay male friends is not universal and should be discarded

conceptually. Sexual relationships among gay male friends, while certainly not impossible, are nevertheless rare for two reasons: 1) As expressed by at least some respondents, there is more sexual excitement and a greater challenge in cruising and ultimately getting a sexual partner who is unknown ("the hunt"), and 2) friendships are often very important for emotional and other support and may be jeopardized by a sexual proposal. Those gay males who are barely acquainted are in an ambiguous position, as there is a potential for either a sexual relationship or a friendship. This ambiguity seems to be one basis of the "gregariousness" of gay males with each other and of the openness of the gay male friendship networks.

A pair analysis of gay male diners in the College Center cafeteria showed that there were core groups of very frequent attenders who regularly ate together (the "high attenders"). They represented for others (the medium and low attenders) a gay presence in the cafeteria and in the College Center in general. The fact that there were so many low and medium attenders who occasionally ate with the core members shows that the gay friendship networks were open to new participants, rather than closed and secretive. This is a behavioral indication of "gregariousness."

The dinner groups served several functions for the regular members besides a setting for meeting new people. They were a source of emotional and other support, and relayed information of practical importance to the individual members. Exchanges of favors and services were common among the regular members. The dinner groups provided a place for members to bring personal troubles and embarrassments.

The chapter contrasted behavior in public and private settings. Besides cruising for sexual partners in the two public settings, the chapter also described behavior in drag shows and in the leather club Slave Auction. Behavior in private settings that was described included gay parties, tricks, dates, and couples.

Finally, the chapter considered the implicit gay annual calendar of ceremonies and their rituals. The calendar is implicit in that nobody refers to it as such, but includes Memorial Day weekend as the best time to go to the gay resort town, Gay Pride Week, the Miss Midwest City Drag Pageant (which for a couple of years was deliberately planned to coincide with Gay Pride Week), Halloween, and the Slave Auction. It was emphasized that several of these ceremonies have special significance for some of the identity-segments within the gay male community. In particular, Gay Pride Week is now associated with Gay Lib; the Midwest City Drag Pageant and Halloween have great significance for the drag queen segment; while the Slave Auction is an event of greatest interest to the leatherman segment. However, the annual calendar of holidays observed in the larger society tends to dominate over the meager calendar of gay ceremonies; most holidays, such as Christmas, New Year's and Thanksgiving are usually celebrated with relatives or straight friends by young adult gay males, rather than being transformed into a gay ceremony. This indicates that, although there is some content to a gay subculture in Midwest City, it is meager.

Footnotes to Chapter Five

1. On distinctions among lesbians, the interested reader may want to consult Barbara Ponse (1978).
2. Lee mentions that one who is uninterested in the other would deliberately avoid eye contact, that is, after the first glance (1978b, p. 80).
3. Although they would be called "trade" by Humphreys (1970), this term was never used in conversations about them; rather, they were referred to as "closet queens." In fact, it is fairly common to hear an anecdote about a sexual act with a male who never before had a homosexual experience. Although such men may eventually "come out" and begin to consider themselves as gay and thereafter form friendships with gay males in the building, this is exceptional. However, Tom described his "coming out" and subsequent (heterosexual) divorce because of sexual participation in the College Center in just such terms; after beginning to regularly "trick" with others in the building, "I had to admit to myself then that I was gay. For a long time I had thought maybe I was but wasn't sure" (recorded conversation, January 21, 1974).

