

RULES AND METHODS:
A SOCIOLOGY OF SUBCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE

A Thesis

by

FRANK MAURICE STAGGS, JR.

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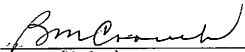
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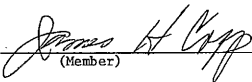
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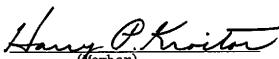
(Head of Department)



(Member)



(Member)



(Member)

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ABSTRACT

Rules and Methods: A Sociology of Subcultural Knowledge

and Practice. (December, 1978)

Frank Maurice Staggs, Jr., B.S.,

Texas A&M University

Chairman of Advisory Committee: Dr. Kenneth L. Nyberg

The primary objective of this thesis was to discern and describe the tactics employed by members of the gay subculture in seeking out other homosexuals in problematic situations. By placing ethnomethodological and phenomenological programs within the frameworks of the sociology of knowledge, these "methods of cruising" were used to study that system of knowledge which is incorporated within the gay subculture.

Data were collected in the form of tape recorded interview situations. Interviewees were selected from members of a group of gay individuals found at a southwestern college town. The individuals either were associated with the university or were friends of those attending the university. Twenty interviews were obtained and sixteen interview accounts were ultimately included in the study. Participant observation provided an additional source for data.

It was determined that for the most part, gay persons who seek out other gay persons find themselves engaged in "chancy undertakings." While no two gay men or women operate in exactly the same way, some definite patterns appear to exist. These patterns are discussed as activities of everyday life of subcultural members. Three major tactics found to be used in the "game of recognition" that cruising represents

were eye contact, "radar," and third-person confirmation. The factors involved in gays locating and meeting other gays for social and sexual interaction were found to be varied and complex. Theoretical and methodological implications of the acquisition, presentation and analysis of the data are discussed.

DEDICATION

To my grandfather, posthumously,
my family and my friends.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The original impetus behind this thesis stemmed from a long term study of the subcultural foundations of drug use among rural adolescents directed by Dr. Kenneth L. Nyberg. In what was essentially a quantitative study of deviant behavior I had only to look at the youngsters as they answered the questionnaires; only to talk to their teachers ("off the record"); and talk of my work with colleagues, friends and acquaintances, some of whom occasionally ventured into the same area of deviant behavior to note an intriguing elan. As that research progressed, it became all too apparent that such aberrations from normatively accepted behavior often involve entrance into and participation with an organized social grouping where such behavior is accepted and taken for granted. In this situation the trained mind has a tendency to wander, to play the game of "What if?", to endlessly replay the same themes changing only one or two specifics--in this case, the nature of deviant behavior. In readings and in films, I became acquainted with and intrigued by the amount of social organization surrounding varieties of deviant behavior. Prostitutes, thieves, runaways, drug addicts, it doesn't matter. Whereupon a friend--he or she shall remain anonymous because this person played no part in this work except in providing that essential spark of curiosity--confessed to being gay and quite frankly discussed the whole matter. Sometime later, with the help and prodding of my supervisor and academic mentor, Ken Nyberg, I settled on my current topic of the methods gays use to locate one another, how they carry on a particular everyday activity in a hostile world. It

was indeed an interesting topic for gays are at once open and hidden, individuals among other individuals, a group among other groups, and undeniably distinct.

In this study I have tried to maintain the texture of its academic nature, avoiding the political nature of the gay community, while incorporating the "rhythm" of those intimate conversations and observations I made. In many respects, my choice of a sample was unique among gay groups because as a whole those within the sample showed a high degree of informativeness on academic, scientific, and political issues surrounding their lifestyle, and an openness with which they greeted a researcher. In this sense, what followed were not interviews with "representative gays" (if such indeed exist); rather, they concern very definite individuals. Whether their insights can be of any use to the rest of us was ultimately my decision, and the appropriateness was considered with other sociological endeavors in mind. Other sociological works are but studies of individual groups and people--and they have been of some use to us. Tolstoy once said that all happy families look alike, but each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. The same can be said of any group of people involved in everyday affairs.

I thank especially Dr. Kenneth L. Nyberg for his support, assistance, and prodding. Few others would have encouraged such a daring task. He cautioned, without attempting to dissuade, of the inherent suspicions engendered by research into any area of sexual behavior. I was left on my own to come to understand that such suspicions have no place in a field dedicated to the understanding of human existence. I remember reading once where someone said that you

don't have to be Caesar to understand Caesar. I can only hope that my superiors, friends, peers and family understand. Others are of no concern.

For my part, I feel gratitude, and quite honestly, admiration for those in my sample for their willingness to share this facet of themselves. Having entrusted this side of themselves to me, I have a duty to caution the reader to avoid hasty judgements. Everyone has different experiences, and quite often different people have different realities, different pictures of the world. Of those who offered to make utterly private matters public, their honesty should give us pause.

To Drs. James Copp, Ben Crouch and Harry Kroitor I offer the deepest of thanks for their encouragement, their invaluable assistance, and above all, their patience. Ms. Lois Saltsman provided immense help with transcriptions and secretarial support.

Specific individuals have already received my private thanks for getting together some of the interviewees, and for providing insights I would not have otherwise received.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

. . . And yet of course there are extraordinary niches in social life where activity is so markedly problematic and consequential that the participant is likely to orient himself to fatefulness prospectively, perceiving in these terms what it is that is taking place. It is then that fateful situations. . . become chancy undertakings, and exposure to uncertainty is construed as willfully taking a practical gamble.

(Erving Goffman, Interaction Ritual: 171)

This thesis is not about sex. It is about people categorized because of their sexuality, and how they handle that categorization, i.e., being gay. Simply stated, this thesis addresses the process whereby "fateful situations" become "chancy undertakings." Specifically, the concern is with the "cruising behavior"¹ of homosexuals in problematic settings.

Though much has been attributed to sociology in the area of sex research, sociology, in fact, has historically neglected to a significant degree the study of human sexuality (Plummer, 1975; Nyberg, 1973). Homosexuality may be discussed as a psychological condition of an individual and as a behavioral aspect of individual life. It may also be studied as of a way of life or life-style shared by a group of human beings. In this way, a life-style which incorporates homo-

This thesis utilizes the reference style of the American Sociological Review.

¹While there may be several variants, cruising generally refers to that behavior engaged in by homosexuals in an effort to find other homosexuals for social and sexual encounters.

sexuality is in many respects an organized phenomenon. It is a social existence which extends far beyond the sexual "typifications" (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973; Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Warren, 1974) on which the delineations between "straight" and "gay" are made. Because the gay life-style is only partially sexual, it is perhaps more appropriate to speak of the gay life-style as a homosocial, rather than homosexual, existence. Hence, an important distinction must be made at the outset between individuals who merely behave homosexually or possess homosexual tendencies, and those individuals who are affiliated to some degree with a homosocially based, or gay, subculture. The gay individual, as opposed to the merely homosexually behaving individual, shares a system of meanings with other gay individuals.

As Garfinkel (1967: 11) notes, an ethnomethodological study of human activities investigates

the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life.

Ethnomethodology is the study of what people say they do, how they say what they say they do, and what they actually do in terms of what they say they do. If gay behavior is to be studied in the context of a sociology of knowledge the logic of that behavior must be studied.

In that homosexuality has been regarded as a legitimate topic of study for social scientists (Bell, 1971; Warren, 1974; Hooker, 1967), the purpose of this thesis is to provide further insight into the foundations of the gay subculture. Additionally, while this thesis is aimed primarily at the gay subculture, its methods and findings may be applicable to other subcultures. The objectives of this thesis are:

1. To discern and describe the tactics employed by members of the gay subculture in seeking out other homosexuals in problematic (i.e., non-gay) situations.
2. To extrapolate from these tactics (i.e., methods) that structure which organizes the system of knowledge and which serves to "make sense" (Berger and Luckmann, 1966) of these methods.
3. To relate these tactics and logics to that system of knowledge which is incorporated within the gay subculture.
4. To describe this relationship within the frameworks of the sociology of knowledge using ethnomethodological and phenomenological programs.

Implications and Direction of Study

The implications of studying homosexuality as a group phenomenon are quite profound, especially if each study can take as a logical assumption the existence of a social reality giving substance to a gay way of life. To do so is not necessarily to grant homosexuality "legitimacy!" Rather, to do so is to increase the objectivity of the study of homosexual behavior. It is to take a step in the direction of removing the study of homosexuality from the arena of the study of deviance. Though gays are "deviant" from the mainstream of sexual behavior, it serves no purpose to continue using a label so loaded with negative connotations that it hinders objectivity, and, quite the opposite of granting "legitimacy," presupposes "illegitimacy,"

Homosexuality as a sexual typification has, over the course of time and through various social mechanisms,² resulted in repeated

²Such social mechanisms include societal condemnation, ostracism, physical abuse, execution and murder, and the banding together of

and enduring differences in social experiences. A social reality has been constructed and shared by individuals who by choice and inclination engage in behavioral patterns which differ in significant ways from those of the larger system of which they are a part. Through the sharing of similar systems of symbols and protocols the homosocial life-style develops into a subcultural way of life.

In analyzing and describing aspects of the gay Weltanschauungen I hope to show that it is possible to assume that gays share in the construction of a social reality which is both enduring and on-going, and that it is through and because of their shared reality that gays have established a form of social organization which enables them to function within a larger socially organized system with which they are partially at odds.

Olsen (1968) considers social organization as "the process of bringing order and meaning into human social life." That is to say, social organization is the structural component in the social construction of reality. The homosocial subcultural life-style arises because similarly typified individuals establish regularized and ordered patterns of interpersonal relationships. Those who share a gay reality view themselves as co-members of a group. They identify themselves and similar others with the gay community, and share a common culture and a common system of norms and values.

like-minded individuals into a demimonde existence (Cf. Becker, 1962; McNeill, 1963; Clinard, 1964; and Warren, 1974).

While the gay world is not necessarily "territorially localized"³ it is nonetheless possible to speak of gay individuals as forming a community. The social organization of the gay community is able to satisfy the social needs of gays qua gays. Most important, gays view themselves as forming a community.

This thesis is concerned with practical actions which manifest themselves as accomplishments of that everyday life rooted in a domain of reality relevant to homosocial existence. As such, it focuses on both the structure and meanings which make such artful practices sensible. The subcultural structure of gay life has grown around the deviant master status of its members. To understand how gays function within their subculture one must first understand what it means to be deviant, what it means to be a member of a subculture, and specifically, what it means to be gay. A review of the literature dealing with these topics can provide the scientific empathy required to investigate and understand the subtle nuances of gay behavior.

³In many major urban areas one can note the appearance of gay "territories." They are often co-terminous with the urban centers' "Little Bohemias" such as Greenwich Village. Cf. Weinberg and Williams, 1974. One Houston activist once noted "Montrose is our camp", (Notes).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

The premise of this thesis rests on the presentation of gay persons as members of a viable subculture. It assumes that there are homosexually-inclined individuals who not only have similar life-experiences, but also have come to share certain meanings arising out of those experiences. This process whereby gays are able to share meaningful homosocial experiences is the process of the social construction of reality. It is a phenomenon which allows gays to sensibly be gay.

At the core of the gay reality is the homosexual act; to perform a homosexual act is to deviate from societal norms which govern sexual behavior. The person who engages in homosexual behavior risks being labeled a deviant simply because homosexuality is deviant behavior (the noun and the adjective are not necessarily synonymous). Likewise, a subculture which is homosexually-based is also deviant.

