NEGOTIATED GENDER WITHIN SAME-SEX RELATIONSHIPS:
GAY MEN PRACTICING GENDER THROUGH LOCAL ACTION

A Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree Master of Arts in the

Graduate School of The Ohio State University

By

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The Ohio State University
2005

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ABSTRACT

From the moment a child is born, she is introduced into a structure of social relations that socialize her according to gender norms. However, in a homosexual relationship, gender identity and gendered behaviors may not be easily understood utilizing those prior gender representations. This project addresses the complexities of gender by examining how gendered behaviors are negotiated within same-sex relationships and how this negotiation translates into gender identities for the individuals within the relationship. The practice of gender is partly outside the individual, but enacted and maintained locally through the actions of social actors. (Connell 2000, West and Zimmerman 1987, and Yancey Martin 2003) Using in-depth qualitative interviews with six gay male couples (individual and couple interviews), I apply Eric Leifer's local action theory (Leifer, 1988) to examine how these men negotiate gender within their lives. Results indicate that these men were socialized according to distinct and traditional understandings of gender and definitions of masculinity and femininity provided by the respondents coincide with stereotypical conceptions of gender. However, they expressed that they do not believe in these stereotypes and they often actively present different aspects of their gender in different situations in order to avoid any stigma that might result from challenging stereotypes. But at home, these men attempt to create a more equitable and accepting relationship that deviates from traditional gendered definitions.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"From conscious thought, right from the start, I knew I was gay. I don't think I knew what 'gay' was at the time, but I knew I wasn't like my other friends or family; I knew I liked boys and I liked what they made me feel. But I never really acted on it until much later because I didn't know what I was supposed to do. It wasn't like what my friends were doing." (Nicholas)

Theoretical research on the self asserts that one's sense of self is a social construct created through interaction (Augoustinos 2001; Duveen 2001; Goffman 2002). Through interaction, an individual acts and reacts to create, maintain, and present her self to her fellow social actors. An individual's identity emerges as a function of these representations of the self. As a creation through interaction, one's identity is formed from how others identify her as much as how she identifies with someone or something; she may identify as being feminine but her identity is just as much about how others characterize her as feminine. Hence, identities are largely constructed externally, and then subsequently internalized as a sense of self.

These representations provide organization for the individual, as well as her fellow actors, and understandings about characteristics of an identity create a sense of stability for the social world. However, there are consequences for the content of such identity formations. While it may be organizationally "neat" to categorize and classify identities

based upon certain characteristics, what does that classification mean to the individual being classified, and how does that affect her life? An additional concern is how these classifications affect the agency individual actors have in determining their gendered identities and selves.

Erving Goffman's work on the self, (Goffman 1959) was particularly interested in the tension that arises between what an individual is expected to do and what that individual may want to do of her own accord. According to Goffman, individuals "perform" for various social audiences in a manner that allows them to maintain their self-image. This implies that the actor has some level of control over the maintenance of her self-image. Yet, Goffman perceived the self as a product of the negotiation, or interaction, between the actor and her audience and not as an intrinsic quality that is possessed by the actor. As one person acts, the other person reacts and gives feedback to the initial actor. She then uses this feedback to alter her performance.

Gender identity is one of the central elements of an individual's identity formation and sense of self. From the moment a child is born, she is introduced into a structure of social relations that socialize her according to gender norms; she is presented with various representations of gendered expectations and gendered behaviors. In terms of familial relationships, representations of what constitutes a couple may be characterized by strict gendered behaviors between the mother and the father[1]. However, in a homosexual relationship, gender identity and gendered behaviors may not be easily understood utilizing

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[1] The reality of what "family" means may vary from person to person and what a family consists of is evolving with the increased prevalence of alternative family structures. However, the heteronormative ideal nuclear family, which is stressed and valued by American culture as the traditional ideal, consists of a legally married mother and father and their biological children. (Waite 2000)

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those prior representations. This confusion could be present for those within the relationship as well as by other actors within society. All actors, regardless of sexual identity, must address issues of gender when performing and presenting their selves to others. However, due to their marginalized sexual identity, it would seem that lesbian and gay individuals might have a more difficult time negotiating gender as they maneuver their way through the heterosexist nature of our culture and society. As a result, lesbian and gay individuals may have to produce more deliberate "gender work" to manipulate their gender identity and to present their gendered self.

Traditional understandings relate gender with the sex of the person; men are masculine and women are feminine. Since lesbian and gay couples are composed of two individuals of the same sex, they cannot fall back on the traditional understandings of how gender should be configured within a relationship. So it will be impossible for the individuals within the same-sex relationship to adopt traditional notions of gendered relationship roles and behaviors. This is not to say that heterosexual couples are completely limited in their ability to negotiate gender within their relationships. However, heterosexuals have the ability to follow a gender script that has been given to them by the social structure. Their negotiations may result in various arrangements that align with or differ from the traditional norms. Regardless of the outcome, they have the potential to follow the traditional script and enact traditional masculinity and femininity within their lives, or they can alter this script as best suits their relationship. However, lesbian and gay individuals do not have that script to follow; they must write a new script. Through this

process of constructing their script, an inevitably non-traditional negotiation of roles and behaviors will take place between these partners.

This project addresses these complexities and ambiguous aspects of gender by examining how gendered behaviors are negotiated within same-sex relationships and how this negotiation then translates into gender identities for the individuals within the relationship. Division of labor is a powerful tool for creating and maintaining relationship stratification within heterosexual relationships. It is through such domestic activities that heterosexuals create and maintain traditional gender schemes. As such, this project gives particular attention to division of labor activities within same-sex relationships to assess similarities or differences in how these couples "do gender" in their private and intimate situations. First, I anticipate that the partners within a same-sex relationship will have been socialized with dichotomized representations of gender, where clear understandings of traditional femininity and masculinity were attained. However, due to the nature of their same-sex relationship, gender identities and gendered behaviors within the relationship will not be as traditional for the subjects. Second, I anticipate that each partner will take on distinct roles within the relationship and that these roles will either align with traditional masculine or feminine relationship roles or the couple will challenge tradition and define their relationship roles in a non-traditional manner. Either way, an examination of this negotiation process within same-sex couples will expand our understanding of such relationships and the lived experiences of lesbians and gays. Finally, I anticipate that this negotiation of gender within the relationship will have an impact on the individual's gender identity.

CHAPTER 2

PRIOR RESEARCH

The literature within lesbian/gay studies has not widely or directly addressed the negotiation of gender identities or gender behaviors within same-sex relationships. For background information, I examined studies on various aspects of this issue within the areas of gender, identity and the self, family, and lesbian/gay studies.

