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Manning Up and Queening Out: Gay Men's Negotiations of Gender and Sexuality

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Manning Up and Queening Out:
Gay Men's Negotiations of Gender and Sexuality

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the ways that gay men use different self-presentation strategies to manage their gender and sexual identities in various social spaces. Thirty self-identified gay men participated in semi-structured, in-depth interviews and described how they perform sexuality (i.e., gayness) and gender both separately and simultaneously. Hegemonic masculinity, a pivotal concept to gender studies, explains that gender organizes social life, favoring certain performances of masculinity over others. The result is a hierarchical structure where men are dominant, while women and gay men are subordinate. In analyzing men's responses about how they perform gender and gayness, I develop the concept of hegemonic sexuality – one that explains how certain performances of sexuality are rewarded more than others. Specifically, I investigate performances of gayness, and discuss the choices gay men make in considering performances of their sexuality. These performances are always contextual – the place, time, and audience are commonly mentioned as being important to men as they perform gender and sexuality strategically. In examining the ways men interpret their own experiences performing identities, this research contributes to the scholarship of gender and sexuality by highlighting how sexuality, as an organizing principle, contributes to the marginalization of an already marginalized population of gay men, via hegemonic sexuality. In this study, men frequently describe the workplace as an environment where they make conscious efforts to perform their gender and sexual identities strategically. The men's stories help us understand how certain performances of sexuality permit some men to be recognized as "acceptable gays," while others are labeled "too gay" in different social situations.

PREFACE

I came to this research from my own fascination with gender and sexuality. As early as elementary school, I learned that boys and girls are expected to behave differently. I learned this the day I wore my brand new purple rain boots to school. They were my favorite color, and I was very excited to show them off to my friends. Once I arrived to school, however, I found myself feeling embarrassed as I was met with ridicule from my peers, who laughed at my purple boots. I learned that purple was not a color that boys should take a liking to. Years later, in high school, I recall feeling ashamed of my attraction to other boys my age. It was around this time that Matthew Shepard was tortured and left to die in Laramie, Wyoming. I had also been taught in high school that HIV/AIDS was a disease that gay men often suffered from. I only knew two other boys who had come out while in high school. One of these boys had been kicked out of his parent's house, and both had been ridiculed by our peers. I did not have very positive associations with being gay, and I questioned whether or not it was safe for me to come out to my friends and family.

As a freshman in college, I did start to come out, trying to construct a positive definition of what gayness meant to me. I explored different performances of gender and sexuality, trying to find a balance between my new gay identity, and what I felt was acceptable in the heteronormative environments I found myself in. I still felt pressured to act masculine and straight, although I knew I was not straight. Even as I gained confidence to go to gay bars and dance clubs with my friends, I felt a new pressure - from other gay men - to dress a certain way, and to behave in a certain way. The rules of

masculinity and gayness, I learned, are quite specific. At the time, however, I couldn't articulate what they were, if (how) they were different, or to what extent these mattered to me.

I grew eager to learn more about sexual identities, and how they are connected to, or are separate from, gendered identities. I wondered why gay men are expected to behave a certain way, and what the consequences were if they did not behave in the prescribed manner. Some of these consequences I had felt myself. For example, one summer, when I was twenty years old, I was walking down the street holding my boyfriend's hand, when a man tried (but failed) to hit us with his pick-up truck.

Certainly not all of my memories of finding and constructing a gay identity are negative. The support I received from my friends and family after coming out has been incredibly encouraging. I have met plenty of LGBT people who are successful, happy, and healthy. So while many of the memories I have written about seem negative, I find them helpful in how I think about gender and sexuality. These experiences help me to look critically at the ways gender and sexuality norms operate in our society. Indeed, my sociological imagination is sparked by these experiences.

This research is the start of an investigation into the ways that gender and sexuality are performed, as well as the consequences of those performances. The title of this work, "Manning Up and Queening Out," highlights the close relationship of gender and sexuality. The first part of this title, "manning up," draws attention to the ways that men engage in various performances of masculinity. From R. W. Connell's foundational writings on masculinity, we know much about the ways that masculinities can take various forms. Furthermore, West & Zimmerman's frequently cited work demonstrates

that gender is in part an act – it is something that is "done" rather than something that naturally exits. Gay men, who are often stereotyped as being too feminine, are acutely aware of their performances of masculinity. Indeed, on dating websites, phrases like "Masc 4 masc" and "no femmes, no fatties" draw attention to performances of gender among gay men.

The second part of this title, "Queening out," focuses on the ways that men manage performances of sexuality, in addition to the ways that they manage gender. The term queening out, refers specifically to the ways that a person acts somehow like a stereotypically gay person would. For gay men who are described as queening out, they somehow become "extra" gay. Sexuality too, is something that is performed, much like gender.

This work is only the beginning of what I hope will become a continued investigation of performances of sexuality and gender. There is certainly much left for us to understand. The realities for gay men are that they are marginalized by hegemonic masculinity, and some are further marginalized by hegemonic sexuality. Research in this area is necessary to make continued progress in offering equality for all, regardless of sexual or gender identity.

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Lastly, I extend my gratitude to the men who shared their stories with me. Without their

willingness to share their accounts and experiences with me, I could not have completed

this work.

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CHAPTER 1

FLAMERS, FAGS, AND FAIRIES

I entered this area of study as many researchers do: by studying something that is part of me. Barry Glassner and Rosanna Hertz (2003) edited a book of stories of how sociologists come to their research areas of interest. The authors note that as sociologists, we are members of the society that we also study. More specifically, they note that we are also members of particular groups. We are members of the families we study. We may feel the same stigma as the groups we analyze. We are citizens of the communities we are curious about (Glassner and Hertz 2003). I am no different. I am sparked by C. Wright Mills' (1959) sociological imagination to inquire further about the community that is most salient to me: the gay community.

Of course I have not always been part of the gay community. Coming out as a teenager in a small conservative town was traumatic, and I recall feeling a great deal of anxiety as I considered telling the people around me that I was gay. Mills' (1959) call to sociologists though, is to make the personal public – and so I have used my own status as a gay man as an opportunity to learn more about gay men, and the community that I am a part of.

In my adolescence, I felt that my peers knew something different about my sexuality that I had not yet understood. I was called a flamer, a fag, and a fairy long before I understood what those words really meant. I understood WHY I was called those word – my friends were happy to explain this to me. "It's because you're so soft-spoken," I remember one friend had told me. Or it was because I was in the band at school and

liked music, someone else explained. The vintage clothes I bought at local thrift shops and my reputation as a "church-going momma's boy" did not help either. Regardless, my peers had assumed something about me – my sexuality – before I even understood that I was attracted to other boys. I learned that I was not performing masculinity particularly well, according to my classmates, and that not doing masculinity well meant that I was probably going to be (or already was) gay. At the very least, I had been performing gayness better than straightness, as my peers were making assumptions about my sexuality based on what I was doing, what I looked like, how I acted, and what my interests were. I also learned that some boys are treated differently than others. The concept of hegemonic masculinity – that society values men more than it does women, and some men more than other men – was not yet a concept I could identify, even if I could feel its presence and power (Connell 1995).

Now an out gay man, I have also learned that some <u>gay</u> men are treated differently than others too. Hegemonic masculinity works within the gay community too, in both obvious and less obvious ways. I have observed, in my own attempts at participating in gay culture, how hegemony works among gay men. On gay social media websites and phone apps, men are given brief opportunities to describe themselves and what they are looking for (whether that is a relationship, friends, or sexual partners). "Masculine guy for same," "Masc only," "No femmes, no fatties," are just some of the descriptors I have seen on these networking/hookup sites. Men seem to have very specific ideas of what they mean by "masculine," but I have only a vague idea (at best) of what these ideas are. I started wondering if I was a masculine gay man, or masculine *enough*. And even if I was, *who* gets to decide that I am or am not? There may be in fact, *many*

masculinities, as Connell (1995) describes, but even among gay men, there are many *gay* masculinities (Nardi 1999). To this end, I ask the following: given that there are multiple gay masculinities, how do gay men manage gender and sexuality, as two components of their identities, in various social contexts? What are the consequences of these performances? Ultimately, I find that men are ranked, in a way, based on performances of not only masculinity, but also performances of sexuality[1].

While all gay men are subordinated by hegemonic masculinity, they are still performing different versions of gay masculinity. Many scholars have identified masculinities that are performed by gay men (Kimmel 1996; Levine 1998; Nardi 1999). There are studies of gay clones, leathermen, and bears (Hennen 2005; Levine 1998; Mosher, Levitt and Manley 2006). Today, men are asked on some dating sites like Grindr or Scruff to identify what subcultures or "tribes" they belong to or are interested in. These include categories such as Bear, Clean-Cut, Muscle, Jock, Twink, Daddy, College, Otter, Geek, Military, Discreet, Poz, Rugged, Daddy Chaser, Bear Chaser, Transgender, and Leather. While many of these (sub-) sub-cultures within the gay community refer to men of a particular body type (e.g., an otter is a thin, hairy gay man, while a bear is a more heavyset man with a hairy body), others have to deal with personality traits, interests, or additional identities (e.g., Geeks, Leather, or Transgender men). All of these "types" of gay men come with them a cultural value or meaning. Men who self-identify as a particular "type" create these meanings themselves, as well as others who label them as

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[1] Throughout this and the following chapters, I use the term gender to describe a range of performances of masculinities and femininities, which gain meaning through social interaction (i.e., gender is socially constructed) (Connell 1995). I use the term sexuality, or sexual identity to describe a self-concept that describes a person's sexual attraction to others, usually (in U.S. culture at least) labeled as "straight," "gay," or "lesbian" (Cass 1984; Diamond 2003).

being members of particular cultural sub-categories. All of these categories, though, carry with them a gendered component. Masculinity, or gender more broadly, is connoted in each of these "tribal" categories (e.g., a Twink is colloquially considered to be less masculine than a Daddy). It is up to the individual to perform the cultural expectations of each category, including how masculine (or not) one is. The extent to which gay men appear masculine is, in part, a result of the interaction between the men's performances and the evaluation of those performances by the various audiences. Because gender is largely a performance (West and Zimmerman 1987), individuals can and do choose how to present their gender differently in different social situations, whether they do this consciously or not. Sexual identity (or "gayness," as I refer to it) can be thought of in similar regards – individuals may or may not choose to perform their sexuality in public (e.g., by holding the hand of their partner, kissing, etc.). Sexuality is thought of as a closetable identity – one that can be concealed or revealed, to some extent, at an individual's choosing (Faulkner and Hecht 2011; Goffman 1959).

Sociologists understand that some performances of masculinity are rewarded more than others, and that this hierarchy of performances is part of the concept called hegemonic masculinity. Sociologists have also demonstrated how gender is policed in a variety of ways. Individuals are rated, ranked, and either given social status or have it reduced through our social interactions. But hegemonic masculinity might not be able to explain how our sexual identities are also assessed, ranked, and rated in similar fashion. Scholars writing on hegemonic masculinity explain that gay men are often devalued as a category of people, similar to women (Connell 1995), but this largely relies on the assumption that gay men are, by definition, not as *masculine* – in the traditional sense of

the word. Therefore, as I describe later, *hegemonic sexuality* can explain the ways that people assess, rank, and rate other individuals' performances of sexuality similarly to the ways that hegemonic masculinity is understood. That is, among gay men, as a group, some gay men are awarded greater social status compared to other gay men. In my research, men describe the ways that some gay men are somehow "better" than others and also why some gay men are tolerable at best, and still other gay men are undesirable altogether.

In his book, *How To Be Gay* (2012), David Halperin discusses how specific aspects of culture have become a major component of the collective gay identity. If you have not seen a classic gay film, or cannot reference the latest pop song's lyrics, you might lose your proverbial "gay card" as punishment for not being a "good gay." This collective gay culture that Halperin (2012) describes is just one component of how hegemonic sexuality might work to separate gay men. Characteristics such as occupation, race, social class, age, etc., might also be taken into consideration in understanding how these intersecting identities "fit" into a hierarchy of hegemonic sexuality. Gender is obviously a component as well. Following recent scholarship (Brickell 2006; Pascoe 2007; Wilton 1996), I also suggest that sexuality and gender are almost always intertwined so that one performs gender and sexuality simultaneously – even if that was not necessarily intended. That is, either gender or sexuality might be emphasized by an individual's particular performance, but they will almost always be performed together in some way.

Gay men in different social settings may choose to perform their gender and sexuality in different ways. Men can (attempt to) conceal or reveal their sexual identity at

different times, and in different social situations (Faulkner and 12001; Goffman 1959). That is, men may choose to behave differently at work than they do at home, or with other family members, or at a gay pride parade. It is the active management of these gendered and sexualized identities that need further exploration. While many studies look at how gay men perform masculinity, there is an absence of literature investigating how gay men perform both masculinity and sexuality *simultaneously* – and how these performances might change in different settings. The broad question I seek to better understand with this research is: What strategies do gay men use to manage their sexual and gendered identities both separately and simultaneously? To answer this broad question, I also ask related questions: What matters to gay men when they are making decisions about their sexual and gendered identity performance? In light of the many forms of masculinity that exist both in the gay community and society at large, how do gay men choose which masculinity to perform, and when to perform it? These kinds of questions can help us gain a better understanding of how gay men's identity management strategies contribute to their position within a hegemonic structure that is based on both sexuality and gender.

This study enhances our understanding of the intersections of gender, sexuality, and identity. Intersectionality theories argue that identity is complex, and that multiple components of our identity create the "whole" person (Collins 1998). In this research, I demonstrate how gender and sexuality are so intertwined that we must find ways to understand them not only separately, but also in conjunction. The current study attempts to do this. By investigating the ways that gay men actively manage their identities in various social environments, we will have the opportunity to understand the ways that

performances of gender and sexuality are often conscious, planned performances. I demonstrate that men rely on performances of gender and sexuality to manage their identities in different ways, at different times, and in different places. Social context then, becomes important as men navigate their daily lives. I also show that not all gay men's performances of gender and sexuality are valued the same, and that hegemonic sexuality creates a hierarchy in which some gay men value some "types" of gay men more than others.

Chapter 2 explores other scholar's contributions to our knowledge of gender, sexuality, identity, performativity, and the intersection of these areas. My research adds to this knowledge by focusing on the intersection of gender and sexuality to address questions about the ways that these identities are performed co-constitutively. I also develop the concept of hegemonic sexuality in chapter 2. Hegemonic sexuality offers an explanation for the further marginalization of an already marginalized group of gay men. Some gay men are socially rewarded more that others based on performances of sexuality.

In chapter 3, I describe my methodological research practices and introduce the participants who generously shared their personal experiences with me. Thirty men shared accounts of their personal experiences with me during semi-structured, open-ended interviews. Without their narratives, this project would not exist.

In chapter 4, I investigate how the participants define and engage with the term masculinity, noting how they sometimes rely on popular definitions of masculinity, while at other times construct their own definitions of what masculinity means. This chapter provides a foundation for later chapters, which build upon men's definitions of

masculinity, and how these definitions also contribute to the concept of hegemonic sexuality. There are many commonalities among different definitions of what is (or is not) masculine, yet sometimes men disagree on what "counts" as masculine, or what matters most while performing masculinity. I look at various ways of performing masculinity, and identify how sexuality is an integral part of these performances. That is, even when men emphasize a performance of gender, sexuality is nearly always performed as well.

I address sexual identity management in chapter 5. Although I separate the management of gendered and sexual identities for analytical purposes, I find that while they might be managed separately at times, both are part of the performance. In performing sexuality, most men continuously negotiate interactions with the closet. This is so despite the fact that all men are "out" to themselves and those close to them. In some situations, they choose to reveal their sexuality and come out of the closet, while at other times, they choose to conceal their sexuality and either remain in the closet or enter it again. Managing one's gay identity largely revolves around the notion of gathering support. Support is used as a tool to assess whether or not it is safe to come out. This supports some previous research, particularly Jason Orne's (2011) concept of strategic outness as part of a process of coming out. I build upon Orne's (2011) concept by highlighting the ways that men engage in identity management strategies to gain support from friends and family members.

In chapter 6, I turn to the workplace as an important site where gay men mange both gender and sexuality together. The workplace is a unique environment where relationships between bosses and coworkers must be handled with particular care.

Discrimination against LGBT individuals still is prevalent in many spaces, in both explicit and implicit ways, and men negotiate these spaces differently than they would other social spaces. I find that desires for authenticity help guide decisions to come out or remain closeted. Men must sometimes make choices to either reveal their gay identity (and potentially face negative consequences), or to manage their sexual and gendered identities in a way that allows them to "pass" (as heterosexual) in a heteronormative society. While others have studied the ways that desires for authenticity have shapes decisions to come out (Clarke and Smith 2015), I emphasize how men negotiate their gender and sexual identities in different ways, while remaining authentic. Men also cite a desire to be "professional" as an explanation for managing their gendered (and sexual) identities. I suggest that this notion of "professionalism" is in part a façade that represents just one way that hegemonic sexuality necessitates appropriate ways for gay men to interact in a heteronormative society.

In the concluding chapter, I describe the contributions this study makes to the existing gender and sexuality literature, highlighting the ways that gender and sexuality management occurs simultaneously. Additionally, I suggest how hegemony functions somewhat differently when looking through either a lens of masculinity or sexuality. I call for a continued empirical investigation of the cultural meanings of "being gay" and how gayness is susceptible to hegemonic divisions in much the same way that hegemonic masculinity is.

Sociologists understand that gender and sexuality are fluid concepts that individuals define in various ways throughout their lives. Outside of academia, the fluid nature of gender and sexuality has also recently been recognized in a number of popular

news sources. Jaden Smith (son of actor Will Smith and actor/musician Jada Pinkett Smith) was recently featured in a Louis Vuitton fashion campaign for women's clothing alongside women, wearing an embroidered skirt (Smith 2016). The Twitter hashtag #MasculinitySoFragile has gained popularity as a way to showcase the toxicity that some forms of masculinity can perpetuate (e.g., that men are violent, misogynistic, unemotional, sexually aggressive) (Lutz 2015). Caitlyn Jenner debuted her new self in June of 2015, transitioning from Bruce Jenner and bringing transgender issues into the mainstream spotlight. Popular television shows, like "Orange Is The New Black" (the one that takes place in an all-female prison), shed light on the complexities of sexual identities, and how they may shift depending on the circumstances. And while "Netflix and Chill" became a popular euphemism among young people for having sex (Urban Dictionary 2015), documentaries that are *actually* shown on Netflix (and promoted!), like *Do I Sound Gay?,* question the performances of sexuality and gender for men, and what that says about their identities (Gertler and Thorpe 2015). In a variety of ways, issues of gender and sexuality are finding their way into the mainstream.

The point here is that gender and sexuality are complicated identities and concepts, and ones that are not recognized only by scholars. Individuals outside the academy also have a growing interest in understanding the performances of gender and sexuality in everyday contexts. I use my analysis of the data collected for this study to offer a better understanding of how gender and sexuality can be understood together, and how each informs performances of the other. I look for the ways that men use gender and sexuality as tools to represent themselves strategically in various social contexts. In short, my research offers some understanding as to how masculinity and gayness are

constructed, for what purpose they are constructed, and with what consequences.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The intersection of gender and sexuality is complex and as of yet not very well understood. Sociologists have been studying matters related to sex, gender, and sexuality for years, but this field of study has really taken off only recently. Although the American Sociological Association was founded in 1905 (Rhoades 1981), the Sociology of Sex and Gender section was not formed until 1973, and the Sociology of Sexualities not until 1997 (Rosich 2005). Since then, researchers have contributed much to our understanding of these areas of scholarship, but much more work needs to be done to enhance our understanding of the ways that sex, gender, and sexuality intersect – not only in theory, but also in practice.

Scholars have developed a number of theoretical frameworks for understanding gender and sexuality. Sociologists generally agree that performances of gender and sexuality are socially constructed – they are guided by historical events, institutional forces, and reinforced by interactions with other individuals (Risman 1998). Hence, as performances of gender and sexuality shift and change, we must allow our theoretical understandings of those performances to also shift, in order to accurately describe how individuals interact with these identities.

Contemporary theories of gender and sexuality place increasing importance on the idea of fluidity to understand how gender and sexuality are organized as identities (Butler 1990, 1993). That is, identity is no longer viewed as fixed, but instead as tied to, or expressed in, particular contexts; how people identify and perform their gender and sexual identities is likely to change depending on the place or time of any social

interaction. While scholars do not all share the same ideas about the fluid nature of gender and sexuality, Richardson (2007) asserts that understanding identities as being fluid makes perfect sense, since the meanings of sexuality and gender are constantly changing. Individuals may identify as being heterosexual or straight at one point in their lives, and later identify as being non-heterosexual (Diamond 2003), or vice versa (Tabatabai 2012). Similarly, individuals perform gender in various ways. Scholars who study gender have identified numerous ways that masculinity and femininity are performed, so that we now understand gender as a collection of masculinities and femininities (Connell 1995).

Contemporary theories also emphasize the ways that sex, gender, sexual identity, sexual desire, and sexual behavior are not always congruent with one another (Butler 1990). Not all men are masculine, straight, attracted to women, and have sex with women (exclusively). Some men are feminine; some men are non-heterosexual; some men are attracted to men; some men have sex with other men. There are countless different combinations of these identities that men can claim over the course of their lives. Our understanding of these different identities, desires, and behaviors, needs continued development.

The purpose of my work is to examine the ways that gender and sexuality intersect among gay men. Broadly, I ask, "How do gay men manage masculinity?" At one point, it was assumed that gay men simply lacked the ability to be masculine, thus making them feminine. That is, masculinity and femininity were viewed as mutually exclusive categories. Psychologist Sandra Bem wrote quite plainly, "as every parent, teacher, and developmental psychologist knows, male and female children become

'masculine' and 'feminine,' respectively, at a very early age" (1983:598). It was also commonly understood that masculinity was a characteristic of male heterosexuality, and femininity was a characteristic of male homosexuality, so that assumptions of gender were used as proxies for sexuality, and vice versa (Altman 1982). More recently however, scholars have shown that gay men *can* be, and are, masculine, but not all in the same way (Connell 1995). And while we know more about the different ways that gay men perform masculinity and sexuality, we still do not know enough about the ways that men negotiate masculinity in various social settings. Thus, my question "How do gay men manage masculinity?" is not a static question – I do not suggest that there is a single way that all gay men manage masculinity. Rather, my inquiry is contextual and addresses how gay men manage their gender and sexuality in various contexts.

Context, then, is important for understanding the performances of gender and sexuality. While some scholars suggest that these concepts are becoming increasingly fluid (Diamond 2003; Ward 2015), others emphasize the continued weight of established categories of gender and sexuality (Cornwall and Jolly 2006; Rubin 1984; Seabright 2012; Sedgwick 1990). These two arguments need not stand in complete opposition to one another. It may be that the categories of gender and sexuality are generally more fluid, but the acceptance of performances of "nontraditional" identities remains tied to particular audiences and social contexts. How gay men negotiate sexuality and gender within these different social spaces is the focus of this study.

In what follows, I summarize the theoretical contributions from various scholars who have studied these issues. Most importantly, I elaborate on the concept of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1995) as a way for us to understand the hierarchical

nature of not only masculinity over femininity, but also some masculinities over others[2].

Connell (1995) explains that gay masculinities are perhaps the most obviously

subordinated masculinity (but not the only subordinated form of masculinity), and that

gay men suffer the consequences of this (e.g., discrimination in the workplace, political

exclusion, cultural abuse, and becoming the victims of violent hate crimes). Given the

entanglement of masculinity with sexuality (Wilton 1996), I introduce the concept of

hegemonic sexuality to better understand how gay men simultaneously perform

masculinity and sexuality, albeit in different ways in different social contexts. Hegemonic

sexuality helps to explain the practices within society that promote the dominant position

of heterosexual identities over non-heterosexual identities. Among non-heterosexual

identities (e.g., gay men), hegemonic sexuality can help to explain the dominant position

of some performances of gayness over others.

There are some scholars who use the term hegemonic sexuality in their writings,

although they have not developed or used the concept to the extent that I present in this

research. To my knowledge, this term has been used very little, and is sometimes

presented as "hegemonic masculinity and sexuality" which indicates two separate terms –

hegemonic masculinity as one concept, and sexuality as a second, but not hegemonic

sexuality (Gieseler 2014; Jackson 2008; Jenkins 2012; Johnson 2010; Riggs 2010). When

the term "hegemonic sexuality" is explicitly used, its meaning is not necessarily

explained. For instance, in advocating for the importance of lived experiences as part of

the study of embodiment and sociology, Chris Shilling (2001) mentions hegemonic

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[2] Connell's (1995) hegemonic masculinity is an extension of Gramsci's (1971) concept of
hegemony, which describes how various groups of people obtain and maintain power
over others.

sexuality just once in the conclusion of the study, saying that humans have a multiplicity of experiences that do not always fit gendered or sexual binary constructions. Other scholars mention this term casually in describing the heteronormative nature of public spaces (Boyd 2010), or suggesting that some sexual behaviors are perhaps more normalized or appropriate than others, creating a kind of hierarchy of sexual behaviors that favors heterosexuality (Morris 1995).

In my review of the literature, only one scholar uses the term hegemonic sexuality more than just in passing. However, while Lorraine Nencel (2010) uses the term, or a variation of it (e.g., "hegemonic discourses of sexuality") no less than eighteen times in her article, she fails to fully develop the term or explain what is explicitly meant by the term. The article focuses on the ways that women's choices of work dress (specifically wearing miniskirts) are performances of sexuality (Nencel 2010). While I also argue that hegemonic sexuality is evident in workplace environments, I suggest that this is only one of several ways that hegemonic sexuality operates in the marginalization of gay men. I extend the use of this term not only to men, but gay men specifically (no other literature uses this term to reference gay men specifically), and demonstrate that evaluations not only of clothing, but also gestures, speech, and other performative elements are all used to subordinate some gay men more than others.

Because gender and sexuality are so closely entangled, I suggest that while hegemonic masculinity includes sexuality as one of its organizing principles, so too does hegemonic sexuality include gender as one of its organizing principles. In other words, taken together, the notions of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic sexuality provide

insights into the social pressures that are placed on these co-constitutive identities and how variously situated men respond to them.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SEXUALITY STUDIES

While the sociological study of sexualities is newer than other specialty areas, there exists some literature that helps inform the current investigation of the intersection of gender and sexuality. Much of the early literature addressing homosexuality problematized and pathologized individuals claiming to be homosexual and/or practicing same-sex sex. In the first two editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), homosexuality was listed as a mental disorder within the category "sexual deviation" (American Psychiatric Association 1952, 1968). Although homosexuals diagnosed with mental disorders were subjected to electroshock therapy and lobotomies as treatment (Knauer 2009), other scholars took a very different approach to sexuality. Alfred Kinsey (1948, 1953), for example, argued that homosexual behaviors were much more common than previously thought, and therefore should not be treated as deviant sexual behavior. Evelyn Hooker's research also suggested that the American Psychiatric Association (APA) reconsider the DSM's inclusion of homosexuality as mental disorder (1957). Hooker concluded that "homosexuality as a clinical entity does not exist. Homosexuality may be a deviation in sexual pattern which is within the normal range, psychologically" (Hooker 1957:18). Kinsey's (1948, 1953) and Hooker's (1957) research called attention to the stigmatization of homosexuality and served as ammunition for the emergent gay rights movements to use as an aid in normalizing the sexual behaviors of openly gay men and women (D'Emilio 1983).

It was not until 1974 that homosexuality was removed from the DSM as a mental disorder and replaced with "Sexual Orientation Disturbance" (SOD) (APA 1974; Spitzer 1981). SOD was created as a label for homosexuals who were upset or bothered by their sexual orientation, and was only to be used as a diagnosis for individuals with unwanted homosexuality (APA 1974). SOD eventually was seen as a problematic and unnecessary diagnosis (Rubinstein 1995). In 1980, in the third edition of the DSM, SOD was changed to "ego-dystonic homosexuality" (APA 1980). Finally, in 1987, the APA publically announced that the use of *any* of these diagnoses was ill advised, and that in future publications of the DSM, these disorders would not be listed (Fox 1988).

While dropping sexual orientation from the list of mental illnesses was certainly a victory for gay rights activists, the DSM continued to include other gender-related categories of disorder, including transvestism, transvestic fetish, gender identity disorder, and gender dysphoria (Perone 2014). Broadly, these illnesses were defined by incongruence between a person's sex, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation (Perone 2014). In the APA's most current version, the DSM-5, gender dysphoria continues to be listed and is defined as the presence of "clinically significant distress," and "a marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender and assigned gender," for at least six months (APA 2013). This psychological/pathological emphasis on the incongruence of gender, sexuality, and gender identity stands in sharp contrast to contemporary sociological understandings of the various behaviors and identities that are captured by these terms. Most sociological and queer frameworks claim that gender and sexual identities are much more fluid and transient than biological or genetic

perspectives, which view these entities as having much more rigid and permanent boundaries (Udry 2000).

MULTIPLE MASCULINITIES, FLUID SEXUALITIES

Our identities, whether understood in terms of gender, sexuality, race, age, religion, occupation, or otherwise, are constructed every day through the interactions that we have with others (Mead 1934). Other theorists have built on Mead's groundwork to explain how gendered and sexual identities are constructed. Of course, our identities cannot be reduced to just one or two components. We are multi-faceted individuals with multiple identities and many parts that comprise each of our identities. Theories of intersectionality address the importance of multiple identities and how we make choices in our daily lives to emphasize some identities at certain times, for different reasons (Collins 2000). The primary focus of my work however, specifically investigates the simultaneous management of gay men's gendered and sexual identities.

At one point in time, masculinity was understood as the opposite of femininity; that is, what was considered to be feminine was, by definition, not masculine (Terman and Miles 1936). Contemporary gender theorists, R. W. Connell (1995) among them, have challenged these understandings of masculinity by arguing that traditional criteria for determining masculinity (e.g., being physically strong, aggressive, financially well-off, unemotional) offer far too narrow a range of characteristics to capture the experiences and variations among men. Therefore, Connell (1995) points out that there is a vast range of characteristics that are considered masculine within the wider society. More importantly, men do not need to display *all* masculine characteristics in order to be

"real" men, nor does a single fixed definition of masculinity exist. Definitions, aspirations, and interpretations of masculinity depend on a number of factors (e.g., social class, race, occupation, location), and individuals can perform masculinity differently over time, even throughout a single day (Connell 1995). This alternative view of gender allows for a deeper understanding of the ways that various identities contribute to a gendered self. By conceptualizing multiple masculinities, we recognize "differences between men, and thus [see] masculinities as plural, changing, and historically informed around dominant discourses or ideologies of masculinism" (Whitehead and Barrett 2001:15). Thus it becomes nearly impossible to discuss and theorize just a single masculinity – we can only refer to multiple forms of masculinity (Brittan 2001; Connell 1995).

Although describing multiple masculinities, Connell (1995) also emphasizes that not all masculinities are valued the same in social life. Specifically, what Connell terms "hegemonic masculinity," produces and maintains inequalities not only between but also within gender groups. The notion of hegemonic masculinity indicates that in any given culture or society, there is one form of masculinity that is exalted above all others. It is held up as a kind of ideal form of masculinity and serves as a figurative measuring stick – one that is used for comparing men to one another. This form of masculinity can always be contested – that is, *how* masculinity is presented can change—but what remains constant is the dominant position of men, and the subordinate position of women (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Contemporary hegemonic masculinity also subordinates homosexual men, sustaining and promoting the dominance of heterosexual men (Connell 1995).

In order to be viewed by others as masculine, men must perform gender in a convincing way. Michael Kimmel (1996) argues that not only is an audience necessary, but at least some members of the audience need to be male. Men are the "keepers" of masculinity, and they ultimately reward successful performances of masculinity by reinforcing a particular "kind" of masculinity. Essentially, men who engage in masculine behavior are only rewarded for this behavior if other men acknowledge the behavior as being masculine. The reward for a successful masculine performance is really a dodged bullet, so-to-speak. Questionable performances of masculinity are scrutinized or ridiculed. This can take the form of good-natured teasing, laughing, and joking, or more threatening accusations (e.g., being called a faggot) (Kimmel 1996; Pascoe 2007). Successful performances of masculinity then are sometimes rewarded by *not* being questioned.

For gay men, this can be a challenge, since gay identities do not fit within traditional definitions of masculinity, which value heterosexuality. Gayness is often associated with femininity, and the persistence of these gender and sexuality stereotypes means that others view gay men as being more feminine than heterosexual men (Blashill 2009). Gay men then, must perform their gender and sexuality in concerted ways if they desire to claim both a gay *and* masculine identity.