In tackling behavioral phenomena within the gay world one also must wrestle with the concepts of deviance and subculture. To explore and understand behavior as it is constituted in a gay reality, we must review our understanding of these concepts within a framework conducive to applying these concepts to an examination of the social construction of reality within a gay Weltanschauungen.

A Preliminary Caveat

Sociology and its concepts are not immune to the fashions and fads of time (Gouldner, 1970; Frederichs, 1970). The various

theoretical perspectives are influenced by the eras in which they develop. Sociological perspectives, like other ideologies, shift over time. Different points of view are taken into account in defining problems for study and in the way such problems are explained. As "things to be known" change, so do "ways of knowing things to be known." Hence, though various theories seem to be in opposition with one another, the apparent oppositions are often due to differences in perspectives.

Differences in perspectives may be explained, in part, by differences in realities held by sociologists at various points in time, and by differences in the realities held by the groups being studied. Moreover, it should be considered that, as a schemata for interpretation, sociology, as any other discipline, is a constructed reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). As times change and influences vary, so will meanings and processes of interpretation. Therefore, no theory can plausibly purport to be absolute. Theory, like thought, is intuitively grounded in a relationship with perception and perceptual knowledge, in the relation between life, expression, understanding and reality. Frazier (1976: 3), in beginning his discussion of various theories of deviance, reflects:

No single definition of deviance can be offered. . . that will satisfy all who are concerned with its broad personal and social effects. Sociologists differ greatly in their conceptions of deviance. None is unquestionably true. All definitions serve more or less specific purposes.

Deviance

Various major theories of deviance may be rudimentarily identified as being structural or social psychological in point of view. Of the theories which have had great impact on the scientific study of deviance, those which consider statistical deviance, social pathology, social disorganization, anomie and social control can well be considered structural. Theories of deviance such as those of differential association, labeling (or societal reaction), social learning and control theories have also had profound consequences for the study of deviance. They evidence a social psychological approach to the study of deviance, though in the case of control theory, the social psychological orientation is clearly evident more in the works of Hirschi (1969), and to a lesser degree, Matza (1964, 1969).

Statistical deviance. Departure from some standard is a common starting point for many social scientific definitions of deviance. The statistical concept of deviance is presented in terms of frequency of behavior. Both deviance, and its counterpart, conformity, are viewed as existing along a continuum based on frequency of behavior. Behavior is conforming if it occurs most frequently within the group, and it is deviant if it occurs with much less frequency. Allport (1934) describes the distribution of behavior as falling along a curve shaped somewhat like a "J," with deviant behavior approaching zero and conformity approaching infinity (when graphed along axes of frequency of behavior and type of behavior). In some cases, behavior may be distributed along a bell-shaped curve (normal distribution curve), with conforming

behavior falling in the middle and deviant behavior lying on either end. With either distribution, those individuals who do not behave like the majority are in the minority. This difference is the basis of the definition of statistical models of deviance: difference is deviance.

Social pathology. Theories of deviance based on the social pathological paradigm view society as "a living organism subject to the laws of growth, decay and change" (Davis, 1975: 17). Borrowing from biological Darwinism, evolution resulting in social change was a natural process devoid of any conception of "free will." Basically deterministic the direction of change is seen as always in the direction of a perfect ideal, guided by some "natural law." The view of deviance as a social disease was succinctly described by Gillin and Blackman (1930: 527):

Since society is made up of individuals bound together in social relationships, social pathology refers to the maladjustment in social relationships. The phrase is based on the analogy of bodily maladjustments of functions in the organs.

Society was seen as basically "good"; any inconsistencies were manifestations of social disease, traceable to "maladjustments in social relationships" (Davis, 1975: 22). Such malfunctions were situated more in antisocial and maladjusted individuals, than in malfunctions of the social system. Moreover, with a theoretical slant towards social Darwinism, social deviants were seen as the "least fit" in a contest for the "survival of the fittest."

Normative behavior was taken as existing and given. Any departure results from personal inadequacies. There was a peripheral concession that certain "abnormal" social conditions could result in maladjusted behavior by offering individual alternatives for antisocial and personally degenerative behavior, which a "weak" person might be liable to choose.

Social disorganization. Like the social pathologists, those of the Chicago School of social theory viewed the societal process as one of equifinality; that is, society inevitably progresses towards an ideal and perfect state. Society, for the Chicagoans, was subject to the processes of birth, growth, survival and decay. Deviance, as a product of social disorganization, was a "natural" phenomenon, and manifestly functional.

As society develops, various institutional orders arise out of competitive processes among individuals and groups. This competition, like Darwinian competition, is "natural." The tendency is for the dominant groups to strive and push for social equilibrium. Other forces tend to bring about change within the social order. Important forces which lead to upheavals and to eventual changes include population increase. According to Durkheim (1951), such population increases lead to more competition, on-going division of labor and differentiation, more heterogeneity within the society and eventually increased impersonality in social relationships.

Like other forces which produce social upheavals, this leads to a transitory period of social disorganization. This disorganization is seen as natural and as peripheral. Social disorganization was seen by

the Chicagoans as a decline in the influence that existing norms have upon the individual. Hence, deviance resulting from social disorganization reflects the failure, in part, of the moral order to regulate an otherwise unrestricted ecological order (Davis, 1975: 44). Additionally, disorganization could be of a personal nature; as individuals become demoralized and overly individualized (because of the lessening influence of the moral order), they become less capable of conforming to and living within the dominant expectations of the group. Hence, disorganization results in the breakdown of social and individual controls over behavior.

However, as change is inevitable and disorganization usually peripheral, dominant institutions (old surviving ones and newly arisen ones alike) influence social reorganization in an on-going process towards social perfection.

An emphasis on ecology theory presents a problem with the topic of free will. Chicagoans viewed moral meanings as "a product or an extension of physical placement" (Davis, 1975: 46). The environment shapes the individual. Therefore, deviance is not primarily the result of individual will or choice. Rather, deviance was seen as an alternative for behavior which depended a great deal on external, ecological pressures. Social placement provides an important element for disorganization and deviant behavior.

Anomie theory. Anomie theory considers deviance as an alternative form of behavior. The theory (Merton, 1968) presents deviance as a result of the failure of certain individuals to achieve in a legitimate fashion those goals prescribed by society. That is, deviant

behavior is an alternative path towards achievement of goals otherwise blocked by the existing social structure. Merton (1966) assumes that social norms are to some degree explicit and generally agreed upon. He assumes, in his presentation of the theory (1966: 805), that there is consensus within the social group as to what constitutes deviant behavior:

Deviant behavior cannot be described in the abstract but must be related to the norms that are socially defined as appropriate and morally binding for people occupying various statuses.

Hence, where anomie refers to a state of social disregulation, anomie theory also concludes that when a social unity is in a state of disorganization, individuals are not regulated by the usual constraints of a stable society. Anomie theory thus describes the effects of anomie behavior (deviance) in both stable and disorganized social structures.

Social control theory. Influenced by Marxist philosophy, social control theories, especially as presented by Davis (1975), have developed a paradigm for the study of deviance (as well as order and change in general) based on a conflict perspective of society (Cf. Dahrendorf, 1958; Coser, 1956). In any given system or subsystem, resources, commodities and other goods are scarce, that is, there are fewer resources than can satisfy the needs and wants of everyone.⁴ The general order of things, according to the proponents of conflict/social

⁴ Economists have long realized that while needs are unlimited, goods are quite limited. In this sense, demand always exceeds supply.

control theory, is that man competes with other men for those resources. Competition, rather than cooperation, is the rule. Man, however, is social, and being social, competes through groups. Formal and informal organizations develop, and it is in intergroup conflict that the struggle for scarce resources is most manifest (though there also appear intraorganizational conflicts for goods and position). The struggle for scarce goods is in essence also a struggle for power. Those groups, institutions and organizations that are more powerful are able to dominate and subjugate the less powerful groups, and, benefiting from this power differential, they are capable of satisfying their wants and needs at the expense of others. They are able to effect an unequal distribution of resources in their favor.

To retain their favorable stance, the more powerful groups must control people, they must insure enough conformity and obedience in society such that prevailing power structures will not topple. "Status quo" theorists (those theorists who, in "radical theorists" eyes "apologize" for the status quo) hold that in doing so the major requirements of a majority of the people are met; conflict theorists hold that only those people -- generally an elite or group of elites -- in power have their requirements satisfactorily met.

Deviance is seen as the result of the maldistribution of goods and resources within the society (Davis, 1975). Definitions of what is "bad", of what is deviant, are made in terms of what permits the type of control necessary for maintaining the status quo and also in terms of what threatens it. Social rules become necessary to keep individuals "in line." They are imperative in insuring that sufficient

conformity exists in society such that society is "held together."

A social control perspective may include the Durheimian notion that deviance, as well as cohesion and conformity, is natural. Deviance can be seen as performing a function (rather than a dysfunction)⁵ in that it serves to draw or illustrate the limits of acceptable behaviors. Reactions to deviations from such normative behaviors may additionally serve as a mechanism for solidarity and cohesion. Moreover, where conflict and Durkheimian viewpoints are merged, deviation and deviance may be viewed as mechanisms for social change.

Most conflict theorists, however, do not incorporate such Durkheimian points of view. Instead, they take the position that socially defined rules are defined by the more powerful rule-makers to facilitate their own participation in supply and demand allocation in a "market" characterized by scarcity, and in which an unequal social system is wrought: ". . .politically powerful groups make and enforce rules that are detrimental to the interests and needs of the powerless groups" (Davis, 1975: 205).

The prevailing institutions and market situation, then, benefit the "elite"; for the needs of the "powerless" to be met, illegitimate -- deviant -- channels arise which attempt to provide

⁵Merton (1949: 71) defines functions as "those observed consequences [of a phenomenon] which make for the adaptation or adjustment of a given [social] system." Dysfunctions are negative functions.

necessary resources for the "underdogs," Deviance, it follows, is seen as arising out of organizational rivalries existing in inequitable economic, political and social market situations.

The social control/conflict model offers some useful ideas. It introduces the notion of deviant groups (which may or may not comprise subcultures). In terms of the homosexual community, "straight" society enforces a set of rules which proscribe the very acts which are the basis of the homosexual life-style. A homosocial life-style provides channels for the expression and fulfillment of needs otherwise hindered by the dominant groups.

Differential association. The differential association of deviance (especially as laid out by Sutherland, 1947) deals with criminal behavior. However, because of its emphasis on the learning process, it can be generalized to other forms of deviance, including participating in a gay life-style.

Basically, criminal behavior is seen as learned through interaction in a process of communication with others. Such learning processes occur primarily within intimate personal groups. The knowledge transmitted includes knowledge about the methodologies associated with criminal behavior as well as the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations and attitudes. Essentially it is a process of the transmission and acquisition of the corpus and praxis of subculture. In terms of criminality, "the specific direction of motives is learned from definitions of the legal code as favorable or unfavorable" (Sutherland, as quoted in Farrell and Swigert, 1975: 192). Delinquent behavior results from an excess of definitions favorable to the

violation of law over definitions unfavorable to lawbreaking. The process and consequences of differential association is similar to the learning of other behaviors and knowledge in the larger social system, and in other subcultures.