Much of the work on gender formation has focused on social learning and differential association theories as groundwork explanations for the transference of gendered norms and the gendered ideology (Eccles et al. 1993; Howard and Hollander 1997; Nagy, Jacklin and Baker 1993; Pleck et al. 1993; Risman and Ferree 1995). In considering gender, social learning theory would posit that gender roles are taught to young social actors by other social actors. Through socialization, individuals learn what gender means and what behaviors and actions are acceptable for each gender. Broadly, this results in a gendered ideology within a society, referring to the beliefs about the importance of men and women adhering to culturally defined standards for their gendered behaviors. (Pleck et al. 1993) Differential association theories take this notion further by positing that parents and other social actors differ in "the degree to which they reinforce sex-typed behavior for boys and girls." (Lippa 2001:66) The gender relations approach to studying gender also recognizes that there is a flexibility to gender that cannot be completely

understood by merely recognizing expectations that are presented to women and to men. By acknowledging the relational aspects of gender, the structure and configuration of gender can become apparent. (Connell 2000) The structure of gender relations consists of power relations, production relations (division of labor), cathexis (emotional relations), and symbolism. (Connell 2000) This entire framework builds from the notion that through interaction, we build and adapt our concept of our gendered self and our gendered identity by learning the gendered norms and where we fall within the gendered ideology. Our gendered actions and reactions are simply part of a larger pattern of gendered action that can be understood as the configuration of gendered practice. (Connell 2000)

Gender theorists have asserted that gender is something that is practiced by social actors through interaction. (Connell 2000, West and Zimmerman 1987, Yancey Martin 2003) This means that gender is a "system of action that is institutionalized and widely recognized but also is dynamic, emergent, local, variable, and shifting." (Yancey Martin 2003:351) Through interaction, individuals enact gender options that are made available to them by social institutions. Building on Goffman's ideas on gender displays, West and Zimmerman have looked at "doing gender" as an active process of situated gender displays. (West and Zimmerman 1987) That is, social actors enact or display gender appropriately (or inappropriately) according to particular contexts or circumstances. They choose these actions by utilizing prior knowledge of such actions and situations as well as anticipating future actions, or reactions, from other social actors. "Each practice of gender is a moving phenomenon, done quickly, (often) nonreflexively, in concert or interaction with others." (Yancey Martin 2003:352) In this way, the practice of gender is partly outside the

individual, through options and limitations made available by the gender order, but enacted and maintained locally through the actions of social actors. (Yancey Martin 2003)

Sexuality can also be a crucial element of this ideology. To fully understand gender and how sexuality might play into the equation, you must look at the relational character of gender and the overall structure of the gender order. Something or someone is only masculine or feminine in relation to other aspects of gender. Quite often this benchmark is heterosexual masculinity. Work by Barbara Risman and Danette Johnson-Sumerford points out that "gender is essentially a system of stratification based on categorization that is created and recreated daily." (Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1998:23) Non-heterosexuals, who do not adhere to these gendered standards or system of stratification, are often viewed as less of a man or less of a woman. According to R.W. Connell, "certain constructions of masculinity are hegemonic, while others are subordinated or marginalized." (Connell 1992:736) To many people, "homosexuality is a negation of masculinity and homosexual men must be effeminate," (Connell 1992:736), while lesbian women must also be butch.

In terms of the gender research that has looked at homosexuals, it has primarily been comparison studies looking at homosexuals versus heterosexuals. (Chung 1995, Connell 2000, and Rutter and Schwartz 1996) But there hasn't really been much work focusing solely on differences within a group of homosexuals. Regardless, much of the research is built on the notion of a heterosexual gendered ideology.

Concerning gender and family/relationship studies, findings once again point to the process of creating hegemonic conceptions of gender. "Historically, the family is a 'gender

factory,' where the polarization of masculine and feminine is created and displayed."

(Risman and Johnson-Sumerford 1998:23) Hegemonic conceptions of gender are basic

beliefs that are so taken for granted in our society that they are invisible to most people.

There is simply an understanding of men as protectors, providers, and sexual aggressors,

and women as naturally emotional, nurturing, and sexually receptive. In a heterosexist

society such as ours, homosexuality disrupts this gendered order of the traditional family.

A same-sex relationship doesn't fit the gendered mold of relationship roles and behaviors

within a family.

The available research on same-sex relationships indicates that these couples are

similar to traditional heterosexual relationships in terms of relationship goals, affection and

companionship, relationship satisfaction and relationship quality. (Risman and Schwartz

1988) However, research also indicates that lesbian and gay couples seem to have greater

role and behavior flexibility as well as more relationship equality. (Carrington 1999,

Patterson 2000, Risman and Schwartz 1988, and Rutter and Schwartz 1996) However, it's

not clear how gender and gender identity configure within the relationships of lesbians and

gays. What is lacking is an understanding of the dynamics of role/behavior creativity for

same-sex couples as well as the interpersonal negotiations that go on within these non-

traditional relationships. So how do these couples negotiate the terrain of gender within a

coupled relationship?

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL OPTIONS

With respect to the process of negotiation, do individuals or couples have a sense of agency in the production of gender work, or do they simply act according to normative structures surrounding notions of gender and family/relationships? This issue of creativity in action guides the theoretical framework of this paper. Action theories are used to examine how gender identity and behaviors are negotiated within same-sex relationships, and how individual actors are able to act.

It has been argued that action theories fall within one of two camps, normative action theories or rational action theories (Joas, 1996). Within this framework, rational choice theories are characterized as more calculative, while normative action theories are more learned, habitual, and repetitive. Normative action theories consider the situation in which an action takes place as having influence on what an actor will do. These situational forces are grounded in the norms and the social structures that surround the individual. Essentially, normative action theories view human activity as repetitive action that is learned through socialization. Rational choice theories, on the other hand, do not place such a focus on situational influences. According to these theories, actions are based on measures of costs and rewards, where the optimal action will result in the maximum reward for the individual, while minimizing any and all costs associated with attaining that

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goal. To make such a choice, individual actors are well informed regarding potential options, and options are preferentially ordered to maximize the actor's goals.

Traditional theoretical outlines for the construction of gender would initially be grouped with the normative theories of action. However, everyone does not form the same conventional gender identity, and individuals within same-sex relationships cannot easily apply traditional gender norms and behaviors to their situation. Normative gender and family definitions present traditionally heterosexual roles and behaviors for individuals. The union of a man and a woman; a father and a mother; a masculine part and a feminine part characterizes conventional notions of family and relationships. By the nature of their sexuality, individuals in same-sex relationships cannot utilize these normative constructions as guidance for their actions within their relationships.

Rational choice theories may not be the optimal explanation for the negotiation of gender either. Pure rational choice theories are grounded in the principle that actors have access to perfect information[2] so that they are able to order their preferences of outcomes and can then act in the most rational manner. However, lesbian and gay individuals who enter a same-sex relationship may not have perfect information regarding their situation or what their partner's potential for action might be. Therefore, their actions may not be completely rational. They are in a process of creating their gendered reality.

Perhaps the more ideal theoretical perspective would be a middle-ground theory that would capture the influence of normative frameworks and influences, but would also

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[2] The importance of information is a diverging point of rational choice theories. Earlier, pure rational choice theory assumed that perfect information was necessary for actors to choose a course of purposive action from options available to them. However, later rational choice theory recognizes that information can sometimes vary according to quality or quantity, and this lack of perfect information could affect the rational choices that actors make.

allow for the free will of the individual to act or react in accordance to the norms and situations she is presented with. Eric Leifer's local action theory (Leifer, 1988) could be used to explain the negotiation of gender by same-sex partners. Local action theory centers on action as being created through the process of interaction, yet it rests on the inability to predict the outcomes of an action. Actions could be influenced by normative structures, but Leifer's theory gives the actors a greater sense of agency in creating their actions. However, unlike pure rational choice theories, Leifer's theory does not rely on perfect information for the actors. Moving through the uncertainty of the situation is what helps individuals come to a decision on action.