While the scholarship on men and masculinities is rapidly expanding, there is still some tension concerning the ways that gay masculinities are theorized. There is a growing body of literature that focuses on particular forms of gay masculinities (Nardi 2000), such as studies of gay subcultures (e.g., leathermen, bears, and gay clones of the 1970s) (Campbell 2004; Kimmel and Levine 1998; Manley, Levitt, and Mosher 2007;

Mosher et al. 2006; Wright 1997). These studies describe and explain the unique facets of these subcultures, and how their members utilize self-presentation strategies to indicate both their identities as gay men and masculine men. These strategies include hairstyles (including facial hair), mannerisms (including the ways men walk, or posing while standing still), and clothes. For example, gay clones in San Francisco during the 1970s were characterized by having an athletic, highly muscular physique and butch[3] style of clothing, making the clone look "more like a 'real man' than most straight men" (Kimmel 1996:279). A handkerchief worn in the back pockets of gay men's pants was also a tacit way of communicating to other gay men their sexual preferences (Fischer 2015). Studies like these allow alternative masculinities to be better represented in mainstream understandings of gender and sexuality. Also within institutions, such as sports, scholars have shown that various types of masculinities co-exist, such that straight men and gay men can bond in ways that were not likely to happen before (Anderson 2015). Eric Anderson's concept of inclusive masculinity is meant to capture recent decreases in sexism, homophobia, racism, and masculine bullying that have made it possible for men who play sports to embrace a softer version of masculinity that allows them to traverse social barriers and form bonds with men who are very different from themselves (Anderson 2009). Inclusive masculinities acknowledge and celebrate a variety of masculinities in ways that disrupt the rigid hierarchical structure of Connell's (1995) hegemonic masculinity.

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[3] The word "butch" or "macho" is a term for men (and women) who perform masculinity perhaps more so than the ideal model man. "The term 'macho' implied over conformity to the traditional male gender role. This role is regarded as even more masculine than the modern male gender role" (Levine 1998:57).

Similarly, an emerging concept of hybrid masculinities has been developed as a way to explain that some men select different aspects of various "kinds" of masculinities, to create their own gendered and sexual performance (Arxer 2011). Steven Arxer (2011) developed hybrid masculinities to describe how men combine hegemonic masculinity with non-hegemonic practices in ways that distance these performances from the hegemonic ideal. Because hegemonic ideals of masculinity are malleable (Connell 1995), men are able to choose under which circumstances they perform different aspects of masculinity. For example, Messner (2007) compares different roles that Arnold Schwarzenegger has played, both on and off screen, to illustrate hybrid masculinities and the ways that individuals can emphasize certain aspects of hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculine performances. Schwarzenegger has, over the years, been a male body-builder, an actor in various movies such as *The Terminator* and *Kindergarten Cop*, and the Governor of California. In each role, Schwarzenegger emphasizes various aspects of traditional hegemonic masculinity (e.g., physicality, aggression) with non-hegemonic aspects (e.g., nurturing, empathy, humor) (Messner 2007).

But while some scholars describe hybrid masculinities as challenging traditional hegemonic masculinity, other scholars argue that hybrid masculinities may actually reinforce hegemonic ideals, and that they simply disguise or conceal the ways hegemony is operating. Tristan Bridges and C.J. Pascoe critique the concept of hybrid masculinities and write that the combination of hegemonic and non-hegemonic masculinities actually "maintain the structure of institutionalized gender regimes to advantage men collectively over women and some men over other men" (2014:247). Similarly, young heterosexual male sex workers who engage in sex with other men perform what Cenk Özbay (2010)

calls "exaggerated masculinity." These sex workers must negotiate the risks involved with maintaining masculine identities (e.g., wearing certain clothes, drinking alcohol, talking about girlfriends that they may or may not have), while engaging in often-unsafe sexual behaviors with other men (Özbay 2010). This form of masculinity, Özbay argues, actually positions these young men *closer* to hegemonic ideals of masculinity, and not further away from them as Arxer's (2011) analysis of hybrid masculinities suggests.

Thus within the field of masculinities, there are competing theories of how masculinity is being conceptualized. While some authors see contemporary masculinities as being inclusive and progressive (Anderson 2009, 2015), others see them as involving more covert versions of hegemonic masculinity (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). My study begins at this fork in the road of theory. By investigating gay men's strategies of gender and sexual identity management, I explore the current relationships of men to hegemonic structures, looking for ways that hegemony is either reinforced or dismantled.

In addition to the ambiguities regarding how to understand the relationship between contemporary masculinities and hegemony, I address another gap between theory and practice with my current study. Earlier in this chapter I discussed that contemporary scholars view gender and sexuality as fluid. Scholars explain that individuals have many different identities or selves, and that these are both fluid and emergent (Simon and Whitfield 2000). Although Diamond (2009) describes the fluid nature of sexual identities as pertaining more to women than to men, she demonstrates how individuals may identify as being heterosexual at one point in their lives, then become attracted to members of the same sex at another time, and then later identify as straight again. Diamond (2009) describes women like actress Anne Heche, who has had

long-term relationships with both men and women (and then men again) as having a fluid sexuality. Diamond (2009) contrasts women's sexual fluidity to that of men's - who she argues have a more stable sexual identity. However, I find the concept of sexual fluidity to be helpful in understanding the ways that men shape their own experiences and make sense of their own sexual desires. In my interviews, some men discussed how they identified as straight for much of their childhood, and then later identified as bisexual before coming out as gay. And while some may argue that this is a "natural" trajectory for gay men who may have really been gay all along, such an approach ignores the very real experiences that men have had while identifying as bisexual or straight. Furthermore, some men in my study, while now predominantly being attracted to other men, also describe themselves as being "homoflexible" – a term that indicates a predominantly gay identity, but also allows for the possibility of opposite-sex sexual experiences[4].

Furthermore, Diamond's work has recently been challenged by authors who argue that men's sexuality is just as fluid as women's. In Jane Ward's most recent book, *Not Gay: Sex Between Straight White Men* (2015), she discusses various ways that white heterosexual men engage in homosexual acts. By analyzing these same-sex sexual experiences, Ward further complicates our understanding of sexual desire, orientation, and behavior. Although Ward's study focuses on the fluidity of sexual behaviors, not sexual identity (i.e., the white men in her study do not identify as gay, but sometimes

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[4] The term "homoflexible" was introduced by one of my participants, as a way of describing his sexuality. It stands in opposition to the term "heteroflexibe," which Laurie Essig (2000) first wrote about to describe people who primarily are attracted to people of the opposite sex, but who are open to sexual interactions or relationships with people of the same sex.

have sex with men), I find the concept of sexual fluidity to be helpful in understanding the ways men shape their own sexual experiences and make sense of their sexual desires.

In addition to emphasizing the fluidity of sexual and gender identities, gender theorists also explain that gender, sexuality, and biological sex are not necessarily congruent with one another. That is, men and women are not limited to only masculine and feminine roles or performances, respectively. In fact, Judith Butler (1990) argues that this kind of inherent male/masculine and female/feminine conception of gender is not only limiting, but is useless as a guide for understanding the range and nature of gender performances:

> The cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist' – that is, those in which gender does not follow from sex and those in which the practices of desire do not 'follow' from either sex or gender. …because certain kinds of 'gender identities' fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as developmental failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain" (Butler 1990:24).

Here, Butler refers to those gender and sexual identities that do not "match" (e.g., the feminine man and the masculine woman). She later argues that the assumption that sex and gender are inherently linked also extends to sexuality – the notion of "compulsory heterosexuality" captures this assumption (Butler 1990). Queer theorists have challenged the assumption that "mis-matched" sex, gender, and sexual identities are problematic (Jagose 1996). The real problem, according to queer theorists, is that common conceptions of gender and sex (both inside and outside the academy) limit performances

of masculinities and femininities to a very narrow range of behaviors. Furthermore, the assumption that men are masculine and attracted to women creates a heteronormative society – one where heterosexuality is widely accepted as being the standard form of sexual expression (Warner 1999). These scholars point out that not all individuals follow this same pattern, as mentioned above, and that linking sex, gender, and sexuality in predetermined ways simply does not work (Butler 1990; Diamond 2003, 2009; Diamond and Butterworth 2008; Jagose 1996; Tabatabai 2015; Ward 2008, 2015; Warner 1999).

Despite theorizing gender and sexuality as fluid concepts that continually change and are not always congruent with one another (i.e., that some men are masculine, and others feminine), some researchers argue that the mainstream conceptualization of gender continues to view it as an extension of biological sex, with masculinity being closely tied to being male (Brown 2001; Linneman 2008). Men are expected to be masculine, and women are expected to be feminine. Since gay men are stereotypically characterized as being feminine, this reality is particularly problematic for gay men. Linneman (2008) writes that even for gay men who otherwise present themselves as masculine, gay masculinities are feminized at least *some* of the time. Brown (2001) adds that drag queen culture, which is a prominent symbol of gay culture, emphasizes performances of femininity. For this reason, Brown (2001) finds that drag queens (men intentionally performing femininities) are considered deviant and devalued by both straight people and gay men. Contributions from scholars like Linneman (2008) and Brown (2001) challenge notions that gender and sexuality are independently fluid and argue instead that they are more co-constitutive of one another. Performances of gender then, may guide performances of sexuality in particular ways, and performances of sexuality may guide

performances of gender in particular ways. This co-constitutive characteristic of gender and sexuality can help explain why the associations between gayness with femininity, and straightness with masculinity are commonly made in U.S. culture.

Whether or not gender and sexual identities are considered fluid or co-constitutive, they must be performed in order to be recognized. Sometimes, these performances are recognized in the way the actor intended them. Of course, this is not always the case, and so at other times, the audience does not receive the actor's performance in the intended manner. In terms of the intersection of gender and sexuality, scholarship begs for a greater understanding of the ways that individuals choose to perform their gendered and sexual identities, and under what circumstances. That is, what are the strategies that individuals use to perform their identities? Masculinity scholars have studied the ways that hegemonic masculinity has guided performances of gender, specifically for men, but less is known about the ways that sexuality is performed. Performances of sexuality, as I argue in subsequent chapters, are guided by a concept of hegemonic sexuality, which I describe as being closely related to hegemonic masculinity, but with an emphasis on the ways that sexuality is structured in a hierarchical way, so that certain performances of sexuality are valued more than other performances. In the following section, I begin to develop hegemonic sexuality as a concept that I apply specifically to gay men for the purpose of enhancing our understanding of gay masculinities.

DEVELOPING A THEORY OF HEGEMONIC SEXUALITY

Earlier in this chapter, I discussed the concept of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity places differential value on performances of masculinity, and results in various inequalities (e.g., discrimination, access to political, economic, or social power) as a result of this hierarchy of gendered performances. Some men benefit more from performing certain masculinities than other men performing other masculinities. I extend the use of the term hegemonic masculinity to incorporate a deeper understanding of hegemony, not simply by specifically applying the concept to gay men (although I also do this), but by considering how performances of sexuality are also awarded differential value, creating a hierarchy of sexual performances. To this end, I use the term "hegemonic sexualities" to represent the ways that sexualities are positioned in relation to one another, with some deemed to be more desirable than others, and creating certain advantages and disadvantages depending on the performance. Performing desirable versions of gayness, as I discuss in subsequent chapters, allows gay men to be out, but also to be accepted within heteronormative environments. While other authors briefly discuss this concept, it has not been developed extensively, and has not necessarily been called hegemonic sexuality, per se (Gieseler 2014; Jackson 2008; Jenkins 2012; Johnson 2010; Riggs 2010). That is, scholars have described how performances of sexuality are variable, and are somehow valued differently by different audiences, but have not articulated what to call this. However, a system that places more value on some performances of sexuality and less value on other performances of sexuality ought to be understood with more clarity. Under what circumstances, and how, are performances of sexuality awarded? What kinds of performances are devalued, and who decides?

The concept of hegemony, originally developed by Antonio Gramsci (1971) and later adopted by Connell (1995), refers to the cultural dynamic by which a group claims and sustains a leading position in social life. According to Connell, hegemonic masculinity is at the root of power hierarchies. While Gramsci (1971) had originally used the term hegemony in reference to social class stratification, Connell expanded this definition to capture how the distribution of power and social status also depend on gender stratification. Connell describes many different forms of masculinity (e.g., based on social class) that, in part, determine the amount of institutional power available to the individual. That is, within any society, a particular form of masculinity is deemed most desirable. Men who do not perform this socially exalted form of masculinity are not rewarded with the same advantages as men who do. Connell (1995) explains that while the form of masculinity that is most valued and rewarded can vary over time, hegemonic masculinity simultaneously upholds the dominant position of men and subordinates women. Connell (1995) explains that men's *complicity* with the hegemonic project (e.g., reaping the benefits of patriarchy and not challenging it), along with the *marginalization* of alternative masculinities, offer room for a single form of (straight) male masculinity to rise to the top. Thus, contemporary hegemonic masculinity extends to sexuality, in a way that rewards heterosexual men and subordinates gay men (Connell 1995).

The concept of hegemonic masculinity has been criticized for perhaps being too rigid a construct, one that does not accurately describe the nuances of men's performances of masculinity (Moller 2007). In revisiting this term, Connell and Messerschmidt defend its usefulness, explaining that masculinities in any society are fluid and that "we need to recognize social struggles in which subordinated masculinities

influence dominant forms" (2005:829). They emphasize the agency that subordinated social groups (e.g., women and gay men) have in reconstructing valued definitions of masculinity, as well as the importance of location (e.g., local, regional, global levels) for the distribution of power and privilege (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). I interpret Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) rethinking of hegemonic masculinity as an invitation to explore gender and sexuality in different ways, one that Richardson (2007) echoes. She writes that scholars need to "(re)imagine how we think about these interconnections between gender and sexuality in ways that might enable such analyses [of 'complex interimplication[5]']" (Richardson 2007:465). It is here that I begin to distinguish the difference between hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic sexuality.

While hegemonic sexuality operates similarly to hegemonic masculinity, I argue that the two concepts are in fact different and can be used to understand different aspects of both sexuality and gender. Most notably, the concept of hegemonic masculinity suggests that men remain in a dominant social position, while women remain in a subordinate social position. Based on performances of masculinity, some men hold a more dominant or subordinate social position than others. Hegemonic masculinity can be used to understand how gender operates within marginalized groups, such as gay men, but ignores how sexuality is also operating within the population of gay men. Some authors have investigated the relationship between sexuality and power (Anderson 2005; Gutterman 2001). For instance, these scholars have described that depending on the sex role (i.e., penetrating or being penetrated), gay men may hold more or less power within

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[5] Richardson (2007) borrows the term "complex interimplication" from Butler (1997) who describes the relationship between gender and sexuality as informing one another, and that feminist and queer theories need to engage more deeply in these interimplications.

their relationships with other men (Anderson 2005; Gutterman 2001). While part of this involves a performance of gender, there is also a performance of sexuality. Gay men who are penetrated during sex are often stereotyped as being more feminine (presumably because they are acting as the "female" in the sexual relationship), and are often the targets of negative comments or "bottom shaming" by other gay men (Moore 2015). In this way, gay men divide themselves based on sex role – just one example of how hegemonic sexuality operates. Much of the existing literature investigating hegemony and sexuality still focuses on the ways that hegemonic masculinity primarily differentiates some gay men from others. For instance, Peter Glick and colleagues (2007) studied the reactions of men whose masculinity had become threatened in some way. They found that threatened men were more likely to respond negatively to effeminate gay men, but not more negatively to masculine gay men (Glick et al. 2007). Other studies have found that cross-gender characteristics are applied to gay people regardless of how they present themselves (Mitchell and Ellis 2011). That is, individuals are likely to describe gay men as feminine, and lesbians as masculine (Mitchell and Ellis 2011). Mitchell and Ellis (2011) also found that negative stereotypes about overtly feminine gay men are still common, with some of this negativity occurring even within the gay community. That is to suggest that gay men who are not overly feminine might not be susceptible to the same negative stereotypes as their feminine gay counterparts. In his study of men on a gay social networking application, Miller (2015) found that gay men tended to privilege masculinity while interacting with the application. These kinds of studies offer strong support for the utility of a concept of hegemonic sexuality to understand perceptions and evaluations of gendered and sexual performances of sexual

minorities. This is not simply hegemonic masculinity operating among gay men. Sexuality is being performed as part of a gendered performance, and gender is performed as part of a performance of sexuality. Gay men, on the basis of gendered performance, are viewed more negatively – not just by straight men, but also, perhaps, by gay men. Masculinity it seems is valued over femininity regardless of sexuality.

I argue that the same hegemonic forces that separate men from women, and straight men from gay men operate in a more complex way regarding sexuality. While hegemonic masculinity acknowledges sexuality (by rewarding heterosexuality), it does not consider how sexuality is performed in a multitude of ways. Contemporary theories of gender analyze and describe multiple masculinities and femininities (Connell 1995), but do not typically consider multiple performances of sexualities. Hegemonic sexuality operates much in the same way as hegemonic masculinity and works on at least two different levels. First, hegemonic masculinity treats heterosexual identity performances more favorably than non-heterosexual identity performances. Secondly, within a particular sexual identity group (e.g., straight, lesbian, gay, bisexual), certain performances of sexuality are viewed as more desirable than others. On one hand, the rewards for performing sexuality in this culturally desirable way include being seen as professional at one's place of employment, and might result in promotion. As I discuss later, professionalism is a prominent concern for out gay men. On the other hand, the punishment for not performing sexuality in the culturally desirable way includes the potential for social isolation, from both straight and gay cultures, as well as the potential for being victims of violent hate crimes (Alden and Parker 2005).

Sexual identities, like gendered identities, are widely thought of as fixed categories by the public at large; that is, individuals are expected to identify as either being heterosexual, gay, lesbian, or bisexual and not to switch or waver between categories. I have already discussed that we live in a heteronormative society (Warner 1999), that is, heterosexuality is the most socially desirable form of sexuality or, at least, the most common form of sexuality present in our society. The concept of heteronormativity is linked to the concept of hegemonic sexuality in that it acknowledges that heterosexuality is valued over all other forms of sexuality. For instance, bisexual identities have come under critique, by both straight and gay/lesbian audiences as being an inauthentic and illegitimate identity (Callis 2013). Bisexuality is an ambiguous social identity that is seen as disrupting the sexual binary (Ault 1996). Studies investigating bisexual stigma find that bisexual individuals are stereotyped as being dangerous and hypersexual (Callis 2013). I interpret such findings as evidence of a sexual structure that places straight identities at the top of this hierarchy, gay and lesbian identities somewhere in the middle, and bisexual identities beneath gay/lesbian identities. Hegemonic sexuality helps us to discern this hierarchy of sexualities in relation to one another (e.g., straight and gay sexualities), but also to understand performances of gay sexualities in relation to one another (or straight sexualities, or others). That is, I employ this term to better understand how everyday performances of sexuality are simultaneously influenced by and contribute to a pervasive hierarchy of sexuality. By these everyday performances, I am referring to actions or behaviors that somehow indicate something about gayness – the kinds of things that David Halperin (2012) writes about in his book, *How To Be Gay.* In this book, Halperin (2012) describes a variety of ways that culture creates a foundation

for a gay collective identity to be constructed. These cultural artifacts (including campy films and certain pop-song artists) are often characteristic of gay culture, and knowledge of these films, songs, literary works, etc. somehow grants you legitimacy as a gay person (Halperin 2012). If a gay man is not familiar with the cultural icons widely recognized by the gay community, he risks losing his "gay card" as Halperin (2012) describes.[6] Participating in gay culture, or having knowledge of certain films, television shows, singers, etc. is somehow part of a performance that has more to do with sexuality, perhaps, than it does with gender, even though gender and sexuality are always co-constitutive. Other kinds of performances may also reveal something about sexuality and hence also fall under the concept of hegemonic sexuality. For instance, those who study metrosexuality acknowledge that there is a sexualized component to the term. While a metrosexual is typically a self-identified straight man, he dresses fashionably, and often defends his sexuality by saying things like, "I'm Metro, NOT gay!" (Hall, Gough, and Seymour-Smith 2012). In their research of metrosexuals, Casanova, Wetzel, and Speice (2016) find that dress is important for the ways that sexuality is interpreted. One of their straight-identified respondents noted, "It's a very, very fine line between how a well-dressed gay guy dresses and how a well-dressed non-gay guy dresses… I'm sure people have called me a metro[sexual]" (Casanova et al. 2016:64). There is something about clothing, then, that can indicate whether a man is gay or straight. According to this respondent, a gay man and a straight man can both be well dressed, but depending on the

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[6] Incidentally, as I was writing this chapter, another gay man told me that he was "taking back" my gay card because I had told him I was not familiar with the latest season's drag queen contestants on the television show *Ru Paul's Drag Race*. Apparently, my lack of knowledge of this popular television show means that I am not "doing" gayness in the right way (according to this one man).

clothes (and the gender/sexuality performance while wearing those clothes), he may be perceived differently.

As yet another example, the newly released documentary *Do I Sound Gay?* asks, "Is there such a thing as a gay voice?" (Gertler and Thorpe 2015). The documentary explores why some people "sound gay" while others do not. While the documentary focuses on trying to "correct" speech patterns and inflections, Gertler and Thorpe (2015) also question what it is about a voice that makes it "sound gay" in the first place, and why gay sounding voices are often thought of as something to be embarrassed about? This documentary makes me question why voices that sound "too gay" are valued less, at least in certain social settings, and why men with gay sounding voices are positioned lower in the hegemonic sexuality hierarchy?

If some voices are in fact, "gayer" than others, and if wearing certain clothes might reveal something about a person's sexuality, or if "gayness" can be indicated by a liking of certain songs, films, or television shows, how are these symbolic meanings created? Which symbols of gayness are more important, and how might they locate gay men on a hierarchy of hegemonic sexuality? My research focuses on how hegemonic sexuality can be used to understand how gay men navigate and respond to the simultaneous demands on masculinity and sexuality. Some men may conceal their gay identity by somehow "downplaying" their gayness, while others may emphasize their sexuality to indicate that they are gay. Still other men's performances of sexuality may be interpreted as being "too gay," either by heterosexuals, or by other gay men. Depending on the performance, gay men may find themselves situated either higher or lower on the hierarchy that is guided by hegemonic sexuality. Of course, performances of sexuality

and gender are nearly always performed together. I argue that since sexuality is

necessarily performed with gender, hegemonic sexuality offers another tool to understand

inequalities related to sexuality. Not all performances of sexuality prioritize or emphasize

gender as part of the performance (even though gender is entangled tightly with

sexuality) so there must be something else that can help explain these performances. Just

as gender is performed in relation to race (hooks 2003) and social class (Hollingworth

2015), it is also performed in relation to sexuality. Sexuality and gender are performed

co-constitutively, as are gender and class, gender and race, race and class, etc. (Collins

2000). Studies like those of Ward (2015), Bridges (2014), and Bridges and Pascoe

(2014), who directly investigate the relationship between sexuality and gender, offer

support for the notion of hegemonic sexuality, where performances of sexuality are

always conducted in relation to a hierarchy in which some sexualities are valued more

than others.

CONCLUSION

As a still emerging field of study, gender and sexuality scholars continue to press

boundaries and look for new ways of understanding how our gender and sexual identities

are related to each other and malleable. While scholars once thought that identities were

predictably fixed (e.g., that "normal" men were masculine and heterosexual), it is now

well understood that gender and sexuality are performed in a number of ways (Connell

1995). These performances are often contextual. That is, individuals perform their gender

and sexuality in different ways at different times, and in different places, in front of

different audiences (Kimmel 1996). Hegemonic masculinity then, organizes these

performances of masculinity in a range of most to least desirable, and thus encourages (at least some) men's behaviors to match the idealized form of masculinity. However, not all men aim to, or are able to, perform this idealized form of masculinity (which itself may change over time) (Connell 1995). Since hegemonic masculinity advantages whiteness and heterosexuality, for example, black men and gay men are unable to truly perform an idealized form of masculinity that sits atop this hegemonic structure. Contemporary scholars continue to seek new explanations for men's gendered performances.

Thus, there are discrepancies in the ways that scholars conceptualize masculinities, and how well theories of masculinity match the reality that is produced and experienced by men. Contemporary masculinities have been conceptualized as becoming more varied (i.e., multiple masculinities are recognized), but it is unclear whether these inclusive, hybrid, or exaggerated masculinities are situated closer to, or further from, hegemonic masculinity (Anderson 2009, 2015; Arxer 2011; Bridges and Pascoe 2014; Özbay 2010). Certainly, there is more to be learned within the field of men and masculinities – particularly concerning the ways that sexuality is incorporated within these studies. Chris Beasley (2012) also recognizes the tension within this scholarship and calls for a deeper understanding of contemporary masculinity, but cautions scholars to add to knowledge in a way that does not produce or require homogeneity, but rather considers multiple frameworks that can help inform this area of scholarship.

In response to this call for continued exploration of masculinity studies, I ask how gay men specifically incorporate into their daily lives, performances of gender and sexuality. How do gay men manage these identities separately and simultaneously? Other scholars have described our society as a heteronormative one – a society that values

heterosexuality over other sexualities (Warner 1999). Hegemonic masculinity also values

heterosexuality as part of a desirable gendered performance. Gender and sexuality then,

are always in some ways linked together. These performances are co-constitutive, so that

performances of gender and sexuality are related to one another (Pascoe 2007). In this

study, I ask how men manage these identities, and how they strategize their performances

of gender and sexuality in various social settings. I suggest that performances of sexuality

are organized in a similar hegemonic way as masculine performances. Hegemonic

sexuality rewards certain performances of sexuality, such that within gay sexualities, men

who are "too gay" are disadvantaged compared to other gay men.

In the following chapters, I explore the ways that hegemonic sexuality operates,

describing first how men make sense of masculinity and the ways that gender is

important to their identity performances. Then, I discuss specifically how sexuality

becomes part of those performances of identity. Last, I describe how men manage gender

and sexual identities at work, as a way of continuing to develop the concept of hegemonic

sexuality.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

I approach the topic of sexual and gender identity management with questions that require qualitative research. My purpose in this research is to better understand the strategies that gay men use to manage their gendered and sexual identities, both separately and simultaneously, in various social contexts. These strategies include the ways that men manipulate their identities while they are with different audiences: friends, family members, co-workers, employers, acquaintances, and strangers. These strategies also include the ways that men manipulate their identities in various social spaces: at work, at home, in gay spaces (e.g., bars, parades, neighborhoods), at places of worship, the gym, or other public spaces. To better understand how gender and sexuality are actually co-constitutive identities, I developed a research plan focusing on gay men's accounts of their lived experiences.

RESEARCH DESIGN

I draw my data from thirty in-depth, semi-structured interviews. To be eligible for participation, interviewees needed to be at least eighteen years old, and identify as gay[7]. I recruited participants for this study using both convenience and snowball sampling. Initially, I recruited participants by asking men who had previously come out to me if they would be interested in talking with me about masculinity and the gay community.

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[7] One participant, TJ, told me that he identifies as "homoflexible," a term he says he created for himself to describe his own sexuality. To him, this means that he identifies predominantly as being gay, but would have sexual relations with a woman "if it felt right."

Some of these men are my friends and acquaintances. Other men I met for the first time during the interview. After these interviews, I asked participants to refer other men for the study. Additionally, I used social media platforms (e.g., Grindr, Scruff, Adam4Adam) to invite men to participate. I personally knew half of the participants prior to interviewing them. The other half of the participants I met for the first time at the interview.

Interviews were conducted between 2012 and 2014. I allowed participants to decide the location of the interview. Despite some claims that we live in a post-closeted society (Dean 2014), some men are not openly gay and requested more private interviews. Thus, interviews took place in a variety of locations. Some took place at coffee shops, some at bars, and others at the participants' residence. Four respondents requested that the interview be conducted via webcam, and two by telephone.

Interviews were semi-structured, and lasted between 30 minutes and 2.5 hours. On average, interviews lasted 64 minutes. After an initial greeting, I reviewed a consent form to participate that was approved by the Institutional Review Board at University of Cincinnati. After this review, I began each interview by asking participants to describe what masculinity means to them, and what kinds of things came to mind when they heard that word. I asked participants what they thought of their own gender (i.e., how masculine they thought themselves to be), and if they thought of gay masculinity as something different from straight masculinity. Conversations about masculinity then, led very comfortably into conversations of being gay, outness, and stories of coming out. Having participants describe their thoughts and feelings on both masculinity and sexuality allowed them to reflect carefully on the ways that they actively managed both of these

identities in different social spaces. I asked participants to describe the ways they manage

gender and sexuality while with their closest friends, at work, with family, and in other

public places, to name a few. If, throughout the interview, certain demographic data was

not revealed (e.g., age, race, occupation), I made sure to ask explicitly at the end of the

interview. A list of the interview prompts is included in Appendix A.

After the interviews, I immediately wrote down some of my observations about

the interview, including how the participant dressed for the interview, use of hand

gestures and body language, and also reflected on how my own identity as a gay man

related to the interview conversations (LaSala 2003). I also noted how comfortable the

participants seemed throughout the interview process.

All interviews were audiotape recorded with participants' permission, and

transcribed in full. I transcribed two-thirds of the interviews myself using two different

methods. The first method involved a transcription software program called F5, which

allows users to slow down the speed of audio playback. This was useful for me in

transcribing interviews initially. Later in the transcription process, I began using dictation

software available on Mac computers. This software detects speech and automatically

types whatever the speaker is saying. I used a method called "parroting," or re-speaking

the interview and allowing the speech-to-text dictation software to type what I am saying

(Tuttas 2015). This significantly reduced the time I spent transcribing my interviews. The

remaining third of the interviews I had transcribed by a third party. I began outsourcing

interviews once I was confident I had identified preliminary themes from the data.

After the first interview took place, I began coding and analyzing the data. This

allowed me to identify concepts as they emerged from the data, and allowed me to make

connections between categories or groupings of data as I collected it (Corbin and Strauss 1990). I relied on a grounded theory approach to analyze the interview transcripts. As I read, reread, coded, and recoded transcripts, I created analytic categories (e.g., men who emphasized finding social support before coming out, or men who described their work identities as "professional"), and then proceeded to analyze the relationships between those categories (Charmaz 1990). I did not use any software programs in the coding process, but preferred to highlight and categorize interview excerpts by hand. This approach allowed me to become deeply immersed in my data and to make more meaningful connections. For example, by investigating the ways men used the term "professional" to describe their gendered and sexual identity performances at work, I was able to piece these narratives together to begin developing the theoretical concept I call hegemonic sexuality.

PARTICIPANTS

All participants (whose real names have been replaced with pseudonyms) are self-identified gay men aged 22-52. The mean age is 31.2 years. The vast majority of respondents are white. Of the thirty respondents, only five (17%) describe themselves as non-white. Three of these men are black, one is biracial, and one is Hispanic. One man identified his race as being white and Jewish. Since I used convenience and snowball sampling methods, most of the participants reside in Cincinnati, Ohio. In utilizing a snowball sampling method, some men, who live in Cincinnati, referred other men to participate who did not live in Cincinnati. As a result, six participants were living in other parts of the U.S. at the time of interview. Since living in Cincinnati was not originally a

requirement for eligibility to participate, I decided to interview these men from other parts of the U.S. Although I do not have enough data to make generalized comparisons between the men living in Cincinnati and men living other places, these six participants living elsewhere offer their own unique perspectives – one that I feel adds to the richness of the data.

Men in this study work in a variety of occupations. Some are in white-collar jobs such as marketing, information technology support, and education. Others work in service jobs such as restaurants, hair salons, and retail. Some work part time, others work full time, and yet others work on short-term contracts with their employers. The range of participants' educational attainment is just as varied as occupations. Some participants have earned high school degrees, and others hold doctoral degrees. Participants in this study are "out" (in terms of sexuality) to at least some people in their lives, although the degree to how "out" they are varies. Information about participants' age and occupation can be found in Appendix B.

CONSTRAINTS ON GENERALIZABILITY

The main question of this research asks how gay men manage their gendered and sexual identities. This assumes that men make choices in how they present themselves, as Goffman indicates in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). According to social identity theory, individuals make choices in all kinds of situations to manage their identity in ways that promote a positive self- or group image (Tajfel and Turner 1979). As I studied the various identity management strategies that participants described, I was keenly aware that they were practicing these strategies during the interviews themselves.

In some ways, I may have held a certain amount of power over participants as a social researcher. Particularly among participants with whom I was already acquainted, comments like "Are you always going to study me now?" or "Is your tape still on?" were common. To me, this meant that they treated the interview somehow differently than a conversation between friends. While I have no way of knowing for sure, it seemed at times that when my tape recorder was on, participants "acted" the part of the interviewee, and may have wanted to be seen in a particular way. In this way, however, the participants ultimately held the power. My research depended on the stories that participants shared with me; my analysis could only reflect the materials they gave me during the interview. This is not a new characteristic of qualitative research, of course. Social science researchers have acknowledged that power differences between interviewer and interviewee can shape the research itself (Anyan 2013; Hoffman 2007; Thornborrow 2002). Sometimes the interviewer holds the power, and sometimes the interviewee holds the power (at least in terms of what the participant is willing to share with the interviewer). Ultimately, the relationship between the interviewer and interviewee is a dynamic one, and I attempted to establish relationships of trust where my interviewees felt comfortable discussing their thoughts and experiences.