Labeling theory. Labeling theory is rooted in the Chicago School and in symbolic interactionism. Underscoring labeling theory is the notion that deviance arises out of an interactive process between an individual and those who react to the individual as a deviant. Moreover, to paraphrase a saying, deviance is in the eyes of the beholder. The theory of societal reaction, as it is also called, is primarily interested in the mechanics, the dynamics and the consequences of the reaction of the audience. Neither the act nor the actor are the independent variables; rather, reaction becomes the independent variable.

People deviate from society's norms. This, however, constitutes deviation, not deviance. If the deviation is reacted to (though it does not necessarily follow that reaction will automatically follow any given act of deviation) the individual is labeled in a usually hostile fashion as a deviant, as evil or abnormal, and generally unsuited to the company of "good and decent" people. Gradually, the theory goes, such a label is internalized by the individual. Secondary deviance follows as the individual develops defenses and low self-images. The individual continues to act in a deviating manner, entering into a career of patterned deviance. Secondary deviance occurs because the individual is "acting out his label."

Labeling theory presents deviance as normative, i.e., that acts are not inherently "bad" but are defined as such by those who make,

enforce and conform to social rules. Societal reaction theory also emphasizes the processes by which one aspect of an individual's life-style or behavior (or even some physiological aspect) leads to the whole individual being stigmatized as "bad" and/or deviant.

Social learning theory. Social learning theory can be viewed as a theoretical integration of differential association theory (Sutherland, 1947) and Skinnerian behavioral learning theory.

Within this framework, deviant behavior is learned through interaction within a given social environment. Here, consequences are attached to behavior which either reinforce non-conforming (i.e., deviant) behavior or fail to punish such behavior to "a greater extent than it reinforces conforming behavior" (Akers, 1973: vii). These social environments provide "definitions" which enhance the desirability of non-conforming behavior at the expense of conforming behavior.

In support of the social learning approach, there have been cited certain Behavior Modification techniques which have been applied in clinical situations as evidence of the role of social learning, primarily of the S-R type, in deviant behavior. The success of Behavior Modification and aversive conditioning techniques in "curing" or "deconditioning" sexual deviants is noted (Rackman and Teasdale, 1970; Ellis, 1964; Freund, 1960).

Within the arena of sexuality, the effects of social learning are most salient in gender-role socialization. Various socializing agents quite effectively teach young males to be masculine in manner and attitude, and young females to be feminine. However, it must be

remembered that gender-role and sex-role identifications, though similar, are not the same. Gagnon (1967) illustrates this point with the example that where eroticism is concerned, conventional sex-role learning becomes ambiguous and, at times, ineffective.

Control theory. Control theorists do not consider deviance to be caused. Rather, they see deviance made possible because of the inability of society or social groups to prevent its occurrence. That is to say, deviance is more likely to occur where the hold on individuals by society and/or particular groups is weak or weakened.⁶

⁶ The theory of control is similar to the theory of social organization. Like social organization theory, control theory views action, under normal conditions, to be regulated by norms. When social organization is disrupted, the control force of norms is broken. In such cases, individuals are left free to deviate.

Emile Durkheim (Cf. Clinard, 1964: 11) argued that groups cannot constrain individual conduct: the more social disintegration within a group, the more likely one was to see the occurrence of deviance. Merton (1968) applied the term anomie to such a state of social dis-regulation (See Chapter II of this thesis). In such states, individuals are not regulated by the usual constraints of a well-ordered society.

Control theorists assume that without the control force of norms, individuals would follow their own paths towards fulfilling individual desires. In this sense, conformity, not deviance, is "the unnatural human condition" (Frazier, 1976: 54). Control theory, then, can be seen as a theory of conformity as much as it can be viewed as a theory of deviance (Frazier, 1976).

Reiss (1951) considers conformity, or individual control, to be the result of individual internalization of social norms held by groups which have non-delinquent group expectations. Accordingly, there are several circumstances where this internalization of conventional norms does not occur effectively. The individual may simply not internalize conventional control norms. Situations may be such that previously established controls have broken down and are no longer effective. On the other hand, there may be an absence of social rules among important reference groups. Conflict may be present, too, among the social groups which serve as primary reference points for the individual. In these cases, according to Reiss's hypothesis, ineffective social and personal controls allow the emergence of deviance.

An important adjunct to control theory is presented in the "drift theory" proposed by Matza (1964). Drift theory contends that the weakening of social control is not in itself sufficient to bring about deviance. Matza reintroduces the concept of "will" and analyzes the interface of human will and the processes which render the moral control of social norms ineffective. In doing so, Matza concedes that the social structures of deviant subcultures play an important role in the emergence of deviance. "Subterranean convergence" is described by Matza as an intersection of conventional and deviant cultures which, in essence, results in conventional values offering subterranean support for deviant actions. That is, the deviant may offer conventional rationalizations for otherwise unacceptable behavior. The veracity of the rationalizations is self-evident only to the deviant. Similarly, the deviant perpetrator may simply evade social norms rather than reject them. This process of "neutralization" allows, in the deviant actor's mind, the commission of social infractions; it is made possible by subterranean convergence. While neutralization hinders the binding force of social convention, it does not necessarily guarantee the occurrence of deviance. It is here that Matza introduces the concept of "drift." The individual who is in a state of drift no longer is constrained by conventional moral patterns; he is, however, not at the point of consciously choosing a deviant path. He is neither attracted to nor repelled by conventional behavior. Ultimately his behavioral choice is largely determined by "will." The decision to deviate is a rational choice. The choice is his because he either determines the deviant activity is within his ability and

competence (i.e., he has a sufficient "stock of knowledge") or he sees himself unable to do otherwise.

While Matza concludes that both conventional societies and deviant subcultures invite conformity, commitment and allegiance, he views the deviant "drifter" as one who lies between the two camps, as one who responds

in turn to the demands of each, flirting
now with one, now with the other, but
postponing commitment [to either].
(Matza, 1964: 28)

Commitment, for Matza, is important because of its absence.

Hirschi, in Causes of Delinquency (1969), proposes that attachment, commitment, involvement and belief are the elemental bonds of convention within society. While some control theorists emphasize the salience of internalization (Reiss, 1951) as effective social control, Hirschi considers that for whatever internalization may be, its essence "lies in the degree of attachment of the individual to others, not in the personality" (Frazier, 1976: 67).

A positive relationship exists between conformity and attachment to others. Commitment occurs when, with all things considered, the costs and risks of deviance in terms of material and intangible aspects exceeds whatever possible reward deviant activity might present.

An individual who is involved to a greater degree with conventional social functions is more likely to be controlled by conventional norms than the person who is not. Involvement with conventional social functions limits any possible situations conducive to deviant activity. The individual, however, must believe in the norms governing such activities and expectations, and where such belief is diminished, the

probability that such social rules will be broken increases. The concept of "will," however, is de-emphasized by Hirschi, in favor of "probability". A decrease in the effectiveness of elements of societal control only increases the possibility of deviance.

Deviance operationalized. As seen, there are varying foci for definitions of deviance. Since there is little proof of any specific biogenic causes of homosexuality,⁷ it would seem logical to assume that homosexuality is, in part, learned behavior.⁸ Sutherland's differential association theory of criminal behavior (1947) can be adapted for use in describing other forms of deviant behavior. Specifically, certain

⁷ Etiological questions are addressed in Chapter III.

⁸ Homosexuality may be placed within the social learning model as subcultural deviance, i.e., it is "typically implicated in a recognizable continuing social system which serves to recruit, teach, and provide support and opportunities for the deviant practices" (Akers, 1973; 142). Social learning theorists note that the physiological capacity for sexual activity is innate. However, aside from the few basic abilities that allow for sexual arousal and orgasm, other aspects of sexual activity "appear to be the product of learning and conditioning," in part attributable to experiencing the rewards and punishments associated with socio-sexual behavior (Kinsey, et. al, 1953: 644-646; Akers, 1973: 143).

While homosexuality may be viewed as a subcultural manifestation of a form of sexual deviance, not all same-sex relations are evidence within the subculture or as subcultural manifestations, nor are all homosexually-behaving persons members of a homosexually-based subculture. This is an important area where the gay-homosexual differentiation must be maintained. More serious, there is the implication that the homosexual act itself is taught through subcultural affiliation. Though many of the concepts and definitions of "gayness" are acquired through the subculture, the inclination and wherewithal to perform a homosexual act is not. The implication that gay subcultures actively "recruit" members is infortuitous in that, while the gay communities stand as "recognizable continuing social system(s)" which provide support and opportunities for homosexual expression and do indeed "open their doors" for the gay, they do not "recruit" in the insidious manner which the term has come to connote.

concepts dealing with the learning and acquisition of knowledge and methodologies in the criminal world may also be applicable when studying homosexuality as a group phenomenon and the transmittal of a gay corpus and praxis. The social control/conflict model is useful in describing the subculturation of homosexuality: that is, why homosexuality becomes homosocial as a necessity. Societal reaction (labeling) theory may be used to analyze the "underground" or demimonde nature of the homosexual community, but it can hardly explain the homosexual practice and/or desires of the gay (much less "closet queens"). However, labeling theory serves a purpose in removing the stigma of homosexuality, permitting thus a more "value free" study of the subject matter. Becker (1963) noted, in this regard, the relativity of deviance: "Deviant behavior is behavior people so label."

The consequences of attachment, commitment and involvement (as presented by Hirschi, 1969) are notable when homosexuality is discussed as an organized social phenomenon. The degree to which a gay is committed, attached and involved with the subculture increases the likelihood that he or she will become familiar with and utilize a sub-cultural "stock of knowledge" and possibly follow certain "recipes for behavior" provided by subcultural affiliation. Matza's theory of drift (1964) may be used to explain entrance into a subculture which has no apparent "anticipatory socialization" (Merton and Rossi, 1950) processes. A deviant who chooses to become involved in organized subcultural practices differs from the person who engages in similar practices, but on an individual basis. The latter may come into

contact with the subculture, but remains on its periphery, sharing only in isolated deviant acts.

Deviants share a common denominator. They assume a master status of "deviant", of disvalued, ostracized beings:

. . . as persons in a given status, whether or not they commit acts associated with their groups and imputed to them, they are disvalued and reacted to in a negative manner by large numbers of persons in the society.

(Sagarin, 1975: 5)

Basically, deviance is seen as behavior which lies in a socially disapproved direction beyond some "tolerable limit" (I. Reiss, 1970; D. Black and A. Reiss, 1970). Norm violation, especially that which is motivated, purposive norm-breaking, is a factor in the definition and application of the deviant label (Parsons, 1951). Such definitions, however, are not applicable to certain types of deviance, e.g., forms of ascribed deviance such as physical handicaps. In order to operationalize deviance in a manner inclusive of such forms of deviance, Edwin Schur (1971: 24) defines deviance as follows:

Human behavior is deviant to the extent that it comes to be viewed as involving a personally discreditable departure from a group's normative expectations, and it elicits interpersonal or collective reactions that serve to 'isolate,' 'treat,' 'correct,' or 'punish' individuals engaged in such behavior.

Qualified to include acts of secret deviance, the above description provides a most useful operationalization.⁹ It allows an

⁹Sagarin (1975) does this by utilizing Goffman's (1963) differentiation between discredited and discreditable characteristics. For further elaboration, see Sagarin's footnote on page 9.

elaboration of the concept of deviance in terms of subcultures because (1) of the relativity, rather than the absoluteness, of deviance and (2) it includes the idea of differences in normative expectations and behaviors. Further, by discussing deviance in terms of the social processes which help to create it, it makes it possible to take into account the many social variables included in the processes. This is opposed to merely studying one individual or aggregate of individuals who might otherwise be presumed inherently deviant. In considering deviance to be a social process, society, as well as its conforming and nonconforming actors, becomes an active partner in the social creation of deviance (Simmons, 1969).