According to local action theory, individual actors are motivated to act by an attempt to attain status. (Leifer, 1988) This status is attained from the roles that an individual actor holds. However, achieving a desired status requires more than just holding a certain role. It also requires the acknowledgement of that role and status by other actors. Essentially, a person only has status if another person has a complimentary status. (Leifer, 1988) Without a role compliment, the status that an individual seeks is meaningless and unattainable. Within a same-sex relationship, the status and roles that one individual seeks are tied to the status and roles that her partner seeks. For example, partner A might wish to assume the role of caretaker of the domestic sphere, but partner B has to relinquish access to those activities and acknowledge that partner A is responsible for those actions and is entitled to the status that that role bestows on partner A. Partner A can only claim the roles and statuses she seeks if partner B acknowledges and agrees to this achievement.

As individuals search for status, they have two ideals, or options, for achieving this status. The first ideal is role behavior. Role behavior refers to the understood normative behaviors attached to certain roles. When an actor adheres to role behavior, she holds a certain status that goes along with that role she is holding. A mother who adheres to the appropriate maternal behaviors is rewarded with the status of being a good mother. However, if a mother does not exhibit good motherly behaviors, she is likely to receive sanctions from others for not fulfilling her role as a good mother. As a result, she will not be rewarded with the status she seeks as a mother. If actors are not able to exhibit the appropriate role behavior, they are not rewarded with the status that corresponds with the ideal of role behavior.

Sometimes situations are not straightforward and normative. Sometimes there is a level of uncertainty surrounding a situation and individual roles and behaviors are not clear to the actors. In these situations, the role an individual will assume is acquired through interaction. Individuals within same-sex relationships are not able to follow the traditional male-female relationship roles within familial relationships[3], so roles and actions must be discovered or created by the couple. Such situational interaction presents the second ideal for achieving status, local action. Local action refers to the way an individual attempts to gain status in situations where roles may not be well established. According to Leifer, local action rests on the ambiguity that surrounds a role or the situation the actor is in, and the interaction process that actors engage in delays the defining of roles until the ambiguity is

[3] Within the heteronormative context of American culture, traditional heterosexual relationships, being comprised of a man and a woman, are framed around the roles of the husband and the wife and the traditional gendered behaviors that go along with these roles. Many nontraditional couples, regardless of sexuality, choose to not follow this framework. However, for lesbian and gay couples, a basic normative relationship framework does not exist.

lessened (Leifer, 1988). Local action revolves around an active process of interaction, and this interaction contains an element of reciprocity. Actors act and react to one another in an attempt to define the situation and their respective roles. Once the role setting is established and roles are defined, actions take on unique understandings that can be shared by both actors. (Leifer, 1988)

While this might appear to be a process that all couples or families go through, it would likely be easier for traditional heterosexual couples to follow the normative roles and statuses that correspond to their sex categories. For lesbian and gay individuals, gender and relationship roles are not as clearly assumable. It's not as likely that lesbian and gay individuals will be able to achieve their desired status through the role behavior ideal. As a result, the ideal of local action presents a potential explanation for the actions and behaviors that these actors might engage. While the process of local action begins with roles being unassigned, reciprocity with action amongst partners, acknowledgment of complimentary roles and statuses, and common goals for their union guide these actors to negotiate their gendered identity and behaviors and consequently create their individual and joint realities. I anticipate that this reality will be reflective of normative socializing patterns of behavior, where one partner assumes the traditional masculine position within the relationship and the other partner assumes the traditional feminine position. However, the partners could be more creative with their relationship and not distinguish between traditionally gendered behaviors and activities. Either outcome could result from local action and an agreed upon reality for the couple.

CHAPTER 4

DATA & METHODS

For this project, I conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with six homosexual

male couples; an interview with each partner separately and then an interview with the

couple together. A purposive sampling strategy was used to obtain participants from a

specialized population of interest; homosexual male couples who live together within a

committed union. I do not assume that the experiences of gay male couples are the same

as the experiences of lesbian couples. Nevertheless, for the manageability of the immediate

project, the population of interest is limited to homosexual male couples[4]. Three

respondent recruitment strategies were used. First, I did not interview personal

acquaintances, however, these connections were used to snowball sample and to discover

other individuals and couples who might be included in the study. Second, posters were

also used to elicit voluntary participants. These posters were placed in various locations

around Columbus, Ohio, with a high concentration in locations that are considered safe for

the lesbian/gay community. Finally, letters were also sent to various lesbian and gay

support and social organizations to elicit voluntary participants.

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[4] The immediate focus on only couples of one sex (male couples) provides an initial exploratory step for a
gender-comparative work to follow, which will compare and contrast gay male and lesbian couples.

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This project is based on data gleaned from in-depth qualitative interviews. With the respondents' consent, the interviews were conducted in their homes. Choosing their home as a location for the interviews was an attempt to maximize the comfort for the respondents as well as ensure the security of our discussions. This also provided the interviewer with an opportunity to gain a sense of the environment in which the couple lives and allowed participant observation of the home to capture the setting in which the couple creates their life together.

The basic structure of the interview process and my interaction with each couple included: a greeting and answering of basic questions with the couple, an in-depth interview with one individual while his partner was outside the house or sequestered in another part of the house (approximately 1½ hours in length), an in-depth interview with the second individual while his partner was outside the house or sequestered in another part of the house (approximately 1½ hours in length), a group interview with the couple together (approximately ½ hour in length), and finally a debriefing session where the central research questions were revealed to the subjects and a more blatant discussion of the topic of gender and relevant research often occurred. Actions and interactions between the participants during the couple interview were also observed and noted. This included spatial dynamics, such as where the participants were sitting in relation to one another and the researcher; body language and physical interaction between the couple; and verbal interaction or verbal cues, such as if the couple spoke to each other or directly to the researcher, or if one individual was verbally more dominant and the other more verbally submissive.

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An interview questionnaire was constructed in a manner that was primarily open-ended, which allowed the interviewer or the respondent to delve deeper into an issue if needed. The interviews addressed how each person conceives of gender, how the concept of gender was socialized to him, how he perceives himself in terms of gender, how he thinks others perceive him in terms of gender, and how this gendered structure is negotiated or decided upon within his relationship. To assess the impact of relationship longevity on this negotiation process, couples were systematically chosen according to three periods of relationship longevity[5]: two couples that have been together for less than five years, two couples that have been together for five-ten years, and two couples that have been together for more than ten years.