CHAPTER SIX. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This dissertation has shown that the gay community in Midwest City, even though it does not have a shared residential territory, is nevertheless a community. The dissertation has also shown that there are limits to the ecological explanation for community. The most crucial limitations come from the variables of city size and "critical mass" (Fischer, 1976) of membership in the community. Unlike the "institutionally complete" (Breton, 1964) gay neighborhoods and gay ghettoes that are found in the largest metropolitan areas, it was shown that the gay community in Midwest City is institutionally rather underdeveloped. It was for this reason that the concept of "quasi-institutions" was introduced so as to emphasize that the two gay bars, the several forms of dyadic sexual relations, and Gay Lib are only poorly developed as institutions and that gay males live out significant portions of their daily and weekly rounds of activities, not within the gay quasi-institutions, but rather in the completed institutions of the larger city. One can say that the gay organizations and gay dyads are dependent on the larger city for their continuation. Clearly, the less developed and less institutionally complete the gay community within a city, the less fully can the lives of its members be encapsulated within the community. At the same time, it was seen that information about certain ecological locations ("gay places") is compatible with, and not sharply demarcated from the developed heterosexual institutions of the larger city; for example, knowledge about gay places is periodically conveyed in the city newspaper, as well as by cabdrivers and by the

telephone crisis intervention center.

Two interrelated processes were examined: How ecological settings contribute to the sense of community (or more generally, how structure contributes to perceptions) and how cognitive labels (as, "gay community") contribute to the perceived salience of certain territories and places. The main argument was that the label of "gay community" is most powerful in certain ecological settings. "Gay community" as a label contributes to the perceived salience of certain territories and locations. Some places within the city come to be known as "gay places" even though most of these places are in public, and heterosexuals may also be present. This liminal aspect of some of the places, such as the College Center with its plurality of groups, requires further actions by gay males to transform such places into gay places. The interactions in public places that are required for the transformation of the public place into a gay place are either subtle cues between strangers (as seen in eye contact in cruising) or verbal interaction between gay friends and acquaintances. The places can be transformed only with sufficient gay male participants; for example, the gay bar is perceived as a gay place without further action for its transformation, but it serves as a gay place only late in the evenings when sufficient gays are present. (That is, it is not recognizable as a gay bar on any afternoon when few people are present, and most of those present are not gay.) Other places, such as the College Center, are perceived as gay places only in the evenings and on weekends, but are rarely completely transformed into gay places because of the plurality of different groups with different purposes in the settings.

A gay male is quite limited in the numbers of gay places where this identity can be presented in Midwest City. The formation of intimate, sexual relations is limited and tied to certain public ecological settings. This means that location has a direct effect on intimacy. Because gay places are perceived by members as places that are relevant to a gay identity, it is clear that ecological location preconditions the behavior to be found in the setting. That is, an ecological setting is perceived and acted on by gay males to transform it into a "gay place." With interactional cues, sexual relations are made possible and legitimated by the setting. This is like an information "feed-back loop": A place is perceived as a gay place, so the actor emits gay cues to others present, and by their responses, the perception of the place as a "gay place" is affirmed.

With repeated interaction between gay males in an ecological setting, a location comes to have a reputation as a "gay place." When this has been established for the participants in the location, not only is the perception of the place as a gay place affirmed, but simultaneously, the salience of the gay identity of the participants to the place becomes established. The gay place then preconditions further interaction. In this way, sexual relations that are built up in the location with interactional cues come to be legitimated by the setting. Further, regular participants in the setting tend to be recognized by each other as having a gay identity. Information in the place about its nature as a gay place then is redundant. Several different sorts of messages assign meaning to the place as a gay place where a gay identity is salient. In this sense, the "gay community," as a set of

gay places where a gay identity is salient, is constructed and reconstructed by the repeated interaction of the participants in the places.

The focus of the ethnography has been on the interactional patterns, the criteria of membership in the group, and the extent of shared cognitive orientations. It was seen that the interactional patterns are complex because there are several segments in the community. The sharpest divisions in the community are based on sex (being a lesbian or gay male) and age (for males, being below or above approximately thirty or thirty-five years of age). Many gay males are further segmented into the identity-segments of drag queens, leathermen, chickenhawks, and Gay Lib members, while chicken, hustlers, and bisexuals (who also have distinct identities) are less clearly in interactional segments. Except for the last three, it is clear that the segments have higher interaction among the members within the segments than outside them. Hence, these segments are important to the social organization of the gay community. However, just as cues and interactions are required to transform a place into a "gay place," so also, these segments become visible to observation only by the behavior of those in the segments. One expects drag queens, leathermen, and chickenhawks to act differently from each other and differently from "regular" gay males. Also, the identities of drag queen, leatherman, chickenhawk, and Gay Lib member can only be displayed in rather limited sets of places. At the extreme, for example, Midwest City does not have a single gay place where the identity of leatherman can properly be displayed, and a gay male with the additional identity of leatherman must travel to the large metropolis eighty-five miles away to find an