Subcultures

Theorists and researchers have generally viewed subcultures as "cultures within cultures". Indeed, Sagarin (1975: 295) defines a subculture as

a group of people, partially removed from a larger society of which they are a part, who interact among themselves to a large extent and in important sectors of their lives, sharing with one another some common values and common outlooks on the world which impart to them a sense of ingroup similarity not extended to others.

Implicit in such a definition is the notion that, among members, there exists some degree of social organization which orders their relationships and interactions among themselves. Subcultures are not mere random aggregates of individuals. Rather, subcultures are composed of persons who share unique intersubjective realities, maintained by an identifiable system of knowledge, and structures through

ordered patterns of interpersonal relationships. Subcultures, then, are socially organized.

Olsen (1968) defines social organization as a process of regularized, systematized and ordered patterns of human relationships. Socially organized collectivities are characterized by particular memberships, interpersonal identification among group members and a shared culture and system of norms and values. Given this last characteristic, it is apparent that the organizational foundation of a subculture rests to a large degree on a social reality and Weltanschauungen¹⁰ shared by its members.

Some (Cohen, 1955; 1959) see the development of subcultures as a consequence of differentiation within society. Individuals who share similar social problems interact among themselves because other patterns of interaction are less available to them because of "differences" or "problems." In some cases (e.g., drug addicts, prostitutes, career and professional criminals, homosexuals), subcultures may develop which have a system of social norms and values which distinguish them from the larger society (Cohen, 1955). The values they share include those incorporated from the larger social system as well as a set of values, meanings and symbols which are to some degree distinctive (Clinard, 1974). Subcultural members participate in the

¹⁰Karl Mannheim (1952) presents a basic discussion of the concept Weltanschauungen in "On the Interpretation of Weltanschauungen," pp. 53-63 in Paul Kecskemeti (trans. and ed.), Mannheim's Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

larger cultural system to some degree while retaining a certain uniqueness in values, meanings and perspectives.

Distinctiveness of normative systems may or may not create conflict between the subgroups and the larger social system. Even in those cases where conflict is present, such tension may not entirely prohibit effective interaction between groups, though here the difference may be best noted by distinguishing between "subcultures" and "counter-cultures" (Yinger, 1960).

Those groups which possess different value systems from the majority and are still able to maintain effective interaction to some degree, are subcultures. Those groups, on the other hand, which hold a conflicting symbolic structure which is in direct opposition with the larger society such that the smaller group rejects with such great adamance the larger group's values and meanings that intergroup interaction is prohibitive, are termed counter-cultures.¹¹

The various conceptions of subcultures focus to some degree on the interactive, i.e., behavioral, processes, and also on the underlying symbolic systems which support such interactions. There is great diversity on the types of subcultures. Some are based on ethnicity, race, occupation, social class or even physical attributes. Theorists modify the term in operationalizing it for use in their particular theories. What is meant by "subculture" when one refers to a "sub-

¹¹In that gays, for the most part, must and are able to function within the larger social structure (Bell, 1971), the gay world is more aptly described as a subculture rather than as a counter-culture.

culture of violence" (Wolfgang, 1961), differs from what is meant by the term in speaking of the Mexican-American subculture. However, there is the implicit notion of some type of behavioral patterns based on a unique system of symbols existing within the social symbolic system of a larger social group.

In what ways do such a unique symbolic, as well as normative, system arise and nurture subcultural social organization within a larger social system? In part, the question may be addressed in terms of the social construction of reality accomplished by members.

The Social Construction of Reality

There is a tacit understanding among group members that a degree of symbolic consensus exists (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973; Vernon, 1965), that one's "world view" corresponds to the "world view" of others, and that others order phenomena in much the same way as we. Much of human interaction occurs in this taken-for-granted atmosphere. As such, the individual is engulfed by a reality in which meanings, at least as they are applicable in day-to-day situations, correspond to the meanings of others.

Reality is the assignment of phenomena to a domain which the individual views as having an existence beyond its own (Berger and Luckmann, 1966); it is the "ways of knowing things to be known" (Nyberg, 1976). Realities become intersubjective if the system of symbolic meanings are shared with others; that is, if one's assumption of consensus is in fact correct. Reality thus provides not only an order to phenomena, but also a perspective for viewing the world.

The existence of an intersubjective, all-encompassing reality of the everyday life-world does not preclude the possibility for the existence of more specific, less dominant realities which are available to members of society. The "routine grounds of everyday life" (Garfinkel, 1967) while providing a schemata for behavior in ordinary circumstances, may leave room for

other realities [which] appear as finite provinces of meaning, enclaves within the paramount reality marked by circumscribed meanings and modes of experience.

(Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 25)

While remaining subsets of the paramount life-world, these "finite provinces of meaning" serve to provide a unique perspective for individuals, allowing people to function in a less than totally homogeneous society, and which, by definition, arise out of differing experiences of role enactment in different situations.

Realities other than those of everyday life may be held by one individual or shared among groups of individuals. They may be based on one facet of life, on one phenomenon, or many. Individuals who share in a set of experiences, who have similar ideas about such an experiential set, may form a community (Warren, 1974), a "world" (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973) of intersubjective meaning. It is within this perspective that this study of the gay subculture is focused.

Subcultural knowledge. The role of knowledge is fundamental in the structure of reality. People adopt certain methodologies to accomplish certain goals given certain circumstances. The goals, the methodologies, indeed the very definitions of the situations, are socially determined within the context of intersubjective realities.

The symbols, meanings, methodologies and world views are all included in the "stock of knowledge"¹² (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973) which are part and parcel of a given shared reality. And, as Sutherland (1947) points out in discussing the learning of criminal behavior, the use of methodologies falls within the realm of units of knowledge associated with certain realities.

Knowledge is the certainty an individual has that phenomena may be assigned to his realm of the real, and are deemed to be characterized in such-and-such a way (Berger and Luckmann, 1966). Thus, knowledge is that which the individual thinks is the case (Schutz and Luckmann, 1973). This includes "recipes for behavior" or methodologies for accomplishing goals.

The concept of knowledge, while playing a fundamental role in the structure and process of a subculture is also a central issue in the differential association theory of deviance (Sutherland, 1947). Basically, behavior (conforming and deviant) is seen as learned through interaction and communication with others.¹³ Such learning processes occur primarily within primary groups. In terms of deviant behavior, the knowledge transmitted includes knowledge about methodologies associated with such behavior as well as certain specifics such as direction

¹²Nuehring and Fein (1976) offer this brief definition of "stock of knowledge" as referred to by Schutz: ". . .information at hand concerning management of the practical matters of everyday life, including values, assumptions, typifications of self and others, and procedures ('recipes') for bringing about desired states of affairs" (Footnotes).

¹³See footnote 7, which discusses learning theory.

of motives and drives, attitudes, and reasons for behavior. Such a process necessitates an organized subculture.

The learning of norms and methodologies is a subcultural process. The acceptance of such indicate both a tendency toward conformity (Krech, et al., 1962) and at least a tacit choice of affiliation (Nuehring and Fein, 1976) with the group.

Subcultural affiliation. Studies have shown that affiliation is derived more with significant others who are more re-enforcing and/or who help reduce fear and uncertainty (Mehrabian and Ksionsky, 1974). Hence, commitment to a deviant behavioral pattern may be the result of a "self-enhancing" commitment, i.e., commitment which in some way enhances the individual's sense of self-worth and leads to a genuine attachment to the identity afforded by affiliation (Stebbins, 1971).¹⁴ Commitment, like affiliation, is more than attachment to self. It is an attachment to a group. Acceptance of a group's Weltanschauungen thus promotes conformity; and conformity can be considered a correlate of affiliation. Basically, social affiliation may be defined as

the objectively perceivable acts by which individuals intentionally and voluntarily come together in face-to-face interaction for purposes of sociability, friendships, affectivity, and often, though not necessarily, the pursuit of various group defined interests.

(Nuehring and Fein, 1976: 3)

¹⁴ Deviance best flourishes when it is supported by a group (Matza, 1964). While it need not be the case -- contrary to Goffman's position (1961b) -- that, given deviant subcultures' tendencies to maintain and promote deviance, "full-fledged" deviants be always members of deviant groups, deviants, in more cases than not has collective support (Stebbins, 1971).

Affiliation and commitment to a subculture are not necessarily lasting (Matza, 1964). This would be especially true within the gay subculture, as the individual moves in and out of locales and friendship circles, and in view of Kinsey's findings on the modulation of sexual behavior.

Before we can begin to examine the effects of involvement with and affiliation to a gay subculture we must continue our search through the literature to achieve an understanding of what it is to be homosexual and what it means to be gay within a homosocial environment.

CHAPTER III

BEING GAY: A REVIEW OF THE SUBSTANTIVE LITERATURE

The Homosexual Condition

In moving from a review of the concepts "deviant" and "subculture" in general to "homosexual" in specific, we keep in mind the tenuous theoretical status of those concepts. The situation is in no way ameliorated as we specifically discuss homosexuality as a manifestation of a deviant subculture. Quite the contrary. We move from the fuzzy general to an even less definitive specific. While most studies acknowledge the controversial status of the nature and incidence of the homosexual condition, researchers proceed to analyze the homosexual or homosocial life-style as though clarity in all respects has been miraculously achieved. I do not wish to leave that impression.

The term "homosexual" is often taken for granted. It is a term widely used without precise understanding. The prefix "homo" is derived from the Greek root meaning "same." Basically, homosexual designates an individual who is sexually active with someone of the same sex; homoerotic designates attraction (Nyberg, 1973). This simple definition is misleading, however. Quite apart from their own psychosocial sexual orientations, most individuals are capable of either heterosexual or homosexual activity. While there is much disagreement on etiological explanations of sexual behavior in general and homosexual behavior specifically, research shows that humans are capable of wide flexibility in terms of sexual behavior, that individuals are able to

attach erotic desires to almost anything, and that a good deal of sexual behavior is learned (Gagnon and Simon, 1973; Nyberg, 1973).

Experiments with rhesus monkeys support the contention that human sexual behavior is learned (Harlow, 1959). Instinctual explanations of sexual behavior are under attack (Gagnon and Simon, 1973). Biological, behavioral and social scientists have expressed similar views (Cf. Kinsey, 1948 and 1953; Money and Ehrharst, 1972; Ford and Beach, 1951; Nyberg, 1973).

The taken-for-granted concepts in western societies tend to present sexuality as an "either/or" facticity, a dichotomous phenomenon of mutually exclusive polarities (McIntosh, 1968). However, any dichotomous categorization of human sexuality into heterosexual and homosexual classifications is fallacious. Countless and ambiguous cases occur and cannot be explained in such a paradigm. As with most other forms of social phenomena, individual dispositions and behaviors fall on some sort of continuum between ideal types. John McNeill, in The Church and the Homosexual (1976) discusses some of the more salient anomalies of a heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy. There are those individuals who are constitutionally heterosexual, but behave homosexually. There are also those "straights" who have had homosexual experiences and, quite apart from having a predominantly homosexual orientation, are definitely heterosexually inclined (Cf. Kinsey, 1948 and 1953; Humphreys, 1970). On the other hand, there are those who have homosexual histories but whose behavior is heterosexual. Folktales notwithstanding, there are many homosexuals who marry and have children,

as well as those individuals who consider themselves bi-sexual (Clark, 1977). No necessary connection between overt sexual behavior and psychosocial sexual orientation can be maintained.