Portions of the interview required the subject to rank various traits/roles on a scale of 1–5 (1= very masculine, 2=somewhat masculine, 3=neither more masculine nor more feminine, 4= somewhat feminine, 5=very feminine) while also giving an explanation for that ranking. Although these distinct categories were given as a framework, the explanations, or the reasons for ranking each trait/behavior were of primary interest. The categories were simply a tool used to elicit the thoughts behind each ranking. To further assess the gender of the individual, the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI)[6] was administered to each individual during the separate individual interviews. The BSRI measures gender

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[5] The initial design of this project called for couples with relationship longevity of less than two years, two-six years, and more than six years. However, due to the available pool of interview subjects, these categories were altered to reflect meaningful distinctions among available couples.
[6] "The Bem Sex Role Inventory, or BSRI, is an instrument that identifies sex-typed individuals on the basis of their self-concepts or self-ratings of their personal attributes. The BSRI asks the respondent to indicate on a seven-point scale how well each of the (listed) attributes describes himself or herself. Although it is not apparent to the respondent, (one-third) of the attributes reflect the culture's definition of masculinity (e.g., assertive), and (one-third) reflect its definition of femininity (e.g., tender), with the remaining attributes serving as filler." (Bem 1983)

based on normatively gendered personal characteristics. (Bem 1981, 1983, and 1993)

While the BSRI and role theory have received some resistance in gender research as being too rigid with sex roles and role identity, the Bem Scale has also been recognized as a good benchmark to begin discussions of relational aspects of gender and gender identity. A strength of using the BSRI is that it does not limit the measurement of gender to a polarized scale of masculine versus feminine; rather, it measures masculinity (strong masculine and weak feminine traits), femininity (strong feminine and weak masculine traits), androgynous (strong masculine and feminine traits), and undifferentiated (weak masculine and feminine traits). Such a conception of gender is appropriate to demonstrate the fluidity and relational nature of gender, especially for lesbians and gay men who use a greater amount of normative creativity to negotiate their gendered lives. The construct validity of the BSRI has also proven to be strong for homosexuals. (Chung, 1995)

Participants[7] vary in age and duration of their relationships, and they also represent differing social circles. All of the interviews were conducted in the couples' homes.

Austin and Zachary: Austin, 26, works as a Manager at a brokerage firm. He grew up in a traditional two-parent home with an older sister and a younger brother. His father worked outside the home and traveled a lot for his job, while his mother stayed at home with the kids. Zachary, 24, works as an Operations Coordinator at a bank. His family consisted of his mother and father and a younger sister. His father worked outside the home, while his mother stayed at home to care for the children and the home needs.

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[7] To ensure confidentiality of respondents, all identifying markers have been removed and pseudonyms are used instead of actual names.

Austin has been "out"[8] in terms of his sexuality for five years and Zachary has been out for seven years. They have been a couple for 2½ years and have lived together for two years.

Brandon and Nicholas: Brandon is 37 and is a Pharmacist. He was the youngest child in the family and the only male. His father worked outside the home as an accountant, and his mother primarily functioned as a housewife while Brandon was growing up. Nicholas is 42 and works as an Assistant Prosecuting Attorney. He was the second of three children. His father worked outside the home and his mother was a housewife. Brandon is divorced from a heterosexual marriage and has been out for four years. Nicholas has been out 16 years. They have been together for three years and have lived together for two of those years. They recently bought their first home together.

Carl and Justin: Carl, 35, is a merchandise manager for a department store. He grew up in a two-parent home with two younger sisters. Both of his parents worked outside the home while he was growing up. Justin, 37, works as a Data Systems Coordinator for a public-sector organization. He also grew up in a two-parent home with a younger brother. His dad worked outside the home, while his mother remained at home. Carl has been out for 16 years, and Justin has been out for 20 years. They have been together as a couple for eight years, and have lived together for seven years.

Ethan and Tyler: Ethan is 34 years old and works as a Sales Representative for a healthcare provider. He grew up in a two-parent home on a farm along with an older brother and sister and one younger sister. Both of his parents worked the farm as well as

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[8] Whether or not an individual is "out", or open about her sexual identity with others could impact her gendered negotiations. As Connell noted, homosexuality is a negation of masculinity by traditional norms. (Connell 1992). For someone who is "out", it is a statement of pride in her identity, and a rejection of heterosexist ideals. However, if someone must mask her sexual identity in a situation, it could speak to the ability or the safety for that individual to challenge the traditional heterosexist gender order.

side jobs and community work outside the home. Tyler, 40, is Chief of Human Resources for a large public-sector organization. He also grew up in a two-parent home, and he has one older sister. Both of his parents worked outside the home. Ethan has been out in terms of his sexuality for 15 years. They have been together as a couple for 8½ years and have lived together for all but three months of that time. They recently bought and moved into an old house that they are working to rehabilitate together.

Jacob and Daniel: Jacob, an architect, 43, is the oldest of four children. His father worked outside the home and his mother stayed at home to take care of the children. Jacob has been out in terms of his sexuality since he was 22 years old. Daniel, 41, was also raised in a traditional family structure. He works as a copy editor for a publishing house. Jacob and Daniel have been together for approximately 12 years and have lived together for 11 of those years in a home they purchased together.

Kevin and Aaron: Kevin, 36, was very recently laid-off from his job as an Information Technology professional and is currently looking for employment. He is an adopted child, and is the second youngest of seven children in the family. His mother was a homemaker, and his father worked in the family-owned restaurant. He has been out with his sexuality for 18 years. Aaron, 41, works as a Consultant to public and private organizations. Aaron's father was a self-employed inventor and his mother works with him as a Consultant. His parents separated in 1976, but still remain in touch with each other. He has been out for 19 years. Kevin and Aaron have been together for almost 11 years and have lived together for 10 of those years.

CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

<u>Representations of Gender</u>. All of the individuals were raised in traditional

two-parent homes. All of these families stayed in tact while the men were growing up,

however, Ethan's mother died when he was 19, Justin's dad died five years ago, Aaron's

parents separated during his teen years, and Carl's parents recently divorced. The

remaining parents are still married and living together. For all of the individuals, the

parents displayed traditional masculine and feminine behaviors within a relationship. The

fathers worked outside the home and were considered the "breadwinner" of the family,

while their mothers either stayed at home or gave up careers and cared for the children and

the home, or they cared for the home in addition to some form of work outside the home.

> "(Mom) was the housewife, I mean, she worked like a couple of odd jobs every once
> in a while, but you know, she pretty much, while I was growing up, made dinners
> and cleaned the house and did all that stuff. Breadwinner was (dad's) role…and the
> outside stuff, like the lawn. Like, if anything needed fixed up, like he would put the
> sidewalk in or fix the driveway; he did all the outside stuff." (Brandon)

For some of the families, certain household tasks may have been shared, but the

primary responsibility for that task was gendered.

> "(My mom) did all the cleaning and stuff, and my dad always did the yard stuff, or I
> did it or my brother. But my mom always did all the housework. And cooking, too;
> she and my dad shared that more often when he was home. They shared that
> responsibility, but more often she cooked. Dad always handled…financial
> decisions." (Austin)

	Length of Relationship	Time Living Together	Age	Race	Occupation	Annual Income	BSRI* Classification	Perception of Partner's BSRI* Classification
Austin	2 yrs, 6 mos	2 years	26	White	Manager (brokerage firm)	$40,000	Undifferentiated	Masculine
Zachary			24	White	Operations Coordinator (bank)	$28,000	Masculine	Androgynous
Brandon	3 years	2 years	37	White	Pharmacist	$102,000	Feminine	Androgynous
Nicholas			42	White	Assistant Prosecutor	$61,000	Androgynous	Feminine
Carl	8 years	7 years	35	White	Retail Merchandise Manager	$41,000	Masculine	Masculine
Justin			37	White	Data Systems Coordinator	$32,000	Masculine	Androgynous
Ethan	8 yrs, 6 mos	8 yrs, 3 mos	34	White	Sales Representative (benefits organization)	$40,000	Feminine	Masculine
Tyler			40	Black	Chief of Human Resources	$72,000	Androgynous	Feminine
Jacob	12 years	11 years	43	White	Architect	$90,000	Undifferentiated	Feminine
Daniel			41	Asian	Editor	$59,000	Androgynous	Masculine
Kevin	11 years	10 years	36	White	IT Professional	$55,000	Undifferentiated	Undifferentiated
Aaron			41	White	Consultant	$20,000	Feminine	Androgynous

* The BSRI measures gendered personality traits according to Feminine (high on feminine traits and low on masculine traits), Masculine (low on feminine traits and high on masculine traits), Undifferentiated (low on feminine and masculine traits), and Androgynous (high on feminine and masculine traits).