appropriate place to present the identity. In Midwest City, the friendship networks of leathermen can come together, for example for dinner in the cafeteria of the College Center, but the identity of leatherman is then a latent aspect of the interaction.

One comes to be recognized as a member of the community by being seen by others in gay places and by emitting gay cues toward others in the places (e.g., by cruising). In some places such as the gay bar, individuals assume that all other males present are also gay. In conversations, one can assert that one is a member of the gay community by the statement that one has "come out" or that one is "a homosexual." These two statements are functional equivalents; either statement is accepted by others as equivalent to membership in the community. Such statements were never observed to be challenged by another member, as if the assumption is made that a person would never lie about being gay or having come out.

It was argued that the identity categories of homosexual and heterosexual have a social reality but are "reified" and viewed as inevitable and "fated." For example, one is said to "discover" his sexual orientation identity, and many believe that alternation between the identity categories is impossible. Many gay males believe that once a male has "come out" and discovered his "true" identity, changing to a heterosexual identity is impossible. Semantically, gay males verbalize this belief by referring to this change in identity as "going back into the closet," which is not equivalent to heterosexuality at all. The negative identity category of "closet queen" is used by some gay males to refer to their past biography before they "accepted" the homosexual identity. In a similar way, gay males refer to some other males, who

define themselves as heterosexual, as "really" being closet queens who just cannot "admit" their homosexuality. This set of beliefs in itself tends to promote stability of the gay identity for gay males. The beliefs about "coming out" are also important in promoting stability of membership in the gay community, even though such beliefs gloss individual differences in the meaning assigned the term and its application to the individual's experiences.

The extent of shared cognitive orientations in the gay male community was also examined. Evidence from the semantic differential showed that gay males are similar in their views of the social world (i.e., gay males, lesbians, men in general, and women in general) and differ from heterosexual males in this regard. In particular, gay males did not significantly evaluate the objects men in general and women in general significantly differently than heterosexual males, but did significantly differ in the evaluations made of gay males and lesbians. This suggests that gay males do not differ from males in the larger society on cognitive categories relevant in the larger society, but do share distinctive views of cognitive categories that are of greater salience within the gay community. This provides partial evidence that there is content to the concept of a gay "subculture."

Other evidence bearing on a gay subculture was seen in the implicit gay annual calendar of ceremonies. Events in the implicit calendar were more relevant to some identity-segments of the community than to other segments. For example, the annual Miss Midwest City Drag Contest and Halloween are of greater interest to the drag queen segment, while the annual Slave Auction is of greater interest to leathermen. However,

the calendar of ceremonies is meager, and most holidays are shared with the larger society and are not transformed into gay holidays. Hence, some evidence was found that cognitive orientations and elements of a subculture are shared and underpin interaction, even though the community is structurally weak and fragile and only has quasi-institutions.

Because sexual relations among most young adult gay males are usually with relative strangers and tend not to be repeated, friendship is important to the social organization of the community. A pair analysis of the dinner groups in the College Center cafeteria showed that there were core groups of very frequent gay male diners. However, because many other gay males occasionally joined the core groups, these groups were by no means closed and secretive. Examples of the "openness" of the gay male friendship networks were given for other activities as well. The open networks allow meeting new people who may become either friends or sexual partners. The friendship groups served many functions for the core members besides a setting for meeting new people, including a place to bring personal troubles and embarrassments and a source of emotional and other support, such as exchanging favors and services and obtaining practical information. These functions have little to do with homosexuality.