Although my respondents have very different stories to tell, they still constitute a fairly homogenous group – at least in terms of race. Since I utilized convenience and snowball sampling methods, my own whiteness likely limited, in some ways, my ability to recruit participants of color. The vast majority of my respondents did identify as white, and I do not provide an in-depth analysis of how race interacts with gender or sexuality when it comes to identity management. While some of my respondents do comment on

how their non-white race might add additional nuances to the performances of their

gender or sexuality, I do not address this at length in this project[8]. I would suggest

however that future studies of sexuality and gender seek to broaden our understanding of

the ways that race is important in the construction and maintenance of our other

identities.

Many of the participants in this study are part of a narrow age group. Just over

half (54%) of the men are 24-35 years old. This means that men from this age group may

have had a stronger influence on the ways that I have interpreted their experiences

managing gender and sexuality, compared to the experiences of either younger or older

men. I do not specifically address how the age of my participants may have affected their

identity management strategies. I do, however, try to keep this in mind to the extent that

age is one part of the social context that does influence how men make choices to present

themselves in certain ways. For example, coming out of the closet as a teenager may be

very different than coming out as a middle-aged man. Coming out of the closet in the

1970's was likely very different from coming out in 2016, since cultural attitudes towards

the LGBT community are remarkably different today compared to just a few decades

ago. My aim in this project is not to offer a historical comparison of various identity

management strategies, but to focus on how men today operate within the structures of

gender and sexuality.

I also do not provide an in-depth analysis of the ways that social class influences

men's management of gendered and sexual identities. Men report working in a variety of

occupational fields, and have a range of educational experience ranging from high school

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[8] I do address the intersection of race in some chapters, and return to a brief discussion of
race in the concluding chapter.

graduates to doctoral degrees, but I am not confident that my data allows me to fully develop any conclusions related to the ways that social class operates within the context of sexual or gender identity management. I do offer some ideas about the importance of work (and thus social class) for the management of gendered and sexual identities. However, future studies should be designed and conducted to specifically understand how these additional social experiences contribute to identity management.

There is much more work to be done in terms of understanding the multiplicity of the ways that gender and sexuality remain important in the lives of individuals. Our identities are unique, yet in some ways, they are shared by others. The gay men in this study discuss ways that their identities change – over time and place. The social context often dictates how they present themselves. Through an analysis of the accounts that participants offer, I explore the strategies men use and the reasons why men perform their gendered and sexual identities in particular ways.

CHAPTER 4

SHADES OF GAY: THE PROBLEM WITH DEFINING GENDER AND SEXUALITY

I think that as gay men, we like to turn [gender] into something that is so

black and white and it's just really all these different shades of gray. Like,

no one is one hundred percent masculine and no one is one hundred percent

feminine. Just like there's really no clear ground with sexuality either, like

everyone is a little gay.

- Steven (23)

In a previous chapter, I engaged with different theories of gender. Traditional

theories and definitions of gender held that masculinity and femininity represent polar

opposite concepts. Within that framework, masculinity and femininity only existed in

relation to one another, so that that which was not masculine was, by definition, feminine

(Connell 1995; Levine 1998; Nardi 2000; Risman 1998). Thus, traditional gender

theories placed masculinity and femininity on a two-sided coin. A coin lying on a table is

either heads-up *or* it is tails-up. Gender was understood as masculine *or* feminine, but not

both at once; nor neither at all. Alternatively, contemporary theories of gender emphasize

many ways that masculinity and femininity are interpreted and performed (Connell 1995).

That is, contemporary theories work with multiple and overlapping conceptions of

masculinities and femininities. Lastly, queer theories assert that categorical labels are

problematic in that they fail to capture real experiences and hence serve to constrain

identity expressions (Jagose 1996). For this reason, queer theorists are primarily

interested in non-normative, or "mismatched" sex and gender identities (Jagose 1996).

Indeed, they aim to queer what is generally considered to be the norm.

These theories of gender are markedly different, and hence provide very different entry points for developing an understanding of everyday gender practices. My motivation for this research was sparked by a realization that I actually had little knowledge of what it meant to be masculine – especially as a gay man. How do men understand masculinity? In what ways do they manage their gender in calculated ways? How does being gay matter to performances of gender, if at all? I learned from the participants in this study that there is not just one way of understanding or describing masculinity (or gay masculinity), but rather there are many ways to describe masculinity. In a society where men are rewarded or punished, respectively, for appropriate or inappropriate displays of masculinity, it seems imperative to know what "counts" as masculine and not. But identifying what is masculine, as I discuss in this chapter, is not always an easy task, especially for gay men. Furthermore, performances of gender almost always involve a performance of sexuality. Gender and sexuality are performed together, and so the gender theories I discussed earlier conflate the two and do not necessarily offer a full explanation of the processes gay men go through to manage their identities. To develop a more robust account, we must also consider how sexuality matters in performances of gender (and vice versa).

As Steven says in the introduction to this chapter, gay men do not understand gender as being black and white, but rather different shades of gray. Tanner[9], a 25 year-old jewelry designer agrees with Steven. He says, "Masculinity is really subjective! It

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[9] All participants' real names have been replaced with pseudonyms.

covers a lot of different things!" Herein lies the issue: Men do not have a shared understanding of masculinity. And while having a shared understanding of the term "masculinity" may not even be necessary, gay men often value masculinity as a desirable trait, and have different ideas of what exactly it is that makes masculinity desirable. If performances of masculinity can only be rewarded if the actions are interpreted as masculine, how does one know what "counts" as masculine? The men I interviewed struggled to articulate masculinity, and often discussed gender and sexuality as if they were the same thing. That is, in their descriptions of gender, men often juxtaposed what is masculine with what is gay. In describing what is masculine and what is feminine, men used examples of what is straight and gay, respectively. Managing gender, then, is also a way to manage sexuality. For example, TJ (25) describes the ways that he alters his behavior around certain people (e.g., the straight men that he works with) to (hopefully) appear more masculine:

> There are certain times when I'm around [my co-workers] that I act more
> masculine and more reserved. Like what I'll talk about – what I do on the
> weekends. I won't necessarily change my body language like the way I stand or
> the way I walk or anything…[pauses]…Actually, I guess I would change the way
> that I do some of those things. Sometimes I feel like I just need to present a
> certain way. In my opinion, we still live in a very close-minded world. So, I guess
> that I will change the way I act for my own personal well-being. It's difficult. It
> really is.

Here, TJ mentions just a couple of identity management strategies that he uses to perform gender and sexuality in a particular way. Goffman (1959) describes impression

management strategies as including the intentional attempts to control another person's perceptions of a particular person, object, or event. TJ tries to manage the perception of both his gender identity and his sexual identity by regulating the kinds of things he discusses with his co-workers, and his body language. He tells me that he thinks his coworkers "have this perception that I'm going to hit on them. They're not very open. I think they're just a little bit ignorant." By performing or managing gender in a particular way, TJ also hopes to manage the perceptions that others have of him – specifically that he is a masculine man whose sexuality is not called into question. Throughout this work, I use the term "management" to describe the self-presentation (Goffman 1959) strategies that men use – sometimes related to gender (i.e., gender management), sometimes related to sexuality (i.e., sexuality management), and sometimes related to the whole self (i.e., identity management).

This chapter explores gay men's definitions of masculinity, how they use these definitions for their own identity management strategies, and how sexuality becomes an integral part of gender management strategies. There is an array of scholarship that seeks to understand masculine identity management in various contexts, such as high schools (Edley and Wetherell 1997), prisons (Sloan 2012), and gyms (Gill, Teese, and Sonn 2014). Although there is less literature focusing on gay men's construction of masculine identities (Levine 1998; Nardi 2000; Sánchez and Vilain 2012), my research contributes to current understanding of masculine identity management, specifically for gay men. I demonstrate how gender and sexual identities are co-constitutive by analyzing gay men's accounts of their own experiences managing their identities in various social spaces. Traditional understandings of masculinity assume a heterosexual identity, but of course,

gay men also perform masculinity. Discussing gender without sexuality means that we are ignoring how sexuality influences performances of gender (or vice versa). My aim is to contribute to our understanding of the ways gender and sexuality are interrelated both in theory and in practice. First, I summarize participant's definitions of gender. Next, I describe how they use these definitions in their own lives, in order to manage their gendered (and sexual) identities. In discussing the ways men utilize these definitions of gender, I begin to make sense of the ways gendered performances contribute to not only the concept of hegemonic masculinity, but also to hegemonic sexuality. I demonstrate how just as (hetero)sexuality is a component of hegemonic masculinity, so too is gender (masculinity) a part of hegemonic sexuality.

DEFINING MASCULINITY

In discussing masculinity, men identified a wide range of characteristics that they incorporated into their definitions. I asked participants several different questions concerning masculinity: what came to mind when they thought about the word masculinity, what masculinity "looked" like to them, and whether they felt that they were masculine themselves. Some men struggled to define masculinity. They were able to list many characteristics of what they thought masculinity was "supposed" to be, but not necessarily what they thought it meant to them. They invoked traditional understandings of gender when describing what makes men different from women. Table 1 lists some of the ways that the men described masculinity and femininity as being in contrast with one another. Most participants were uncomfortable asserting that these definitions are true for

all men, mostly because they did not feel that they themselves fit this traditional

masculine male role.

Table 1: Participant Descriptions Of Masculinity And Femininity

Masculinity	Femininity
Unemotional	Emotional
Hairy	Clean Shaven or hairless
"Boxy" body type	"Curvy" body type
Plain	Flamboyant
Calm and cool	Excitable or high energy
Low-pitched voice	High-pitched voice
Muscular/Built	Slim/Thin
Confident	Sensitive
Baggy clothing	Tight clothing
Dominant/Independent	Vulnerable/Weak

Scholars have grappled with the notion of masculinity (and femininity) for

decades and have tried to identify essential and recurrent elements of it. Chafetz (1974),

for example, concluded that there are seven primary dimensions of traditional

masculinity: physical, functional, sexual, [un]emotional, intellectual, interpersonal, and

other personal characteristics (such as being adventurous, ambitious, or competitive).

Psychologists Deborah David and Robert Brannon (1976) describes manhood with the

help of only four summary characteristics: "No Sissy Stuff," "Be a Big Wheel," "Be a

Sturdy Oak," and "Give 'em Hell."

When I asked men in my study what masculinity meant, they provided responses

that fell into just three categories. First, men described a particular body type and

appearance that masculine men had, noting physical build and clothing as part of a

constructed masculine identity. Second, participants described different personality

characteristics that masculine men displayed (e.g., independence, confidence, and being competitive). Last, men maintained that participation in certain activities, or having particular interests, defined men as being masculine or not (e.g., drinking beer, hunting, and weight training). Regardless of how the men in my study discuss masculinity, however, they almost always use *sexuality* as a way of describing how they make sense of gender. This finding contributes to current scholarship of gay masculinity. In making sense of their *gendered* identity, gay men almost always do so through a filter of *sexuality*. That is, gay men often understand that gay masculinity is different from straight masculinity in sometimes obvious, and sometimes subtle ways. Even further, gay masculinity operates under a larger umbrella of masculinity, one that values first heterosexuality. Gay masculinity is seen as a lesser form of masculinity, or one that is not valued in the same way that straight masculinity is. This contributes in part to the concept of hegemonic masculinity, where some forms of masculinity are valued over others. It also contributes to the concept of hegemonic sexuality, where some sexualities are valued over others. Specifically, there is a certain way of performing gayness that is seen as most desirable (and other performances seen as undesirable). Men discuss this in terms of not wanting to dress, sound, act, or to *be* "too gay."

Body Type and Appearance

Current literature discusses male body types largely in terms of hypermasculinity. Gendered norms pressure men in our society to be muscular (and women to be thin). That is, stereotypical notions of masculinity connote chiseled male bodies that possess a great deal of strength. In general, two of the most common eating/body disorders are anorexia

nervosa and body dysmorphia, with women being more likely to suffer from anorexia nervosa and men being diagnosed with body dysmorphia (Murray and Touyz 2012). For gay men however, the expectations on the body are more confusing. Some studies show that gay men are likely to suffer from an obsession with thinness and consequently are at risk for anorexia – much like women (Morrison, Morrison, and Sager 2004). Other studies suggest that because men are looking to attract other men, they place greater importance on a muscular body[10] (Tiggemann, Martins, and Kirkbride 2007). While an investigation of eating and body disorders is far beyond the scope of this research, it is useful to understand gay masculinity as involving a convincing performance that relies heavily on physical appearance. I find that sometimes this has to do with body size, but also with clothing and body hair.

Outward appearance is a crucial aspect of identity management. The actor on stage must be dressed for his part, if he is to give a convincing performance. "Clothing is everything!" Christopher (24) tells me. "No matter what kind of clothing you wear, that's what defines you. You could be a body builder, who is really masculine – but if you're wearing yoga pants, you won't be perceived as very masculine at all." Erving Goffman (1959) stressed the importance of appearance in developing his dramaturgical theory of the self. Similarly, West and Zimmerman (1987) specifically describe gender as a particular kind of performance that at least in part involves dress and impression management. How we appear to others is linked strongly to our identities and how the

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[10] This reasoning came especially during the time when many gay men were suffering from HIV/AIDS, before treatment was readily available. Men were seen as frail, weak and helpless. To combat these negative stereotypes, some gay men overcompensated by building their bodies up – to cover up any signs of weakness (Tiggemann et al. 2007).

self is both constructed and maintained (Ricciardelli 2011). Having a masculine identity, then, is achieved at least in part by *appearing* masculine.

In the current study, men were quick to list the idealized forms of the male body that generally characterize it as masculine (Table 2). Commonly, men described masculine men as being "big" or as having a noticeable musculature. Evan (40) describes his image of a masculine man in the following way: "For me, it's about muscles and definition. Not necessarily body building, but strength and size." Christopher (24) describes a masculine man as someone who is "physically fit, but I also think of someone who is bigger…someone who is either bigger or fat is masculine too I guess." When I ask Tanner (25) to tell me what he thinks of when he heard the word masculinity, he immediately says, "The first image that comes to mind is that guy on the Brawny paper towels." The "Brawny Man" image, which you likely can picture in your mind, features a stocky man wearing a plaid button-down shirt, standing in front of a pine forest[11]. What is common among the respondents' description of masculine men is that they take up physical space. For some, it matters less whether this space is filled up with fat or muscle as long as the body is large. Christopher (24), says, "Someone who is bigger – or fat – I think of them as masculine I guess." Although fatness is generally viewed as a stark contrast to the physically fit physique of the stereotypical masculine man (Farr 2013; Forth 2013), Trautner, Kwan, and Savage (2013) find that when comparing black and white overweight men, black men are seen as more intelligent, successful, competent, and masculine than their white counterparts. Christopher, who thinks of big men as

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[11] This "Brawny Man" image has changed only slightly since it was first seen in 1974. Since then, the Brawny man has ditched his axe, removed his mustache, and darkened his hair (along with updating his hairstyle), perhaps to reflect the changes in idealized versions of masculinity (Mckay and McKay 2011; Stevenson 2004).

masculine, continues to tell me that in addition to the size of a man, strength is also important. He says, "if someone tries to start something with a masculine guy, they'll just punch you in the face or something. They don't take shit like that." Aaron (28), who is friends with Christopher tells me, "a lot of my friends, or even people I've met, automatically assume that I'm an effeminate gay man because of my size – right off the bat!" Aaron is about 5'10" and very thin. In this way he positions masculinity and femininity at opposite ends of a size continuum—and also places gayness on the feminine end, as I discuss in greater detail later in this chapter. According to Aaron and many of the other men in this study, when it comes to masculinity, (body) size does matter.

Table 2: Participant Descriptions of Masculinity Related To Body Type and Appearance

Baggy pants	Cargo shorts	Jeans
Basketball shorts	Chiseled	Mustaches
Beards	Corn-fed	Plain (vs. Colorful Clothing)
Big	Cowboy boots	Rugged
Big clothes	Dark eyes	Scruffy
Blue-collar clothes	Dark hair	Stands Up Straight
Boots	Facial hair	Strong
Broad shoulders	Flannel shirt	Tall
Burly	Goatees	Tattoos
Business wear	Handsome	Walks With Chest Out

Both facial hair and body hair are commonly cited as factors contributing to a masculine image. Nineteen of the thirty men I interviewed mentioned facial or body hair as an indicator of masculinity. "I think of facial hair. Hairiness is kind of a thing. Being scruffy. Those are things I associate with or define as being a masculine guy" (Anthony, 26). "I have a hairy chest, and I have a five o'clock shadow, and part of that defines my

masculinity" (Neil, 25). Men are influenced by cultural ideals of what "looks" masculine. Dwight E. Robinson (1976) describes in his research on men's facial hair fashion trends, that the popularity of particular styles of facial hair is influenced by the current fashion trends. Recently, in U.S. culture, we have seen men's moustaches regain popularity, promoted with events like "Movember" – where "Mo-bros" are encouraged to refrain from shaving for the entire month of November, in an effort to bring awareness to men's health concerns such as prostate and testicular cancer (us.movember.com). While facial hair fashions change over time (Oldstone-Moore 2015), they are nonetheless significant in constructing a self-image that is masculine. Gavin (26) works in online communications and marketing. I met him at a sports bar, where he described for me what makes a gay man masculine, telling me specifically what he thinks gay masculinity is:

> When I hear the word masculine, especially when it relates to gay men, [I think of] a guy that has facial hair, brown eyes, wearing some kind of flannel shirt and isn't any smaller than 170 pounds, and for whatever reason is about six foot [tall] and has really broad shoulders and has a very deep voice and stands straight upright and walks like *this*.

Still sitting on his bar stool, Gavin puffs his chest out and rocks side to side, demonstrating how a masculine gay man might walk. Body types then, do not only include how muscular, or tall, or heavy one is, or how much hair adorns one's face, but also includes the type of clothing worn, and other body language cues, like posture, gait, and hand gestures. "I think I live my life more on the feminine side as far as my characteristics and traits and my mannerisms," says Steven (23). When I asked Steven to

tell me what he meant, he told me very clearly, "I talk with my hands – a lot! Being communicative is something that is considered to be more of a feminine quality, because women like to communicate and men don't." Steven's comment is important because it reveals an issue that is central to my research: the simultaneous performance of gender and sexuality. Steven discusses his hand gestures as being indicative of femininity, but later notes that his feminine hand gestures, in part, led others to believe that he is gay. "I think partly because of my gestures, and partly because of the activities I was involved in as a kid – I used to do gymnastics, and dance – I think people assumed I'm gay because of this." Performing masculinity incorrectly then, says something not only about one's *gender*, but about one's *sexuality* as well. If individuals do not perform the gender that corresponds to their sex, then their sexuality will likely be questioned (Rosario et al. 2006; Stein 1989). A man who lacks masculine characteristics is often assumed to be gay.

There is more to being masculine than just looking the part though; that is, physical appearance is not the only marker of masculinity. Patrick (32) describes the juxtaposition of masculinity and femininity among men where he now lives in San Francisco:

> You see these muscle queens who walk around and they look like some of
> the most masculine people around…they're these huge [muscular] guys,
> and that is the most forward thing that you see about them. But as soon as
> you engage them they present a much more feminine side. So visually
> speaking, you can groom yourself however you want and that's how you
> outwardly portray yourself to the rest of the world. It's just separate from
> how you interact with others in my experience.

The men that Patrick describes are similar to the men that Levine (1998) described while studying in New York. Gay "clones" were characterized as hypersexualized, hypermasculine gay men who religiously went to the gym – contrasted to other men described as "swishy" or "nelly" (Levine 1998). But Patrick, and several other men in this study feel that no matter what a man looks like, he can perform his gender (either masculinity or femininity) through his personality. The "type of man" one is becomes just as important as what one looks like.

Personality Traits

Physical appearance is important in creating a masculine identity, but it is not the only component. For instance, within bear culture, there is an emphasis on physical features that connote masculinity: his tendency to be stocky and have a beard or to wear fabrics like flannel or denim (Kampf 2000). Bear culture however, prides itself on being more than a superficial image – it values genuine and mature personality characteristics – ones that are described in contrast to twinks (who are seen as fake and effeminate) (Manley et al. 2007).

Personality traits, then, constitute a second category of what men describe as encompassing masculinity. While many men could not necessarily articulate what kinds of traits were associated with masculinity, they believed it was something other than just looking masculine and doing things that were masculine. Evan (40) for example, tells me that masculinity is "a way of *being* versus any "look." It's not aesthetic to me. Its more attitudinal I think more than anything." Dylan (26) explains his idea of masculinity by telling me about his gay friend:

I think that what makes a person masculine is how they act, and the way

they want to look in society. I think that [my friend] Alex is masculine. He

is gay, but he has a powerful job [in a bank], is independent, and

responsible. He takes care of himself and his needs and wants. I think it's

mostly a state of mind. That's what makes him masculine.

Aside from the type of job Alex has, independence and responsibility are two of the

personality traits that Dylan associates with masculine gay men. Other men also comment

on the performance of certain personality traits to give the impression of a masculine

identity. Christopher (24) tells me, "Masculinity is all an act!" It involves having

confidence and independence in being able to take care of oneself and not needing to rely

on others. Vance (23) works in politics as a campaign manager. He describes masculinity

as relating to "someone who provides either for their family or country or for their tribe

or whatever." There is a sense of being in control, or at least coming across as being in

control, that is involved in a masculine performance. Table 3 lists some of the ways that

participants referred to masculinity as being akin to a personality trait or some other

characteristic that cannot be observed as easily as physical traits.

Table 3: Participant Descriptions of Masculinity as Personality Traits

Aggressive	Cool	Powerful	Rough
Butch	Decisive	Providers	Straight (sexuality)
Christian	Dominant	"Real Man" Mentality	Subdued Energy Level
Competitive	Independent	Responsible	Takes Care of Self
Confident	Macho	Rigid	Tough

Many of these descriptors stand in contrast to what the men thought of as feminine traits;

hence their thoughts on masculinity and its relationship to femininity were both derived

from and reinforced traditional gender dichotomies. Men are dominant; women are

submissive. Men are aggressive; women are passive. Men are competitive; women are

collaborative. These common stereotypes are repeated over and over again by the men in

my study. Brian (26) tells me that part of being masculine means being in control, or

having power, but that "I feel it means you're weaker if you're feminine…I think most

people need to have one or the other in our society. They can't have both." Other men

noted how certain personality characteristics, like being confrontational, are rewarded for

males, but punished for women. Isaac (24) tells me, "If women have an opinion or are

strong willed, they're considered bitches - or that they're being too pushy." He also

explains that where he works, it is the aggressive men who get promoted. Furthermore,

from Isaac's perspective, gay men are viewed and treated similarly to women:

> I'm very outspoken which has hurt me sometimes because people at my
>
> job view that negatively for me. In the gay culture, it's okay that we act
>
> this way around each other. Being strong, being opinionated…gay people
>
> are bitchy! I think that women and gay men are sort of on the same level
>
> in the workplace when it comes to that. There is an inequality there.

In his work, Linneman (2000) argues that gay men can be considered risk-takers

(arguably a masculine trait itself), in that they make choices in different situations to

sometimes exaggerate their masculinity by becoming more confrontational and

aggressive. As Isaac suggests though, this exaggeration of masculinity is not always

successful. Isaac recognizes that being outspoken in the workplace has a certain gendered

implication – for (straight) men, this is seen as positive, but for women it is a negative attribute. Furthermore, this same characteristic has a sexualized connotation as well. Gay men who are as outspoken and confident as many straight men are also seen as being pushy or "bitchy," just as women are, despite their gender. In order to be rewarded for this masculine trait, gay men would somehow need to conceal (or "tone down") their sexuality, or enhance other kinds of masculine traits. Dylan describes the way he tries to do this at work, serving tables:

> The other day I served this table of seven guys and they were all bankers. They were kind of assholes – like super uppity I just felt like I had to go in there [to their table] with a strong personality to make them not treat me like a bag of dirt. I felt like I had to man up a little bit by coming in with like a stern clear talking voice - deeper. I needed to talk and be clear and concise with what I was saying. I think that is something that is masculine. I changed my demeanor and stood differently – like I kept a stronger stance or had better posture or something than I do with tables of women.

In addition to his more assertive speaking voice, Dylan felt like he had to add to his performance of masculinity by standing in a particular way. "Manning up" was a way for Dylan to attempt to be one of the guys – and to establish himself as someone who would not be taken advantage of. And while manning up is in part a performance of masculinity, it might also be a performance of sexuality.

Activities and Interests

Traditional gender roles are characterized by distinct expectations regarding the kinds of tasks that are appropriate for men and women to perform, including around the home. Studies have found that couples still divide household labor based on traditional gender roles. Compared to men, women are more likely to perform what are known as "core" household tasks (e.g., cleaning, cooking, laundry) (Bartley, Blanton, and Gilliard 2005; Bianchi et al. 2000; Kroska 2004). Since these kinds of household tasks are feminized, men often have little interest in participating in or contributing to these chores. Regarding heterosexual men, some scholars explain that the types of work that men do (or do not do) is still part of a masculine performance. Within the home, *not* doing housework becomes a symbolic way for men to assert their masculinity (Brines 1994). Since *doing* housework is a performance of femininity, *not doing* housework necessarily becomes a performance of masculinity. This is important to consider because these viewpoints, however antiquated, indicate that lots of activities or interests are still labeled as masculine or feminine. Tanner tells me about his two gay friends who are in a relationship together:

> There are certain qualities that come off as masculine. Like, when [my friend] Sam talks about his relationship, he says he pretty much handles all of the things that maintain the stability. He pays the bills, and [Sam's boyfriend] does all the cleaning.

Even if gay men do not subscribe to these labels, particularly when involving heterosexual division of household chores, they are able to still recognize the gendering of activities, and rationalize ways that they do not "do" gender in the same way as

straight couples (Goldberg 2013). So while Tanner tells me about his friend's relationship as one in which Sam plays the more masculine role, he also tells me:

> Sam is very effeminate to look at and to hear. And his boyfriend is the breadwinner in the relationship. But Sam is the one who takes care of things like making sure the lights stay on and that there is food on the table, so in that sense, he's the masculine one. Sometimes one is the guy and one is the girl, but then those roles might switch. They are pretty balanced.

In the households of same-sex couples, scholars find much more egalitarian ways of sharing household chores. When chores are divided, it has less to do with the nature of the task itself than with the prestige of their respective jobs (Carrington 1999), their income (Goldberg, Smith, and Perry-Jenkins 2012), or their job flexibility (Sutphin 2010).

> Gay men in this study discuss activities and performances of masculinity along similar lines. When asked what masculinity meant to him, Cal (39) said:

> A masculine man has no feminine attributes. The stereotypes fall back onto that: someone who's interested in sports and camping and manly-man stuff. Stereotypically that's what a man does. These are things that wouldn't deal with anything feminine. If somebody watches chick flicks, or "Glee," or if someone is into the performing arts, someone who is an artist, or likes to do drag - all these things lead a person towards the idea of feminine, which is the opposite of masculine. So that's just how I interpret that.

According to Cal, being a man includes certain activities (sports and camping), and

excludes other activities (viewing certain movies and performing arts). For him,

masculine and feminine stand in contrast. Brian (26) echoes this concept of masculinity

in action. He tells me that masculine men "do manly things! They hunt and fish…they're

the providers. That's a masculine quality – to be able to provide." He continues to tell me

how he considers himself to be masculine (despite other people considering him

feminine) because he likes "sports, fishing, outdoorsy fun, and getting dirty." Anthony

responds that masculine men are "like a laborer type guy. He does physical work. [And

masculine men are] guys who are into sports, and cars, and are kind of rowdy." The

definitions of masculinity that men provided tended to rely mainly on stereotypical

notions of active outdoorsmen.

Table 4: Participant Descriptions of Masculine Activities and Interests

Baseball	Football	Powerful Job	Sports
Camping	Golf	Providing	Tobacco/Smoking
Cars	Hunt	Repairing Things	Topping (Sex Role)
Drinking Beer	Laborer	Sex	Weight Training
Fish	Outdoorsy	Soccer	

Table 4 lists activities and interests that participants associate with masculinity.

Many of these activities are sports-related. Nearly all respondents mentioned sports as a

masculine interest. Sports have been recognized by scholars as providing an arena for

athleticism, competition, and camaraderie among men (Kimmel 1996). Gavin articulates

the importance of sports and athleticism in his response to me:

I think when growing up - and this is outside of the gay community - even in high school - being masculine or even being hyper masculine to make up for possible feminine tendencies, is considered a positive thing. You want to be playing some kind of sport. And if you're a jock, you want to be very masculine and playing something like football because if you have these feminine tendencies, you can easily be labeled as gay.

Gavin hints that being active in sports is not really enough to be considered masculine. Some sports are considered more masculine than others. Football and wrestling are considered more "manly" than tennis and water polo. The more aggressive or violent the sport, the more "manly" it is considered (Messner 2002). Sports that are not commonly played by women (e.g., football, boxing) are regarded as more masculine then those played by both men and women (e.g., soccer). Michael Messner (2002) describes why some sports are valued more than others. He refers to sports like baseball, football, and basketball (the big three) as part of a "gender regime" – a term he borrows from R.W. Connell.

While Gavin discusses the gendered hierarchy of sports quite plainly, other participants consider how sports participation not only says something about one's gender, but also about one's sexuality. Playing, or being interested in, sports that are lower on the sports "totem pole" raises a red flag, so-to-speak. The more masculine of a sport a man plays, the more likely he is to be assumed to be straight. Again we see gender being used as a kind of measuring tool indicating sexuality. This is what Gavin means when he says, "…because if you have these feminine tendencies, you can easily be labeled as gay." This becomes even more obvious when men participate in sports that are

considered less masculine. The sports that fall outside Messner's "gender regime" bring the athlete's sexuality into question.

Growing up, Isaac had a very close relationship with his brother. As they got older though, Isaac noticed how his brother started losing interest in some of the things they would do together.

> When [my brother and I] were kids we both did gymnastics and we tumbled and stuff – and that is definitely not considered masculine. At some point in his life, he caught wind of the fact that that was not the standard of what he was supposed to be – and growing up with a gay brother, I'm sure that he was wanting to distance himself as much as possible from also being perceived as gay because of you know, he didn't want to be guilty by association.

Isaac's brother (and consequently Isaac himself) realized that being a gymnast did not have the same social status as being a baseball player. Isaac told me that his brother was "very much in that culture of masculinity," and that eventually, his brother decided that gymnastics did not fit into that culture. Isaac even makes the connection that since gymnastics is not masculine, and that he is gay, the two are somehow connected, which is part of the reason why his brother stopped doing gymnastics. Participation in this sport might somehow make him gay by association.

Neil also makes a connection between gender, sexuality, and sports. When I asked Neil how he would describe his own gender, he replied:

> That's a good question. I think I've had poor self-perception in the past.
> Like if someone tells me I can be queen-y, I will be so mad. That is just

not true! Like today at work, someone thought I had really bad aim and I said, "Why are you prejudging me?" Then I felt the need to let them know that I played sports growing up. They responded, "What did you play, tennis?" I was like, "What the fuck?!" Like do I really give off that sort of impression that I'm like this gay, non-athletic - I don't know - non-masculine person?

Tennis is not part of the sporting gender regime that Michael Messner (2002) describes. And even if tennis is not considered to be as masculine a sport as football, basketball or baseball, it is somehow associated not just with gender, but with sexuality as well! Isaac interprets being called "queen-y" (a commonly used phrase indicating effeminate gay men, à la drag queens) as an insult. And when he tries to defend his masculinity, citing sports as proof of his masculinity, he flounders since his coworker takes Neil to be the kind of person who would play a non-masculine – or gay – sport.

This example also reveals the nature of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity not only subordinates women, but also subordinates some men, while advancing other men (Connell 1995). In the examples provided by Gavin, Isaac and Neil, we see that the connection between masculinity and sports is still very important. Athleticism is an integral component of masculinity, and possessing athletic skills (e.g., having good aim) is valued. But it also matters what kind of sport men participate in. In discussing masculinity, participants commonly cite football and baseball as being very masculine, while other sports, like gymnastics and tennis, are not given the same masculine "score." In fact, participation in these sports is enough to call ones sexuality into question. It is not enough for a man to play a sport in order to do masculinity the

"right" way. Instead, he has to play particular sports that are considered to be masculine.

A straight man could be mistaken as being gay if participating in a non-masculine sport!