Table 5.1: Basic Demographics and Bem Sex-Role Inventory Scores

For Tyler's parents, individual careers and comparable incomes placed them in relatively equal positions within the relationship. However, their roles within the home often gave way to gendered tradition.

> "…they had a plan and they stuck with it. They both worked, but they were the traditional type of family. My father took care of all the expenses, you know, everything like the house and things like that with his income. And my mom earned probably as much as my dad working as a nurse, (but) my dad paid for all the bills and never had any money, and my mom had all the money. And then my dad would need some money and say, 'Give me some money,' and she'd laugh or whatever and give him some money. (In terms of duties,) my mom cleans the house, my dad is the breakfast cook, my mom always cooks dinner, my dad always takes care of the yard, my dad takes care of the cars, my dad takes care of all the finances." (Tyler)

In terms of interaction with the children, the fathers were often the disciplinarians or the authority figures while the mothers were the overall caregivers and displayed more emotions than the fathers.

> "Dad was the definite dominant role in the house, you know, for my mom (and us). I think he's very intelligent…he was always there if I needed anything, like schoolwork or if I needed to go to practice for baseball. I mean, he was always there if I needed him." (Brandon)

> "(Dad) is a very disciplinary type of person. He was very strict when we grew up. A lot of it was because we lived on a farm, and we milked cows, and he made us work a lot harder than my friends and we never had time to do anything else besides be on the farm." (Ethan)

These interactions with their parents most often resulted in these men feeling closer to their mothers and being able to share more about their relationships with their mothers. As Zachary explained:

> "I've always been very, very close to my mother. I talk more with her about details of my personal life than I did when I was younger, but that's more me being comfortable talking about that kind of stuff with your mother. She always wanted to be involved, but I was just like, 'Eh, I don't want to talk about it,' but I pretty much tell her most things now. I wouldn't say that I'm as close to (my dad) as my mother,

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and I don't feel quite as comfortable talking about, especially me and Austin's relationship with him. I mean, I feel comfortable, but not as comfortable as with my mother. I think he'd be receptive, I don't know, maybe it's because he's male?"

More direct elements of gendered power were also evident within the respondents' families:

"...my dad had toys, like a boat he liked to go out on, he had a CB, he had, you know different little toys like that. But I think about my mom; my mom only had a sewing machine. That's it. And I always thought, you know, that's not fair for my mom's sake. She was just accommodating. But I just saw him as getting all that he wanted, but always thought, what's mom getting out of this? I know it's just material things, but she always wanted to travel and stuff like that, but she's never been able to travel." (Nicholas)

These traditional frameworks were also recognized in their friends' families and with

neighbors while growing up. As Brandon explained:

"I would say that they were the same, with the housewife and the breadwinner, you know, the dad would do the outside duties, and the women would do gardens and what-not. But otherwise, it was man outside and woman inside." (Brandon)

Conception of gender & gendered roles. Each man was asked to define the

concepts of masculine (or masculinity) and feminine (or femininity). The definitions

received appear to coincide with stereotypical conceptions of masculinity and femininity.

For these men, masculinity is often perceived as some sort of strength or security:

"I think of strength, and of being firm with decisions of feelings or things like that." (Austin)

"I think it would be (that) you're secure in who you are and I don't think you have to be loud and overbearing. I think that's the opposite of being masculine." (Carl)

There was also an active component to definitions of masculinity whereby

individuals can suppress or express different aspects of their selves in order to "be"

masculine.

"It's not something that's natural for everybody. It's something that's modeled for you and you try to imitate it. And most of the time, masculine is a suppression of

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feminine. No, it would be a suppression of everything that you are. To be masculine, you don't do some things to remain masculine. So if you want to cry, you don't do that because that's not a masculine thing to do. If you like the color pink, you don't wear that 'cause that wouldn't be a masculine thing to do. When you dance, you don't float your hands around 'cause that wouldn't be the masculine thing to do, even though you feel like that's what you want to do. So it's manufactured." (Tyler)

Definitions of femininity for these men appear to revolve around emotions and being less strong than masculinity:

"Masculinity to me seems to be more driven and more aggressive, but femininity seems to be more compromising and giving and maybe a little passive. I guess it's passive." (Justin)

"I would say more emotional, that would be the biggest thing, more open and talkative, maybe even gossipy, chatty, inquisitive…" (Zachary)

However, Ethan pointed out that such definitions of masculinity and femininity can, and do, change for some people.

"I guess, obviously there is a stereotypical masculine; you first think muscular, you think big, you think of a strong person. But to me, someone who is masculine is also someone who's not afraid to be vulnerable. I guess it's always a growing thing for me, because I think of masculine and I thought of my father, and I see him as stereotypically masculine, but he's also very caring. Same thing with Tyler, I always see Tyler as being a very masculine person, but he's still very caring and very loving. And feminine, too, still has a lot of the same characteristics as masculine, where they're very loving, very emotional." (Ethan)

When asked to classify various tasks, traits or characteristics, respondents had a difficult time distinguishing if they believed these things should be masculine or feminine. Initial responses indicate a traditional conception of gender. Things that are traditionally perceived as feminine, such as showing emotions verbally, giggling or laughing, crying, caring for children, home décor, making domestic decisions about the home, talking through problems, compassion, doing laundry, and cleaning the house were most often

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classified as being feminine. Masculine traits or behaviors included home repair, being assertive, automobile maintenance, initiating sex, making financial decisions, anger, providing for the home financially, and fixing things around the house. The act of showing emotions physically was often classified as masculine when the physical emotions involved aggression or anger and as feminine when the physical emotions were more loving and caring in nature. Preparing meals/cooking was widely classified as neither masculine nor feminine as a result of seeing male chefs and cooks on television programs on the Food Network. Other neutral classifications included emotive expressions such as saying 'I love you,' kissing, and hugging, as well as disciplining children.

However, an examination as to why these men may have had difficulty classifying these traits or behaviors reveals an overall neutral or "androgynous" conception of gender, signifying that they do not conceive of most behaviors or traits as inherently masculine or feminine, but rather as socially acceptable behaviors for both genders. Few responses received the extreme classifications of "very masculine" or "very feminine." Respondents also pointed out that their initial thoughts went along with typical stereotypes, but then they answered according to what "should be." This indicates that they were socialized into distinct and traditional gender conceptions, but they also see the faults with these conceptions.

> "Right now I'm fighting the stereotypical answer with my real true answer. I really don't know if these situations are feminine or masculine because they're just living. I think both masculine and feminine people do these things. I think that showing your emotions or crying is stereotypically seen as feminine and as a weakness, but I don't really believe that." (Ethan)

Nicholas had the most difficulty in classifying the traits and behaviors. He began by saying, "…the whole idea of masculine and feminine I think is just changing so much. It's just not cut and dry anymore. I think behavior is not to say, well that's butch and that's not butch." So in the end, he classified everything by the stereotypical notion of gendered norms, and then ranked everything as neutral, or as being both masculine and feminine, expressing a belief in the individual's agency to be or do whatever she or he chooses, regardless of sex or gender. His dual rankings indicate how he believes things should be versus what he recognizes as society's beliefs about the way things are.