Despite the controversies surrounding the issue, an operational definition of homosexuality must be sought. Most definitions of the term define homosexuality as a propensity towards same-sex objects. For example, Bailey (1955: x) defines homosexuality as "a condition characterized by an emotional and physico-sexual propensity towards others of the same sex." Other definitions see a homosexual as "any person who feels a most urgent sexual desire which in the main is directed toward gratification with the same sex" (Cory, 1951: 8). John McNeill (1976: 41) quotes John Cavanaugh as qualifying such definitions pseudo-phenomenologically:

It is important to accept that homosexuality is a way of thinking and feeling, not merely a way of acting. The performance of homosexual acts is, therefore, not in itself evidence of homosexuality.

With the preceding definitions in mind, I refer to a homosexual as a male or female with affectional and/or sexual preferences for individuals of the same sex. In addition, I maintain the distinction made earlier between those persons who merely behave homosexually and those individuals who are affiliated with a homosocially-based subculture. The gay subculture, with its homosocially-oriented Weltanschauungen, provides its members with a shared system of meanings.

The nature of the homosexual condition. Scientific disciplines disagree over the etiology of the homosexual condition. Typically, such disagreements center on the role constitutional, psychological,

and environmental factors play in the development of a homoerotic/homosexual personality. Many psychological and sociological explanations focus upon pathological factors, especially those pathologies found in family situations. Irving Bieber (1962) is a leading proponent of theories which conclude that the etiology of the homosexual condition can be found in family maladjustments. He supports the stereotypical notion that male homosexuals typically have distant, ineffectual or hostile fathers and dominating and possessive mothers. However, Dennis Altman (1971: 4) concludes:

Many psychiatrists tend to locate the origin of homosexuality in "maladjusted" family life, yet such an explanation is not altogether convincing. Too many homosexuals have strong and loving fathers, too many heterosexuals have dominating mothers, for any very obvious connections to be seen. It is probable that in Western societies most mothers dominate their sons, and this fact is often disregarded by those concerned to discover the etiology of homosexuality.

Studies by others such as Hooker (1969) have found no consistent differences in patterns of personality which might indicate that homosexuality is a mental disorder attributed to pathological family interactions.

Likewise, there have been no plausible findings to indicate that homosexuals are "born that way." While numerous attempts have been made to link genetic, physiological or hormonal factors to homosexuality, no scientifically plausible evidence exists in the literature that homosexuality and homoeroticism have such biological causal bases.

Despite the common conception, there is no evidence that homosexuality in general is caused by early childhood experiences

involving homosexual seduction. Though this may account for some specific instances of homosexuality, such a notion fails to provide a comprehensive etiological statement. Such an explanation, for one, fails to consider Kinsey's findings in 1948 and 1953 that a significant number of adolescents and pre-adolescents have had some type of homosexual experience. Moreover, as Dank (1971) points out, there are some individuals who, while never having had any homosexual experience, nevertheless self-define themselves as homosexual.

Relying on findings that sexual behavior is learned (Gagnon and Simon, 1973; Nyberg, 1973; Harlow, 1959), some theories consider homosexual behavior to be likewise learned. While this explanation is enlightening and plausible (other forms of non-conforming behavior have been surmised to be learned: see Becker, 1963, and Nyberg and Staggs, 1977), it also lacks a comprehensive statement of homosexual etiology.

Still, the concept of sexual behavior as learned behavior has important consequences, particularly within socialization and labeling theories. The concept of secondary deviance would imply that a homosexual identity, or "career," is the result of a self-definition that an individual imposes upon him or herself because he or she has been so labeled by others. Or the label may be self imposed without explicit outside intervention:

. . .it might be useful to start from the premise that. . .there is no such thing as a homosexual, for such a concept is. . . an artificially created entity that has no basis in reality. What exists are people with erotic desires for their own sex, or who engage in sexual activities with same-sex others, or both. The desires constitute feelings, the acts constitute doing, but neither is being. . .However, people become entrapped in a false consciousness of iden-

tifying themselves as being homosexuals. They believe that they discover what they are. . . Learning their "identity" they become involved in it, boxed into their own biographies. . . There is no road back because they believe there is none.

(Sagarin, 1973: 3-13)

Though no explicit outside social intervention is present, society is implicitly a partner in this self-definition process in that cultural beliefs determine the definitions that the individual makes.

One can conclude, given the preponderance of possible factors and causes of homosexuality, that no theory or proposition has been satisfactorily proven (Acosta, 1975). While the purpose of this thesis is not to put forth a definitive etiological statement of homosexuality, the presentation of a few of the many etiological propositions dealing with homosexuality accomplishes two objectives. First, it underscores that no comprehensive or definitive etiological explanation exists. Second, such a presentation emphasizes that one cannot ignore the cause or causes of any individual orientation which is at once the cause of so significant a social reaction to it, as well as the force which comes to unite so many individuals in a group manifestation of that condition. It deserves scientific efforts to discern it. A discussion of just how many individuals manifest homosexual behavior is relevant.

Incidence of homosexuality. Just as the question of the etiology of the homosexual condition has caused so much debate, so too has the question of the incidence or occurrence of homosexuality. While no one can say that homosexuality is an isolated and seldom occurring phenomenon, neither can one say exactly how many homosexuals in fact

exist. A discussion of the content of homosexuality, though, is warranted because of the impact this extent has on both the social organization of the gay subculture, and the obvious importance numbers seem to have on "raising the consciousness" of many people to a particular topic.

Part of the controversy involved in determining the incidence of homosexuality stems from disagreements over its definition. With no definitive statement available on what exactly homosexuality is, it is difficult to say exactly "who is" and "who is not," or "who has" or "has not." Furthermore, homosexuality and heterosexuality are not black and white issues of sexuality: individuals are more likely to fall on a continuum between ideal types of "heterosexual" and "homosexual," with some individuals alternating between varying forms of sexual behavior over time, others remaining celibate, and so on. This only exacerbates the difficulty of placing a certain figure on "how many are."

In 1948, Alfred Kinsey and his associates at the Institute for Sex Research published the now legendary Sexual Behavior in the Human Male, followed by Sexual Behavior in the Human Female in 1953. Among the more controversial conclusions of the research was that only 50% of the male population in the United States could be considered exclusively heterosexual. This startling conclusion was based on findings that 37% of the males reported to have experienced at least one homosexual encounter to the point of orgasm, with 13% more reporting homosexual desires. Eight percent of the males could be considered to have been exclusively homosexual for at least three

years beyond adolescence, the report said. Only 4% of the population could be termed life-long homosexuals. For women, the reported incidences were significantly lower. Thirteen percent had had homosexual contacts and only 2% of the female population was exclusively Lesbian.

Kinsey relied on a constructed seven-point scale ranging from exclusively heterosexual to exclusively homosexual. However, both his methodology and his findings have been under attack. For one, Kinsey relied on a disproportionate amount of incarcerated individuals, apparently failing to take into account the effects of situational homosexuality which is prevalent in same-sex environments, such as prisons. Most critics maintain that Kinsey's findings were somewhat inflated.

One potential source of error encountered by Kinsey, as well as other researchers of sexual behavior, is that of subject truthfulness. People are unlikely to be frank about their own sexuality, especially their personal behavior (Sagarin and Montanino, 1977). Lack of forthrightness may stem from efforts to "answer right" or to uphold a certain mask which they wish to present or believe themselves to be true (Deutcher, 1973; Goffman, 1967). Moreover, people are all too often aware of the social sanctions surrounding their sexual behavior, heterosexual as well as homosexual.

The Gay Subculture

The gay community has been investigated in several serious sociological works. However, on the whole, homosexuality as a group phenomenon has not received much scientific attention (Hooker, 1967), especially in terms of quality (Sagarin, 1973; Plummer, 1975; Nyberg,

1973). A study of the rules and methods employed by subcultural members necessarily involves a review of the social organization which gives substance to those rules and methods. In the literature, the phenomenon at hand has variously been called the homosexual "world", the "gay world," the gay "community," "subculture," "scene" or "reality."

Implicit in such terminology is the notion that, at least for some homosexuals, there exists some degree of social organization which orders their relationships and interactions among one another. Hence, to speak of homosexual subcultures is to speak of a socially organized and socially constructed reality.

Social organization. Recalling Olsen's definition (1968) of social organization as a process of regularized, systematized and ordered patterns of human relationships, we can add that social organizations are bounded by membership, interpersonal identification among group members, geographic location, self-identification of members with the group, willingness to defend the group, and a shared culture and system of norms and values. An integral aspect of social organization is the concept of roles (interrelated sets of expectations and actions). Community may be seen as a "social organization that is territorially localized and through which its members satisfy most of their common problems" (Olsen, 1968). It is more able to meet the needs of its members than any other type of social organization, except for total societies, despite that communities are rarely self-sufficient or autonomous from the larger social system.

The gay individual (a homosexual who is affiliated with a homosocial subculture) shares with others of similar group identification a gay reality. Subjectively, they view themselves as co-members of a homogeneous self-typified "community" (Nuehring and Fein, 1976).

Institutions. While the gay world lacks a formal "territorial base with primary institutions serving a residential population," it does provide its constituents with certain "institutions, facilities or areas. . .governed by common expectations, beliefs, and values" (Hooker, 1967: 171-172). Activities of group members range from public activities in gay bars, to private socializing among members of various cliques.

The public institutions of the urban gay community have developed in a relatively stable fashion across the United States. Allowing for regional idiosyncrasies, the public aspects and institutions of gay life appear fairly standardized in urban America.¹⁵ While the life-expectancy of individual facilities may be long or short, on the whole the urban gay may engage in activities which are centered around the bar system, the bath-house network, certain bookstores specializing in homoerotic literature and paraphernalia, variously informally designated parks, beaches, restaurants, restrooms, as well as a multitude of political, religious and social groups catering to gays.

¹⁵"A stranger to the gay community may enter it via its public institutions, provided he knows where they are, or its private clique structure, provided he can manage a social introduction. Experienced homosexuals who are strangers to a particular community have no difficulty using either entrance since the community map is fairly standardized from one city to another in the United States" (Hooker, 1967: 172).

Though gay bars seem to be important and very significant mechanisms for community activity -- as they provide an avenue for both social and sexual expression -- the organization of the gay world extends beyond these public meeting places as a "loosely knit extended series of overlapping networks of friends" (Clinard, 1974: 559). It exists as

a continuing collectivity of individuals who share some significant activity and who, out of a history of continuing interaction based on that activity, begins to generate a sense of a bounded group possessing special norms and a particular argot.

(Gagnon and Simon, 1967: 261)

Phenomenological bases of the gay subculture. Not all individuals who behave homosexually or possess homosexual tendencies share the gay "world" (Hoffman, 1966). Nor do those persons who share a homosexual province of meaning do so solely on the basis of sexual experience (Warren and Johnson, 1972), though superficial delineations between gay and straight usually focus on typifications of sexual behavior. As Warren (1974: 70) aptly points out,

The core stigma for the straight person is the homosexual act, and a gay person is one who prefers sexual acts with members of his own sex.

Moreover, there are individuals who might participate in the gay "scene" who do not participate in homosexual behavior. Such is the role of the "fag hag,"¹⁶ and occasionally of the research sociologist.