So while playing or watching sports is often considered indicative of masculinity and

heterosexuality, there is more to consider than just sports as a generalized category. Only

some sports are thought of as being linked to heterosexuality[12]. In this way we see again

the ways that sexuality and gender are intertwined, and how gender becomes used as a

way to measure sexuality or gayness. This is consistent with the findings of other studies

that investigate the experiences of gay men in sports. Cashmore and Cleland (2011) argue

that masculine sports come with a greater use of homophobic practices (e.g., anti-gay

comments from both players and fans used to imitate and degrade other players) and thus

we see fewer out gay athletes playing those sports. While my data does not exactly

replicate these findings, they do support the same logic – that gender is used as a

predictor of sexuality, and hence constitutes an important part of how gay men manage

their gender.

MANAGING MASCULINITY, MANAGING SEXUALITY

At the beginning of this chapter, I problematized the definition of masculinity,

arguing that by not having a common understanding or definition of masculinity, it is

difficult to know what people mean when they refer to other people or things as

"masculine." Based on the participants' definitions, we know that there are at least three

different components to masculinity. First, a masculine man has a certain ideal body type.

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[12] Of course, this is not always so. Even in hypermasculine sports like football, some players are gay. In 2014, college football player Michael Sam became the first openly gay football player to be drafted to a National Football League team (Belson 2014).

He is generally tall, muscular, and has facial and/or body hair. Second, a masculine man embodies certain personality traits. He is unemotional, confident, and aggressive. Third, masculine men are interested and participate in certain activities, of which specific sports are paramount.

We also learn from the participants that these three characteristics say more about a man than just his masculinity. They also speak to his sexuality. While talking about each of these characteristics, whether it is Steven's flamboyant use of hand gestures, Isaac's "bitchy" confidence, or Neil's "queen-y" athletic skills, gender is used as an indicator of sexuality. Looking, acting, or doing things stereotypically considered feminine is also considered an indication of being gay. Femininity is somehow understood to be synonymous with gayness, and masculinity with straightness, at least for some. Cal (39) is quick to tell me that for him, "the first thing that comes to mind [when thinking about masculinity] is: 'straight.' A masculine man has no feminine attributes." This is especially confusing for gay men to make sense of, as Jack (28) explains:

> Even within gay culture, I see there is a spectrum of [masculinity]. When you meet someone, you ask yourself these kinds of questions: 'Does he play sports? What does he like to drink?' If you're a gay man and you play sports, then that adds to your masculinity. [Drinking] bourbon and whiskey is more masculine than a vodka-cranberry. But if a guy likes to drink vodka-cranberry, does that make them more feminine? I have no idea if it does or doesn't. I don't really get it. People just get really confused when gay guys do masculine things, because we're all assumed to be feminine.

Cal also articulates his frustration regarding the pressures to be masculine in the gay culture:

> I've been thinking…what is going on with all this masculine bullshit? It feels powerless a little bit. It's like I'm in an ocean of dudes that are focused on presentation and how do I know if I meet their criteria? I feel like I'm under a microscope. And then I feel insecure and self-conscious. I hate that!

Jack and Cal's comments help us understand part of the way hegemonic sexuality operates, in addition to hegemonic masculinity. Even within gay culture, certain performances of sexuality are valued more than others. Because he feels like he is being compared to other gay men, Cal worries about his own presentation. He and Jack both feel that some things, like whether one prefers bourbon or vodka, speak to the type of gay man they are. For whatever reason, some behaviors or preferences make some men more desirable than others. A man who drinks a vodka-cranberry may be seen as "too gay" – or that he is doing sexuality and masculinity in an undesirable way.

In sorting out their own definitions of masculinity, men describe a number of ways they negotiate various social spaces where gender and sexuality are performed. That is, men are negotiating their own gender identity somewhat differently depending on the social environment. Gutterman (2001) claims that gay men are more conscious of the presentation of gender and sexuality, in part because having a gay identity is stigmatized. Even if the stigma of being gay has decreased in recent years, gay men are still marginalized, and thus strategically

perform gender and sexuality in ways that are different from their heterosexual counterparts (Whitehead and Barrett 2001). In my study, men described the ways they used impression management (Goffman 1959) as a strategy of "manning up" at some times, or "queening out" during other times. Participants were best able to articulate what gender means to them once I asked them to describe their own gender, or after I asked how they would describe themselves in terms of being masculine (or not). Their responses were varied and nuanced, but enlightening.

Throughout the interviews, men made comments that seemed reminiscent of traditional, contemporary, and queer theoretical perspectives. That is, sometimes men thought of masculinity and femininity as mutually exclusive categories, sometimes as flexible categories, and at other times as useless or confining labels. Some men used different definitions of gender at different times. How men manage their own gender identity depends in part on how they make sense of masculinity as a concept. Of course their management of masculinity is also contextual. Men do not perform masculinity consistently at all times, in all settings, or in front of all audiences. In the following sections, I use men's accounts as examples of how gender is managed under different circumstances. Men manage their gendered identities in different ways, at different times, but these management strategies almost always involve sexual identity management as well. While this section focuses on the ways that men attempt to manage their gender identities, we see how sexuality is also being managed.

Managing Gender Identity According to Traditional Theories

When I asked men to define what the word "masculine" meant to them, some men emphasized a sharp contrast between what is considered masculine, and what is considered feminine, with little, if any room for overlap. Recall that Gavin described the difference between masculine and feminine gay men. "A masculine guy has facial hair, and wears some kind of flannel shirt and isn't any smaller than 170 pounds and is about six feet tall and has really broad shoulders and has a deep voice, stands upright and walks like this." He continued to tell me, "A feminine gay man is relatively thin, has blonde hair, and no facial hair whatsoever. Shaven. Body hair, if any is shaven. With gay men, they have limp wrists and a higher pitched voice. That's pretty much it." Gavin relies on gendered stereotypes of masculinity and femininity to construct an image of gay men that are in contrast to one another. Also part of Gavin's description of gay men is a racialized identity. He mentions that this stereotypical gay man has blonde hair, which also implies whiteness. This is consistent with Goffman's (1963) description of what the ideal man is[13]. This also is consistent with the concept of homonormativity (Duggan 2003; Stryker 2008) – that gay men are stereotypically white. Gavin reiterates the stereotypical ways that masculinity and femininity are opposite from one another, but he later suggests that gay men are able to perform both masculinity and femininity.

Not only does Gavin consider masculinity and femininity to be opposite of one another, but he mentions several times during our interview that being gay is commonly thought to be synonymous with being feminine. "People don't see *me* as being gay because I'm *not* very effeminate. I'm not an effeminate person by nature." By equating

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[13] In his book, *Stigma*, Goffman describes the ideal man as "The young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual, Protestant, father of college of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports (1963: 128).

femininity with homosexuality, Gavin subscribes to the traditional belief that men who are masculine are straight, and that men who are feminine are gay. Because Gavin describes himself as a masculine gay man, he feels like he does not fit in among a stereotypically effeminate gay culture. "I never fit the gay stereotype, which was to be thin, stereotypically pretty, and to talk about fashion – to quote songs by Madonna and Cher. I've always been a bigger guy and I've always had some kind of body hair." Again, Gavin uses gayness to explain gender, citing physical characteristics and interest in pop culture as reason to be both feminine and gay. "There's this big push to be a *certain kind of gay*, but I've never been that." By not doing gay femininity, Gavin feels like he is doing gay masculinity instead (because of his physical size, and not being interested in feminine interests like fashion). And while he feels like perhaps he is doing gender in a convincing way, he feels that his identity as a gay man is mistaken because he performs gender in a heteronormative way – one where he is often assumed to be straight because of his convincing masculine performance. Even though he does not fit the image of a stereotypical gay man himself, and may even reject the stereotype, Gavin still feels some pressure to conform to this stereotype.

Other men emphasize the dichotomous nature of gender for gay men as well. Anthony tells me very clearly that he "defines masculinity along the lines of what is straight, or straight-acting." Straightness again is associated with masculinity, and he tells me that anything feminine is reason to question one's sexuality. Anthony describes himself as being "a very masculine guy. The way that I talk and portray myself, and [the way I] act as a strong person in whatever atmosphere I'm in [makes me masculine]…I find myself putting on that role of a straight-acting guy. I am seen as straight to all my

friends." Anthony positions masculinity and femininity as being completely opposite, and tells me, "I associate masculinity with macho-ism a lot. And you kind of have that 'real man' mentality. Guys are into sports, cars, and are rowdy. Women are not into that stuff." Gender here, is being used to measure a person's sexuality. Because of the way Anthony talks and acts, he is performing masculinity in a convincing way that leads his friends to believe that he is straight (Anthony later did come out to his friends, but was pleased with his success in keeping his sexuality concealed for so long). If a man has enough masculine characteristics, he is assumed to be straight, even if there are other traits that might call his sexuality into question. Anthony continues by offering me an example of when he finally came out to his ex-girlfriend:

> I watch a lot of HGTV. A lot of people associate that with not being very masculine. [Before I came out], I would tell people [I watched this channel] because I was always into very stylish things and the newest home improvement trends. That was how I covered myself and made it seem like it was a very masculine thing. But [my ex-girlfriend] just recently found out [that I'm gay] and she said to me, "Oh so that explains all the HGTV!"

Anthony prides himself on being able to convince his friends (and girlfriend) that he is straight by performing masculinity well. He even admits that watching this particular television channel might not be masculine, but he is able to convince people that it can be. Once he comes out as being gay however, his ex-girlfriend now sees Anthony's HGTV viewing as something that is more feminine, and thus explains his sexuality.

Traditional gender theories emphasize the dichotomous nature of masculinity. Many of the men in this study referenced this dichotomous nature, pointing out ways that indicated either their own or other's characteristics or behaviors could be labeled as either masculine or feminine. Sexuality was then a natural assumption based on gender performance. If one was deemed masculine *enough*, then one is assumed to be straight. If not, then one is labeled as being feminine, and/or gay (regardless of whether or not this is actually true). Although some men think of themselves as masculine gay men, they often view gay masculinity as being something different than straight masculinity. Essentially, men separate masculine gay men from feminine gay men – replicating hegemonic masculinity within the gay community. This is precisely what Arxer (2011) describes when he points to the existence of multiple hegemonic masculinities that operate within different populations.

Even if these men actually transcend these boundaries (e.g., some men think of themselves as masculine gay men) they sometimes feel that the broader society pressures them to think of masculinity and femininity as two opposite concepts, and also that gayness sits most comfortably at the feminine end.

Managing Masculinities <u>and</u> Femininities

Sometimes men in this study did not believe that there was only one way to do either masculinity *or* femininity, but described flexibility in performing gender. At times, they reject the idea that masculinity and femininity exist as separate, mutually exclusive concepts. Steven (23), who introduced this chapter explaining how he believes gender and sexuality exist as being many "shades of grey" also tells me, "I find it hypocritical

that there is this masculine/feminine indicator in a culture where it's like, we're all just [gay] men! I don't think there should be a determining factor that makes you either masculine or feminine. I think that idea should just be avoided." Similarly, Tanner (25) thinks that masculinity "is really subjective. It can cover a LOT of things!" Some men describe that there are many ways of performing masculinity. Kenneth (22) tells me:

> There are a lot of different definitions of masculinity, especially in the gay community, depending on who you talk to. Like, there is the very masculine, straight-acting gay man, and then there's the normal gay person who is just confident in who they are. They're masculine, but they're not drag queens, or fem or anything.

Kenneth describes two different versions of gay masculinity briefly, and contrasts them with gay femininity. He acknowledges that there is more than just one way to do masculinity, and that these "types" of gender might exist on some kind of spectrum.

Many men in this study mentioned at some point during our interview that they thought of gender as existing on a scale, spectrum, or that masculinity and femininity are somehow blended together. Some described a meter that ranges from one to ten, with femininity sitting at the low end of the meter, and masculinity at the high end. Jamai (41) for instance, uses this scale. He tells me:

> If I had to say on a one to ten scale, where ten is very masculine, I would say I'm between four and five, because I don't dress with a masculine style. I don't wear saggy pants, but I walk with a slight swagger, so people don't always assume that I look flamboyant.

Cal (39) uses the same scale and says:

I think of myself as a 6.5 on the scale with masculine being ten and femininity being a one. Sometimes I will use that meter when someone asks me how masculine I am. But then again, I also tell them that it is subjective and that it's my perception. And that they might have a completely different meter!

Cal tries to use this 1-10 scale as a tool to measure his own masculinity, but still finds it problematic since his idea of a 6.5 might be different from someone else's. When I ask him how he has determined his score, he tells me, "when I was very young, in my high school years, I was very feminine - I loved everything that was for girls. I wanted to be a girl. I liked dressing more like a girl than a boy." As he grew older though, something changed for him:

Somewhere it dawned on me that being more masculine is more attractive to the same sex than being more feminine. It just flipped one day. I tried to be more tuned into my masculine side and developed that. I cut my hair short, wore more guy's clothing, and started working out and taking supplements to gain muscle to transform my body.

While the 1-10 scale is useful for understanding that there are different ways of doing masculinity, it does not help to create a shared understanding of masculinity. Cal also recognizes the value placed on masculinity. Realizing that there is something to be gained by being more masculine, he begins to adjust the way he dresses, and changes the physicality of his body by taking vitamin supplements in order to be seen as more attractive. This is in part what Tiggemann et al. (2007) describes in their study of gay men and body image. Men transform their bodies in order to appear more masculine in order to be seen as more attractive to other men.

Other men have slightly different ways of describing their gendered identity.

Hunter (37) explains that, "I am kind of blended. I present myself as kind of conforming to some kind of stereotypically manly thing, but at the same time, I'm comfortable knowing that I have a very sensitive side…which would be kind of feminine too." Sometimes for men, the question of their own gendered identity no longer is interpreted as an either/or answer, but becomes a both/and answer. Masculine and feminine characteristics can both be displayed, offering men the opportunity to perform gender in different ways, depending on the situation.

Manny (23) performs in an orchestra, as well as teaches grade school music classes. When I ask him about how he thinks of his own gender, he explains that for him, "Gender is a spectrum. Some days I'm a lot more masculine feeling and acting than other days. I've noticed that there are days where I'm dressed in a way that I might be considered masculine, or in a way I would be considered more gay." What is interesting about Manny's response is threefold. First we learn that he understands gender to be a spectrum of characteristics. Second, this spectrum exists not necessarily on a scale of 1-10 like Cal's self-constructed meter, but rather on a scale of masculine-to-gay. Gayness is again used synonymously with femininity, indicating that that which is masculine is not gay, and vice versa. Third, Manny acknowledges that dress and physical appearance is one area where men are able to perform their gender (and sexuality) in a way that is either more or less masculine, feminine, straight, or gay.

Even though Manny believes gender to exist on a spectrum, where he sometimes, as a gay man feels masculine, he sometimes feels like a non-masculine performance necessarily connotes gayness. Other men feel confused in their understanding of multiple

masculinities or femininities. Isaac (24) tells me that, "Within the gay community, the definition of masculinity…the scale is different [from straight masculinity]." For him, context is important in terms of understanding masculinity. Isaac uses different aspects of masculinity in different social environments, much in the same way that Arxer (2011) describes hybrid masculinities. He says, "I don't consider myself masculine that much, but if I were to go to a gay bar, I would feel more masculine there, just by comparison [with other gay men]!" Isaac is comparing himself (and his masculinity) to both straight men and gay men. Compared to straight men, he considers himself to be less masculine, since he is gay. Compared to gay men, he feels more masculine. Isaac struggles though, because he, like Cal earlier in this chapter, feels frustrated with the emphasis that gay men place on acting masculine. He says, "I feel like there is a set point, like a divider. You are either on this team or you are on that team, and if you fall somewhere in between, there is no term for you! People don't know what to think of you!" Of course, the "teams" Isaac refers to are organized around masculinity and femininity. And even though he feels this pressure to act one way or the other, he tells me, "I feel like I pull things from both sides of the spectrum, so I don't know where I fit in at the end of the day." Although Isaac locates himself in the middle of a masculine-feminine gender spectrum, by pulling things from both sides, what he is also saying is that the same actions or behaviors can be labeled differently depending on the context. His occupation as a creative copy-writer, for example, might make him seem feminine compared to other heterosexual men, but more masculine compared to other gay men. He tells me:

> I would say creative people are definitely viewed as more feminine. Because I
>
> work in a creative industry, I've even noticed that the straight guys that I work

with – they're definitely not like the typical straight men – like they're – I would

say they're more like in that grey area where they have some feminine traits and

some masculine traits.

Isaac believes his particular occupation sets him apart from other gay men (i.e., that he is

somehow more masculine than them), and also sets him apart from straight men (i.e., that

he is somehow less masculine than them).

The belief that gender exists as a scale or range of possible characteristics offers

men the opportunity to engage in many different behaviors, or pulling from "both sides of

the spectrum" as some men indicated. These men notice most clearly the ways that dress,

mannerisms, interests, and personality characteristics can be adapted to different

situations. Steven tells me, "I think I have an awareness of [my gender presentation]. I

think I live my life more on the feminine side…but I think I can very much adapt to a

situation of being masculine." He continues to give me an example of a time he adapted

to a situation where he was with a group of straight friends at a restaurant in Texas.

Steven perceived this to be a straight space, and one where he needed to "tone it down" in

terms of his hand gestures and the way he dressed. "That was a time I knew it was going

to be smarter for me to adapt to the situation and not be overly flamboyant. It's like…no

need to be a little gay boy in a barbeque pit!" Steven thought it best to avoid being "too

gay" in an otherwise straight space. Being flamboyant generally refers to a gay male who

performs gayness in a stereotypical way, which is in part also a performance of

femininity. For example, the character Jack McFarland on the television show *Will &*

Grace has been described as stereotypically flamboyant (Hart 2000), representing what

Connell (1987) calls "emphasized femininity." On the show, he is obsessed with body

image, he worships celebrity pop stars, he is often singing show tunes and dancing, and is financially dependent on his friend (who is also gay), Will Truman (Linneman 2008). Steven sensed that in his situation, being flamboyant, or performing gender or sexuality in a way that would out him as a gay man, would not be in his best interest, and so taking steps to manage his behaviors (e.g., not using wild hand gestures for instance), was in his best interest.

Seeing various ways that masculinity and femininity can be performed allows men a greater range and understanding of their identity. However, as Isaac indicated, there is still pressure within the gay community to generally consider oneself as being either masculine or feminine. I suggest this pressure is part of what Arxer (2011) describes as multiple hegemonic masculinities. Within the gay community, some masculinities are valued more than others. This is obvious to some gay men that I spoke with. Barry (31), who works at a non-profit agency, says clearly,

> In our culture, is seems like being masculine is important. It's better for a guy to be more masculine. I have a coworker who is out everywhere except at the place we work, and he gets freaked out about some of the things I say in front of him at work. He gets really nervous. Essentially, he thinks that I'm too flamboyant in the office. But I don't think I am! I feel like people associate flamboyance with bad. Like you get annoyed with a really loud flamboyant friend…I don't know why, but we associate femininity with badness. Or that we value masculinity more than femininity - for sure.

In their work, Sánchez and Vilain (2012) find that masculinity is important for gay men's self-identity. A majority of their participants found masculinity to be important in both

themselves and their partners, and that they wished their own behavior was more masculine. Rodney (41) also supports this finding. "It's okay to be gay as long as you're masculine. Being feminine is shameful." Rodney mentions this idea several times during our interview. The pressure to be a certain kind of gay man comes from within the gay community, as well as outside the community. In some ways, gay men attempt to replicate the kind of masculinity that straight men perform, but that gay men will never be able to achieve, because of their sexuality. Gay men are excluded from doing this kind of (straight) masculinity, as explained by the hegemonic nature of masculinity (Connell 2005). But even within a marginalized population like gay men, hegemonic masculinity still operates to reward some men for their performance of masculinity more than others. In this way, hegemonic masculinity operates for all men, including gay men.

Ambiguity Managing Gender

While sometimes men described ways that masculinity and femininity are polar opposite concepts, at other times, men problematize concepts like gender altogether. The way these men understand gender is somewhat similar to that of queer theorists, who suggest that defining concepts like gender and sexuality restrict individuals to belonging to mutually exclusive categories (Butler 1990; Jagose 1996). Some men acknowledged that much of our society *does* use categories like masculine, feminine, gay, and straight as organizing principles, but they do not find them to be useful to describe themselves. Lawrence says, "I don't think that if you are gay that you couldn't also be masculine if you wanted to separate those two things."

Because these men do not necessarily feel there is a way to define or describe gender, they struggled to articulate their thoughts. Neil (25) tries to tell me how he makes sense of common ideas of masculinity. He struggles because he points out various ways he thinks he looks masculine and feminine (he has a beard and chest hair, but also dresses more femininely, he says):

> I think for me [masculinity is] still sort of this undefined thing…how do I make sense of my physical presentation of self as masculine versus other physical presentations of self [as feminine]? I don't know if I have an answer completely. I see gender as becoming completely redefined. The lines are very, very blurred. There is no such thing as gender. Like, we have sexes, but there is no such thing as *gender* gender.

Neil struggles to define himself as either masculine or feminine, because he feels that he presents himself as both simultaneously. Gender categories do not make sense to him, and he ultimately rejects all categories, not feeling like he fits into just one side or the other. Brian (26) has a similar feeling about gender categories:

> I don't really always fully understand what is supposed to be masculine and what isn't. I really don't like giving gender-based identity to different actions or different things. I know some people consider gender to be flexible, like women can be masculine versus feminine just like men can - there are two sides. I can kind of get that. I've just never really understood where my place was in those things. It just irritates me.

Brian grew up in the Catholic Church, and attended an all male grade school. From his perspective, "Masculinity and being a man is what it was all about! I was always told

how feminine I was around those guys. I guess thinking of masculinity freaks me out. It scares me to overthink that and classify things because it just doesn't make sense to me!" Like Neil, Brian recognizes that the categorical labels of masculinity and femininity are used by most of society to describe people, actions, clothing, etc. Brian also is able to list characteristics of traditional masculinity and femininity, many which were mentioned earlier in this chapter. But because he feels that he embodies characteristics that are both masculine and feminine, he does not find dichotomous categories to be useful for describing himself.

Even while men were discussing gender, sexuality often came into the conversation. Raymond, who was trying to make his thoughts clear, said to me, "I'm trying to help you understand how I think about all this stuff and it's not really a cut and dry thing. There's a whole lot that goes into how I think about what being gay is and what masculinity is and what femininity is." Raymond is a 52 year-old Black man who works in politics. He tells me that he likes to watch sports – particularly football and baseball. He tells me that because of these masculine interests, he is commonly accused of not being gay *enough*. "Even [my partner] tells me, 'You are so NOT gay.'" Raymond says. "Even my supervisor I work with has said to me, 'Oh you are the most non-gay gay person I have ever met!'" Because Raymond's supervisor interprets his behavior as masculine, they think that Raymond isn't doing gayness in a convincing way. His supervisor, like others, makes a connection between masculinity and straightness, and also between femininity and gayness. However, Raymond does not feel like he needs to correct people when they comment on his poor gay performance. "I don't feel I have to validate [being gay] for other people. This is who I am and I don't have to put on any

special performance in order to indicate that I'm a gay man. I just refuse to let other people define what gay means to me."

James, who also rejects gendered categories, links other people's conception of gender with sexuality. He thinks of gender as being "more about perceptions and expectations than it is necessarily an essentialist identity. I don't use the term masculinity in the way that other people do. I don't describe myself as masculine or feminine." Men sometimes refuse to automatically associate straight men with masculinity and gay men (and women) with femininity. And while these men don't think of gender in this way, they do recognize that *other people* will likely still categorize behaviors using these masculine/feminine, gay/straight labels. This is part of queer theory's purpose, to acknowledge what is considered normal (in this case masculine and feminine categories), and then resist and challenge those categories (Jagose 1996). James (27) continues to tell me:

> People are going to perceive you as a certain gender, based on how you look and how you act. Others have always described me as being more feminine, and I accept that. But I don't use that label to describe myself. Being directly called feminine or gay implies that you're feminine because someone else perceives you as gay or feminine.

James lumps femininity and gayness together in terms of how he thinks others perceive him. Because he thinks other people view him as feminine, they must also view him as gay. When another person perceives him as feminine (or gay), he *is* feminine (or gay), at least in that person's mind. James would need to perform gender or sexuality in a different way – in order to pass as straight. The actor's performance is only as good as

how the audience interprets this performance. And while men like James, Neil, Raymond, and Brian might not agree with it, they understand that gender and sexuality are perceived as real through their performances.

CONCLUSION

The task of studying masculinity among gay men is a complicated one. The gay men in this study have many different conceptions about gender and they make sense of both their own gender and other people's genders in many different ways. They often described gender in terms of sexuality – so that straight men doing masculinity might be somehow different from how gay men might do masculinity.

In describing what gender is, participants described three different characteristics of masculinity. First, there is a physical aesthetic to masculinity. Masculine men are muscular, generally tall, and have some kind of facial or body hair. Certain clothing items were also frequently referenced, such as flannel shirts, jeans, or clothes that were looser fitting. Second, men described personality traits that are associated with masculinity. These included being independent, confident, and being in control of one's emotions. Thirdly, masculine men are characterized as having an interest in, or participating in certain activities, most notably sports.

While participants found it relatively easy to list these characteristics of masculinity, they struggled to make sense of how they situate themselves within the definitions of masculinity, because of their gay identity. Here, men confounded definitions of gender and sexuality, explaining that something about masculinity was linked to heterosexuality, and that femininity was associated with gayness. As men

discussed masculine or feminine performances, they frequently used it as evidence of sexuality. That is, they explain gender by using sexuality (e.g., the commonplace assumption that having an interest in gymnastics is not masculine, so that person is probably gay). Performances of gender and sexuality become one and the same for most of these men. It is not just straight people who use performances of gender to determine sexuality. Gay men acknowledge that they do this too – to themselves, and others.

In describing their own gender identity, the men spoke of masculinity in different ways. Men essentially aligned themselves with three broad theoretical perspectives of gender. Sometimes, they viewed gender as being dichotomous. Other men describe their own gender identity to be more fluid or flexible. They see masculinity as existing on a spectrum of behaviors or actions, and think that masculinity and femininity can be blended together. At other times, some men reject the idea that behaviors can be labeled easily as just masculine/feminine, or straight/gay. They do not find these definitions useful, and do not like to use terms like masculine or feminine to describe themselves. They do however, realize that they are in some way outliers in this way of thinking, and so they realize that most people will categorize them as being masculine or feminine.

For gay men, defining masculinity is difficult. The hegemonic nature of masculinity positions heterosexuality as being more valued than gayness, since being gay is still somehow associated with femininity. Hegemonic masculinity values the masculine over the feminine, and straightness over gayness, so it makes sense that among gay men, masculinity is still valued over femininity. Gay men who are more masculine or "straight acting" are seen as more desirable, compared to men who are more feminine. It is like Isaac says, "Feminine people are definitely highly stigmatized. I don't even know…if

you are really fem, I don't even know who you would date! No one even wants to have anything to do with fem guys!" Even among gay men, hegemonic masculinity organizes certain displays of gender, and sexuality by placing value on some behaviors and devaluing other behaviors. While definitions of what is masculine are constantly changing (Connell 2005), gay men operate within multiple definitions of masculinity – both gay masculinity *and* masculinity at large (aka straight masculinity). This is problematic to many gay men because, as the men in this study describe, there is confusion about how masculinity is defined, and how it should be performed. Men cite many examples of how they manage their own gender identity depending on their situation. The men I spoke with acknowledge that performances of masculinity are somehow more desirable than performances of femininity. Scholars refer to this as hegemonic masculinity, but I argue that this also contributes to a concept of hegemonic sexuality, where some performances of gayness are more valued than others. Being "too gay" is undesirable, and part of being "too gay" involves a performance of femininity, according to the men I interviewed. Additionally, while sociologists have long been interested in the ways that sexuality and gender are performed together, this work demonstrates how these concepts are often mistaken for one another. Gender is commonly used to describe sexuality, and performances of gender are used in determining other's sexuality (even though this is often unsuccessful). In the following chapters, I describe further the ways men manage both their gendered and sexual identities.

CHAPTER 5

SEXUAL IDENTITY MANAGEMENT

(OR HOW TO BE GAY, BUT NOT *GAY* GAY)

I would never be the grand marshal in the gay pride parade or anything, but it

doesn't mean I wouldn't go there.

– Lawrence (48)

Having multiple identities supposes that we manage those identities in multiple

ways. Some identities are more recognizable than others, and some identities are more

important than others for certain people. The strategies used to manage these various

identities differ from person to person. In the previous chapter, I discussed ways that

gender is managed and performed. Sexual identities (i.e., how one identifies their

sexuality – usually in terms of being straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, etc.) are also

performed but, although they are typically co-performed with gender as I showed in the

last chapter, gender and sexuality are still subject to somewhat different sets of

constraints. Individuals are able to present themselves in ways that render their sexual

identities invisible. For this reason, Faulkner and Hecht (2011) describe sexual identities

as being closetable identities. This possibility is facilitated by the fact that we live in a

society where heterosexuality is assumed to be the norm, or default sexual identity

(Rosario et al. 2006; Stein 1989). That is, we live in a heteronormative society – a term

that Michael Warner (1999) first introduced. Unless an individual "comes out" or in other

ways discloses their non-heterosexual sexual identity, they are assumed to be

heterosexual[14]. Thus, sexual identity management becomes a conscious act for gay men, whether or not they are out (Faulkner and Hecht 2011; Kirby and Hay 1997). They make choices regarding when to come out, who to come out to, and how to come out. Once they are out, they continue to make choices about how and when to perform their sexual identity (Faulkner and Hecht 2011; Orne 2011).

In the previous chapter, I showed how sexuality contributes in important ways to gender identity management. Gender too, contributes in equally important ways to sexual identity management. And while some studies explore the ways that gender and sexuality are intertwined (Gagne and Tewksbury 2002; Lorber 1996; Pascoe 2007; Rupp and Taylor 2003), we do not yet know enough about the ways that sexual identity management is influenced by gender (and vice versa). Sociologist Stephen Valocchi (2005) has called upon scholars to further our understanding of the ways that sex, gender, and sexuality are understood, arguing that queer studies are "not queer enough." My research adds to our understanding of gender and sexuality. In this chapter, I consider how sexual identity management is influenced, in part, by gender. Gay men make choices to either conceal or reveal their sexual identities. Part of this choice, as my participants describe, involves a gendered performance (at least to the extent that many assume that masculinity is associated with heterosexuality, and femininity is associated with homosexuality). Also, the choice to reveal, or come out as gay is often (but not always) a carefully planned event – it is part a performance that is enacted again and again, throughout these men's lives. I find that men's coming-out narratives continually return

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[14] Unless of course, the individual does not perform consistently with traditional gender expectations. As I discussed in the previous chapter, men who do not perform masculinity convincingly enough risk having their sexuality called into question.

to the idea of support. Support for gay identities is related to the *process* of disclosure itself (Elizur and Ziv 2004); it is linked to positive outcomes when support is gathered from family members (Elizur and Ziv 2004) and from friends and coworkers (Rumens 2011). It is this notion of support that ultimately guides men's decisions about whether or not to initially come out. Finally, men's stories reveal that hegemonic sexuality – which, in part, rewards some performances of gayness over others – guides gay men's coming out processes in ways that reinforce what it means to be the "right" kind of gay (that is, not *too* gay). Men's experiences point to a hierarchy among gay men that is supported by both straight and gay people. It is a hierarchy that relies on sexuality as an organizing principle - one I call hegemonic sexuality.

SEXUAL IDENTITIES

Erving Goffman's pivotal work, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959)*,* describes how individuals make choices (e.g., in their appearances, manners) to shape how others perceive them during social interactions. That is, he developed a theory of the self that emphasizes the significance of impression management (Goffman 1959). I draw on Goffman's work to stress the importance of interpersonal interaction in the establishment of sexual identity. An identity cannot be truly realized until it has been acknowledged and validated by others. This is because when we are discussing categories of identity, such as sexual identity and gender identity, we are referring to socially constructed categories (e.g., homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual, masculine, feminine) (Epstein 1991). In order to successfully claim a particular identity, an actor must convince their audience that they fit within the social constructed boundaries of that identity. Pointing to the importance of audience in performances of masculinity, Kimmel

(1996) describes that, for a variety of reasons, men must prove their masculinity over and over again. More so, they must prove their masculinity to a male audience. According to Kimmel (1996), men – or more specifically masculine men - act as the keepers of masculinity, rewarding other men's performances of masculinity. Other masculine men acknowledge performances of masculinity in a similar way that gay men might acknowledge performances of gayness. Men who do not perform gayness in the right way risk being stripped of their "gay card" - the fictional evidence that they are a "real" gay man. Men must earn a masculine "stamp of approval" from other men, or otherwise risk being called a fag, homo, etc. Masculine identities, then, are not only constructed and adopted by individuals, but also require validation from other men.