Negotiated Gendered. All respondents work outside of the home, but inside the home there is a distinct division of labor. For some, this division appears to fall into line with traditional gendered behavior where one person tends to take on more, if not all, of the traditionally feminized behaviors (cooking, cleaning, home organization, etc.) while the other person takes on less of these duties or assumes the masculinized behaviors (yardwork, bookkeeping, etc.). Ethan does the laundry, most of the cleaning around the house, the budget and finances, and taking care of their dogs while Tyler does the cooking and focuses on maintenance around the house and responsibilities connected to a rental property they own. Daniel does all of the cooking and cleaning, but Jacob manages the finances/bookkeeping. They share the yard work and gardening tasks.

For other couples, the division of labor in the home is not distinctly along traditional gendered lines. Austin and Zachary appear to share most of the cleaning throughout the house, but Austin takes on the cleaning of the bathroom while Zachary handles most of the laundry duties. Due to their schedules, they rarely cook meals at

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home, and yard work is not an issue since they rent an apartment. Brandon cleans the kitchen and the bathrooms, and he most often does the grocery shopping and yard work at their new home. Nicholas does the laundry. They share cooking responsibilities and keeping the house tidy. Carl takes responsibility for the finances, cleaning around the house, grocery shopping, and all the yard work, while Justin does the cooking of meals. They each do their own laundry.

For some of the individuals, this differentiation in duties was based on time, and for others it was based on skill.

> "…I always do the laundry, he's had several laundry tragedies, like shrinking his favorite sweaters and stuff, so I almost always do the laundry… the yard, he says he's devoted to yard work, but we just bought this house, so we'll see." (Nicholas)

> "Since he's in school right now (and working full time), I try to take care of a lot of the day-to-day stuff around the house as much as I can." (Carl)

Several men also noted that their arrangements have changed over time, due to changing work conditions or other factors outside the relationship.

> "He actually does a lot more than I do around here in general. And some of that is because I've been taking classes. Before I started back to school, I probably did a lot more than I do now, but he really does a lot here in terms of cleaning the house, doing the grocery shopping,… Before, it was more evenly divided." (Justin)

This flexibility in roles and duties appears to be stronger for the newer couples, whereas the couples who have been together for longer periods of time seem to have found their spots within the union and they work to maintain the relationship and the behaviors and boundaries that have been established.

In discussion about these activities and duties, each couple initially indicated that their relationship is a "partnership" and that they share everything, including their

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responsibilities within the home. However, these divisions in duties and roles often became apparent throughout the interview. When asked about the divisions, respondents seemed to rationalize their arrangements as a component of their partnership.

> "…I think there's a good synchronicity that we have in our relationship. There are pieces of our personalities that kind of fit in where the other is lacking." (Justin)

> "…how we act, especially at home, it's more like a team effort. We have different tasks that we do, but you know, it all works out together." (Ethan)

The only couple who seemed to have actual disputes or tensions in regards to their roles and division of duties was Ethan and Tyler. It became evident quickly in both of the individual interviews that Ethan was not satisfied with the amount of cleaning and housework that Tyler accomplished.

> "I always wish he would clean more, and I've told him that." (Ethan)

> "He's always on my case about cleaning and doing the laundry and do this and dust that and stuff. The only thing I hate doing is doing it on his time. That's what the argument is really about, whose time is it on?" (Tyler)

However, Ethan also noted the other things that Tyler does for their relationship that he himself is not involved in, which seemed to counterbalance Tyler's limited role in the cleaning duties.

> "But if I actually thought about it, he does just as much work as me, if not more, because he is doing stuff like this (shower renovation), and he does do a lot of work-work. We have another house that we…rent, and he does pretty much all the work with that when there's problems with it, so it's just that he's doing that work, and I don't see him doing it, so I figure I'm sitting at home doing all the work by myself. So that's why I can't get really mad. [laughs]" (Ethan)

There were no clear findings in terms of sex and intimacy. All of the couples indicated in the individual and group interviews that they share their emotions and intimacy equally. There may have been an indication that one of the partners initiated sex

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more frequently than the other (an indication of the masculine sexual aggressor role), but a clear distinction between the two individuals could not be assessed in terms of overall romantic/sexual behavior within the relationship. While one person may have been the initiator of sexual activity, that person may not follow through as the dominant figure throughout the sexual activity.

Gendered Identity: The results of the BEM Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) in Table 5.1 indicate that three of the men are classified as undifferentiated (low on both masculine and feminine traits), three are classified as masculine (high on masculine traits and low on feminine traits), three classify as feminine (low on masculine and high on feminine traits), and three are classified as androgynous (high on both masculine and feminine traits). However, discussions about the individual's perception of his self in terms of masculinity and femininity presented some interesting discussions. None of the respondents identified as being very feminine at any level on any of the identity indicators. Narrative responses from the respondents indicate that one man perceives himself as being "very masculine," seven men believe that they are "somewhat masculine," one man says that he doesn't think of himself as masculine or feminine, and one man believes that he might be slightly "somewhat feminine" when compared to other masculine men.

For many of these men, their self-declaration of their gender does not align with their gender classification from the BEM scale. This was often clarified by a non-belief in, or a non-acceptance of gender stereotypes.

> "I couldn't sort all that out, honestly. It just depends. I mean, cooking, that's stereotypically a feminine activity, but I don't know, I don't buy into all of that. I've never felt comfortable buying into all of that." (Justin)

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However, their experiences also indicate recognition of the power of gender stereotypes and the gendered ideology within their socialization. Their narratives indicate that these men actively display their gender differently in different situations.

> "...I actually try to be (masculine) in certain areas or certain places. I consciously think about it, 'am I acting gay?', so I think about being more masculine as a way of protecting myself from scrutiny or people or from harm." (Carl)

> "I work with a lot of professionals, and it's fast-paced, and ... I would be afraid of losing a little bit if respect if I wasn't more forceful and I guess had more masculine traits at work." (Zachary)

> "(In terms of clothing and how I dress), I take a little more attention to it, I try to pick clothes that are masculine. I don't want to wear something that would be considered too gay." (Austin)

There also seems to be a desire to claim their masculinity, that regardless of the roles that they take on or the behaviors that they might exhibit, they are males, they are supposed to be men, and they are therefore masculine.

> "I think I'm more like the ideal man...just being a guy. I always wanted to be a guy, I like being a guy, I never wanted to be a woman, I just think I act the way I am. I try to do sports and it's stuff I like. It's not stuff I try to do to be a man. I don't have to try to be that way; I just am." (Brandon)

However, in their relationships, they've found their place, they've found their role complement as Leifer's theory would suggest, and they feel more comfortable to "be themselves."