Although some young adult gay males have "affairs" and "lovers," and a rare few may have sexual relations with friends, the most common form of sexual relationship is between relative strangers. For this reason, cruising for sexual partners in public settings was examined in detail. The metropolitan area has only a limited number of public places that may be regularly used for cruising. Besides certain public

washrooms, these are the College Center, the two gay bars, an adult bookstore, and a movie theater. Cruising in these different settings is done somewhat differently. The desire for new sexual partners makes the interactive boundary of the community more problematic than it would otherwise be.

Of course, cruising can be done only in public settings because the interest is in meeting a new sexual partner. The public settings for cruising have different qualities to the interaction than behavior in private settings. As seen in cruising, the type of response of the unknown other (as, eye contact and following) are crucial. The public settings for cruising are very important for searching for sexual intimacy. A dilemma of male homosexuality is this public searching for private, sexual intimacy. It is the dramaturgical problem of seeking intimate relations in public places. This is perhaps one basis of moral objection to male homosexuality in the larger society. Yet, it highlights the importance of the public ecological settings for understanding the social organization of the gay community.

This study has shown some of the limitations on the ecological approach to community. At the same time, it has shown the fallacy of just using the actor's perspective, such as his assertion of the presence of a gay community. An implication of the present study is that the setting of a gay community in a city of a particular size affects the social psychology of the individual actor. One would expect different consequences for the structure of the gay community in cities of different sizes. In cities having gay communities which are larger and more elaborately structured (approaching institutional completeness),

the social psychology of the individual actor and interactional cues would be less important than in medium-sized cities like Midwest City.

APPENDIX

Table 8.--Analysis of Pairs of High Attenders as Ratios of Total Pairs and Total Possible Pairs, 1974.

	A	B	C	D	E
High Attenders	# of Pairs	Pairs with High Attenders	%(B/A)	Possible Pairs	%(A/D)
Jef	246	202	82.1%	321	76.6%
Bruce	200	156	78.0	261	76.6
Bob B.	181	144	79.6	236	76.7
Michael	60	47	78.3	171	35.1
Doug	52	41	78.8	131	39.7
Mark	149	124	83.2	210	71.0
Bill A.	121	97	80.2	162	74.7
John	96	83	86.5	121	79.3
Dwight	77	58	75.3	101	76.2
Bob D.	89	76	85.4	115	77.4
Karl	50	45	90.0	79	63.3
Joe	53	44	83.0	81	65.4
Al	38	35	92.1	78	48.7

Table 9.--Analysis of Pairs of High Attenders as Ratios of Total Pairs and Total Possible Pairs, 1975.

	A	B	C	D	E
High Attenders	# of Pairs	Pairs with High Attenders	%(B/A)	Possible Pairs	%(A/D)
Jef	219	184	84.0%	339	64.6%
Bruce	57	43	75.4	70	81.4
Bob B.	61	53	86.9	94	64.9
Michael	149	122	81.9	274	54.4
Doug	136	111	81.6	266	51.1
Curtis	173	153	88.4	290	59.7
Peter	47	30	63.8	93	50.5
George	47	38	80.9	101	46.5
Brad	36	31	86.1	51	70.6

Table 10.--Analysis of Pairs of High Attenders as Ratios of Total Pairs and Total Possible Pairs, 1976.

	A	B	C	D	E
High Attenders	# of Pairs	Pairs with High Attenders	%(B/A)	Possible Pairs	%(A/D)
Jef	50	36	72.0%	105	47.6%
Michael	135	99	73.3	314	43.0
Doug	145	102	70.3	310	46.8
David	104	90	86.5	218	47.7
Kitty	72	61	84.7	190	37.9
Leo	52	48	92.3	105	49.5
Colin	50	28	56.0	131	38.2
Duncan	31	25	80.6	80	38.8
Jill	37	32	86.5	67	55.2

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