The concept of heteronormativity suggests that as a general societal assumption, individuals are heterosexual until they come out as some other sexual identity (Warner 1999). For this reason, it is possible for a closeted gay man to pass as straight in a heteronormative society. If he wants others to recognize his gayness, he needs to perform that in some way. There is a gap between how individuals identify themselves, and how others identify those same individuals. Both the individual *and* the audience must recognize this gay identity for the performance to be successful (Kimmel 1996). And while some scholars have found that individuals do not identify themselves in terms of sexual orientation until they have had their first sexual experience[15] (Rosario et al. 2006; Cass 1979), the performance of a sexual identity however, need not be sexual in nature. Other scholars place less importance on sexual behavior as a way of establishing a gay identity, and more emphasis on shared common culture. David Halperin (2012) argues

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[15] This does not necessarily mean intercourse, but more likely includes sexual fantasies, masturbation, sexual arousal, etc.

that because gay men share no sense of common ethnicity or national heritage, a collective consciousness is formed around existing culture (e.g., fashion, music, film – or what Halperin refers to as traditional gay culture). That is, to understand gay identities, authors like Halperin focus more on how individuals perform sexuality relative to the collective gay identity and shared experiences, rather than individual sexual behaviors (i.e., gayness defined by men having sex with other men).

It is worth noting here that sexual behavior (what kind of sex you have with whom), sexual desire (who you are attracted to), and sexual identity (a label that indicates to others how we make sense of who we are as sexual beings) are not the same, and do not align themselves in the same way for all people (Butler 1990). That is, not all biologically male individuals are traditionally masculine and are attracted to, and desire women. These categories of gender and sexuality are not binary, mutually exclusive categories, but may be better understood as existing on a continuum. At different times throughout one's life, individuals may locate themselves at different points on these continuums. Lisa Diamond (2003) describes sexual fluidity among women; at some point in their lives, women may identify as being heterosexual, then identify as lesbian, and then as heterosexual again. Other women may identify as being lesbian, but maintain relationships with men (Tabatabai and Linders 2011). Jane Ward makes the argument that sexual fluidity is not reserved for women only (although it may be more socially acceptable for women), but that men also may shift their identities and behaviors in fluid ways (Ward 2015).

Sexual identities are not performed without performances of gender as well. In discussing the collective gay identity, David Halperin (2012) argues that gender must be

performed in a way so as to be included in the collective gay identity (or else risk losing

that "gay card"). Halperin describes how a gay aesthetic is linked to shared cultural

experiences. This involves, among other things, preferences in music, clothing, pop

culture references, performances of drag, etc. It takes a kind of "sixth sense" (or what

might commonly be referred to as "gaydar") to identify someone as being gay, sometimes

based solely on physical appearance. Thus, gay men perform gender in particular ways in

order to be recognized as gay. Halperin (2012) supports the work of Kimmel (1996) in

that, for gay men to truly be part of a collective gay identity, they must be accepted by

other gay participants (much like the gatekeepers of masculinity). Of course, within gay

culture there are many subcultures. Scholars have studied bear culture (Hennen 2005;

Manley et al. 2007; Wright 1997), leather culture (Mosher et al. 2006), clones (Levine

1998), and online gay culture (Campbell 2004). These scholars point out that there are

various nuances to gay cultures, paving the way toward multiple gay masculinities being

possible (Nardi 2000). So while there are many different opportunities to participate in a

gay culture, they all, in some way contribute to part of a collective gay culture.

     While Halperin (2012) suggests that the gay aesthetic is crucial to performances

of gayness, I find that the gay aesthetic has much more to do with performances of

gender, than it does with sexuality[16]. That is not to say I disagree with Halperin's

analysis, but rather I draw attention to the ways in which sexual identities often *rely* on

performances of gender. Sexuality and gender can be managed in different ways.

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[16] Certainly, a "gay aesthetic" is a reflection of both sexuality *and* gender. However, there is nothing about liking Lady Gaga that indicates same-sex attraction. Halperin argues though, that celebrities like Lady Gaga participate as a cultural icon of the gay community (2012). It is through performances of gender that Halperin discusses the construction of a gay aesthetic, and contributes also to collective gay identities.

Sometimes these strategies are used separately (e.g., two men holding hands might be performing their sexuality but not necessarily their gender), and other times they are used simultaneously (e.g., men who perform femininity and gayness simultaneously might be described as flamboyant). Coming out of the closet, for instance, is a strategy for managing one's sexuality that often (but not always) relies on a performance of gender. Men in this study came out of the closet using different strategies, under different circumstances. Since sexuality is a closetable identity that individuals can choose to reveal or conceal, it is important to understand how the process of coming out is used as a primary identity management tool. This is especially so since the coming out process is ongoing and far from concluded the first time a person comes out. To investigate this further, I asked participants several related questions: Why did you decide to come out? Who did you come out to, and who are you not out to? When you decided to come out, *how* did you reveal your gay identity? How did you manage your sexual identity before and after coming out? Their responses help form a better understanding of the ways men construct their gendered and sexual identities, and how performances of gender and sexuality rely on one another.

Claiming a Gay Identity

Michael Warner (1999) writes that because we live in a heteronormative world, we are assumed to be heterosexual until we consciously decide otherwise. The term heteronormativity, coined by Warner, aligns with Adrienne Rich's (1980) "compulsory heterosexuality," Gayle Rubin's (1975) "sex/gender system," and Judith Butler's (1990) "heterosexual matrix." Essentially, the notion of heteronormativity refers to a social

system in which heterosexuality is the default setting—the assumed, the assumed normal, the norm—and where gender and sexuality become aligned in such a way that they "naturally" complement one another. That is, in a heteronormative society, men are masculine, and are attracted to women. Women are feminine, and are attracted to men. Gay men, then, need to come out—if they are to be identified as gay. It is not enough for gay men to decide for themselves that they are gay, but they must somehow perform gayness if their gay identity is to be recognized by others. As the men in this study discuss however, there are certain "tells" that might indicate a gay identity. In part, this is the "gaydar" Halperin (2012) discusses. So gay men, performing gender or sexuality in a particular way (e.g., wearing a particular color shirt, speaking in a certain tone of voice, or walking with an identifiable gait), might not even need to *try* to come out, if they are doing gay sexuality in a convincing way. In this sense, gay men "come out" as gay, either by explicitly telling someone, or by performing gayness in a convincing way.

Men in this study came to terms with their gay identity in a number of ways. For some, it was an identity that they felt they carried with them from an early age. "By age seven, I knew I was different from my brothers. My brain was ticking in a different way," Jamai (46) recalled. "I always knew that I was gay," both Brent (33) and Anthony (26) told me. For other men though, realization of a gay identity did not develop until much later. Cal (39) and James (27) both describe themselves as late bloomers in terms of coming out to anyone, even to themselves. Cal told me, "I was at a Bible college in my early twenties. That kept me in the closet." Regardless of the age at which the men came out, they all described occasions when they still chose to stay closeted, by not revealing their sexuality or correcting others' assumptions of their heterosexuality. In so doing, the

men act on the assumption, reinforced by their own experiences, that homosexuality is still a socially stigmatized identity. In theory, homosexuality is an "invisible stigma" because it cannot be seen in the same way that other stigmatizing characteristics (e.g., race, gender, age, physical abilities, etc.) can be (Goffman 1963). Faulkner and Hecht (2011) build upon Goffman's (1963) work by describing some identities as being closetable identities. Because gayness is not seen, gay people are at least in principle able to conceal or reveal their sexual identities at will; they can stay in the closet when it seems advantageous to do so, or come out of the closet when it appears safe to. In practice, however, it is considerably more difficult to move in and out of an identity that has as much salience as sexuality does. David Thorpe explains this in the documentary *Do I Sound Gay?* He is deeply concerned that his voice sounds too gay, and that it will always out him. He does not like the sound of his voice, and thinks of it as a negative characteristic saying," I didn't choose this gay voice – why would I? Who could respect, much less fall in love with, an old braying ninny, like me?" (Gertler and Thorpe 2015). Thus, considering the entanglement of sexuality and gender, sexuality, while closetable, is hardly invisible. Furthermore, considering that coming out of the closet requires revealing a stigmatized identity, it is not surprising that it is typically a very weighty decision for men to come out as gay.

The men that I spoke to told me stories of the first time they came out of the closet, as well as stories of how they continue to come out of the closet, even years later. I discuss these coming out stories as they relate to gender and sexual identity management later in this chapter. Many of the choices that the men make rely on support from friends and family. Some of the men told stories involving strategies of dropping

hints of their sexuality to "test the waters" with certain individuals. Others came out more publically, with bold statements. While their experiences varied, men's narratives kept returning to a common theme of locating support not just for gay people in general, but more specifically for their individual gay identity. Before turning to a discussion of support, however, I first explain how coming out, support, and sexual identity management are also guided by forces of hegemonic sexuality. Hegemonic sexuality, I argue, influences the ways men choose to manage their identity by adopting strategies to maximize support and minimize stigma from both straight and gay individuals.

HEGEMONIC SEXUALITY

In the previous chapters, I explained how hegemonic masculinity separates and organizes men - it subordinates women, but also some men, while advantaging other men (Connell 1995). Masculinity is certainly part of a performance of sexuality, as I have argued already. Hegemonic sexuality however, focuses on "gayness" as an organizing principle, just as gender is an organizing principle for hegemonic masculinity.

Several of the men in this study spoke of certain performances of sexuality that were desirable, and others that were undesirable. When managing their sexuality, the men relied on stereotypes of gender to indicate gayness. Typically, this involved acting more feminine to indicate a non-straight identity. However, this was considerably more complex than simply adding as much femininity as they could to their performances. The men made it quite clear that there is a limit as to how gay one "should" be, and under what circumstances.

Several of the men that I spoke to described a hierarchy of gayness, where some types of gay men are valued more than others. Jack (28) describes this as follows: "Gay men have created some kind of secondary construct within gay masculinity or something. They want to know if you're a straight-acting guy [or not]." Rodney (41) too describes a system of categories:

> There's this policing of masculinity happening. It's not ideal, I know that…I don't even know what it means! But it's a way of being exclusive. It's a way of saying 'I'm a certain kind of guy, and also I'm only interested in a certain kind of guy.' It's very inauthentic. [Gay men] are definitely policing and promoting a certain kind of gay man.

Jack's and Rodney's comments both support the hegemonic nature of sexuality, which is guided by hegemonic masculinity. Connell (1995) addresses this intersection of gender and sexuality when discussing what it means to be "a very straight gay." The men she describes have rejected both the idea that gay men are inherently feminine, and that men <u>must</u> be masculine (Connell 1995). Even still, men in my study assert that certain gay men are seen as more acceptable than others, and at least part of this hierarchy of gay men has to do with masculine performance. The kind of gay man that is "promoted," as Rodney describes, is the gay man who is most likely to be accepted by others (both straight and gay).

Rodney elaborated on his idea that there are parameters to gayness. Some performances of gayness are acceptable, while others are not. Rodney described a time that he came out to a coworker. This coworker was accepting and supportive of Rodney's

sexual identity, because he was not *too* gay. Rodney expressed his frustration with his coworker's acceptance of a particular "kind" of gayness:

> She said something like, "Yeah you're gay, but you're not *gay* gay." She said
>
> something stupid like that. "Like you're not *too* gay." [She was okay with me,]
>
> but she was saying something homophobic about a particular kind of gay person
>
> she doesn't like. It's hurtful for me to hear that! I don't want to hear that.

Gavin and Hunter both tell me similar stories. Gavin mentions:

> I've had people say things to me like, "I don't normally like a lot of gay guys, but
>
> you're cool." What does that even mean? I'm the *okay* gay guy? Like there is an
>
> acceptable gay and a not acceptable gay? That's still disrespectful to me.

Hunter described a time when he came out to someone:

> They responded to me with, "wow, I never would have guessed you were gay!" I
>
> used to think that was a compliment, but now I see that as offensive. To tell
>
> someone that they would never guess you to be something that you actually
>
> are…it's really irritating.

Rodney, Gavin, and Hunter all mention some kind of continuum of gay men. There are some gay men who are acceptable or tolerable on one end, and other men who are *too* gay on the other end. Both straight and gay people play a part in determining where on this continuum a performance of sexual/gender identity lies. It also seems that gender has much to do with the placement of a performance on this continuum, with more masculine performances being deemed acceptable, and more feminine performances being labeled too gay. By discussing the difference between "good gays" and "bad gays," men reveal

that there are certain organizing principles that guide performances of sexual identity, a structure that I refer to as hegemonic sexuality.

During our conversations, several men discussed how certain actions and behaviors are beyond the scope of gay acceptance. That is, some gay men are *too* gay. Men who fall outside the acceptable level of gayness are problematized, as they give other gay men a bad reputation. For example, in describing a confrontation he had at work, Steven (23) explains how he avoided any tension. Steven lives in Texas and works as a choreographer for a school's dance team. He described where he lived as being conservative, but not uncomfortable:

> I had gotten into an argument with a kid's parent and ended up having a conference with the school's principle. I already thought this was asinine. I kind of got a little sassy with the parent, and I'm sure everyone had the perception that I was just this sassy little gay dance instructor, which is just fitting into a stereotype they probably already have. I knew that was a time it was going to be smarter for me to adapt to the situation and not be overly flamboyant. It's like this metaphor I think of here. 'Barbeque and Texas. There's no need to be a little gay boy in a Barbeque pit.' Do not be overly flamboyant!

Steven alludes to the idea that by acting flamboyantly, he is setting himself up to be categorized as a stereotypical gay man – one who is viewed negatively. Steven decides that others might interpret flamboyance as *too* gay, and therefore unacceptable.

Other men have additional ideas of what it means to be *too* gay. At the beginning of this chapter, I quoted Lawrence who said, "I would never be the grand marshal in the

gay pride parade or anything, but it doesn't mean I wouldn't go there." He continued to

tell me about the line between being gay and being too gay:

> I'm going to a party soon and I'm bringing my boyfriend. I'm not exactly sure
> how [my straight friends] will take that when we walk in. It's not like we'd walk
> in holding hands or anything because to me, that wouldn't be acceptable. I
> definitely wouldn't want anybody to feel uncomfortable. I think there is a line that
> people cross sometimes with that. I think sometimes gay people will get really
> defensive and want to shove [their being gay] in people's faces. That's not who I
> am. I definitely would not shove that in anyone's face.

Such a public display of one's sexuality is beyond Lawrence's comfort level, and not

something he is willing to do. For Lawrence, holding hands with his boyfriend at a party

would be flaunting his sexuality– he thinks this is inappropriate, or too gay. Lawrence

would participate in certain public displays of gayness, such as attending the party with

his boyfriend, but not other public displays, like showing affection.

Being *too* gay is seen as feminine and undesirable. Aaron (28) says this

specifically about gay men looking in digital social spaces. "Men have these phrases that

they use. We all use them. They're these rules like 'No femmes. No fatties.' Or things

like 'masc. only' or 'masc 4 masc' when looking for other guys to date or hook up with."

Rodney echo's Aaron's thought and says, "There's a certain kind of gay you should be.

You should have an aversion to things that are faggy. Don't listen to faggy music and

don't go to faggy places." Recall Isaac (24), who also described how feminine gay men

are stigmatized by saying that, "No one even wants to have anything to do with fem gay

guys!" In each of these examples, there is an assumption that certain kinds of behaviors,

places, or people (e.g., listening to "faggy music," going to "faggy places," or otherwise acting too femme) are undesirable, while others are desirable. Being gay is okay, as long as one acts within a masculine framework that is acceptable, according to some standard of hegemonic sexuality.

I use these examples as evidence of the notion of hegemonic sexuality. Hegemonic sexuality is similar in some sense to the concept of multiple hegemonic masculinities, developed by Arxer (2011). The concept of multiple hegemonic masculinities suggests that men borrow traditional gender ideals to separate masculine gay men from feminine gay men – essentially replicating hegemonic masculinity within the gay community. I believe that hegemonic sexuality is a better term for this, and I emphasize that not only is masculinity a hegemonic force within the gay community, but so is gayness. That is, gay men are not arranged hierarchically solely on the basis of gender, but on sexuality as well. Men's presence in gay spaces (e.g., gay pride parades), or interest in other elements of gay culture (e.g., pop culture, including music and films discussed previously), are part of a performance of sexuality that is not entirely captured by the notion of hegemonic masculinity. By not being *too* gay, men might achieve a desirable level of gayness. Being *too* gay is still connoted by femininity, and is seen as less desirable compared to a more masculine gay man who might fit into the hegemonic masculine ideal with more ease than a feminine man. I argue that this is different from hegemonic masculinity, because it is dealing specifically with a group of men who identify as gay. Gender guides this categorization, but hegemonic sexuality emphasizes the fact that some gay men are subordinated while other gay men are idealized.

The decision to reveal or conceal a gay sexual identity is often done with consideration to the "kind" of gay man that one wants to be perceived as. This, of course, is also contextual. Who men come out to, where they are coming out, and at what point in their life (e.g., as a teenager or as a more settled adult) they come out, all influence the coming out process. Yet even still, hegemonic sexuality guides the choices men make when managing their sexual identities.

In this study, men told me many stories of how they came out of the closet. Some men described how they came out to themselves, as they first began to question their assumed heterosexuality. Other men described how they came out for the first time to someone else, and still other men described how they continually come out of the closet, almost every day. Their stories vary greatly from one another, yet some common themes are discernible. Men's stories centered on concealment, finding support, and ultimately validating their gay identities. Upon initially coming out of the closet, men negotiated their sexual identities in different ways, by concealing or revealing their sexuality in various social settings. That is, while men no longer considered themselves to be "in the closet," they nonetheless managed their sexual identity by emphasizing or deemphasizing gayness to different audiences. They did this partly by performing gender in ways that would signal their sexuality. Before men came out of the closet, however, they typically managed their sexual identity by concealing their gay identity and letting the assumption of straightness guide their interactions.

CONCEALING GAY IDENTITIES

Before coming out to anyone, the men described how they tried to conceal their gay identities. I distinguish three ways that men attempted this. Some men maintained

intimate relationships with women. Other men "played it straight" by lying about their sexual identity. Still other men evaded topics about sexuality, by remaining vague in their conversations with others.

Many men attempted to conceal their gay identity by trying to pass as straight men who are attracted to women. Lawrence (48) passed as straight for much of his life, and was married to a woman:

I knew [I was gay] for a long time, but I was brought up in a Catholic family so [being gay] kind of wasn't an option. I got married and thought, 'this is something I can probably just deal with. It won't cause a problem.'

Other men, like Anthony (26), also used relationships with women to pass as straight:

I still find myself putting on that role of a straight-acting guy. I'll let girls hit on me or I'll hit on girls just for the hell of it. I kind of want to prove [to my straight friends] that I can still pick up a girl like they can.

When I interviewed Anthony, he had recently broken up with his girlfriend:

We had a sexual relationship, but it just never clicked for me. It was fake the whole time. [The relationship] was at a point where I had to propose to her, or I had to back out and make some kind of excuse for why I can't be in a relationship with her.

Anthony and Lawrence passed as straight men by maintaining relationships with women in an effort to conceal their gay identity. Dating wasn't the only context in which men attempted to conceal their sexual identities. Men often discussed their work environments as places where they commonly attempted to conceal their sexual identities, or at least manage their gay identities in particular ways.

In the workplace, men discussed a number of instances where they determined that "playing it straight" was in their best interest. "You don't want to lay all your cards out on the table because you don't know how [your coworkers] will respond. At work, I lie and tell them I'm straight" (Tanner, 25). Tanner works at a jewelry store designing jewelry. He described how he tries to pass as straight, even if his performance is not believable:

> [Several of my coworkers] were sitting around after work hours and the store manager opens a bottle of wine. And so I'm sitting there with a bunch of older guys, and my [young] age is showing. Someone asked me to show them my ID, So I pull my ID out, and my sales manager says, 'Are you sure you don't like dudes?' And immediately, my blood freezes. I freak out inside. I immediately respond with, 'No man! No way! This looks GAY to you??' I tried to brush it off and play it off like it was no big deal. But inside, I was so nervous. I was choking!

Tanner explained to me that the picture on his ID was taken several years prior, when he had a "more edgy" appearance. In the picture, he was wearing eyeliner and had bleached a "skunk stripe" in his hair. While Tanner's manager made assumptions of his sexuality using gender cues, Tanner did his best to deflect claims that he was gay. He told me that was because he "didn't want to give them any room to think of me in a negative way. I don't want them knowing that stuff about me." Of course, Tanner is also making the assumption that being gay will be seen as a negative, and will somehow be held against him in the workplace. Tanner is also responding to the influence of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic sexuality by assuming that looking, or being, gay might mean he is subordinated in some ways in the workplace.

Acting straight, as these examples illustrate, is one way to conceal a gay identity. It should be noted that this term, "acting straight" is used here to describe a performance of *hetero*sexuality in order to conceal one's gayness (i.e., it is not an authentic performance of sexuality). This term is used in contrast to "straight-acting" (or str8acting), which is sometimes used on gay dating websites to describe gay men who perform masculinity like straight men, but who are also open about their gay identity (i.e., they claim a more authentic gay identity) (Payne 2007). The emphasis here, again, still connects masculinity to straightness. Acting straight, then, is different from straight-acting because it is a conscious effort to appear to *be* straight (rather than a gay man who just acts masculine enough to pass as if he *were* straight). Men who are acting straight are making an attempt to be closeted by actively trying to conceal their sexual identity. By performing masculinity and heterosexuality in a convincing (enough) manner, men are able to either keep their gay identity concealed (i.e., closeted), or somehow perform gender and sexuality in a way that is interpreted as still being gay, but more masculine. That is, acting straight and straight-acting performances are additional examples of how hegemonic sexuality operates. Straight-acting gay men who are viewed as being more masculine, and gay men who more closely resemble heterosexual men, are held in higher regard. Tanner may not have performed a traditionally masculine identity with his "edgy" look, but he had hoped that his performance would be seen as masculine and straight *enough* to be seen as a heterosexual male. Acting straight was more desirable for Tanner in this situation, since he did not want to come out of the closet. He explicitly mentions that he did not want his coworkers to think negatively of him, and that knowing his identity as a gay man would surely be seen as undesirable.

Strategies to conceal and reveal gay identities are contextual. Men use different strategies at different times, in different social contexts. The three men described above all used concealment as a strategy for managing their gay identity in a particular situation. Specifically, Lawrence and Anthony maintained relationships with women to appear straight, while Tanner lied about his sexuality in order to "play it straight" and remain in the closet. Other men discussed strategies that were more ambiguous. These strategies, which share an emphasis on avoidance, form a third concealment category and include men's efforts to evade conversations about sexuality and to omit information about the details of their personal lives. TJ is twenty-five years old and tells me how he uses this strategy to avoid coming out to people:

> If I feel like there might be some kind of negative impact from coming out to someone, I'll choose to deflect being gay. I won't necessarily hide it, but I'll talk about everything else that I can that is not gay. I'll leave that part out. I won't let that be open for them to see.

By not confirming that he is gay, TJ hopes to appear straight to other people. There is a tacit understanding that men are straight until proven gay (Warner 1999), and if TJ never reveals his sexuality, others will assume that he is straight. Jeffrey (31) uses this strategy too, especially at work:

> I just don't talk about [my sexuality]. I just talk about work at work for the most part. I keep my personal life personal. But it's way easier to conceal your lack of a gay relationship when you don't have one. You can just tell people you're single, and then you don't have to tell them who your partner is.

Jeffrey keeps his sexuality concealed by avoiding conversation about relationships and other personal parts of his life. He mentions that he does not like to tell coworkers things like where he goes when he is not at work, or whom he goes with. Instead of telling people that he went to a gay bar, he might just say that he spent some time with friends. For men who are in relationships, however, the strategy of avoiding talk that implicates their sexuality can be a bit trickier.

Dylan (26) tells me about a time at the Department of Motor Vehicles when a woman had asked him a question concerning his relationship:

> I remember this lady I was talking to at the DMV. I don't know why I would have been talking about [my boyfriend] there, but I chose to use the word 'friend' instead of 'boyfriend' or 'partner.' I don't know why I did that. I just feel like she would have judged me if she knew I was gay.

Here, Dylan chooses not to identify his boyfriend, which would also reveal his sexuality. Again, gayness is assumed to be an undesirable characteristic of a person. If Dylan did reveal his gay identity to the woman at the DMV, he predicts that he would have been judged (negatively).

As shown by the examples above, men make choices in a number of different social situations about whether they want to conceal or reveal their sexual identity. Men can be out to some people in their lives, while remaining closeted to others. Through these men's stories we are able to see how Faulkner and Hecht's (2011) closetable identities are managed. Men make choices about who they come out to, and under what circumstances. It is, as Raymond (52) says, "We get to allow others to know if we're gay (if we want)." Concealing and revealing a gay identity allows men to choose whether or

not to come out, and they make choices based on how advantageous this might be for them. I argue that my concept of hegemonic sexuality guides at least some of these decisions, based on the context of the situation. In some situations, acting straight and concealing a gay identity allows men to avoid unwanted stigma for being gay. At other times, being a straight-acting gay man is more desirable. At yet other times, performing an authentic gender and sexual identity is most desirable.

A major factor that influences how men decide to manage their sexuality in different situations is the amount of support they might receive from the people they come out to. Finding support is an important factor in men's choice of whether or not (and to whom) they come out.

SECURING SUPPORT FOR COMING OUT

Coming out of the closet is a form of sexual identity management. Men in this study described a number of different ways of coming out in attempts to manage their sexual identity. While many men feel comfortable coming out to various people, there is still a certain stigma attached to being gay. Most men in this study told stories about how they actively sought the support of others – their friends, family members, and coworkers - to affirm and legitimize their sexual identities while avoiding the stigma associated with being gay. Men described how they managed support for their sexual identities in different ways, depending on the nature and circumstances of their coming out. Not surprisingly, as I describe below, it was in the initial coming out – the first time the men told someone else that they were gay – that the question of support was especially significant. But men also emphasize the importance of support, and their efforts to secure

it, as they *continued* to manage their sexuality as they encountered new social settings—sometimes by coming out repeatedly, and at other times by concealing their sexual identities. Coming out for the first time though, was a memorable event for many of the men I spoke with. It was in these initial coming out stories that we begin to understand the ways that men actively manage their sexual identities.

Initial Coming Out Stories

While studying the processes of coming out, Rossi (2010) found that young LGBT adults generally come out to their friends first, and then to family members. There is potentially more at stake in losing family support compared to friendship support. Manny, a 23 year-old Hispanic music teacher explains: "I came out to my closest friends, then everyone else after that. I guess my thought process was that if I could take on the entire world, then [surely] I could take on my family." For Manny, his concern was that his family might not accept him because they had lived nearly their entire lives in South America, and were "staunch Catholics," as he described them. He felt the need to at least gain the support of his friends for his gay identity first, before potentially losing the support from his conservative family for that same gay identity.

Most individuals assume that their parents will not easily accept and be supportive of a nontraditional sexual identity (Savin-Williams 2003). Sean, who is 31, recalls the time when he was deciding whether or not to come out to his family. "I wanted them to know, but I wanted to know that I'd have their support. I thought of my parents as pretty conservative, yet still loving parents. I didn't know what they would do once they found out their son is gay." Cal (39) tells me:

I decided that if my parents knew I was gay…that would be a burden that they

couldn't possibly handle. They were burdened with a child that was abnormal (my

younger sister is mentally handicapped); I would be a second child that is

abnormal.

LGBT individuals may fear disappointing their parents, and tarnishing that relationship

(Savin-Williams and Ream 2003). For example, Tanner (25) tells me why he hasn't come

out to his grandparents. "I haven't told my grandparents. They're in their seventies. I just

don't know if they need to know. I don't want to soil the relationship [I have with them]."

Even when the relationship between the individual and family members is strong, these

fears may be exaggerated, since then there is more to lose for the individual by coming

out (Waldner and Magrader 1999). Coming out to friends first is a common pattern that

has been documented by many scholars (D'Augelli and Hershberger 1993; Rossi 2010;

Savin-Williams 1998), and my interviews also support this finding. Many men followed

this same pattern of coming out to friend groups initially, and they emphasized the need

for support as being important for developing or maintaining positive relationships with

their friends, and then later family members. I argue that even during the coming out

process, hegemonic sexuality operates in ways that guide men to perform sexuality in a

"desirable" way - to ensure that their gay identities would be supported by friends and

later, family members. For example, some men drop hints to reveal their gay identities

gradually, a strategy I discuss in more detail later in this chapter. Gathering support to

validate or legitimate gay identities however, is a primary concern for many men.

Evan (40) and Christopher (24) both came out to their friends before coming out

to anyone else. Evan was at a summer music camp with his best (straight) friend when he

was in his late teens. "For the first time, I had met people my age that were gay, that were hitting on me!" Evan tells me excitedly. He was still very nervous, though, that his best friend would not approve. When Evan finally decided to come out to his best friend, he received warm support:

> I thought my friend would be mad at me, so I didn't take advantage of the opportunities [to be with other men at the camp]. When we finally talked about it, he just said, 'I wouldn't have cared if you had done something [with another man]…I mean didn't you want to? You should do it!

Evan felt relieved that his best friend was so supportive of his sexuality. Christopher also recalls the night that he came out to his group of friends:

> We were out at a bar and we were all drinking a lot. This girl came up to me in front of everybody and said that her friend wanted to know if I was gay. I just said, 'Yeah, I am' and [all my friends] kind of just said, 'Oh!! We talked about it and wondered if you were.' It was fine after that. No one really cares that I'm gay. I think that I'm okay because I think a lot of straight people don't want to be around people that are too gay. They don't like that. They feel more comfortable if you fit in with their straight culture – they don't want to have to deal with gay culture. As long as I was okay to conform to [my friends] and do what they wanted to do, then they were okay with me.

Evan and Christopher are both out to their friends, but not to their parents yet. Their experiences in coming out to friends provided them with support. Evan's best friend encouraged him to develop relationships with other men, and Christopher realized that his friends had already suspected that he was gay. Christopher's friends "didn't care" that

he was gay – which is also a way of accepting his gay identity. Finding support for this identity is not only comforting; it is also a way of legitimizing and validating this gay identity. Not only do Christopher's friends accept his gay identity, they also have indicated that he is performing an "acceptable gay identity," or one that is held in higher esteem according to hegemonic sexuality. Part of securing support from others involves reinforcing the gay identity as an acceptable form of gayness.

There are obvious reasons for wanting to gather support for a gay identity. Men want to keep the relationships they have with friends and family members. They do this by seeking out individuals who they suspect will provide support, and avoid individuals who they perceive as being unsupportive. For example, James (27) says:

> Sometimes you just get more of an impression of a person that they're more comfortable with gay issues, so you try to pick someone who you feel like would be friendly to knowing that you're gay, and usually it's pretty easy to tell. I've almost never been wrong about finding those people.

Jason Orne (2011) describes this process of seeking out and coming out to supportive individuals as "strategic outness." Orne emphasizes the importance of social contexts for sexual identity disclosure; he found that LGBT people are constantly evaluating who can be confided in and who should not. Some people will offer social support, and others will not. Thus, individuals will strategically come out to maximize support and minimize non-support.

Gavin told me a little bit about how he initially came out at work. "I talked to a couple [of] close colleagues before [coming out]. I said to them, 'if I do this, will you guys support me? Will you help me with this?' I asked them because I was really nervous

about doing it." He explained to me that, "I needed support. I didn't have it anywhere else." Gavin located people who would support him, and made sure he could trust them in supporting his decision to come out. In this way, he created a network of people that would provide validation for his identity – by maximizing support. Not only was individual support for the identity sought, but men like Gavin also wanted to be sure that the support they gathered from others could be relied on in case they experienced any negative reactions from others.

According to Rossi (2010), family members are more likely to be told after close friends are told of a new gay identity. As explained earlier, there is a perception that parents might not be accepting of gay identities, or that there is more to lose if parents are not accepting. However, gay men greatly benefit from having supportive parents (Rossi 2010). Jamai is a forty-six year old man who told me how he came out to his mother, after first having come out to his oldest brother:

> I felt bad because I was trying to lie to [my family about my sexuality]. One day, I told my momma I needed to talk to her about something, and I sat her down in the living room. Then my emotions kicked in and before I could say anything, I started crying…I calmed myself down and I told her I wanted her to know that I am a little different. Finally, I told her that I was gay. She asked a few questions, but said that she was very proud of me. That made me feel very good. Once I came out to her I felt really empowered. I felt like I could do anything.

While Jamai was nervous and emotional prior to coming out to his mother, he wanted to have this conversation with his mother – someone he is very close with – because he felt wrong lying to her about his sexuality. Once the guilt of lying about his sexuality was

lifted, *and* he had the support of his mother, Jamai felt empowered. Someone important to him had validated his identity, and he gained a renewed sense of self-worth as a result.

Men discussed additional ways of managing their sexual identity beyond coming out to friends and family members. Once men had established a network of support for their gay identity, they continued to come out in other areas of their lives. This is achieved by explicitly coming out, as in the stories above, but also by managing gender and sexual identities in specific ways. Continual coming out stories are very much a part of gay men's experiences and point to the ongoing management of sexuality (and gender) that gay men, in sharp contrast to their straight counterparts, are required to do.