> "There is nothing what-so-ever that goes on (with Brandon). I don't try to be masculine or feminine; it's just me, and there's no acting in any way." (Nicholas)

> "...I think we're very comfortable with each other and whatever is there, is there. I don't think that gender has been an issue with us. I think it might be an issue for two opposites, like for a man and a woman, or for someone who's very masculine and someone who's very feminine, you know, so it might be an issue of someone jumping out of their role and doing something different, but we're two people who are kind of similar, and we can go either way. We fit." (Tyler)

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CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSION

The goal of this paper was to use qualitative data techniques to gain insight into how traditional conceptions of gender are dealt with and negotiated within same-sex relationships. As the first contribution of a larger research agenda analyzing negotiated gender within same-sex relationships, most of the information gained lends initial support for my anticipated findings. However, the results, as well as the process of obtaining the results, have also opened up new questions.

From the data gleaned from these relationships, it appears that my first anticipated finding is true; the majority of the partners were socialized according to distinct and traditional understandings of masculinity and femininity. Definitions of masculinity and femininity provided by the respondents coincide with stereotypical conceptions of masculinity and femininity as well as sex-based behaviors and characteristics. Their further responses to gendered traits and gendered behaviors indicated that their beliefs about gender were influenced by the stereotypical gendered ideology. Traditionally masculine and feminine behaviors were acknowledged, however, respondents also recognized that these responses were created by popular perception and were not necessarily the way they believed things "should be." These men recognize that their perception of these behaviors and traits may have changed or altered from the way they were raised, but they also

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expressed that their view was not like that of the rest of society. So although initial responses indicate a neutral conceptualization of gender, further reflection by respondents indicate that that neutral stance is how they choose to position themselves, in lieu of the fact that they were socialized to believe and live within a society that functions around traditional gender stereotypes. This lends support to the differential association approach to gender formation since these men were socialized into the gendered ideology early on, but because of their own lived experiences and interactions with others who do not "fit the mold" of the gendered ideology, their perception of gendered behaviors has altered.

My second anticipated finding that each partner takes on distinct roles within the relationship also appears true. For most of the couples, these roles generally do not follow traditional gendered behavior. Although they were raised in homes where duties and behaviors were aligned along gender lines, these couples do not maintain such divisions with duties and behaviors in their own lives. While respondents initially indicated that they share all aspects of their lives, their realities may not be that equitable. It appears that there is a division of labor where each partner in the relationship holds specific roles and positions, and this division is not necessarily equal. However, the arrangements that each couple has created appear to deviate from gender-normative constructions and instead spring from individual skills and interests or other commitments for the individuals. In this sense, these couples may be similar to heterosexual couples in terms of inequitable divisions with domestic labor; however, they differ from heterosexual tradition in their negotiations for establishing this inequity. The arrangements that these men have created appear to be mutual agreements on what is best for the team. These arrangements appear to be stronger

for the longer-term couples than for the newer couples, who seem to be more flexible as they seek to establish each partner's roles and statuses through local action. This supports Leifer's local action theory. While building their relationships, these men have dealt with confusion and imperfect information about their roles and positions within the arrangements and through their interactions, they have created arrangements that fit their needs and their ideas of what a committed relationship should be. They have altered the gendered script as they practice gender in their lives.

My last anticipated finding that gender negotiations will impact the individual's gender identity was also supported. An examination of the gendered identity of these men provided some interesting negotiations. Although half of the men were classified according to normatively-gendered personality traits as either masculine or feminine, the other half were more neutral with either high masculinity and femininity traits or low masculinity and femininity traits. However, these men did not identify as being feminine. Even though they were cognizant of gender stereotypes and at times used these same stereotypes to describe their behaviors or those of their partners, they did not seem to accept those guidelines as definitional of who they are. They often embraced characteristics deemed as feminine, such as being emotional and caring or having fun and laughing or giggling, and they defined that as part of their masculinity and being in an open and masculine relationship. However, they were also aware of the gender dynamics that function outside of their relationships, which often influence their gender practices in these settings. When at work or in public spheres, these individuals often consciously work to display more traditional masculinity while calming any feminine traits they might have. This supports

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Goffman's presentation of self (Goffman 1959), but more importantly, it supports Leifer's local action theory (Leifer 1988), since these men have taken the scripts and information given to them by society, and they have altered the meanings of this information so that it fits their lived experiences. As such, these men have embraced elements of their selves traditionally understood as being feminine and sometimes considered a weakness, and they have celebrated those elements as a part of their masculinity and a special part of their relationship.

As a gender researcher, a major challenge with this project was to access the information about the structure of gender and gendered behavior without leading the respondents to these concepts (and traditional stereotypes about these concepts) directly. I also found it challenging to navigate through the language of sociology in dealing with confusion about some of the concepts I was investigating. The respondents weren't as familiar with some of nuances of the concepts that are being studied, so the challenge was to remain open ended, yet focused, to gather the greatest amount of information about the nuances of these concepts. Although this was not easy at times, it was necessary to gain a full picture of the practice of gender for these men.

This project was built around local action theory and the pursuit of finding one's role compliment and was influenced by the social relational perspectives on gender. The results of this project indicate that social actors are influenced by normative constructions of behavior and roles. However, when the situation does not allow for normative conventions to exist, actors negotiate the roles each will play within the arrangement, and will accept or confer roles, duties, and statuses amongst one another. As Leifer suggested,

this negotiation occurs when actors are left within an ambiguous situation without normative direction. Through interaction, these same-sex couples have negotiated aspects of gender within their lives, creating arrangements that may not align with traditional ideals, but never-the-less prove to be genuine, real, and fulfilling for these men.

In addition to the issues mentioned above, further research is needed to fully understand the issues raised within this study. Division of labor is only one of multiple behaviors informing how negotiations might unfold. The data suggest that for these gay men, the more active processes of doing gender occur in more public situations, rather than the intimate environment of home life. Further research needs to address the stigma that is attached to gender non-conformity and to what extent one realm of gender practice affects another for lesbians and gay men. Research needs to address potential teamwork strategies used by these couples in the front stage as well as the back stage performance of doing gender. Such research should access if there are differences between gay male and lesbian couples to see if there are further gender differences. Research should also examine the effect of family of origin and non-traditional family structures on conceptions of gender and gendered behavior as well as the effect of familial responsibilities on the roles of these partnerships, such as the effect of having children on the respective relationship behaviors for each partner. Addressing these issues in further research would build upon the work on identity and the self and would create literature in gender and gay/lesbian studies. Creating such literature would build an understanding of the intersection of identity formation, gendered socialization, and sexuality, as well as a fuller understanding of gender practices and interpersonal negotiations for lesbian and gay individuals.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

"Individual Interview"
Introductory questions…

- o What is your age? What is your occupation? What is your income? What is your highest level of education? Race/Ethnicity?
- o Are you involved in any groups/clubs/organizations?
- o Are you involved in any volunteer organizations or organizations focused on issues within the gay community?
- o What are some of your hobbies/interests?
- o What are some activities/hobbies that you share with your partner?
- o Are you and your partner "out" in terms of your sexuality and your current relationship?
- o How do others (friends, co-workers, strangers, etc.) act toward your relationship? How do you and your partner react to this?
- o How long have you been "out?"
- o How long has your partner been "out?"
- o How long have you been together? Lived together?
- o What attracted you to your partner? What characteristics do you love about him?

Negotiated Roles – what gendered roles s/he accepts or rejects within the relationship.