¹⁶"Fag hag", like "fruit fly", are terms in the gay argot which signify a straight female who prefers the company of gay men. Further, some people may label themselves as homosexual in the absence of any same-sex sexual experience. Both Freedman (1971: 49) and Hoffman

The gay individual, as opposed to the merely homosexually behaving person, shares a system of meaning with other gay individuals which goes beyond the sexual act. Gays share homosocial experiences. Hence, there is a difference between mere homosexual behavior and affiliation with a homosocial or gay subculture (Nuehring and Fein, 1976).

The gay world exists as a subculture, with a unique intersubjective reality and maintained by an identifiable system of knowledge. While it might be difficult to discuss the gay subculture with traditional views of community (such as offered by Olsen), students of the subject have described the gay community as an aggregate of individuals sharing a common Weltanschauungen, or world view. Evelyn Hooker (1967: 171) concludes:

That portion of the homosexual population which forms a loosely organized society, world, or collectivity having a unified character, as distinguished from a mere aggregate of persons, is not a community in the traditional sense of the term. . . in that it lacks a territorial base with primary institutions serving a residential population. If, however, one is permitted to use the term to refer to an aggregate of persons engaging in common activities, sharing common interests, and having a feeling of socio-psychological unity, with variations in the degree to which persons have these characteristics, depending on whether they constitute the core or periphery, then it is completely germane to homosexuals.

Gagnon and Simon (1967) concur that it is possible to speak of the existence of homosexual communities as they exist for Lesbians

(1968: 22-23) note that some men label themselves as homosexual prior to having had any sexual relations with other males (Weinberg, 1977).

and gay men. They qualify their position, as does Hooker, to speak of the existence of an urban homosexual community. They utilize the more non-traditional concept of community employed by Hooker. While the homosexual community they describe may lack "a formal character or even a specific geographical location," it nonetheless exists. Warren (1974: viii) does not miss this point. Community, she says,

is a matter of time, space, interactions and human relationships, and a special knowledge, but it is also a matter of the sharing of a bond of fellowship that transcends concrete situations.

Entrance, affiliation and identity. The gay subculture is unlike many other subcultures (such as ethnic, religious, racial and even certain occupational subcultures) in that there is little, if any, "anticipatory socialization" (Merton and Rossi, 1950)¹⁷ into a homosexual subculture. There does seem to exist, however, a tacit choice for entering and participating in the subculture (Nuehring and Fein, 1976; Schutz, 1962; Warren, 1974; Holzner, 1972). Such assumptions are based upon a view that man is rational: entrance into the gay community is volitional and rational (Cf. Matza, 1969; Hacker, 1972). However, such a choice need not be clear-cut or decisive; the individual may "drift" into such a decision (Matza, 1964).

Once entrance into the subculture has occurred, the gay person assumes an identity, along with fellow "deviants" in relation to the

¹⁷ Except in those cases reported by Hoffman (1968), Freedman (1971), and Weinberg (1977) wherein some men identified as homosexual prior to any homosexual act. See previous footnote.

larger society.¹⁸ To some degree, a label of "deviant" is internalized -- the individual internalizes to a degree the stigma associated with the label (Goffman, 1973; Berger and Luckmann, 1966: 163ff). However, "affiliation with the gay community also [affords] opportunities for positive self-typification" (Nuehring and Fein, 1976: 27). The gay individual, in some instances, is able to discount the master status associated with homosexuality. An excerpt from an interview done by Warren (1974: 156-157) reads in part:

I knew I was a homosexual and my idea of homosexuals was that they were all degenerate perverts. I must be that too. When I got in with other gays I finally could see we were people like everybody else -- just that we had some different ideas.

Gay people function within the straight world. Except for an occasional few who dissociate themselves as much as possible from mainstream life, much of gay's life is spent in straight society.¹⁹

¹⁸Weinberg (1977) provides a discussion of homosexual self-identity in "On 'Doing' and 'Being' Gay: Sexual Behavior and Homosexual Self-Identity," a paper presented at the Annual Meetings of the Society for the Study of Social Problems. Chicago; and in an unpublished revised version under the same title (Cf. Warren, 1974).

¹⁹Robert Bell (1971: 279) states: "Probably few, if any, homosexuals are able to so immerse themselves in the homosexual subculture that they are able to cut themselves off from the broader society. Being a member of the homosexual subculture does not remove them from the social influences of society. Even if the role of homosexual becomes the major role for those in the subculture, it is not the only one. Such persons will likely have to interact or be defined according to broader society in some significant areas of nonsexual behavior."

Family and occupation maintain a nexus between the "finite province" of gayness and the reality of straight surroundings. Though one can never totally separate finite provincial realities from other realities (Gagnon and Simon, 1967), for the most part the gay world exists as an extra-familial, extra-occupational, spatial-temporal reality. In order to function in the mainstream, a person who is gay must usually repress his or her subcultural identity:

The gay community exists within leisure time, since the contexts of stigma and secrecy prevent its extension into work time.

(Warren, 1974: 78)

Knowledge. Knowledge of the norms and methodologies which support a gay reality is learned as individuals are socialized into special roles and more fully affiliate with the gay world (Clinard, 1974; Nuehring and Fein, 1976). Clinard (1974: 558-559) observes:

There are subculturally defined ways in which homosexual relations are established. . . In the homosexual community, particularly through its gay bars, the individual learns about the rules of homosexual liaisons, places to go, the things that are a part of homosexual life. . .

The integration of meanings and symbols includes methodological integration. Gays learn where to find other gays in order to interact:

Gay community members know about the types of places likely to be gay, and they find specific gay places by word-of-mouth recommendations. . .

(Warren, 1974: 19)

The importance of learning for complete entrance into the gay world should not be underestimated.²⁰ It is apparent that a normative structure exists, with prescriptive and proscriptive expectations (norms) which provide order for the gay reality (Lenzoff and Westly, 1956). The gay world, then, is organized, and exists as a subculture with a unique intersubjective reality. In turn, this reality is supported and maintained by an identifiable system of knowledge.²¹

Subcultural rewards. The gay community serves many functions towards satisfying the needs of its members (Sage, 1975). Perhaps the most obvious is the facilitation of sexual expression. Males, however, are more likely to use institutions of the gay community than are Lesbians.²² Research indicates, however, that gay women are now using the gay community more (Nyberg, 1976). The gay community also provides support for its members. Within community settings, a gay individual is able to express feelings about life in general and gay life in particular. The community provides an atmosphere allowing one to "let one's hair down" without fear of condemnation. Instrumentally, the gay community provides an argot as well as a set of

²⁰This is not to be confused with the learning of same-sex sexual behavior. The etiology of homosexuality has not been proven. Rather, what is referred to is the learning of how to "be gay." Warren and Johnson (1972) state that members of the gay community see "being gay" as something apart from "performing homosexual acts." (Cf. Weinberg, 1977: 4, 21).

²¹It is possible to speak of separate male and female gay realities and communities.

²²This phenomenon was reported by Gagnon and Simon (1967).

attitudes which help resist the societal legacy of "outcast."

Community life serves in many ways not only to bolster an individual's sense of self-worth, but to reinforce commitment to a gay life-style.

While some see this aspect of community as a dysfunction, in that an increase in commitment may be "at the expense of greater alienation from conventional society" (Gagnon and Simon, 1967), most gays continue to function as members of the larger society (Bell, 1971).

Hence, the gay community provides many, if not most, of the daily needs of its members within their capacity of "being gay." More important, it serves as a mediator in the efforts of gays to solve problems associated with being gay.

CHAPTER IV

CRUISING AND CHOOSING

The Phenomenon of Cruising

Among the problems associated with being gay is the problem of meeting other guys. One way in which gays encounter one another is through a process called cruising. Weinberg and William (1974: 46) define cruising as

the pursuit and solicitation of sexual partners in public places, usually being a patterned activity. . .

Cruising may occur in both gay and non-gay settings. While the art of cruising may be problematic in either situation (even in a taken-for-granted "gay" setting one is not guaranteed success), cruising in a non-gay setting is obviously more problematic for the gay person. Cruising is a stigmatized activity of a stigmatized group.

The gay reality is unlike many other "finite realities." It carries with it a stigma (Goffman, 1961b). Due to this stigma, gay people are hesitant to declare or behave in a fashion tantamount to declaration which might betray their sexual identity. There exists a constant fear of being "found out" (Weinberg and Williams, 1974). For the most part a person who is gay must function in the straight world (Bell, 1971), and to do so he must "pass" (Weinberg and Williams, 1974). In preserving a functional identity suitable for the straight world, the homosexual is usually quite aware of the social sanctions involved. Much of what falls within the realm of the gay world is

stigmatized; the gay must in many cases covertly accomplish his or her goals.

One of these goals which must often be covertly accomplished is the meeting of other gays for social and sexual interaction. Cruising must be done carefully. Incorporating past experiences and drawing upon subcultural knowledge, the gay individual often develops a refined art of cruising.

There is some contention whether cruising behavior is on the decline among homosexuals (Humphrey 1972). Recent research indicates that this is not the case (Sagarin, 1973; Bell and Weinberg, 1978; Weinberg and Williams, 1974). Cruising remains a facet of the gay life-style and, as a subcultural phenomenon, warrants scientific attention.

The Phenomenon of Choosing: Psychological Bases of Cruising

Locating other homosexuals is a multi-faceted problem. Basically, the gay is confronted by the choice of "coming out of the closet," i.e., declaring one's sexual identity, or not doing so. To the degree that one's sexuality is stigmatized and to the degree to which one attempts to "pass," the gay is caught in a paradox. Plummer (1975: 181) describes this problem succinctly:

. . .to the degree that the homosexual succeeds in making himself invisible, so he will cut himself off from contact with other homosexuals -- who are, after all, potential lovers. The more successful he is at "saving face", the less successful he may be at "finding a trick."

In the words of Goffman (1963: 42), the problem is "to display or not to display; . . .to let on or not to let on, . . .and in each case, to whom, how, when and where," The gay is caught in a two-way dilemma: he must pass as straight yet retain his own identity (Davis, 1963). The problematic nature of this precarious situation can be mediated to some degree on two interactive levels. On one level, he or she might "flash cues to some while maintaining a straight self with others" (Plummer, 1975: 177). On another level, the gay person must be able to both catch the cues flashed by others and be able to "pick up" on other characteristics which help define the identity of other homosexuals and gays.²³

The methodology of flashing cues and picking up clues²⁴ is refined within a gay province of meaning. The process of recognition

²³What characteristics that are "picked up" and counted as evidence of another's identity may be partially discerned in terms of "underlying patterns" (Wilson, 1970) and indexical particulars" (Garfinkel, 1967). Weinberg (1977) quotes Wilson (1970: 68) as saying that people identify an "underlying pattern," in this case homosexuality, ". . .behind a series of appearances such that each appearance is seen as referring to, an expression of, or a 'document of', the underlying pattern. However, the underlying pattern itself is identified through the individual concrete appearances, so that the appearances reflecting the pattern and the pattern itself mutually determine one another in the same way that the 'part' and the 'whole' mutually determine each other in gestalt phenomena." This mutual determination of appearances and underlying pattern is referred to by Garfinkel as indexicality, and a particular appearance is called an indexical particular.

²⁴These cues and clues are not necessarily the exclusive property of the gay stock of knowledge; however, they are refined and given special import within such a domain. They include, in addition, other characteristics which function as intended or unintended signals.

is highly symbolic:

Recognition of homosexuality depends upon both perception and action; somebody must identify a homosexual, and certain actions must be identifiable as homosexual. With the exception of being caught in the act there is nothing automatic and intrinsic about such recognition processes; they depend largely upon the mediation of certain patterns of socially constructed meanings.