Continually Coming Out

While many men can describe the first time they came out, most do not describe coming out of the closet as a one-time event that can be pinpointed precisely. Rather, my participants, as well as those of other studies, describe coming out as a continual process (Mosher 2001; Orne 2011). That is, coming out is something that the men have to do over and over again. This is so because of the force of heteronormativity (Warner 1999); when individuals are assumed to be heterosexual, gay men must come out – again and again – in different social contexts, to different audiences. Other authors go so far as to describe coming out as a career that must be managed, rather than a process to be completed (Guittar and Rayburn 2016). For example, Neil (25) says:

I think as a gay person, you come out every single day. [But] in the conservative [city I live in], you have to be aware that if you come out…some people are not

going to like that. You've got to get a feel for the people around you and if they'll

be comfortable or not.

Neil describes that coming out does not always have a positive effect, and again alludes

to Orne's (2011) strategic outness. My participants described various ways they

continually come out in different social settings. Sometimes they achieve this by coming

out to many people at once, but other times they drop hints to let people know of their

gay identity. These coming out stories are part of the ongoing efforts to manage sexual

identity. But in addition to continually coming out, I found that men's stories of sexual

identity management also included a management of gender. Gender is used to negotiate

sexual identities. As men first came out to their friends and family members, they often

used gender to assist with their identity management, which meant that in some cases,

they relied on stereotypes of gay men to indicate a gay identity.

Coming Out Publically

Neil came out unintentionally to his parents while he was in high school. He kept

a sketch book where he would collect his thoughts, and on the inside cover, he wrote in

capital letters, "IF YOU READ THIS, NOW YOU KNOW…I'M GAY." Neil told me

that his mother had found his sketchbook and had leafed through it. She questioned him

about the statement and Neil confirmed that he is gay. He described this event (and later

coming out to his father) as being a stressful one, but that "it was sort of a relief" to be

out to his family. He did not think that his parents were fond of the idea of his being gay

(Neil's father would still point out girls that looked to be Neil's age and ask if he thought

they were pretty), but that they were supportive of their son regardless. After coming out

to his family, Neil decided that if he was going to be out, he was going to make sure that other people heard it from him, and in a way that he wanted (i.e., not through community gossip). Having control over this part of the coming out process was important for many of the men I spoke with. It serves as a way for men to manage their own sexuality, and to present themselves as they wish rather than being outed by others. Once Neil's parents knew that he was attracted to men, he wrote an article in his high school's newspaper. It was a "political op-ed piece about Bush being reelected and the highlight of the article was called 'Speaking Up.' I tied it to my coming out to my parents." Neil described how nervous he was about it being printed. He recalls that day quite vividly:

> I was sitting in English class and my teacher passed out a newspaper to
>
> every single student and she put her hand on my shoulder as she walked
>
> past me. I don't know why she did that, but she did. I thought to myself,
>
> 'Fuck! Everyone in this room is about to read my article!" It was on the
>
> front page! The entire *school* was about to read my article.

Neil was nervous about publishing the article, but was glad to be presenting his sexuality in a way that was in his own words. "I was afraid of losing friends, but I definitely knew how fast word would spread. I know what I had said and it's in writing." While Neil was nervous that he would lose friends (although he told me he did not), he was not *so* nervous that he wanted to stay in the closet. He had gained the support of his family. In fact, by that point, Neil's father had encouraged him to publish the article in the paper – even after the school's principle had cautioned his family. "I don't know what my Dad said [to the Principal], but it was along the lines of, 'yes, let [Neil] publish this.' I thought that was really cool of my Dad to do that." With an already established support network

of people close to Neil, he did not feel the need to gather more supporters while continuing to come out of the closet. It was more important for him to not have to hide his gay identity.

As Neil continued to come out in other social environments, he told me about the ways he would come out without having to tell people explicitly that he is gay. Instead, he began performing his own gender in ways that would indicate to others that he was not straight. Much of this focused on his style of dress. "I think about what I'm wearing and if it looks too gay probably every single day." He told me about his favorite purple cardigan that he likes to wear, but that his sister makes fun of him for wearing it because it is "too girly." There is something about either the color of the clothing, or the style of the sweater that seems feminine, and as a result, "too gay." This is frustrating to Neil, because he then has to think about where he is going throughout his day to make sure he is dressed appropriately. "You know what?" Neil says to me, sounding aggravated. "Straight guys don't ever have to think, 'is my outfit going to be *too straight* today?'" He explained how, despite recent fashion trends, "you can usually tell by dress alone [if a man is straight or gay]." While there is nothing inherently sexualized about how men dress on a daily basis, certain colors and styles of clothing are deemed to be more or less "gay" than others. Dylan also sometimes feels "gayer" while wearing certain articles of clothing. He tells me:

> [My gay co-workers] yell at me all the time for wearing things that are too gay for
>
> [work]. Mark makes fun of me every time I wear this purple deep V-neck shirt
>
> that I have because he thinks it's a women's shirt. He always asks me if it's a

women's shirt. It makes me laugh. I don't really get offended by the comment or anything…I just tell him it's not a women's shirt. But he asks me every time! Certain styles of clothing (e.g., a cardigan for Neil and a V-neck shirt for Dylan), and certain colors associated with femininity (e.g., purple) are viewed as less masculine, so some garments are considered more "gay" than others. Thus, wearing particular clothes becomes a way that men manage their sexuality. Because some garments are categorized as being too gay, while others are deemed to be straight, this becomes a way that hegemonic sexuality guides men's performances of gayness.

After Gavin (26) came out to his mother and sister, he used a strategy similar to Neil's in disclosing his gay identity. For Gavin though, the disclosure took place at work. Gavin works at a marketing agency and, as part of his job, is very active on social media websites like Facebook and Twitter. For Gavin, this professional social network is an important part of his daily life:

When you work in social media, by nature you're pretty well connected, so I know a lot of people! I was shocked that nobody else [in my workplace] was gay! I don't know why this is, but I started thinking that for whatever reason people in social media are very conservative. A lot of them are Christians, and post this on their online profiles. I got tired of that and thought if they're going to put stuff like that [online], I'm going to put that I'm a proud gay. So I did it! I put it up on Twitter and Facebook – and surprisingly, it was really well received!

Much like Neil, Gavin made his gay identity known in writing, to a wide audience. This also was part of Gavin's continual efforts to come out. He had gained support from others

who were close to him, and thus did not really *need* additional support from co-workers. Gavin did describe to me though, how he would make it a point to "throw [my sexuality] in their faces. I try really hard!" Gavin feels that he does not represent the image of a stereotypical gay person. "They don't see the gay because I'm not very effeminate. Sometimes I try to get a little effeminate because that's when people will know that I'm gay. I really just want to push the issue." By acting more effeminately, Gavin thinks that his performance of sexuality will be interpreted more accurately. In doing this, Gavin tells me that he'll try to talk about pop culture a little bit more, talk more with his hands, or even jokingly talk with a "gay voice" – one that relies on the stereotype that gay men speak with a high-pitched lisp (Gertler and Thorpe 2015). Performances of gender are done sometimes intentionally to manage sexual identities. Acting more effeminately is seen as a way of performing gayness. Many other men referred to ways that they would use gender in order to indicate their sexual identity, without explicitly coming out.

Coming Out By Dropping Hints

In managing their sexual identities, some men lead people to conclude that they are gay, without saying so directly. Men do not necessarily say the words "I'm gay," but by managing their sexuality and gender in strategic ways, they are able to lead others to the conclusion that they are gay.

Steven (23) never came out to his family. "My parents know that I'm gay, but I never had to tell them. I guess there were enough indicators along the way that they just assumed that their son was gay." Steven told me about some of the toys that he used to

play with when he was growing up that were "made for girls," and different television shows that he would watch:

> I used to make my mother buy me Polly Pocket toys, and I loved watching beauty pageants when I was growing up. My mother told me once as an adult, "Oh honey, I knew [you were gay] when you were five years old. It was that easy to tell!"

Because Steven was interested in stereotypically feminine toys and television shows, his mother had come to the conclusion that Steven was not heterosexual. Steven might not have known he was gay at the time, but his performance of gender meant that others assumed he would be gay. Steven continues to rely on gender to say something about his sexuality:

> I think the tone of my voice is an indicator of being gay. I'm always called ma'am when I go through drive through food windows. I don't have a low voice. I think that between the tone of my voice and the fact that I articulate well…I think those are feminine qualities.

Steven also makes the assumption that because of the pitch of his voice and the way he articulates his words, that others interpret this as the way a gay man's voice sounds. Gay men sometimes rely on stereotypes of gayness to communicate their identity without having to say the words, "I'm gay."

Barry (30) also uses a strategy of dropping hints to reveal his sexuality. As part of his continual coming out process, he tells me a story of how he revealed that he was gay:

> I had gone to a [gay] pride event in Tel Aviv one year. I hadn't told many people where exactly I had gone, but I was showing someone all my pictures. There were

a lot of pictures of drag queens, and guys dancing in like, pink speedos. It was all

really flamboyant and sexual stuff – the way people were dancing…this person

had to know after that that I'm gay.

Again, we see that performances of femininity indicate gayness. Female impersonators, the color of the dancers' clothing, and presumably the way that they were dancing was interpreted as something more effeminate, and would also be interpreted as something so obviously gay that he assumed anyone looking at the pictures would make the connection that because Barry was there, he must be gay.

Rodney (41) also relies on a strategy of dropping hints when coming out to people, both professionally and in his personal life:

When I meet people I assume that they know that I'm gay. And I try to do things

that would indicate that. I definitely don't try to hide that I'm gay. I might start

talking about what I'm interested in, or that I live downtown with my husband. I

make that kind of small talk [to let people know I'm gay].

Rodney indicates that he is gay by mentioning his husband, as well as revealing some of his interests (which he considers to be more effeminate). By revealing this during casual conversation and addressing his partnership in a way that heterosexuals might, he also normalizes the fact that he is gay.

The strategy of dropping hints is part of a continual coming out process that they employ in their daily lives. They rely on gender stereotypes as well as heteronormative assumptions that associate masculinity with heterosexuality, and femininity with gayness. By performing gender in a more feminine way (by talking about feminine interests, or dressing in certain clothes for example), men attempt to indicate their gay sexual identity.

Similarly, men use masculine performances in order to conceal their gay identity, or to act straight. These performances, as I have demonstrated, are often both intentional and strategic. Men make conscious choices in managing their sexual and gender identities, with the intention of appearing more or less gay.

CONCLUSION

For men who identify as gay, sexual identity management is a continual process, specifically in terms of concealing or revealing their sexuality. The coming out process is one that men face daily. They choose if to come out, to whom to come out, and how to come out. The strategies for concealing and revealing their sexual identities vary. As a strategy for concealing their gay identities, some men maintain relationships with women. Others "play it straight" by lying about being gay. Still others avoid conversations that might reveal their sexuality or leave out information when talking with others to keep an illusion of straightness.

Coming out of the closet is achieved in a number of different ways, by different men, and at different times. My analysis of men's initial coming out stories reveals that finding support for a gay identity is important. In order to claim a gay identity, men need validation from others that this identity is legitimate. Men discussed the ways that they would locate supportive individuals to come out to, sometimes by "testing the waters" to find acceptance. Maximizing supportive contacts while minimizing unsupportive ones is part of a coming out process that Jason Orne (2011) terms strategic outness. Men describe finding people who are supportive of LGBT persons and coming out to them first in order to build a strong support network. Men concealed their sexuality to

unsupportive individuals, at least until they felt that their support network was strong enough (Orne 2011).

Consistent with prior studies (D'Augelli and Hershberger 1993; Rossi 2010; Savin-Williams 1998), many men reported coming out to friends first, and then to family members. Maximizing a supportive social network is a motivation for this strategy of coming out. Even after initially coming out, however, men describe ways that they continue to come out in their daily lives. In addition to having private conversations, men sometimes announce their gay identity in very public ways (e.g., via social media, speeches). Other times, men will "drop hints" to lead others to the conclusion that they are gay. This is often accomplished by relying on stereotypes of gay men – especially that gay men are more effeminate than straight men. Thus, performances of sexuality also require performances of gender.

In describing gayness, men also identify desirable, or acceptable, performances of gayness. They describe these in contrast to other performances of gayness that might be undesirable (i.e., performances that are *too* gay). Whether or not they approved, several of the men recognized that gay and straight audiences alike, could easily see performances of gayness that were "too gay" as being negative. These displays of sexuality are integrated with performances of gender, and with the hegemonic nature of masculinity. But, as I argue here, performances of sexuality also speak to the hegemonic nature of sexuality – where heterosexuality is still valued more than homosexuality – even among gay men. Hegemonic sexuality operates similarly to other forms of hegemony. It subordinates anyone who does not resemble the ideal type, or in this case, what it means to be a certain "kind" of gay man. Some gay men, who are too flamboyant

or showy or, simply, *too* gay, are disadvantaged compared to other gay men, even if just in terms of social desirability. We learn from some of the respondents that it is okay to be gay, but not *too* gay. Sometimes, being too gay is seen as an obstacle to professional opportunities/promotions, or potentially unsafe in settings where homophobia festers and where gay men are not welcome. Other times, gay men indicate that some gay men, particularly those that are too flamboyant or who flaunt their sexuality in front of others, perpetuate negative stereotypes of gay men, and hence are seen as undesirable.

In the next chapter, I focus in on the workplace as one of the most important social locations where men manage their gender and sexual identities, using many different management strategies. They manage gender and sexuality strategically, depending on their job, position, and level of comfort.

CHAPTER 6

(GAY) MEN AT WORK: MANAGING GENDERED AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES

IN THE WORKPLACE

I [used to] work on an oil rig in North Dakota, and I was making good money. My boss had told me, 'Hey – you can't act gay. You can't do that.' I had to start making up stories. I would make up stories of the girls I was seeing. [My coworkers] started to invite me to go out to the bars with them, but I wouldn't go. I started having a hard time keeping my stories straight. I am a little disappointed in myself for not being honest. But I'm happy that I finally got the courage to leave that part of me behind. I decided I couldn't do that. If I couldn't be who I was, then I couldn't be doing [that job], so I left.

- TJ (25)

Erving Goffman developed his theories of the self around the idea that life is like a theatrical performance, and that as performers, we are either on the front stage, or the back stage (Goffman 1959). Our behavior is often guided by whether we are on the front stage (where we portray ourselves in a particular role), or the back stage (where we "let our guard down" and are most likely to be our "true" selves). In any kind of role, an actor may gauge the success (or failure) of their performance based on their interpretation of the audience's response. Thus, successful performances—however defined--of a particular role are repeated, and failed performances are altered or abandoned altogether.

In the present study of gender and sexuality, I have argued thus far that gender (in terms of masculinity or femininity) and sexuality (in terms of "gayness") are two components of gay men's identities that are managed sometimes separately, and sometimes simultaneously, but that these identities are almost always linked together. I have also argued that these performances of gender and sexuality change throughout one's lifetime. Gender and sexuality are not performed consistently throughout one's life. They are often not performed consistently throughout a single day for some men. I have already discussed in the previous chapters how performances of identity change depend on the audience, setting, and other contextual factors. The strategies that men use to manage these identities also change, depending on how they wish to be perceived. Sometimes these performances are successful, and sometimes they are unsuccessful.

The workplace offers a unique social location to study the management of gendered and sexual identities. Although the men describe very different work place environments, they all single out work as a particularly important setting for identity performance. Some of the workplaces are more accepting of men's sexuality than others. Some men remain closeted at work, while others are out to all of their co-workers and their boss. In all of the men's experience, gender and sexuality are managed both separately and simultaneously. There is also great variation among the men in regards to occupation and educational background. Participants work in a variety of jobs – including service work, corporate jobs, and professional trades. Many men work multiple jobs, with different performances of gender and sexuality at those places of employment. And yet, even in the variation among men's occupations and these very different work settings, there are some commonalities in terms of the strategies for managing identities.

In this chapter, I discuss not only the ways that gender and sexual identities are managed at work, but also discuss how coming out at work is different from coming out to family members or friends. Coming out at work render LGBT individuals vulnerable to potential negative consequences (e.g., discrimination in the workplace, uncomfortable social interactions, being fired or passed up for promotion) (Gates and Mitchell 2013; Giuffre, Dellinger, and Williams 2008; King, Reilly and Hebl 2008). Gay men in this study who have come out at work discuss reasons why, despite these potential negative consequences, they chose to out themselves. Primarily, this has to deal with a desire to be authentic – or lessening the distance between front and back stages, as Goffman would describe (1959). Lastly, I recapitulate the concept of hegemonic sexuality, describing how both hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic sexuality are present in the workplace under the guise of "professionalism." That is, I argue that professionalism is one example of how hegemonic sexuality exists in the everyday lives of the men in this study.

WHY IS STUDYING THE WORKPLACE IMPORTANT?

Whether working full-time or part-time, work is integral to our lives. In 2000, workers in the United States worked on average 40.46 hours a week (McGrattan and Rogerson 2004). More recent data from the American Time Use Survey indicate that in 2012, the average workday for an employed person aged 25 to 54 with children was 8.8 hours long, which adds up to 44 hours per week (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2013). Other estimates indicate that employed adults in the U.S. work more hours annually than employed adults in most European nations, including Germany and France (Prescott 2004). Essentially, we spend a great deal of time working, and a great deal of time around

our coworkers. This makes the workplace an important social environment for identity performance and identity management. Individuals manage their identities in workspaces differently than in their private lives (Kirby and Hay 1997; Rumens 2009). Gay men, as I demonstrate, have developed strategies to negotiate these spaces in order to manage both their gendered and sexual identities.

There is some previous research that describes the circumstances under which lesbian, gay and bisexuals come out at work. The current study supports many of the findings of previous literature, especially regarding job satisfaction, perceived discrimination, and anxiety levels of gay men (Griffith and Hebl 2002; Ragins and Cornwell 2001; Tilcsik 2011). But while previous studies focus on gay men's "out" status in relation to those concerns, they do not often consider the details of the coming out strategies themselves - the specific strategies gay men use - nor do they consider the continuous strategies that men use to manage their sexual and gendered identities. That is, coming out itself is a lifelong career (Guittar and Rayburn 2016) that gay men must continuously go through as they encounter new people, in new environments. While navigating this continuous process of moving in and out of the closet, men are also managing their sexual and gendered identities. These two identities often rely on one another for validation, but not always. Sometimes, they push against each other in contention, and do not "fit" in predictable or complementary ways.

In what follows, I address three areas related to gay men's experiences in the workplace. First, I discuss how dress and language/communication are tools for gay men's identity management strategies in the workplace. Next, I discuss coming out as an identity management strategy within the workplace. Specifically, I find that men must

manage their fears of discrimination with their desires for authenticity. Lastly, I present evidence explaining how hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic sexuality operate in the workplace, camouflaged by what the men in my study refer to as "professionalism." What is considered professional is always contextual, and depends largely on the work environment, positions of power, and relations to others. Regardless of such variations, however, professionalism is always gendered (Martimianakis, Maniate, and Hodges 2009). While existing literature addresses the ways that masculinity and femininity are performed in professional ways, the literature does not address ways that sexuality is also important in professional settings to the same extent. Since professionalism is assumed to be reserved for the workplace, and that private life is kept separate from work (Abbott 1989), we might also assume that sexual identities (often regarded as a private matter), have no place at work. Of course, our work lives and our private lives are not kept separate quite that easy; the two spheres are far more fluid, and overlap one another (Seron and Ferris 1995). Being professional often requires a masculine performance (Cheney and Ashcraft 2007; Davies et al. 2005). Femininity is viewed as unprofessional, and I extend that to also include gayness. Using professionalism as a particularly important site for expressions of hegemonic sexuality, I demonstrate how performances of gender and sexuality are important in the workplace, and that some performances of sexuality are considered more appropriate (or desirable) for the workplace than others.

MANAGING IDENTITY THROUGH DRESS

Much scholarly literature has addressed how both gender and sexuality are performed through personal effects – particularly clothing. In his essay on fashion, Georg

Simmel (1957) describes fashion as the replication of dress within a particular social class that distinguishes it from other classes. Fashion is used to both distinguish one class from another and to unite members of the same class. While Simmel (1957) focuses his analysis of fashion on social classes, he also addresses the fashionable choices that men and women make in relation to their social positions. We can also extend his theory to practices of distinction among other social groups, such as straight versus gay men. While clothes are not inherently gendered, they can become so and emerge as important symbols of gender, sexuality, social class, and so on (Goffman 1959; Simmel 1957). Several studies have looked at the ways that gender is queered through drag performances (Berkowitz, Belgrave, and Halberstein 2007; Friedman and Jones 2011; Horowitz 2013; Taylor 2005). But for gay men who do not dress in drag, choice of clothing is still an important component of how they manage their sexual and gendered identities, particularly at work. Many work places have norms guiding what is considered appropriate and not appropriate for professional attire. Some workplaces have formal rules dictating uniforms that must be worn to work, while other jobs may have more general guidelines (e.g., business casual or more formal business attire) that become part of office or workplace culture. In jobs that allow greater individual choice in attire, gendered and sexual identities can be managed in conscious ways.

The men I interviewed did not all have choice in the clothes that they wore to work. Some men, like Kenneth, work in the food industry and wear a prescribed work uniform. Other men, like TJ, who works for an airline company have to follow a formal dress code policy with limited options (e.g., employees can choose to wear one of several "looks" including a jacket, or a vest, or a tie, or a combination of company-provided

garments). Still other men, however, work in places with a business casual dress code where they have a broad range of clothing options that are considered acceptable. Overwhelmingly, the men in this study report that their choice of dress has less to do with concealing sexuality (or revealing it), and more to do with appearing "professional." Of course, while what is seen as professional largely depends on the place of employment (Martimianakis et al. 2009), it generally has to do with a particular masculine demeanor and style of dress (Cheney and Ashcraft 2007). In general, men discussed wanting to be seen as responsible workers, but they are also cautious with their choice of dress in some situations. They consciously dressed in certain ways in order to not make others uncomfortable, and also to not draw too much attention to themselves. This strategy of dressing professionally relies, of course, on gendered assumptions of what it means for men to be dressed professionally. Cal (39), who works in human resources, tells me that:

> When we have meetings, I might dress in dress pants and a shirt, but that's not for masculinity reasons – not because I'm concerned about the group perceiving my masculinity, it's about a presentation of an image that shows that I take the work I'm doing professionally.

Cal indicates a lack of concern for how his work clothes contribute to his masculine identity, but that he does consider himself dressing for his job. Cal fails to acknowledge however, that the pants and shirt he chooses to wear actually *are* consistent with norms of masculinity in his workplace (Dellinger 2002). In fact, the default norm for men in white-collar work is to be masculine (Casanova 2015), and that professionalism and masculinity essentially go hand-in-hand in the workplace. Cal's clothes symbolize professionalism and the fact that he takes his work seriously. He wears the same kind of pants and shirt

that the other men he works with are wearing, thus signaling that he is just like his other male colleagues. Casanova (2015) explains that it is common for white-collar men to blend in with other men as a way they attempt to keep their jobs (or position themselves for better ones).

James, a 27 year-old grade school teacher, articulates how gender does matter to him. "Obviously there is a certain professional dress appropriate for men [as] opposed to women. But as far as gender and sexuality, it's not as much about trying to be in or out of the closet. It's just not something I'm that concerned about." While Catherine Connell (2014) finds that LGBT teachers *do* carefully consider the ways they perform sexuality in their classrooms, James reports that he is not particularly concerned with the perception of his sexuality. However, he acknowledges that in order to dress professionally, men and women must wear different clothes. Even though men claimed to not pay much attention to the style of clothing that they wore, they did mention other ways that dress mattered at work.

For example, several men discussed how the *color* of their clothing mattered to both their gendered and sexual identities. Evan (40), who works in marketing and public relations, tells me that at certain work functions "I am not wearing my pink shirt - period. I wear as much black as I possibly can." He describes that while interacting with clients and other business partners, the norms of dress dictate that men wear a lot of dark-colored clothing. Evan tells me he tries his best to fit in as much as he can, and to not look "too gay." He says, "Maybe it's more of a culture thing, but my big bright shirts? I will purposefully avoid [wearing them]. I don't think that would help my cause any." He fears that the brightly colored shirts will indicate something about his sexuality, and people

will assume that he is gay for wearing them. Evan indicated to me that he already worries about standing out at work. He is about six feet, six inches tall, and can be very animated when he talks, often with his hands. Evan describes other ways he tries to downplay his sexuality. In work environments, Evan wears black clothing, and tries to "butch up" his use of gestures – by not using his hands so much while talking (I discuss gestures and body language strategies in the following section). While Evan attempts to not stick out among his colleagues, he sometimes feels like his efforts are futile, since as he says, "even before a word comes out of my mouth – you know how they say – the purse opens up and the beads fall out! [laughing] Even before the purse opens up! If I'm wearing a bright shirt [they'll know I'm gay]!"

Evan's strategy for managing gender and sexuality relies both on hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic sexuality. He thinks of his hand gestures as being too feminine – something that needs to be masculinized before he can hopefully be perceived as fitting in (i.e., appearing to be straight, or straight *enough*). He also acknowledges feeling that certain colors of clothing, worn in the wrong crowd, will be thought of as too bright and too flamboyant. This does not fit into the idealized form of hegemonic masculinity – or the idealized form of hegemonic sexuality. As I discuss later, gay men make efforts to downplay their sexuality at work, under the premise of professionalism. Expression of sexuality is not considered safe for work, and many men feel the need to conform to conventional styles of dress in the workplace, so as not to appear "too gay."

Before continuing to demonstrate how dress matters for many men in the workplace, I would like to point out that men's experiences are influenced by a number of different factors. Isaac, who also works in the marketing industry, does not experience

the same pressure to conform to a particular style of dress. "I dress very casually at work. The whole agency's environment is very different from your typical corporate environment. It's much more laid back." On the day of our interview, Isaac, who met me during his lunch break, was wearing a red and blue colored short-sleeved button down shirt, jeans, and flip-flops. While Evan and Isaac work in similar jobs, they have very different attitudes towards their dress. Several factors could be contributing to this difference, but I do not have enough evidence to conclude with confidence which factors matter for understanding these differences. Evan lives and works in a suburb, while Isaac lives and works in an urban environment. Evan is 40 years old, and works predominantly with men, while Isaac is 24 years old and works predominantly with women. Any of these factors could help shape how the two men perceive the importance of dress at work. What they share, however, is a conscious monitoring of their gender and sexuality while at work. Even Isaac, who may not worry as much about his dress, considers his actions when working with other men:

> I don't know how to describe it…[the men I work with] are just a little bit drier I would say. They're not as animated or like fun-loving and goofy and silly as [my female co-workers and I] are. When I work with [the men], I definitely feel like an outsider at times. I don't feel like I act the same way or say the same things around them. Their style of communication is different I would say. I don't feel like I can be [myself] around them. I'm afraid that they might think that because I'm gay that I'm hitting on them if I look at them too long or look at them the wrong way.

Isaac interacts differently with other men in the office in hopes that his sexuality does not make others uncomfortable. Isaac's fear of making others uncomfortable is in part guided by hegemonic sexuality. Isaac tells me that, "everyone in the office knows I'm gay," but he still worries that if he comes across as the wrong kind of gay (e.g., one who makes unwelcomed passes at straight men), he may suffer negative consequences (e.g., social discomfort or isolation at the least). Instead, Isaac tries to change the way he communicates with other men in his office, presumably in a more masculine way, so as to fit in with their office culture norms.

Neil (25) is a social worker who works with inmates. Like Evan, Neil also stresses the importance of the color of one's clothing when it comes to managing identities. Neil describes his dress as "business casual," and thus he has some flexibility in what he wears to still be dressed professionally. He describes one day when he felt that he made a mistake in his wardrobe choice. In order to meet with his clients, he has to walk through a long hallway lined with windows where he is visible to the inmates. On this particular day at the justice center, he wore a pair of burnt orange khaki pants. He described feeling like he was being stared at, as if all of the inmates somehow knew that he is gay, just from his choice of pants:

> I distinctly remember seeing them all staring at me and I was
>
> like…"fuck." Ever since then, whenever I go to the justice center I make a
>
> very concerted effort to contain my posture and presentation. It sounds
>
> ridiculous to care about what inmates are thinking of you. Their opinion
>
> matters to me – what does that say about my own insecurities?

Hegemonic masculinity compels men to compare themselves with other men. It also positions gay men as subordinate in relation to heterosexual men. However, there are other markers of masculinity that are used as sources of power. Neil's profession as a social worker generally gives him a sense of power, at least over those who need the services provided by social workers. However, when Neil felt that he was being stared at, he perceived this as a threat – in terms of his confidence. The color of his clothing was significant in Neil's perception of his own masculine and gay identity – it was too flamboyant in Neil's mind. He felt uncomfortable being stared at by the inmates because he either didn't feel like he looked masculine enough, or that he looked too gay. Somehow, this mattered to Neil. He became insecure and felt that because the color of his pants indicated something about his sexuality, the inmates had suddenly gained a sliver of power over him – at least enough to cause Neil to be insecure and later change his behaviors around them. Neil did not discuss feeling insecure around other social workers or other professionals that he encountered in his job. He also did not comment on how he thinks about dress when he is around those people. The moment that was most salient though, in terms of guiding his behavior, is this memory of walking by the inmates wearing pants that might have been too gay, or too feminine, or not masculine enough. Something about this combination of dress, audience, and situation was enough to make Neil reconsider the way that he dresses and acts when he plans to be in front of this audience. Later in our interview, Neil tells me how his dress might be different when he is not at work:

> You know, when I go to a neutral place or a gay bar, I'm always thinking that I want to look stylish at a gay bar. I want to be seen as desirable…but I don't ever

want to stand out though. I like colorful things but I would never wear a bright

orange shirt or something. I know I said I had bright burnt orange pants, but that's

different. A lot of it has to do with like, how much do I want to stand out? How

much do I want to be noticed? How much do I want to – not necessarily blend in,

but just - not have to think about that so much? Like to be appreciated for

understanding style and not be overstated.

While Neil is not only talking about how he dresses at work, he is making a comparison

of what might be acceptable at work versus other places. Furthermore, I see this as an

example of how hegemonic sexuality guides men's performance of sexuality. As a gay

man, Neil wants to be seen as stylish and attractive to other gay men, but not in a way

that becomes "overstated." I interpret this as a way that Neil considers how his sense of

fashion, whether at work, or at a gay bar, can make him come across as either desirable,

or too gay. Thus, in this example, place and audience are both important in considering

how to perform gender and sexuality.

Simmel claims that when individuals deviate from fashion norms they do not

necessarily become unique dressers (1957). Rather, those who deviate from these norms

become another "class" of dressers that are not unique at all. Those who do not dress in a

masculine way, for example, may find themselves under the scrutiny of hegemonic

masculinity and become similarly subordinated. For example, men who are labeled (or

identify themselves) as "metrosexual" dress fashionably and pay close attention to

aesthetic appearances (Wickman 2011). However, there are sometimes negative

associations with the label – that metrosexual men are too vain, too effeminate, or too

gay[17]. While these men dress outside of what is considered the norm for masculinity, they may be subordinated as a group of people who are labeled as metrosexual[18].

Clothing represents part of a performance of gender - and sexuality - in any environment. While not all of the men in this study recognize that their choice of clothing contributes to their gendered or sexual identities, stories like those told by Evan and Isaac show us that others might interpret wearing particular colors of clothing as being too gay, or not masculine enough. This is important because it then changes how the men themselves feel about their own performance of gender and sexuality. Some men claimed that their choice of clothing had nothing to do with dressing masculine, but that they wore certain clothing to look professional. Dressing "professionally" however, is guided by gender norms and ultimately does say something about sexuality as well. Men who are not dressed masculine enough, or straight enough, are seen as breaking some kind of workplace norm, and are pressured to conform – even if this pressure is implicit. I continue to address professionalism later in this chapter, but will first discuss how men manage their identities at work using language and communication.

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[17] In their study on metrosexuality, Casanova, et al. (2016) described three different opinions of their respondents regarding the extent that sexuality is a part of metrosexuality. Some respondents think that sexuality has nothing to do with being metrosexual. Others viewed metrosexual as a label for gay men who were still closeted. Still other respondents saw metrosexual as a term that allowed for an alternative space for straight men interested in aesthetic appearances to not be labeled as gay.

[18] Casanova, et al. (2016) find that definitions of metrosexuality are sometimes negative, and sometimes positive. The spectrum of uses of the term "metrosexual" offers an interesting open-ended question of how this term is used both in theory and in practice, and for what purpose.