- o Comfort/discomfort with their level of being "out."
  - How comfortable are you going out socially with other gay men or gay couples? (Individually or with your partner)
  - How comfortable are you going out socially with straight men, women, or couples? (Individually or with your partner)
  - How do you and your partner act/react with these different groups?
  - Think about your interaction with your partner, and I'd like for you to describe for me a typical date. Where would you go, what would you do, how would you interact throughout the date, etc.
- o Sexual identity
  - What label(s) do you use to describe your sexual identity? (Heterosexual, Homosexual, Bisexual, Transexual, Transgendered, etc.)
  - Are you or have you ever been sexually attracted to men?

- Are you or have you ever been sexually attracted to women?
- When did you become aware of your sexuality?
  - Describe your current relationship.
    - How do you refer to each other? What are your "titles" or terms of endearment?
    - How do you act toward each other in the home?
    - How do you act toward each other in public?
    - What do you contribute to the relationship?
    - What does your partner contribute to the relationship?
    - What do you think s/he would say you contribute to the relationship?
    - Who initiates sexual activity within your relationship?
    - How would you characterize the sex within your relationship? (giving as much or as little information as you feel comfortable sharing)
    - Describe your interaction around the house for me. How do you and your partner interact when you are at home? What is a typical night at home like? What do each of you do? Who takes care of what household chores? …
    - How was it decided who would contribute what to the relationship? What factors was this arrangement based upon? Have there been any points of tension/disagreement about these issues? If so, how have these tensions been resolved?

How s/he learned their conceptualization of gender
- What representations s/he was exposed to at differing points in her/his life
- How external perceptions affected her/him
  Parents
  - Did you grow up in a two-parent home? If not, what was your family structure like while growing up?
  - Describe your mother to me. When you think of her, what characteristics come to mind? What was your relationship with her like? How was she involved in your life? What roles did she play? What is your relationship with her like today?
  - Describe your father to me. When you think of him, what characteristics come to mind? What was your relationship with him like? How was he involved in your life? What roles did he play? What is your relationship with him like today?
  - What are your strongest memories concerning the interaction between your parents? How did they act toward one another? Was their interaction different in different circumstances?
  - How have your parent(s) reacted to your sexuality? How have they reacted toward your relationships?

Peers

- o Think of your closest friends while growing up. What characteristics come to mind? Describe them to me. (to see how masculine/feminine her/his friends were)
- o How many romantic relationships have you been in? How would you characterize the significant boyfriends/girlfriends?
- o What memories do you have of your friends' parents' relationships? How would you characterize the interactions between these relationships?
- o What memories do you have of your friends' relationships? How would you characterize the interactions between these relationships?
- o How have your friends reacted to your sexuality? How have they reacted toward your relationships?

Cultural/Social

- o Did you have any role models growing up? Who did you admire? What did you admire about them?
- o What were the forms of media (movies, television, books, music, etc.) that you were exposed to while growing up? Did you have any favorite shows, actors, writers, etc? What did you like or dislike about these?
- o How do you think your parent(s) would characterize you while growing up?
- o How do you think your friends while growing up would characterize you?
- o How do you think your past boyfriends/girlfriends would characterize you?

Define Masculinity:

Define Feminity:

Self Perception – How s/he perceives her/himself in terms of gender

- • Individually, in terms of relationships, & self-ascribed masculinity/femininity Answer these questions on a scale from 1-5 (1 = very masculine, 2 = somewhat masculine, 3 = neither masculine nor feminine, 4 = somewhat feminine, 5 = very feminine) and provide any clarifications/descriptions to explain your answer.
  - o How masculine/feminine is your personality?
  - o How masculine/feminine do you act around the home?
  - o How masculine/feminine do you act at work?
  - o How masculine/feminine do you act in public?
  - o How masculine/feminine do you dress?
  - o How masculine/feminine are your mannerisms?
  - o How masculine/feminine is your speech?
  - o How masculine/feminine do you try to come across to family & friends?
  - o How masculine/feminine do you try to come across to co-workers?
  - o How masculine/feminine do you try to come across to your partner?
  - o In general, how masculine or feminine do you think you are?
  - o Would you characterize yourself as more masculine or more feminine than your partners you've been in relationships with? (each one listed)

- Perception of partner.

  Answer these questions on a scale from 1-5 (1 = very masculine, 2 = somewhat masculine, 3 = neither masculine nor feminine, 4 = somewhat feminine, 5 = very feminine) and provide any clarifications/descriptions to explain your answer.
    - How masculine/feminine is your partner's personality?
    - How masculine/feminine does your partner act around the home?
    - How masculine/feminine does your partner act in public?
    - How masculine/feminine does your partner dress?
    - How masculine/feminine are your partner's mannerisms?
    - How masculine/feminine is your partner's speech?
    - How masculine/feminine does your partner try to come across to family & friends?
    - How masculine/feminine does your partner try to come across to you?
    - In general, how masculine or feminine do you think your partner is?

External Perception – How s/he thinks others perceive her/him
- Partner's Perspective

  Answer these questions on a scale from 1-5 (1 = very masculine, 2 = somewhat masculine, 3 = neither masculine nor feminine, 4 = somewhat feminine, 5 = very feminine) and provide any clarifications/descriptions to explain your answer.
    - How masculine/feminine is your personality?
    - How masculine/feminine do you act around the home?
    - How masculine/feminine do you act in public?
    - How masculine/feminine do you dress?
    - How masculine/feminine are your mannerisms?
    - How masculine/feminine is your speech?
    - How masculine/feminine do you try to come across to family & friends?
    - How masculine/feminine do you try to come across to your partner?
    - In general, how masculine or feminine does your partner think you are?
    - Would your partner characterize you as more masculine or more feminine than he?

Conceptualization of gender, gendered roles, & gendered stereotypes
- What one considers to be masculine/feminine

  On a scale from 1-5 (1 = very masculine, 2 = somewhat masculine, 3 = neither masculine nor feminine, 4 = somewhat feminine, 5 = very feminine), rank these traits and roles and provide any clarifications/descriptions to explain your answer.
    - Preparing meals/cooking
    - Showing emotions verbally
    - Home repair
    - Being assertive
    - Making domestic decisions about the home

- Crying
- Automobile maintenance
- Caring for children
- Home decor
- Saying "I love you"
- Disciplining children
- Kissing
- Talking through problems
- Compassion
- Doing laundry/cleaning the house
- Initiating sex
- Making Financial decisions
- Anger
- Providing for the home financially
- Fixing things around the house
- Hugging
- Showing emotions physically

In closing, how would you characterize gender within your relationship? Is gender an issue for you and your partner? Would you say that you're aware of gender within your relationship?

"COUPLE INTERVIEW"

- How did the two of you meet?
- How long have you been together?
- Are you and your partner "out" in terms of your sexuality and your current relationship?
- How long have you been out?
- How do others (friends, co-workers, strangers, etc.) act toward your relationship? How do you and your partner react to this?
- What are some of your hobbies/interests/activities you share as a couple?
- How comfortable are you with your relationship?
- What label(s) do you use to describe your relationship?
- How do you refer to each other? What are your "titles" or terms of endearment?
- What role do each of you think you play within your relationship?
- What do you gain from the other person by being in this relationship?
- What role does sex play in your relationship? How important is sex to your relationship?
- How would you characterize your relationship in private versus in public?
- Do you have any "relationship" role models?
- Any last comments about your relationship?

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