(Plummer, 1975: 179)

Consequently, the phenomenon of cruising is basically an interactive process between gays. It involves both recognizing and being recognized. Without interaction between the involved parties, cruising is essentially barren:

The majority of homosexual solicitations are made only if the other individual appears responsive and are ordinarily accomplished by quiet conversation and the use of gestures and signals having significance only to other homosexuals.

(Gallo, et al., 1966: 796)

In a sense, cruising is a "gaming encounter" (Goffman, 1961), involving certain tactics, or methodologies, various rules,²⁵ signs and symbols. Part of the "game" is to acquire information about the other's identity, on which the "player" may proceed:

To make a move requires some social arrangement by which a principal. . . can commit himself to a position.

(Goffman, 1961: 35)

As the interactants come into each other's presence, each seeks to define the identity of the other. Information acquired in this

²⁵Humphreys (1970: 47) provides a list of "rules" utilized in cruising.

process can be evaluated in terms of information available in his or her "stock of knowledge." The situation is processually defined, expectations formed and problematic decisions made. In this way, the actor decides upon a course of action which, hopefully, will bring forth the desired response:

For those present, many sources of information become accessible and many carriers (or "sign-vehicles") become available for conveying this information. If unacquainted with the individual, observers can glean clues from his conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly similar to the one before them or, more important, to apply untested stereotypes to him.

(Goffman, 1959: 1)

This description by Goffman presents a curious problem here.

Do gays, as a stereotyped minority, apply similar stereotypes when cruising? Stereotyping is essentially second-hand information because the individual applying the stereotype has not personally confirmed or rejected its correctness.²⁶ Stereotyping, if it does

²⁶ Although there is evidence to suggest that only a limited section of the population holds rigid stereotypes of the homosexuals (Simmons, 1965; Steffenmeier, 1970), and evidence to suggest that very few homosexuals actually match this stereotype, the existence of homosexual stereotyping is beyond dispute. Such stereotypes provide "cues" for some perceivers to interpret an individual who exhibits these "cues" (whether homosexual or not) as homosexual. To assist the public in recognizing homosexuals, several accounts exist in both the academic and non-academic press of "points to watch for." The News of the World advised its readers in 1964 to be cautious of "the man who has never married; the fussy dresser; the office or factory crawler with a smarmy grin on his face; the man with an excessive interest in youth activities; the man who cannot resist pawing you as he talks." These men, the article suggests, are likely to be homosexual (Plummer, 1975: 181).

occur, represents a play of caution on the part of the gay person who strives to maintain the mask of straightness, should anything go amuck while cruising to satisfy his or her social and sexual needs.

It is possible that gays also rely on other forms of second-hand information about individuals in their efforts to meet one another. Such a form of second-hand information is third-person confirmation. In this technique the cruiser relies on information sought and/or given about particular subjects. At times, third-person confirmation may occur if the cruiser draws conclusions about the cruisee because of the company which the latter might be observed in.²⁷ By doing so, the cruiser counts social milieu as evidence of identity. Whether gays do indeed rely to some degree on stereotyping and third-person confirmations remains to be seen.

Decisions made within processes such as cruising are made within an "awareness context." As Glaser and Strauss (1964: 670) note, an awareness context is

the total combination of what each interactant in a situation knows about the identity of the other and his own identity.

²⁷"They can also assume from past experience that only individuals of a particular kind are likely to be found in a given social setting. . . If they know, or know of, the individual by virtue of experience prior to the interaction, they can rely on assumptions as to the persistence and generality of psychological traits as a means of predicating his present and future behavior" (Goffman, 1959: 1).

In that the process is basically problematic until the actual point where each actor definitively acknowledges his or her identity (e.g., "Yes, I'm gay," or assenting to a sexual liaison) such an awareness context is essentially closed, for "one interactant does not know either the true identity or the other's view of his identity" Glaser and Strauss (1964: 670).

As long as the awareness context remains closed, the gay person must reason, calculate and evaluate evidence in such a way as to maximize the rewards (realizing a satisfying encounter, either sexual or social) and to minimize the risks (being caught):

Like other games of chance, deviant sexual encounters focus on an eventual reward. The tactics are determined by the players' calculations of how best to maximize profits, the primary reward being sexual pleasure under preferred circumstances and the chief cost being possible exposure to a hostile community. The consequentiality of such action is of two sorts: the immediate, sought after pay-off and the long range contingencies, which may or may not be desired.

(Humphreys, 1970: 46)

Cruising involves an individual who is at once trying to decipher the identity of another while attempting to present an identity as discreetly as possible. Compounding such a situation is the possibility that the other person may be involved in the same activity. The complication, however, may actually help, rather than hinder the process. In a sense, as the interactant attempts to "get at" the other's identity by "stepping into his shoes, he or she may turn the other's attempts at identity suppression into a "sign situation" (Goffman, 1961). As in other situations, attempts at suppressing

one's identity can form a clue which the gay can count as evidence:

The peculiar relations to other persons attending any marked personal deficiency or peculiarity are likely to aggravate, if not produce, abnormal manifestations of self-feeling. . . Thus "queerness" is no sooner perceived than it is multiplied by reflections from other minds.

(Cooley, 1922: 259-260).

Part of the process of identity definition, according to Goffman (1961), involves an eye-to-eye ecological huddle that maximizes each participant's opportunity to perceive the other participant's monitoring of him. Cruising can thus be considered a highly interactive gaming encounter. As a game, it must rely not only on certain "rules of the game," but on certain tactics (methods) for playing the game. There is also a requisite store of knowledge with which the game is given social significance. Falling within the gay's experiential province of meaning, it encompasses a significant area of his or her gay reality. It is this peculiar nature of cruising which lends itself to a phenomenological examination of its symbolic and epistemic logic.

CHAPTER V
METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

By the very nature of social deviance, it is difficult for deviants to locate one another outside of subcultural parameters. This is especially true for the gay. Locating other homosexuals is a multifaceted problem. Cruising, the art of encountering other homosexuals for social and sexual episodes, can theoretically be placed within a gaming-encounter perspective (Goffman, 1961). The theoretical aspects of cruising were discussed in the preceding chapter. The task remaining is to test the hypothesis that cruising, as an art or accomplishment of the everyday life-world of the gay, fits a gaming-encounter model. If the hypothesis is valid, we then can conclude that cruising involves processes of reason, calculation and determination of "evidence" [as to who is homosexual and who is not]. Such processes, if they do indeed occur, would be grounded within a gay "stock of knowledge," and would comprise "recipes for behavior" (Schutz, 1962) suitable for the accomplishment of cruising.

The most effective way to determine whether or not cruising is an artful accomplishment of the gay world is to directly examine the empirical world as constituted within a gay reality (Cf. Filstead, 1970:1-11). Since a study of the structural logic of the gay subculture may involve discernment of processes implicit even to the gay who is so involved, the researcher should adopt a methodological strategy which maintains a close tie with social reality; i.e., the researcher should use

an approach to examining the empirical social world which requires the researcher to interpret the real world from the perspective of the subjects of his investigation.

(Filstead, 1970:7)

In short, the use of ethnomethodological strategies is called for when the focus of research is on "practical reasoning" (Turner, 1974:7).

Ethnomethodology

Ethnomethodology is a comparatively recent approach to the study of social phenomena. An ethnomethodological study of human activities investigates

the rational properties of indexical expressions and other practical actions as contingent ongoing accomplishments of organized artful practices of everyday life.

(Garfinkel, 1967:11)

Primarily, ethnomethodology seeks to discern and to describe the methods individuals use in accomplishing social action. In doing so, ethnomethodology tries to understand the methods people use in interpreting and constructing their social world.

Ethnomethodological practitioners emphasize the social construction of reality (Schutz, 1962; Berger and Luckmann, 1966). In this way, ethnomethodology is directed towards the problem of meaning, especially in everyday life situations. Starting from the phenomenological "taken-for-granted," e.g., mundane, everyday life world, the ethnomethodologist also studies other strata, or "provinces" of man's reality. The assumption is that these other strata of reality are but "finite provinces of meaning" within a greater, paramount reality of everyday life.

As such, ethnomethodology reflects the phenomenological goal of seeking out the essences of social phenomena and forming objective and ideal paradigms relating to the understandings (or typifications) that individuals hold. In contrast to other more quantitatively oriented approaches, ethnomethodology seeks to make typifications of the typifications individuals hold of one another and the things around them.

Symbolic Interaction Theory

A common ground exists among ethnomethodologists and social psychologists, notably, through the symbolic interactionists. Specifically, an important similarity between the two perspectives can be seen in the importance given by both to the concept of meaning (Mead, 1934; Garfinkel, 1967). The desire "to know other men's minds" is evident in both camps, though ethnomethodologists also attempt to establish how "men know other men's minds."

Theories and methods based on symbolic interaction theory have been a predominant force in modern social psychological theory. Symbolic interactionism places the individual and society together as an indivisible and interdependent social unit.

Basically, symbolic interaction theory holds that human beings interpret or "define" each others' actions instead of merely reacting to them. Human social behavior is distinct in that social man is a symbol-creating and symbol-manipulating creature.

Within symbolic interaction theory, social action is not seen as a product of social organization. Rather, society is the framework within which individuals act. Group life is seen as based on

cooperative behavior; cooperative behavior in turn is more than just the result of responses to biological and physiological stimuli. Instead, humans respond to each other on the basis of meanings of gestures. The key concept is meaning, and the unit of analysis is the social act.

A social act is not simply a response to a stimulus. Using certain social mechanisms, individual actors ascertain (or attempt to ascertain) the actions of others. Actors respond to the acts of others by interpreting those actions in terms of shared meanings. Hence, interaction rests upon consensus. On this basis, society is seen as comprised of actors sharing common understandings of "the way the world is." The weltanschauungen they share provides these actors with ready-made and commonly accepted definitions and expectations for behavior.

Symbolic interactionism's roots can be traced to the writings of Cooley and Mead, who focused, to a large degree, on the processes involved in socialization. In discussing the concept of self-image, Cooley arrives at the idea of the looking-glass self (1902). According to Cooley, individuals see themselves as they feel others see them. In attaching emotion to this process, the individual constructs, assumes and maintains a socially acquired identity.

Mead tackled the problem of socialization by conceptualizing it as a process by which individuals come to understand the actions of others. An individual responds to others on the basis of symbols or meanings of gestures. Mead considered language as the most important

of significant symbols for it provides a conduit through which children (or new members) learn the meanings and definitions of those around them.

Research

This is a study not only of cruising. It is also a study of the logic which guides gays who cruise. In this sense, this is a study of a social phenomenon and those meanings which "make sense" of it. For that reason, a theoretical perspective to guide a research approach had to be compatible with the intent to know and understand the minds of those about whom I was to be reporting.

Lofland (1971) makes a sharp distinction between quantitative and qualitative research and analytic approaches. Quantitative methods are concerned with statistics (or "knowing about") while qualitative programs are designed, "to provide an explicit rendering of the structure, order, and patterns found among a set of participants" (Lofland, 1971:7). Qualitative methodology, further, is committed to representing the "participants in their own terms" (Lofland, 1971:6). It becomes a medium to "know" the participants and their experiences.