In addition to using dress as a strategy for managing gender and sexuality in the workplace, men also described how language and communication become tools to tinker with gender and sexuality performance. Several authors have described what might constitute a gay aesthetic or a gay sensibility – elements of gay culture or "gayness" that contribute somehow to the ways that gay people are distinguishable from their heterosexual counterparts (Alexander 2010; Chauncey 1994; Halperin 2012; Levine 1998). These characteristics range from dress and grooming habits, to preference of music genres and the stereotypical "gay lisp." Consistent with the findings from other studies[19], men in this study pick up on how gendered ways of communication say something about both masculinity and sexuality. Three themes emerged related to the ways that men communicate strategically. Carefully choosing topics of conversation (and also avoiding other topics) is one strategy men use to either reveal or conceal their sexuality. Second, men describe body language and gesture use as part of their gendered and sexual performances. Lastly, the men talk about how they use various elements of paralanguage (i.e., parts of speech including inflection, speed of talking, etc.) to manage their identities.

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[19] For example, while living in New York City in the 1980's, Martin Levine observed that the four most common topics of conversation among gay friends were "the four D's:" Disco, Drugs, Dish, and Dick (1998). David Halperin (2012) writes how being able to quote lines from particular campy films reinforces not only individual gay identity, but as a way of participating in gay culture that also validates membership in the gay collective identity.

Topics of Conversation

For some men, simply avoiding the topic of sexuality at work was the main strategy utilized to conceal their gay identity. Compulsory heterosexuality defines straightness as the norm of society, and reinforces an assumption of "straight, until proven gay" (Rich 1980). Thus, the men who wished to remain closeted at work felt they could avoid any negative reactions from coworkers or employers by relying on the assumption that they would be seen as straight, unless they came out as gay (given that they convincingly play the part of a straight man while at work).

Anthony (26), who works as a manager of an automobile manufacturing plant, was warned by his boss (who is gay) to remain closeted:

My boss had kind of just figured out that I was gay because I never seemed interested in talking about women at work. He confronted me and told me that he was gay also, but advised me that if I wanted to move up the management ladder, I shouldn't come out at work. He warned me that people in the auto industry are not very tolerant of gays, so I've just made sure to not let anything slip in regards to me being gay.

Another respondent, Patrick (32), who works for a software development company, purposefully engages in vague conversations about his private life with coworkers. Patrick describes how he avoids talk about girlfriends and what he does on his weekends. "It's kind of a game to find ways of saying something without saying anything and not being specific." For a long time, Patrick did not tell coworkers whether or not he had a romantic partner. He also avoided telling them what he does with his personal time – especially if he goes out with gay friends to the gay neighborhood in his city.

Raymond (52) provides another example of how the topic of sexuality is avoided at work. Raymond works in politics, and tells me about his experiences when he was a "new guy" to the political scene in Washington D.C. As a new college graduate, and like many of his colleagues, Raymond had not yet come out.

> Gay people existed, but it was always a big secret no matter who you were. And so those of us who were in politics – we knew who all the gay members of Congress were and all of the gay political appointees. We didn't talk about it and we didn't socialize in gay settings or anything. It was just the [political] culture.

Raymond lived in D.C. during the late 1970s and early 1980s. This is after the gay liberation movement of the late 1960s and just before the outbreak of HIV/AIDS. These developments contributed to making gay men more visible in public life. Raymond, however, followed the traditional norms of political culture at the time, which was to conceal his own gay identity by avoiding conversations about sexuality.

Sean (31) also uses conversation topics to manage his gender and sexual identity, emphasizing masculinity and trying to appear straight (enough):

> When I was bartending [at a straight bar], it was important for me to connect with my customers and make them comfortable. I don't really like sports, but it was important for me to stay current on the latest games – who won, who was playing soon, and other big sports events. I still didn't watch sports, but I could at least convince other guys that I knew what I was talking about.

Sports and alcohol consumption are two characteristics of traditional masculinity (Capraro 2000; Messner 1990). Sean uses these sites as a way to reinforce his own performance of masculinity. In doing so, he is also hoping to keep his sexuality in the closet. "I don't want to come out to my guests. I want them to stay at my bar and keep drinking! Being openly gay in that environment could cause people to leave." The concept of compulsory heterosexuality suggests that as long as Sean delivers a convincing performance of masculinity and does not reveal that he is gay, he will (hopefully) be assumed to be straight. Gender and sexuality are managed simultaneously through these performances.

While some men avoid conversations about sexuality in order to remain closeted, other men purposefully talk about certain things that might reveal their gay identity. This does not always mean that they say the words "I'm gay," but rather they discuss issues that might be important to gay men, for example. Gavin (26) works at a marketing firm. He is out at work, and "puts it out there a lot," as he says. Gavin describes himself as being a non-stereotypical gay man that lacks a lot of the "gay mannerisms that would give me away. That's why I try to overcompensate and talk about my involvement with the local HIV/AIDS resource center, I talk about HIV, talk about people who are gay." Society still associates gay men with HIV and AIDS[20]. By making a point to talk about these topics, Gavin is actively trying to manage his sexuality. He is hoping that people will conclude that he is gay if he talks about his involvement in the gay community and caring about gay issues.

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[20] Men who have sex with men are more severely affected by HIV compared to any other group in the United States (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2014).

Patrick, Raymond, Gavin, and Sean each use conversation as a way to either conceal or reveal their sexual identity. Sometimes these performances also took into consideration how a gendered performance would be helpful in also managing sexual identity (e.g., performing masculinity in a convincing way often was enough to perform straightness convincingly enough as well). These men work in very different occupations (software development, politics, marketing, food service), so I conclude that the strategy of avoiding/engaging in certain topics of conversation is useful as a tool for identity management regardless of the type of work individuals engage in.

Body Language

Some respondents in this study discuss body language - specifically the use of gestures - as another strategy to conceal their sexual identity[21]. By using what they identify as masculine gestures (or more commonly avoiding use of feminine gestures), these men hope to not be identified as gay. For Evan, this is a very conscious decision. "I've tried to butch up the gestures. My hand gestures are [typically wild]. I'm knocking things over because my hands are swinging so much!" Evan tells me how he tries to rationalize this "butch" behavior, and why he uses certain gestures in some contexts and not in others. "Maybe it's less of a masculine/feminine thing. It's more of an intimidation thing. I don't always just get to be as relaxed in my personality. There's a persona that has to change." Evan describes that when he is with his friends (to whom he is out), his

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[21] Many men *are* out in the workplace, and do not necessarily try to conceal their sexual identities. In the interviews I conducted however, none of the men discussed ways that they actively used gestures or body language to intentionally manage their sexual identity. They may be doing this in reality of course, but I cannot say for certain without direct observations of the men in their workplaces.

wild arm gestures are common. But in other settings, like at work, he tries to limit the way he talks with his hands. Evan does not want to think of his behavior change in terms of gender, but this is *exactly* what is happening. When Evan feels intimidated (in whatever sense), he feels the need to use fewer effeminized gestures and to change his persona – to be *more* masculine, and *less* gay.

Recall Neil, who also describes how he "makes a very concerted effort to contain my posture and presentation" in a way that is not effeminate at work. Also discussing posture, Gavin explained to me that a man who stands with his hip pushed out to one side, or someone who walks with "swishy hips" is considered to be more feminine. Body language in these instances says something not only about one's gender (as being feminine), but also about one's sexuality (as being gay).

Paralanguage

Participants also discuss the *ways* they talk during conversations at work. These ways of speaking are elements of paralanguage (e.g., pitch range, speech speed, rhythm). Paralanguage is important to communication, as it affects the meaning of the messages sent to other individuals as well as how those messages are received (Qiang 2013). Depending on the stress we place on certain words, the volume at which we speak, and our use of pause within messages, the semantic information we send can be different (Qiang 2013). Several of the respondents in this study described how they sometimes change the way they talk while in their work environments. In effect, they are using paralanguage as a tool to manage their gendered and sexual identities.

Dylan (26) is a restaurant server. He tells me that while he is working, he tries to adjust his behavior depending on whom he is serving:

> If I'm greeting a table of ladies, I'm going to be a little more flamboyant in the way that I approach them. I'm not going to put on my butch voice [like I would] if I was serving a table of business guys. [With men], I'm going to talk a little deeper, a little slower.

Dylan explains to me that his job depends on providing service to people that they will enjoy. Since Dylan is working for tips, making his guests feel comfortable directly influences his income. "It's because I don't want [my male customers] to think that I'm gay. I'm not going to try to hide who I am. I just try to make them comfortable." Dylan worries that male customers would be uncomfortable around openly gay people, so he attempts to alter the way he interacts with different customers. Hegemonic masculinity can explain part of why Dylan behaves differently in front of men and women. Dylan might feel pressured to act more masculine in front of a group of men (compared to women) because, as Michael Kimmel (1996) explains, men are seen as the primary gatekeepers of masculinity. Men must somehow "earn" masculinity through successful performances in front of other men, who validate the performance. Certain aspects of speech, such as the speed of communication, and the pitch of our voices reveal something about our gender, and consequently our sexuality. In their article addressing masculinity on the television show *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, Morrish and O'Mara (2004) describe how the main actors' use of inflection and suggestive phrases while talking to one another makes it obvious, in case we forgot – that they are gay. Yet when these actors are talking with the straight guest, they change the way they communicate in order

to make the guest (and likely themselves) feel comfortable, much like the way Dylan describes his experiences. Using inflection then, is a way for men to manage sexuality and gender identities in conscious ways.

In sum, several of the men routinely use elements of paralanguage to manage their gendered and sexual identities in the workplace. According to a number of the participants, speaking more slowly and with a deeper voice is more masculine (and straight) than a high-pitched voice that could be perceived as being more feminine (and gay). While elements of paralanguage are used in attempts to indicate something about gender and sexuality, they only hint at these identities.

For men who wish to be out at work, explicitly coming out is another strategy they use. And while I (as well as other authors) have argued previously that coming out is a continual process that must often be repeated time and time again, it is used as a way of revealing one's sexual identity (Orne 2011). The next section of this chapter discusses how men manage their identities by disclosing their gay identities.

MANAGING IDENTITY THROUGH DISCLOSURE

As discussed in the previous chapter, men come out as part of a strategy to manage their sexual identities. The reasons for coming out are varied, but many men desire to present their authentic selves in front of others. Goffman describes this concept in terms of decreasing the role distance between the front and back stages of one's life (1959), but since then, scholars have expanded the use of this term. Authenticity is often considered synonymous with "sincerity, truthfulness, originality, and the feeling and practice of being true to oneself" (Vannini and Franzese 2008:1621). It can also be

thought of as a commitment to one's self-values (Erickson 1995). For gay men, living openly gay is a way to be consistent in the presentation of their own sexual identity across different social contexts. While gay men still manage their sexuality in different ways in different spaces, they do not necessarily feel pressured to live in the closet. Instead, men are able to both come *out*, and fit *in* with the norms of their environment, while maintaining an authentic sense of self (Hutson 2010).

Gay men in this study wrestled with wanting to be authentic in terms of their gay identity, but also wanting to be accepted in their workplace (for being gay and being professional workers). Sharing an *authentic* sense of self is important to many of the participants. Sometimes the desire to be authentic was the catalyst for coming out. Other times, the satisfaction of being authentic was realized after coming out. In most cases, being authentic was seen positively. Recall TJ (25), who introduced this chapter. After working for some time on an oilrig, he realized that he was unhappy because he was not able to be himself. He said, "I'm happy that I finally got the courage to leave that part of me behind. I decided I couldn't do that. If I couldn't be who I was, then I couldn't be doing [that job], so I left." TJ couldn't be authentic in that job, so he needed to go elsewhere – to a job where he could be open with his sexuality. Now he works in the airline industry and he tells me, "I feel okay being out at work, because there are a lot of gay people in the airline industry." While part of this is a management of an authentic sense of self, it is also an example of emotion-management, where TJ decides to change jobs because he wants to feel better about himself and the interactions he will have in a different job (Hoschild 1979). He tells me that after starting to work in a more accepting environment, he felt more like himself. "I started acting more gay. I got a really gay

haircut, and I bought my first messenger bag. I started going to gay bars, and talking more about it [at work]. I started getting out in the gay community." For TJ, being authentic meant being able to express his gay identity at work in terms of talking about going to gay places, and dressing/looking like how a gay person might look. His individual identity was part of his interpretation of a collective gay identity (i.e., he interprets gay people to have their hair styled a certain way or to wear certain accessories). TJ was gay before the haircut, and he was gay before he started going to gay bars. His presence in gay spaces, however, along with having a gay aesthetic or "look" somehow meant that he was "doing gayness" in the right way. He felt that his identity as a gay person was somehow legitimated by others around him that could now recognize, because of his style or attendance at gay establishments, that he is, in fact, a gay man. TJ's performance of sexuality is intended to authenticate his sexual identity, in a way that is comfortable *for him*. But I also argue that hegemonic sexuality is guiding TJ to perform gayness in a particular way. None of these characteristics makes him any more or less gay than he was before. Nonetheless, he is, in some respects, conforming to certain stereotypes of gay men – that they are found at gay bars, or look a certain way (i.e., they "look gay") – particularly in terms of how he dresses and by getting "a really gay haircut." Through his actions, then, he is acknowledging that there is a very specific way to perform gayness correctly. Performing gayness in the right way allows TJ to feel as though he is being more authentic in his performance and in his identity as a gay man.

As mentioned earlier, authenticity in the workplace can be the catalyst for coming out, or it can be appreciated after coming out. Cal (39) came out at work and felt that

afterwards he had achieved a more true sense of himself that he was pleased with. He

describes how he felt before and after his decision to come out:

> I was afraid of rejection. I was afraid of what other people would think of
>
> me if I shared that [I was gay]. Revealing something that might be seen as
>
> weird or strange or gay or not gay or whatever. But what I found was that
>
> the more real and authentic I am, the more comfortable people are around
>
> me.

After coming out at work, the men in this study describe feeling a sense of relief, and also

surprise that people did not react in a negative way as they had expected. Gavin chose to

come out publically on Facebook and found that he had a lot of support from his family,

friends, and especially coworkers. "Looking back, it was really absurd [to have been

afraid], because nothing happened! Everybody's reaction was really heartfelt, and it felt

really good. I was so nervous about it. I had all these feelings of anxiety and it turned out

great – I was shocked!" Of all the participants in this study, none of the men reported a

negative experience while coming out at work. Only two of the participants remained

closeted at work[22].

Even if the reaction from coworkers is positive, the decision to disclose one's

sexual identity can cause much anxiety and distress. Because they are invisible, non-

heterosexual identities are stigmatized differently than visible "blemishes," such as skin

color (Goffman 1963). Homosexuality cannot be *seen,* per se. In this sense we understand

that sexual minorities occupy a closetable or concealable identity (Hecht and Faulkner

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[22] One of these men was not out to anyone at work, but the other, Anthony (26), was
approached by his boss (who is also gay) and advised Anthony to remain closeted at
work if he wanted to move up in the company they worked for. For this reason, Anthony
told me that he has no plans of sharing his sexual identity with anyone at work.

2000; Herek 1998). Thus, the act of disclosing sexuality is important to the management of one's entire identity. An individual must decide if, and then how, to come out[23]. Then the individual must consider how, when, and to whom disclosure will take place.

Participants in this study describe several reasons for hesitating to come out of the closet in their work environments. There is an ever-present fear of experiencing discrimination from co-workers, bosses, clients, etc. that may be enough to keep a potentially stigmatized identity hidden (Bouzianis, Malcolm, and Hallab 2008). Gavin, who works in marketing, describes hesitations about being out at work. Before coming out, he said, "I felt like I might be shunned. Like my opinion wouldn't be as valued. Everyone might judge me." Gavin was concerned that colleagues would discredit him if he came out. Despite huge gains in LGBT rights (e.g., same-sex marriage is now legal in the United States), LGBT workers continue to feel insecure and stigmatized in the workplace. As the U.S. government continues to debate the passage of an Employment Nondiscrimination Act, LGBT individuals can legally be discriminated against in the workplace in many places. Perceived stigma in the workplace has been linked with anxiety, discrimination, stereotyping, social isolation, stifled advancement and opportunities, and job loss (Clair, Beatty, and MacLean 2005). And although some might perceive this stigma in the workplace, others report being harassed by their colleagues, hearing derogatory comments about LGBT people in the workplace, or witnessing disrespect or discriminatory treatment of other co-workers (Eliason, Dibble and

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[23] Of course, sometimes individuals are outed against their wishes. Participants in this study also told stories of being outed by family members, colleagues or other people before they were ready to be out. But while this is sometimes the case, the necessity of management of sexual identity becomes even more needed for these individuals.

Robertson 2011). Anxieties related to job discrimination play a part in deciding whether or not to come out.

In this study, nearly all the respondents reported being out to at least *some* people at work. Although most respondents considered themselves to be out, they mentioned that this was not without hesitation, anxiety, and much mental preparation. The degree of outness varied as well. Some participants were out to everyone at work, while others were only out to the colleagues they work most closely with (i.e., not out to bosses or subordinates). Other workers chose to come out to their superiors in addition to other coworkers, and one respondent came out to his boss, but not anyone else (in this case, the participant's boss was known to be gay as well). How to come out and to whom are both part of the strategy used to manage sexual and gendered identities.

Isaac (24), a creative designer at a marketing firm, tells me how he came out at work:

> I proposed to the head creative director at the time to start doing a
> campaign for the gay pride events that were coming up. When I was
> talking about gay pride [and why I should be on the project…eventually I
> had to say, 'well I know from experience…' Then obviously, word just
> spread [that I'm gay]. It was just sort of inferred. I didn't have to say,
> 'Hello! I'm gay!'

Isaac used a project at work to manage his identity. By working on a gay-themed project, he was able to indicate his sexuality without having to "come out" and say it.

Similarly, James (27) uses work-related events as a way to manage sexuality. A grade school music teacher, James had asked his new principal for permission to attend a

conference for LGBT music educators. He felt the conference would be part of his professional development, but it also outed him to his new boss. "I felt like I was taking a risk, especially because she is my direct superior who is responsible for my annual review and whether I am recommended to be rehired or not." This kind of uncertainty is troublesome for LGBT individuals who must weigh the costs and benefits of coming out. Even in gay-friendly workplaces, gay and lesbian workers have described differential treatment (e.g., stereotyping, sexual harassment, gender discrimination) because of their sexual identity (Giuffre et al. 2008). If LGBT people fear negative consequences because of their sexual identity, they may try to keep their sexuality concealed, using strategic outness to come out to individuals who are supportive of their gay identity, while keeping their sexuality concealed when threatened by discrimination (Orne 2011; Orne 2013).

While Isaac and James both took steps to reveal their sexuality, not all respondents did. Hunter describes the ways that he keeps his sexual identity concealed:

> "There have been some times during a job interview I intentionally censor myself just in case they might have a negative view about gay people. I don't want to hurt my chances of getting hired, so I leave out the fact that I was the advisor for an LGBT youth group, for example.

Again, the specter of discrimination in the workplace forces gay men to, at the very least, consider what potential negative consequences might lie ahead if they are discovered to be gay. Whether the fear is not being hired, not being promoted, or being fired, gay men face anxiety in the workplace that cause them to manage sexual and gendered identities in different ways. These identities are often tangled in complex ways, so that managing the performance of gender may be done through sexuality, and vice versa. By now, this

should be evident. Some men, in revealing their sexuality, do so by discussing certain topics (e.g., gay bars), or by dressing in a particular way (e.g., wearing certain clothing). These performances rely on both gender *and* sexuality – to inform an audience of the intended identity.

"PROFESSIONALISM" AND HEGEMONIC SEXUALITY

In the previous chapters, I have discussed the concept of hegemonic sexuality, or the idea that some performances of sexuality are valued more than other performances of sexuality. Similar to the notion of hegemonic masculinity, which refers to the dominant form of masculinity that is both normative and culturally exalted, the notion of hegemonic sexuality captures the ways that sexuality too has dominant forms. Hegemonic sexuality extends specifically to gay sexuality, indicating that some ways of being gay are more desirable and rewarded than other ways. Using this term, we can start to understand what David Halperin means when he asserts in his book *How to be Gay*, that he is "a miserable failure as a gay man" (2012:34). Halperin discusses gay culture at large, where a gay collective identity has been fostered. Because he does not participate in gay culture the way that others think he ought to, he writes that he often feels "like an outsider to [gay culture]. Gay male culture remains an enigma, whose obscure logic I continue to puzzle through" (Halperin 2012:36). Whether or not he thinks he is performing his sexuality correctly, the responses from others indicate that he is doing something wrong. There must be a correct way (and an incorrect way) to be gay.

In my interviews, participants often talked about not wanting to be "too gay," or that men who were perceived as being too gay were somehow looked down upon. Being

labeled as "too gay" might have to do with the clothes one wears (e.g., Neil's favorite orange pants), how feminine one is perceived (e.g., Aaron, who discussed online dating phrases like "no femmes, no fatties"), or the public display of sexuality (e.g., Lawrence, who would not participate in a gay pride parade, but would attend one). In these cases, there is something about an individual's performance that diverges from how gayness "should" be performed. This can sometimes be a fine line of performance, though, because as Clarke and Smith (2015) find in their study of British gay men, being closeted (not gay *enough*) is seen as being just as bad as being, or looking *too* gay.

When discussing appropriate performances of sexuality and gender in the workplace, many men described their performances in terms of toning down their sexuality, or acting more masculine – not because they were trying to be someone they are not, but because they wanted to be "professional." For example, Tanner (25) works full time in a jewelry store as a jewelry designer. At first, he tells me that he does not think much about what he wears on a daily basis. "I just wear what I want. My clothes aren't that tight or crazy." But as we talk more, he starts to indicate to me that he in fact does consider what he wears quite a bit. He places a certain value on some kinds of clothing. Even as he tells me what he *doesn't* wear (tight or "crazy" clothes), he is indicating that those kinds of clothes are part of his wardrobe, or part of who he is. He makes distinction between clothes in terms of what they might signal about him. "I [like to] look nice, but I'm not overly feminine in my clothing attire. I think there are some outfits that I do realize that I look more gay [in]." Here, Tanner is more specific about what he values and devalues in clothing choices. Dressing femininely or dressing too gay is seen negatively. He later becomes very specific about what makes an outfit too gay.

"If I'm wearing a salmon colored V-neck T-shirt with a cardigan over it, I'm going to feel more gay than if I had pants and a button-down shirt on. In a work environment…I try to wear something that is more socially acceptable." For Tanner, dressing too gay does not fit his understanding of what is socially acceptable to wear at work. He continues to say:

> You can spot a gay clothing line when you see it. Like, you have your socially acceptable dad wearing his polo shirt and jeans, versus some dancer from L.A. wearing some colorful number. I think about more what it looks like when I'm at work. It is kind of exhausting. I wish I didn't have to as much, but I feel like there is a kind of inappropriate need for that. It helps me put a filter on myself so that I can keep things professional.

Rather quickly, Tanner has gone from telling me that he does not think much about what he wears, to feeling exhausted about the mental energy he puts into thinking about how professional he looks, compared to how socially inappropriate he might look. He also has indicated that "looking gay" and "looking professional" are two separate, contrasting aesthetics, and that the latter is more appropriate than the former.

Other men that I interviewed made similar comments. When I asked Christopher (24) about the way he dresses for work, he says, "I think about what I can and can't wear. When it comes to [being] professional, I'll wear a shirt and tie maybe. I don't accessorize or anything like that. I stick with the basics." Vance (23) describes changing the way that he dresses when he is going to work. "Mostly it's on a professional standpoint and not a

fashion standpoint." Another respondent, James (27), tells me about the difference

between dressing for a gay social space and the workplace. He says:

> It's not as much about trying to be in the closet versus not. It's just not
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> something I'm that concerned about...there are things I would wear to a gay bar
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> that I wouldn't wear to [work]. I wear more professional attire to work. I just
>
> think of it as dressing professional versus dressing for a gay bar.

While James does not see this as important, he does make a point to identify that there is

a difference between looking professional and looking gay. Dressing "too gay" is seen as

unprofessional, and therefore undesirable in the workplace.

Men do not only discuss styles of dress as being important to professionalism

though. Some men also discuss professionalism in terms of what makes for acceptable

workplace behavior. Rodney (41), a college professor, comments on his gendered

behaviors in the workplace. He says:

> When I go into professional settings, I act more reserved. I talk less. I definitely
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> think that being reserved is more of a masculine affect. It's more about me being
>
> read as professional. Being reserved is masculine kind of performance or
>
> behavior.

Rodney associates professionalism with acting reserved, which he also associates with

masculinity. Being professional means being masculine, which seems to also exclude

gayness. Being too gay is seen as not masculine, and hence unprofessional. Tanner also

tells me about how he changes his behavior (not just his dress) in the jewelry store.

"[Around some people], I get to be a little more relaxed and I let my feminine side show

more easily. I do feel myself needing to dial down when I'm around other people though.

If I use hand gestures, [I might] feel criticized." Tanner is not out at work. He tells me that he does not want people to know he is gay because that will change how people think of him as a worker. "Disclosing that you're gay in a professional environment might hinder you in some way. I don't want that to be an issue where I work. I try to keep that part of me on the more socially acceptable side." He also tells me about sharing personal information with his colleagues. "We had a meeting at work once where they discouraged us from talking about personal information at work. I was glad it got brought up because it's just not professional. I felt like I dodged a bullet!" Tanner's employer had given him a way to stay closeted in the workplace by suggesting that sharing personal information (e.g., identities of romantic partners) was not a workplace topic of discussion. This was comforting to Tanner, because it meant he could focus on doing his job, and not worrying about if he would be passed over for promotion for being gay.

The concept of professionalism is one example of how hegemonic sexuality operates. Part of being professional includes a performance of straight masculinity. Performances of gayness and femininity are viewed as being unprofessional. Gay men in this study view their professional behavior as allowing them to fit in to a heteronormative work environment. Those gay men who are successful in appearing professional ultimately considered themselves more desirable, compared to gay men who might not dress or behave in accordance to the heteronormative workplace norms. According to hegemonic sexuality, it is okay to be gay at work, as long as you are not *too gay*. Being "too gay" is seen as unprofessional. The inverse of this, obviously, is to say that a professional men who is also gay, is an acceptable "kind" of gay person.

For many men in this study, professionalism and gayness are incompatible. Being too gay (or sometimes just being gay at all) is seen as being unprofessional or unacceptable and could hurt your future employment prospects. In some workplaces, gay men are accepted, but must conform to a particular set of behaviors to be considered professional (this includes styles of dress, use of gestures or mannerisms, and what makes for appropriate conversation). I consider this narrow set of expectations to support the concepts of both hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic sexuality. Professional men must act and dress masculine, must not act or dress feminine, and must not act or dress too gay. The word "professional" in the workplace has become something of a code word for being masculine or straight, so much so that men in this study sometimes failed to recognize that this meant they were adhering to heteronormative rules at work.

CONCLUSION

The men in this study come from a wide variety of occupational and educational backgrounds. Some work in salaried positions, others in hourly-waged jobs. Their work spans across many areas, from marketing to education to software engineering to choreography and music performance occupations. Yet even within these various places of employment, there are some common strategies for managing gendered and sexual identities.

Many of the findings from this study support previous literature in regards to gay men's anxieties around being out in the workplace. A majority of the participants in this study are now out to at least some people at work. The decision to come out, and how to come out, is carefully considered and often planned, which is consistent with Jason

Orne's (2011) concept of strategic outness. Men make choices to reveal or conceal their sexual identity by coming out to certain people and remaining closeted to other people. There is a strong desire among participants to be honest about their sexuality. Being authentic is a strong motivating factor for being out at work. Participants in this study reported that they feel uncomfortable lying about their sexuality, but do not always feel comfortable coming out at work (or at least not right away). Many men made efforts to manage their sexuality and their gender in hopes of presenting themselves more masculine or less masculine, and more gay or less gay. These strategies include the clothing that they wear to work, the topics of conversation they have with coworkers, use of body language or gestures, and various paralinguistic elements, such as the pitch of their voice and the speed at which they speak with.

Gay men in this study manage their gendered and sexual identities simultaneously. Sometimes the strategies are so intertwined that the participants themselves do not realize that their efforts to manage sexuality are also managing gender. Men like Evan dress professionally – which means he wears clothes that are appropriate for men in his workplace. His choice of clothing says something about how masculine he is. If he wears his bright yellow shirt, then he believes he will be perceived as being more feminine. With femininity, Evan believes that he will also be perceived as being gay. Gender management then becomes sexuality management as well. We see this with the use of body language, gestures, and paralanguage as well. Feminized gestures need to be "butched up" in order to be perceived as more masculine (and less gay).

While authenticity is desired, there seems to be a line that participants wish not to cross. It is important to nearly all of the participants in this study to be out at work.

However, they wish to not appear too gay. Many men in this study felt comfortable being open about their sexuality at work, but it was an openness that still required gender work (e.g., speaking with a deep voice, avoiding feminine postures). This finding is interesting, because it offers a more nuanced understanding of authenticity. Andrew Pierce (2015) argues that authenticity in constructing our individual identities (and our identities as members of collective groups) is built on an "intersubjective relation of trust." Trust between two actors is required for authentic selves to be revealed. In studying men's work experiences, I find that while men desire to be authentic, they manage their identities in different ways at different times. Some men's desire for authenticity is certainly built with trust among coworkers, and as they grow to trust others, they come out to them – similar to Orne's (2011) strategic outness. Other men however, discussed managing their sexual and/or gendered identities as a way of demonstrating a "professional" characteristic at work. That is, regardless of the level of trust they have developed with others, they may still manage their identity in concerted ways.

The notion of what is considered to be professional and unprofessional came up in many of the interviews. A close examination of the evidence suggests that "professionalism" is actually a euphemism for guiding work behavior and dress in ways that are not read as being "too gay." Participants used examples of clothing that would be considered professional (e.g., button-down shirts, but only in particular colors), and other clothing that would be considered too gay (e.g., a V-neck shirt and cardigan). Something about the gay clothing meant that the wearer would not be taken seriously. The attached stigma of being gay would hurt that person professionally (and perhaps socially too). This extends also to use of gestures and topics of conversation, but ultimately indicates that in

the work environment, some forms of masculinity are valued over others, and some forms of gayness are valued over others. Specifically, those forms of gayness that most closely replicate the valued forms of masculinity will be valued themselves. This hierarchy of behaviors/performances of gayness contributes to the concept of hegemonic sexuality. Gender and sexuality are very intimately connected. Straightness is part of masculinity as much as gender is part of sexuality. Hegemonic sexuality then, is closely related to hegemonic masculinity, but captures a different aspect of how men are "organized" within a sexual hierarchy.

I discuss this guise of professionalism as one example of how hegemonic sexuality operates in the day-to-day lives of gay men. Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity describes the ways in which men are positioned advantageously for certain performances of masculinity. Hegemonic sexuality extends Connell's work, expanding our understanding of hegemony to also include the ways that performances of sexuality are also awarded differential value. I argue that hegemonic sexuality, like hegemonic masculinity, operates in a covert manner – as evidenced by the narratives of the men in my study. While the men desire to be seen as professional, they do so by managing sexuality in a way so as not to appear too gay. Hegemonic sexuality also builds upon other scholars' work that helps us to understand the ways in which gender and sexuality are intertwined together, such as C.J. Pascoe's (2007) book, *Dude, You're a Fag* and Jane Ward's (2015) book *Not Gay*. While hegemonic sexuality focuses on the ways that sexuality can be understood as a hierarchical structure, it helps inform the ways that gender is part of sexual identity, and vice versa.

This study has identified some of the ways that men manage their gendered and sexual identities. Some strategies are directed to managing these separately. Other strategies however, are used to simultaneously manage both gender *and* sexuality. Management of sexuality and gender in the workplace occurs both separately and simultaneously for these men. In the workplace, men use identity management strategies to be seen as both masculine *and* professional. The strategies described by these participants reinforce and perpetuate idealized forms of hegemonic masculinity and hegemonic sexuality.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

[Gay] guys on dating apps ask this a lot: "Are you masculine?" That question to me seems disturbed – it's always used to exclude certain people. It's like the most superficial kind of masculinity. It's like literally: are you wearing a baseball hat that has a sports logo on it? It's like they're doing some weird masculine drag. It's a depraved pageant. There's this underlying idea that masculine is good and feminine is bad. It's a very hateful way to behave I think.

> – Rodney (41)

This is certainly an exciting time to be in the field of masculinity studies. While I have experimented with perceptions of my own masculinity, I initially thought it was because I had immersed myself in this field of study that I began to notice performances of masculinity and sexuality with such glaring obviousness. I found myself dissecting every aspect of every performance - my own and others - wondering if other people spent this much time thinking about whether or not wearing a particular shirt looked masculine enough, or if it was too gay. As I had these thoughts, I would scold myself for thinking that there even was such a thing as "masculine enough," or "too gay." But I have since learned that some men *do* think about these things, and also that this is not just limited to gay men. Masculinity studies are growing in popularity, both inside and outside of the academy. Since my research focuses on the experiences of men in their daily lives, I am particularly interested in the broader society's recent interest in masculinity. For example,

a few years ago life coach John Kim (2014) wrote an article describing four qualities that make a real man[24] – qualities that challenge stereotypical characteristics that are commonly cited (e.g., men are aggressive and unemotional). Comedian and writer Robert Webb's (2014) article, "How not to be a boy" also encourages men to move away from traditional masculinity. Axe body products recently adopted a new marketing campaign – one that focuses more on men's self-confidence than its previous sexist "skirt-chasing" campaigns (Beer 2016). It even features a Black man voguing in a pair of high heels! In the fall of 2015, the hashtag #MasculinitySoFragile gained popularity on Twitter, drawing attention to the toxic ways that traditional masculinity pervades society (Zeilinger 2015). Finally, a recent video that has gone viral on the web features a young man who, while working out at the gym, dances his way to a very impressive 264 lb. snatch to the tune of Beyoncé's "Single Ladies" (Tharrett 2016). It seems evident then, that lots of people are currently questioning what masculinity means and what purpose it might serve in various cultures.

Masculinity scholars too, have added to our understanding of masculinities. While Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity remains the foundation for understanding gender hierarchies, other scholars in the field have proposed theories that capture an even more contemporary view of gender relations. Some authors suggest that our society is becoming more progressive, and less homophobic, as evidenced by a decrease in sexism and masculine bullying (Anderson 2015). Inclusive masculinity, as Anderson (2015) describes, is a version of masculinity where gay and straight men are able to bond in ways that were not possible before (e.g., within the often hypermasculine

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[24] Kim (2014) writes that today's "real men" respond to others, they are introspective, they have goals, and they take action instead of complaining.

institution of sport). Also considered a more progressive version of masculinity, hybrid masculinities are performed in a way that allow men to pick and choose from both hegemonic and non-hegemonic practices, in order to create unique gendered and sexual identities (Arxer 2011). At first glance, this sounds like a giant step towards gender equality, and a step away from the constraints that keep many men confined to performing masculinity in very specific ways. However, some authors suggest that these new performances of masculinity do not necessarily challenge hegemonic masculinity or gender inequality (Bridges and Pascoe 2014; Özbay 2010). Instead, these authors argue that hybrid masculinities actually just obscure those same systems of subordination (Bridges and Pascoe 2014). Özbay (2010) goes so far as to suggest that some men engage in what he calls exaggerated masculinity, which positions men closer to hegemonic masculinity – not further away.

During the time that it took for me to complete this study, I have thought a great deal about what it means to be masculine, how masculinity is performed, and why being gay is sometimes celebrated, and sometimes shunned. I have also spent a great deal of time monitoring my own performances of gender and sexuality. I have grown a beard and started going to the gym at least five days a week. Changing my physical appearance has in some ways changed how I feel about myself, and how I *think* others perceive me. For me, growing a beard is a performance of masculinity. At times, I feel like more of a man (whatever that means – sometimes I'm still not sure). To others, my beard, and perhaps my more in-shape body, has indicated more than just masculinity. In fact, I think that it represents more than just gay masculinity – it represents a certain *kind* of gay masculinity.

I can remember a specific day in the early summer of 2015 when I was with a group of friends who I had not seen for over a year. It was quite warm, and I was wearing a tank top. Upon seeing me, one of my friends (who is a gay male) exclaimed, "Oh hey, daddy! Look at you!" as he grabbed my upper arm. I had never been called this before – and I did not know quite what to make of it. Martin Levine (1998) wrote about leather daddies and popular culture references to all kinds of other "daddies" – big daddies (heavier gay men), silver daddies (aging gay men), muscle daddies – not to mention gay men with children (i.e., *actual* daddies) (Albo 2013). It mattered less to me what my friend really meant by this term and more that he used this as a way of complimenting me for a particular performance (or at the very least, appearance) of gay masculinity.

But I have recently juxtaposed these performances of masculinity with purposeful performances of femininity and I have also begun to display my sexuality in more obvious ways than I used to. I began taking dance classes at the ballet. I dressed in drag for an event. I came out to the undergraduate classes I teach. I wore clothing with pro-gay rights slogans while visiting my family in Texas. None of these performances are particularly groundbreaking or novel. But they did offer me insights into the importance of *context* as I look back on these performances. Some of these performances (both of masculinity and femininity) were in public, some in private. Some involved friends as audience members, some family, coworkers, or strangers. Performing gender and sexuality in these ways allowed me to think about and better understand the performances that my research participants described. I felt that I could relate to some of these performances more clearly, but also more complexly. While I do not use my own experiences as empirical data, reflecting on my own experiences has helped me

understand others' experiences. Above all, the men who participated in this study have deepened my knowledge of the many different aspects of identity construction, management, and performance that this project deals with.

CONSTRUCTING GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES

In this study, I was predominantly interested in the ways that men manage and perform their gender and sexual identities in various social contexts. One of my original research questions asked, "What strategies do gay men use to manage their sexual and gendered identities separately and simultaneously?" Managing these identities in various ways, in various contexts, tells us something more about the construction of these performances. Men may choose to perform gender and/or sexuality in different ways, but by investigating these self-presentation strategies, we learn that not all performances of sexuality are treated equally. Erving Goffman's (1959) theory of self-presentation explains that all people are involved in identity management strategies, but I was interested in the ways that gay men engaged in these strategies specifically related to gender and sexuality. In what ways did men manage their gendered and sexual identities, and under what circumstances? Before I could understand this, however, I needed to know more about the ways gay men make sense of their own gender identity and how they understand their own sexuality. Experts in the field, such as Judith Butler (1990), Raewyn Connell (1995), Michael Kimmel (1996), and Barbara Risman (1998), along with many others, have already described gender asfluid, flexible, fleeting, and finite. Our contemporary understanding of gender allows us to think of many, many ways that masculinity and femininity can be performed. Judith Butler (1990) addresses this in her

book, *Gender Trouble,* where she argues that sex categories and gender categories are all performative, socially constructed concepts. Similarly, sexual identities are also performed, socially constructed concepts (Fausto-Sterling 2000; Herek 1986). Gay men rely on culturally prescribed definitions of what it means to be gay, and they perform this "role" accordingly. Performances of gender are commonly labeled as masculine or feminine, as my respondents pointed to countless online dating and hookup website profiles of men who are looking for "masc guys," and *not* looking for men who might be perceived as being "femme." Thus, gay men rely on the same definitions of masculinity and femininity as the wider society. But also important to gay men is the performance of their sexual identity. Men in my study revealed that there are various ways to perform sexuality, and while there is no wrong way to be gay, some performances of gayness are deemed better than others. Gender and sexuality are nearly always performed together, but I suggest throughout my research that it is useful to shift the focus towards performances of sexuality in order to see the hegemonic nature of these differently valued identities/performances.

My respondents' narratives offer opportunity to explore the construction of these gendered and sexual identities. In this sense, respondents confirmed existing sociological literature that describes multiple masculinities and multiple gay masculinities (Connell 1995; Nardi 2000). Men spoke with ease when they described what masculinity meant in the broadest sense. They described the physicality of the idealized masculine man: He is muscular, he is hairy, he has chiseled features, and he stands tall. They described what kinds of activities masculine men are engaged in. Not surprisingly, sports, being outdoors, drinking, and smoking were included on this list. Respondents also described

the various personality traits - like being assertive, responsible, tough, confident, and independent - that characterize a masculine man. What became problematic for men in my study, however, was describing themselves in relation to that masculine ideal. They often describe themselves as sometimes masculine, and sometimes feminine, or as combining masculine and feminine characteristics in any number of ways. Connell (1992) addresses this conflict of straight and gay masculinities by describing them as conventional and contradictory masculinities, respectively. While Connell (1992) describes gay masculinities as being a different version of masculinity that is performed, her work does not fully describe gay men's performances of gendered and sexual identities. That is, Connell's work still neglects, to some extent, the importance of performances of sexuality.

All of the men in this study identify as being gay. Even though they have this in common, they do not necessarily share the same understanding about what it means to be gay. Just as Connell (1995) describes multiple masculinities, there are multiple ways of performing sexuality, in this case, performing "gayness." A collective gay culture is one where gay men reinforce what it means to be gay (e.g., listening to certain music, quoting lines from campy films, dressing in particular fashions) (Halperin 2012). However, not all men participate in this culture in the same ways (e.g., recall Lawrence who is willing to go to a gay pride parade, but not willing to be a participant on one of the floats). Men construct their gay identities in ways that make sense to them. These identities may be performed differently depending on the environment and audience. That is, the presentation of sexual identities is also contextual. If we can notice variations in the presentation of sexuality and see that those performances are somehow different from

performances of gender (albeit related to one another), then we can also imagine how those performances are compared to one another. A gay man who is muscular and wears a flannel shirt gets compared to a gay man who wears tight-fitting clothing and walks with a certain kind of swish of his hips while walking. They are ranked and rated during social interactions, and held up against some ideal form of gay sexuality. The closer those performances match the ideal, the more likely a man is to experience certain social advantages. I suggest that hegemonic sexuality describes this system of ranking and rating performances of sexuality. Some performances (and thus some sexual identities) are valued by the members of the society, while other performances (and identities) are further marginalized. Having a better understanding of what constitutes a desirable or undesirable sexual identity might allow us to better understand the choices that men make in managing their gendered and sexual identity performances in different social spaces.

PERFORMING SEXUALITY

At the heart of this research, I asked the question, "What are the strategies that men use to manage their gendered and sexual identities in various social spaces?" I am interested primarily in the performances of gender and sexuality, and the choices that men make to perform in particular ways, in particular places. And since *everyone* engages in these types of tailored performances, gay men do so more deliberately. Because gay men are an already marginalized population in the wider society (Connell 1995), they, like other marginalized groups, are more aware of how their performances of identity - sexuality (and gender) - influence the outcomes of the interactions they have on a daily basis.

By and large, heterosexuals can assume with a fair degree of certainty that they will be regarded as heterosexual without putting much thought to the way they perform their heterosexuality. As Michael Warner (1999) describes, this occurs because we live in a heteronormative society where heterosexuality is the norm. Non-heterosexuals who navigate their way through a heterosexual world every day, must find ways to either assimilate into this heterosexual world, or to reject certain aspects of heterosexual norms, spaces, and culture and instead create norms, spaces, and culture of their own (Ghaziani 2011; Sullivan 1996). Men in this study do both – they find ways to conceal their sexuality in some settings, and reveal their sexuality in other settings. They do this through various performative strategies, which include dress, talk, and body language. I interpret this as an additional way that hegemonic sexuality operates. This helps explain why some men choose to perform sexuality and/or gender in a particular way – in front of particular audiences, in particular circumstances. Not all performances of gayness are equally valued by a given audience, and so gay men must make choices about how they perform their own sexuality, in addition to their performance of gender, race, etc.

HEGEMONIC SEXUALITY

I now return to hegemonic masculinity, the concept that I have explored throughout this work, to discuss it in more detail. In considering the strategies that men use to manage their sexual and gendered identities, I have suggested that these performances are in part explained by hegemonic sexuality. Hegemonic sexuality represents the various performances of sexuality that are organized into a hierarchical structure, with some performances of sexuality being idealized, while others are not.

Since gender and sexuality often, if not always, work together, I suggest that we need a better understanding of the way that other characteristics - not just gender - contribute to the hierarchical positioning of individuals in society. We need to recognize other structures that simultaneously operate within and around hegemonic masculinity – particularly one that I call hegemonic sexuality. These two structures overlap one another, but point to different sources of advantage and disadvantage. One structure rewards performances of masculinity, and the other performances of sexuality (i.e., gay men, versus gay men who are "too gay").

Before I continue, I would like to revisit Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity, as this has been one of the most influential theoretical concepts guiding my own research. In this work, Connell focuses primarily on the ways that hegemonic masculinity can explain the domination of men and the subordination of women, as well as the domination of some men over other men. Specifically, Connell discusses the subordination of gay men and the domination of heterosexual men (1995). The organization of male dominance, according to Connell, is culturally configured. Connell writes that, "at any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted" (1995:77). Thus, we can understand that gendered performances are interpreted through the lens of a particular culture's expectations of what masculinity or femininity "should" look like. Connell also suggests that everything we do is gendered, and therefore becomes part of the social organization of masculinity. "In speaking of masculinity at all, then, we are 'doing gender' in a culturally specific way" (Connell 1995:68).

Also important to understanding hegemonic masculinity is Connell's emphasis on masculinity as part of a broader system of gender relations. Masculinity does not exist on its own but, rather, exists within this system of gender relationships. Relationships exist between masculinity and femininity, but also between masculinities. It is within these relationships – and the social processes of doing gender - that we see the ways that hegemonic masculinity is upheld. That is, Connell (1995; 2014) asserts that it is not helpful to define masculinity as a fixed set of characteristics, as it is always culturally specific, always changing (both in terms of what "counts" as masculine, as well as its relationship to the gendered structure), and always contested.

Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity has informed my development of the concept of hegemonic sexuality. The two concepts are undoubtedly related, but I insist that they are in fact, separate organizing structures. Hegemonic sexuality describes the ways that members of a particular culture are related on the basis of their performances of sexuality, while hegemonic masculinity describes the ways that members of a particular culture are related on the basis of their performances of gender.

This is not to suggest that the two concepts are so closely related that one could simply replace the word "masculinity" with "sexuality" in Connell's work. Nor could one assume that the dominating/subordinating relationship between men and women that hegemonic masculinity explains is exactly like the dominating/subordinating relationship between straight- and gay-identified individuals. It is not that simple. While I do suggest that there is a symbolic system of sexual relations that organizes sexual identities and performances, I do not think that this system is exactly like the system of gendered relations that Connell describes. In her work, Richardson (2007) discusses the need for

scholars to understand gender and sexuality as concepts that both rely on, yet are separate from, one another. Furthermore, Richardson (2007) suggests that the way(s) we understand the relationship between gender and sexuality might not be the same as the relationship between sexuality and gender. This is crucial in understanding how hegemonic sexuality is different from hegemonic masculinity. They are separate concepts, because they seek to describe relationships and identities on the basis of two separate characteristics. Of course, sexuality is part of a gendered performance, and vice versa. This is why Connell describes gay men as subordinated in relation to the dominance of straight men. In part, this has to do with sexuality. But it also has to do with masculinity, since gay men are stereotyped as being effeminate, which is not an ideal upheld by hegemonic masculinity. Thus, hegemonic masculinity, for Connell, interacts with sexuality at some level, but also interacts with race and class, and other such systemic sources of domination. Hegemonic sexuality also interacts with gender (and race, and class, etc.), but does so in ways that are potentially different from hegemonic masculinity. Just as Connell argues that "to understand gender, we must constantly go beyond gender" (1995:76), I have tried to understand sexuality by going beyond it; that is, we need to consider how a hierarchy of sexuality contributes to an individual's social position in the society at large.

Connell discusses how gay men are subordinated in relation to straight men, and that this can be explained by hegemonic masculinity. I believe that Connell's analysis is a good starting point for understanding how a different sexual identity fits into the hegemonic gender structure, but also that there is room for a deeper understanding. Connell writes that, "from the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, gayness is easily

assimilated to femininity" (1995:78). This might explain how, in relation to straight men, all gay men are subordinated. However, we also know that there is a wide array of gay sexual identities, as well as a wide array of masculinities that are performed by gay men. Gay bears, leathermen, clones, twinks, otters, daddies, etc. (Albo 2013; Manley et al. 2007; Mosher et al. 2006; Levine 1998), all perform sexuality and gender in various ways, and thus cannot be simply lumped together under the singular category of "gay men." Within the subcultures of gay men, there are a variety of gendered and sexual performances, and the concept of hegemonic sexuality can help explain why some performances are upheld or exalted by that subculture, while others are not. Thus hegemonic sexuality is useful not only in understanding the social relationships between straight and gay men, but also the social relationships among gay men themselves. So while Connell is interested in questions like "What is true masculinity?" or "What makes a *real* man?" I use hegemonic sexuality to help answer questions like, "What makes some gay men desirable?" and "How gay is *too* gay?"

Throughout this research, I have made a case that hegemonic sexuality can help to explain what it means to be an "acceptable" gay man in our culture. These "acceptable" gay men stand in contrast to men who are "too gay" – indeed, the men who are "too gay" are those who are subordinated within this structure of hegemonic sexuality. Men who exemplify the (sub)culturally exalted form of gayness are rewarded with a higher social position in relation to those men who are "too gay." The participants in my study gave examples of how this structure organizes the lives of gay men. Men told me stories of how they, in certain situations, felt they should "butch up" or "man up" in order to appear less gay. At other times, men recalled times where they felt they needed to "tone it down

a notch," to not appear too flamboyant. Men managed these performances of sexuality in order to fit more closely with a desirable form of gayness, and to avoid appearing "too gay." Of course, many of these actions take into account a gendered performance. "Butching up," "manning up," and "toning it down" all involve a more masculine and less feminine gendered performance. But other colloquial phrases like "queening out" might have just as much to do with a performance of gayness as it does femininity. Hegemonic sexuality then, is useful in explaining how these performances of sexuality in part determine the social position of gay men in relation to one another.

But what does it mean to be an acceptable gay man, and what is it that makes some men "too gay?" While my initial research did not begin with these questions in mind, the stories offered by my respondents can help answer these questions. Of course, sexual identities are not isolated from other identities, such as race or class. Thus gay men who are white, work in white-collar jobs, and who are middle/upper-middle class, probably find themselves higher in the hierarchy of gay men (compared to gay men of color, working in blue-collar jobs, who are in a lower social class). And of course, gender certainly has something to do with men's location in a sexual hierarchy. Masculine performances are deemed to be more desirable than feminine performances, and thus masculine gay men are seen as "acceptable," while feminine gay men are seen as undesirable. Men cite specific times when they realized that even *within* the gay community, there are desirable and undesirable ways to "do" gayness. The men tell stories of the ways that being too loud, too queeny, too flamboyant, and too feminine all contribute to the ways that they might be perceived as being "too gay." It seems that the ideal gay man can be characterized (in part) as masculine, thin, white, and middle-class.

Perhaps a further investigation of hegemonic sexuality will reveal additional characteristics that are used to position gay men within a sexualized structure, such as age, religion, sex role, being HIV-negative, interest in sexual (sub)cultures (e.g., leather culture, chaser communities, non-monogamous lifestyles).

In writing about hegemonic masculinity, Connell (1995) discusses some of the consequences of a hierarchical social structure that is based on performances of gender - violence against women, wage inequalities on the basis of gender, and the denial of other kinds of rights toward women (Connell 1995). Sociologists have also recognized that hegemonic masculinity impacts the opportunities available for men and women in other ways, such as in the job market (Hodges and Budig 2010), men's relationships to violence (Donaldson 1993), as well as various health outcomes (Sabo and Gordon 1995). I have considered how hegemonic sexuality also explains the experiences that gay men might have in the job market. I think that discovering these kinds of relationships are challenging, as there are no "fixed" categories among gay men to compare. Without oversimplifying the complex relations between sex, gender, and sexuality, it seems somewhat straightforward to locate inequalities between the social categories of men and women in terms of occupational promotions, instances of domestic violence, etc. (Donaldson 1993; Hodges and Budig 2010; Sabo and Gordon 1995). To pinpoint inequalities between "acceptable" gay men and gay men who are "too gay" may be more challenging, since definitions of "acceptable" and "too gay" gay men are far more complicated compared to the distinctions between men and women as social categories.

This study demonstrates that developing a greater understanding of the ways that hegemonic sexuality manifests itself is useful for understanding the experiences of gay

men. While hegemonic masculinity suggests that all gay men are marginalized, hegemonic sexuality helps to explain that not all gay men are marginalized in the same ways. For example, gay men of color experience racism both outside *and* inside the LGBT community (Han 2008; Ibañez et al. 2009). In my research, I found that gay men (a majority of whom were out both in their professional and personal lives) often carefully considered what they wore, what they drank, what they talked about, how they talked, how they used body language, and any other number of self-presentation strategies that might indicate what "kind" of gay man they are. The men described the consequences of these choices, and told me what happens when they do wear the bright orange pants, or drink a cranberry vodka instead of whiskey, or if their voice is too high pitched, or if they talk too much with their hands. Often, the result is that they somehow feel less masculine. In these situations, men are not just performing gender, but also performing sexuality. Since most of the men in my study are already out, it is not simply a performance to indicate gayness (versus straightness), but also a performance that indicates what "kind" of gay man one is. This is where hegemonic sexuality is useful – it helps explain why men like Lawrence might attend a party with his boyfriend, but not hold his boyfriend's hand, or why Isaac considers femme gay men inherently undesirable. Gay men are marginalized within the gay community in a number of ways (e.g., race, class, age, weight, gender expression, HIV status), but sociologists have yet to describe and address how these characteristics interact to form a hierarchy among gay men.

As I mentioned above, researchers have described some of the ways that gay men are advantaged/disadvantaged. They have studied the ways that race influences social status (Ibañez et al. 2009; Han 2008), how thinness is often valued over fatness (Whitesel

2014), and how gay men living with HIV are still stigmatized (Berg and Ross 2014).

What has not been developed, is a theoretical framework that can help explain all of these

processes together. Hegemonic sexuality can be useful in this effort. I build upon existing

literature that locates inequalities and offer a way to conceptualize these inequalities as

part of a system of sexuality – one that explains that some performances of sexuality are

rewarded, while others are not.

CONCLUSION

As I began this research, I was primarily interested in *how* men managed their

sexual and gendered identities as they navigated different social spaces. As I talked to the

men in this study, listened to their stories, and read through their interview transcripts,

their narratives revealed not only *how* they managed their identities, but *why* they

managed them in different ways at different times. Their stories represented bits and

pieces of a larger concept that in some ways regulates their performances of sexuality and

gender. This structure of sexuality – the socially constructed ways of "doing sexuality" –

is at least in part, guided by hegemonic sexuality. It can be seen, as Rodney says at the

start of the chapter, as a "depraved pageant" where gay men attempt to replicate the ideal

form of gayness. As Rodney notes, this includes some performances, but necessarily

excludes others, and marginalizes some gay men. While hegemonic masculinity

marginalizes all gay men, hegemonic sexuality further marginalizes some gay men.

This marginalization is important to recognize, especially in light of today's

current political battles involving sexual identities. As LGBT people gain more freedoms

in the United States, they will continue to face new choices in identity construction,

management, and performance. Straight people too, will be confronted with new ideas, as they interact with LGBT people in various social spaces, as well as consider the construction, management, and performance of their own heterosexual identities. In the summer of 2015, the Supreme Court of the United States ruled to legalize same-sex marriages (Obergefell v. Hodges). Although this is a huge victory for LGBT people, it does not protect them from other forms of discrimination. For example, LGBT people still face the possibility of workplace discrimination, and therefore are often cautious about revealing a gay identity at work. Those who are out at work often manage their sexual and gendered identity under a guise of professionalism. I have suggested that this notion of professionalism is one way that hegemonic sexuality operates. By valuing "professional" performances of sexuality (i.e., masculine or straight), gay men reinforce a hierarchy of sexuality that subordinates other performances of sexuality.

This study reveals that there is still a long way to go in terms of dismantling the hierarchy of hegemonic masculinity. I have suggested that a second structure, hegemonic sexuality, also permeates the lives of gay men. It is as Rodney observes about gay men's culture at the beginning of this chapter. Masculinity is a kind of drag for men – especially gay men, he says. Rodney refers to this kind of performance as a "depraved pageant," alluding to the ways that drag queen pageants in gay culture mimic beauty pageants, explicitly rewarding women for performing femininity in conventional ways. Rodney is disturbed that men who put on this show – a kind of "masc mask" so-to-speak – do so only to separate themselves from other men. Being "too gay," even within the gay community is still not valued. Gay men worry that they sound too gay or look too gay, and thus they attempt to alter their performances to be seen as the "right" kind of gay

person if they are out, or to not be seen as a gay person at all if they would rather be closeted. Hegemonic sexuality can help to explain how gayness is valued as long as others recognize it as not being "too gay." Often times, this means that men are not seen as too feminine; the faggots, fairies, and flamers are examples of this devalued gay femininity. Gay men, regardless of their performances of sexuality (or gender) are part of this system of sexuality. The stigmatization of being "too gay" helps us to understand why gay men make certain choices in their everyday lives – to appear like a certain kind of gay man.

There is certainly more work to be done. Only five of my thirty respondents identified as non-White. The intersection of their racial identity with their gendered and sexual identities is significant, but not one that I could focus on in this research. Those respondents reinforced what others have written before – that sexual identities are not visible, but racial identities are (Bowleg 2013). Racial identities are not closetable in the ways that sexual identities are (Faulkner and Hecht 2010). They made clear to me that coming out as a white gay man is different than coming out as a gay man of color. Other sociologists have written about the experiences of LGBT people of color (Quesada, Gomez, and Vidal-Ortiz 2015), but we need to know more about their experiences. We must focus on the ways that racial identities interact and intersect with performances of sexuality to obtain a better picture of the complexities of these multiple identities. How gay men of color navigate their everyday lives in relation to a hierarchy of sexuality can help to inform us of the marginalization that these men face not only as people of color, or as gay men, but also how they experience marginalization as gay men of color – and how they experience this marginalization within the LGBT community.

Also, we need to learn more about the ways men value (and devalue) gayness, and the specific presentation of gay identities. We must further investigate the ways that gay men rank and rate one another and, in so doing, reinforce hegemonic sexuality. Why do men still use phrases like "masc only" and "no femmes, no fatties" when looking for romantic or sexual partners? How can men challenge these kinds of hegemonic pressures? And, should they? Today's society recognizes all kinds of sexual identities that reach beyond the heterosexual/homosexual binary (e.g., bisexuals, asexuals, pansexuals, polysexuals, metrosexuals, sepiosexuals, spornosexuals, and lumbersexuals, to name a few). Research investigating the ways that various sexualities are performed (both individually and collectively), and how those sexualities are related to one another can provide a more robust understanding of identity. This broadened understanding of identity will help extend the usefulness of hegemonic sexuality as a tool to explain the hierarchy of sexuality. Sociological research is needed to further identify the ways that society values different sexual identities, as well as the reasons why some identities or performances are valued more than others. Furthermore, we need to develop a better understanding of the consequences for men who are marginalized within this hegemonic system of sexuality. Who is marginalized, for what reasons, with what consequences, and by whom? The answers to these questions can help capture the everyday experiences of gay men.

This research has explored identity construction, management, and performance in a variety of social spaces, and informs us of the ways that gay men make sense of gender and sexuality throughout their lives. The men who provided me with accounts of their personal experiences allowed me to tell a broader story about the ways that social

context matters (e.g., social space, time, and place) in choosing how they perform their gender and sexual identities. The environments gay men inhabit, the people who surround them, and the choices they make in terms of their identities are all related. These men reveal their confusion about what it means to be a gay masculine man. They also express their frustration concerning the ways that gay men exclude one another within their own LGBT community. Hegemonic sexuality is a theoretical tool that focuses on the ways that gay men are either advantaged or disadvantaged. This will allow future research to focus on how sexuality as an organizing principle in social relationships. By recognizing the ways that structures like hegemonic sexuality limit the construction and performance of legitimate sexual and gendered identities, we can better understand how (some) gay men are further marginalized in our society.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule

This interview schedule is intended to be semi-structured in order to allow participants to guide the interviews. The following list represents a guideline for beginning a dialogue with participants. While questions were not asked in the same order, the general topics were discussed, to greater or lesser extent, depending on the participant's experience and interest.

Questions about masculinity:

- When you hear the word "masculine" what kinds of things come to mind? Do you consider yourself to be masculine? How so?
- Are gay men and straight men masculine in different ways? Can you explain what you mean?
- How might you consider your friends – are they masculine? How so?
- When you see another man, how can you determine if he is masculine? Are there any specific situations you can recall when you were "sizing up" another man?
- Do you think others consider you to be masculine? How do you know?

Questions about sexuality:

- At what age did you decide that you were gay?
- What was that like for you?
- Did you tell people that you were gay then?
- Are you open about your sexuality? With who?
- Tell me about how you "came out" to people.
- How do you decide who to come out to and who to not come out to?
- Are you out to family members? Can you tell me a little bit about how you decided when or who to come out to?
- Has there ever been a time when you felt harassed or discriminated because of your - sexuality? Can you tell me about that time?

Questions about friends:

- I'd like you to think about your closest group of friends. What types of things do you like to do together? What are these times usually like? What kinds of things do you talk about?
- Would you say the friends that you spend most of your time with are mostly gay, or straight, or a mix of straight and gay friends? Are these friends mostly male or female?

- What kinds of things do you do with your gay and straight friends? Are there things that you do with your gay friends that you don't do with your straight friends? Are there things that you do with your straight friends that you don't do with your gay friends?
- When you are going to be spending time with your friends, can you describe the way you dress?

Questions about family:

- Do you feel that you are able to "be yourself" around your family members, or do you change some things about the way you behave or talk? Are there specific incidents that you can describe?
- Can you describe the way you dress when you are around your family? How is this similar or different to the way you dress when you are home?
- Describe the way you act when you are around your family.
- Have you ever brought home a boyfriend/partner to meet your family? What was that like?
- Have you ever met the family of a boyfriend/partner? What was that like?

Questions about work:

- Do the people you work with know that you are gay?
- How was it that you told them that you are gay?
- Do you feel that you are able to "be yourself" around your coworkers?
- Has there ever been a time when you felt that you needed to change the way you act around your coworkers or bosses? Can you describe a specific situation where you felt that you needed to do that?
- Do you think about the way that you dress when you are at work? How so?
- Have you ever felt that you needed to change your appearance while you were at work?
- Could you describe a specific incident where you felt this way? Why did you feel this way?
- Where you work, are there ever social events where employees bring their significant others? Have you ever attended an event like this with a significant other? What was this like for you – were you comfortable?
- Thinking about the kinds of things we talked about earlier – about masculinity – have you ever noticed a time when you felt like you tried to "butch up" or otherwise change how you acted while at work? Can you tell me about such a time?

Questions about daily life:

- When you are running daily errands, such as going to the grocery store, going to the gym, shopping, etc., do you think about the way you dress? Can you describe how you decide what to wear?

- Do you think about the way you act when you are in different situations like being at the gym or in the grocery store, such as "butching up" or other ways of appearing less or more masculine? What kinds of specific incidents can you describe regarding this?
- Do you notice yourself changing the way you act or dress depending on what you are doing or who you are with? Can you describe a time when you felt yourself doing this?

Questions about relationships:

- Do you have a romantic partner?
- How does your time with this person change the way you behave in public?
- How comfortable are you publically displaying your affection for a romantic partner, by holding hands or kissing them in public? Have there been times when you have wanted to display affection but felt you could not? What was this like?
- Does your partner's masculinity matter to you? How so?
- When looking for romantic or sexual partners, does their masculinity matter to you?

APPENDIX B
Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Race	Education	Occupation	Out at work?
Aaron	28	White	Doctoral Degree	Higher Education/Interior Design	Yes
Anthony	26	White	Bachelor's Degree	Corporate Management	No
Barry	30	White (Jewish)	Bachelor's Degree	Nonprofit Management	To Some
Brent	33	White	Master's Degree	Director of Admissions Operations	Yes
Brian	26	White	Some College	Restaurant Server	Yes
Cal	39	White	Bachelor's Degree	Human Services/Counseling	Yes
Christopher	24	White	Bachelor's Degree	Graphic Designer	To Some
Dylan	26	White	Some College	Restaurant Server	Yes
Evan	40	White	Master's Degree	Nonprofit Marketing	To Some
Fredrick	40	White	High School	Nonprofit Director	Yes
Gavin	26	White	Bachelor's Degree	Social Media Marketing	Yes
Hunter	37	White	Doctoral Degree	Assistant Professor	Yes
Isaac	24	White	Bachelor's Degree	Marketing	Yes
Jack	28	White	Master's Degree	Coordinator of Student Involvement	To Some
Jamai	46	Black	Some College	Customer Service, Finance	No
James	27	White	Master's Degree	Education, K-12	To Some
Jeffrey	31	White	Doctoral Degree	Surgeon	No
Kenneth	22	White	Some College	Food Service	Yes
Lawrence	48	White	Master's Degree	Pharmaceuticals	No
Manny	23	Hispanic	Some Graduate School	Education, K-12	Yes
Neil	25	White	Master's Degree	Social Worker	To Some
Omar	36	Black	High School	Customer Service, Retail	To Some
Patrick	32	White	High School	Software Engineer/Information Technology	To Some
Raymond	52	Black	Bachelor's Degree	Political Consultant	To Some
Rodney	41	Biracial	Doctoral Degree	Assistant Professor	Yes
Sean	31	White	Master's Degree	Adjunct Professor	Yes
Steven	23	White	Bachelor's Degree	Dance Choreographer	To Some
Tanner	25	White	Associates Degree	Jewelry Designer/Restaurant Server	No/Yes
TJ	25	White	High School	Customer Service, Airline Industry	To Some
Vance	23	White	Some Graduate School	Political Consultant	Yes