I decided, therefore, that a qualitative approach and a theoretical perspective congruent with such an approach were appropriate for this study. Both ethnomethodology and social interactionist perspectives are committed to "knowing the minds" of those individuals studied. Because both approaches remain faithful to the concept of "meaning" (particularly as seen in symbolic interaction theory) and the sense such meanings attribute to behavior and other social phenomena (ethnomethodology), I sought a compatible merger of ethnomethodological and

interactionist theoretical perspectives. It was my judgement that, for the purpose at hand, such a merger was both possible and desirable.

Qualitatively, a merger of ethnomethodological and symbolic interaction perspectives into one methodological program demands some sort of "face-to-face" approach (Lofland, 1971). Two methodological designs were most appropriate in this case: interviewing and participant observation. Both permit a reasonable proximity to the group being analyzed and both permit a report, "in good faith," of phenomena and the perceptions of such phenomena by the participants and myself.

A flexible (unstructured, in the conventional sense) interview design seemed desirable because I wanted to discover the ways the participants go about cruising and the ways they make sense of their actions. Ethnomethodology is dogmatically determined to present or report these ways in the participants' (i.e., subjects') own terms. A structured interview schedule would have hindered a more faithful report of these tactics if only because the offering of pre-set questions involves the assumption that "the ways" are already more or less known [to the researcher and] hence imposes a great deal of researcher bias. On the other hand, a flexible or unstructured set of questions promotes "intensive interviewing with an interview guide" (Lofland, 1971:76). In this manner, primarily by maintaining the direction of the interview, I could, in essence, make explicit the implicit (and more so, the seemingly obvious) perceptions, constructions and interpretations of the interviewees by allowing them in fact to help define some questions for discussion. The interview becomes all the more relevant because it is set forth by a process influenced by the interviewee's responses.

Participant observation would allow me to compare reports with "real" behavior. But more important, it would allow me to "know," in yet another dimension, the participants' construction of their social world. The more I could "know" the subjects and their environment, the more faithfully I could report their minds and their actions.

The techniques of interviewing and participant observation were used (Cf. Douglas, 1970; McCall and Simmons, 1969; and Hooker, 1967). Such techniques were tempered with a critical attitude (Warren, 1974). That is, while I held as valid the subjects' reality, I did not automatically assume as "factual" everything that was mentioned by the subjects. While nothing was assumed to be false, a critical posture was maintained which acknowledged the possibility that even the subjects were unaware of certain underlying patterns of logic which may guide their behavior. A cautious critical attitude aided in eventually reaching a more complete understanding of the reality at hand. By carefully combining participant observation with ethnomethodological analysis, the ultimate goal of making what was implicit explicit was more nearly met.

In interviewing, the ethnomethodologist must take care to limit the skewing effects of his or her own opinions and ideologies. A period of initial entrance into the community to be studied was dictated. It afforded me an opportunity to observe the subjects. During this period I "learned" from the group such things as argot, membership, certain norms of behavior, and the like. This period served a double purpose. As time was spent with the group, I gained first-hand knowledge about the group and its members, and this period allowed for adjustment by the group to the presence of a researcher.

This period of mutual adjustment was important. For one, the gay world is rich in argot, some not easily translatable. Constantly to have asked interviewees to rephrase their comments because I could not understand words which they used with ease and took for granted might have tested their patience and jeopardized complete integrity of the session.²⁸ An adequate knowledge of the argot facilitated the interview process. Not knowing when and how to use gay language might have been as detrimental as an ignorance of it.

This period was also used to gain the confidence of the subject group. During this period of reciprocal adjustment, the gays, becoming accustomed to the presence of a researcher, began to "can the camp"²⁹ which usually accompanies the introduction of outsiders.

The writings and research on the gay world provided only second-hand information. First-hand experience coupled with previous literature review provided a more adequate introduction to the subject (Cf. Douglas, 1970). Participation included visits to gay bars, gay homes, attendance at gay social and political meetings, and the like. Entrance

²⁸Of course, constant rephrasing was sought to help uncover implicit notions. Such rephrasing, however, was left to the fundamental phenomena, rather than for the purpose of simple definitions which could be acquired elsewhere.

²⁹Camp is the purposeful exaggeration of gay behavior. In the eyes of straights, the theatrics of camp approach the outrageous.

Though camp is a valid phenomenon of gay life, it is also a barrier to the understanding of gays and their subculture. Had I been less prepared or more unknowing, I might have taken such camp behavior as truly representative behavior, drawn spurious conclusions, and issued an analysis which bolstered the stereotype of gays in our midst. Fortunately, during the adjustment period I learned what counted for camp and what did not. Such distinctions were necessary and invaluable.

into the community and understanding of its processes and structure were greatly facilitated in this way (Cf. Warren, 1974; Hooker, 1967).

As I gained a clearer picture of the gay community, I was more able to guard against another factor endemic to interviewer error. I became aware not only of the biasing effects of interviewer ideology and opinion, but of the beliefs I originally held about the "true sentiments" of the group (Hyman et al., 1975:35).

This study made me aware that interviewing is an interactive process. The integrity of the final analysis was more fully guaranteed because I attempted to communicate with the interviewees on a level where some symbolic consensus existed. Since the phenomena to be studied were gay phenomena, I strove to reach symbolic consensus nearer to a level of meaning close to that of the subjects. A researcher cannot normally attain full cognition of the subjects' reality. Ultimately the researcher aims to achieve a truthful interaction, so consequently, a "compromise consensus" had to be achieved. That is, in "bargaining" for consensus of meaning I had to reinforce my status as a researcher and sociologist without destroying my taken-for-granted presence in the group. I remained aware that whatever consensus had been achieved could not duplicate the consensus held by group members. Hence, my analysis does not assume that data were totally representative of gay life.

This research thus began with a four-week period of initial entrance into the group. Primarily, interaction at this stage consisted of observation and non-data collection conversations. Eventually, this stage developed to include limited participation. Note-taking was done for personal edification, as well as preliminary descriptions of the gay

situation at hand, including aspects not central to the basic research but which, as a part of the gay reality being studied, support and give substance to it.

During this four-week period I became secure in my position. I was ready to begin interviewing. I was at a stage where my presence was taken for granted. I marked this point by observing that extraordinary camping behavior had ceased: I was no longer regarded as an audience for a performance because I was no longer regarded purely as a researcher.

During the substantive interview stage I interviewed ten males and ten females. (Of the twenty interviews obtained, only sixteen were finally used in the analysis. The remaining four interviews were unable to be transcribed because the tapes were damaged.) Those that were interviewed included, of necessity, some who had recently moved from the original locale or who, though residing in another community, still maintained close ties with the group. Both types were integral parts of the friendship network of the community (Clinard, 1974). There was no way around this: the community being studied was highly mobile and transitory in nature. I must add that this tendency towards mobility was due more to their being involved with the university than because they were gay. A student population is usually highly mobile.

Living in a college community, the sample consisted primarily of individuals associated with the university network, with the exceptions already noted. Interviewing was done on a voluntary and overt basis, and interviewees were recruited in a snowball effect.

In seeking to unfold both the underlying epistemic logic and the structure of that logic which the subjects used in cruising, the interview design was structured by the two questions, "Can you tell if someone is gay or not if you see them in a place other than a bar. . .?" and "How?"

These questions were aimed at the primary source of the problematic nature of cruising. That is, when a gay person wants to meet someone, how does he know if that someone is gay or not? Though apparently a loosely structured design, it remained rigorous in that each succeeding question was dependent on the preceding answers. In essence, this type of schedule design prodded the interviewees to rephrase their answers, the way the subjects processually uncovered the logical order of his or her "stock of knowledge." In this way, I ultimately sought an opportunity to study the way subjects make explicit, in their own way, those implicit orders of logic which structure their subcultural stocks of knowledge and "logics in use."

CHAPTER VI
DATA AND ANALYSIS

When a researcher decides to undertake an epistemological study of a subculture's system of knowledge, she/he assumes that the group possesses a unique subcultural stock of knowledge. While subcultural members maintain epistemic ties with the larger social system, they also develop and maintain a uniqueness in terms of those things generally relevant to the subculture's existence and of those things germane to the specific roles mandated by subcultural affiliation.

Verification of Subcultural Authenticity³⁰

The assumption that subcultures possess unique stocks of knowledge reflects Schutz's proposition of a social distribution of knowledge (Schutz, 1962; Berger and Luckmann, 1966:46, 77):

By virtue of the roles he plays the individual is inducted into specific areas of socially objectivated knowledge, not only in the narrower cognitive sense, but also in the sense of the 'knowledge' of norms, values and even emotions.

(Berger and Luckmann, 1966:77)

Of course the researcher must first determine if the group to be studied indeed represents a subculture or if, instead, it is just an aggregate of people who share something in common. In the case of this

³⁰ My attempt to verify the existence of a subcultural pattern did not violate any phenomenological tenet, for mine was not an attempt to discount the veracity of the subjects' realities. Rather, it was a caution against analyzing a group in terms of subcultural standards when in fact none might exist. Had no subculture in fact existed a host of spuriously false conclusions would have been made.

study, I had to determine whether the group of gays who formed my research sample were pooled from a gay subcultural community in the university area, or rather if they were an aggregate of homosexually-oriented individuals, some of whom, it could be sure, maintained subcultural ties elsewhere. I compared attributes of the group with definitional descriptions of subcultures, especially those of Sagarin (1975) and Olsen (1968). Subcultures were discussed in Chapter II of this thesis.

The period of initial observation was used precisely for this evaluation of subcultural authenticity. I had to be satisfied that the group maintained some sort of membership pattern, which it did. I had to establish whether any pattern or code of conduct existed among the members that could not be found in the other social networks formally or informally connected with the university, which, it appeared, was the case. And finally, mainly through the interviews, I had to conclude whether or not the group maintained a unique form or stock of knowledge which was transmittable and shared among members. This, too, I found to be true.

Indications, then, were that the group could be identified as a subculture; a subculture, to be sure, with ties to a larger cultural system of gays.

The core membership of the group consisted of approximately sixty (60) individuals, male and female, some heterosexual, most homosexual, all gay-oriented. The heterosexuals found within what I determined to be the core group were four females (the slang for such women is "fag hag"). Two heterosexual males were found in the larger group, which

swelled at times to almost two hundred (200). At one local party some four hundred (400) people attended. However, this larger number also included older local homosexuals who normally did not associate with the group. It also included former group members and out-of-town friends and associates. On occasions such as this, a number of heterosexual males and females (mostly females) could be seen, even though such gatherings were more or less "closed to the public." This evidence suggests that gay subcultures go beyond sexual associations and exist as social networks in which homosexuality is a non-problematic phenomenon.

The core faction of the research population comprised most of the membership in the two formal gay associations in the area. One association was service oriented and unofficially attached to the university. Its members were all university students and/or staff. The other was a social organization which spanned the community.

Several strong cliques could be determined in the group. The cliques, though, were fluid and constantly changing. Interestingly, a high degree of interaction was evident between Lesbians and gay men. According to the group, such interaction is normally restricted in the larger metropolitan areas in the region and, they often pointed out with pride, theirs was a unique phenomenon in the gay world. Talking with members of gay groups from other areas I concluded that this seemed to be a correct assessment on the part of my confidantes.

For the most part, even when going beyond clique boundaries, most community members were aware of "who was" and "who wasn't" in the group. They seemed aware not only of the gays in the community, but of the homosexuals who weren't.

The awareness of membership indicated the existence of a normative structure among group members. Not only was the group aware of homosexuals in the area who, for various reasons, could not or would not associate with the group, they were also aware of a number of individuals whom they did not care to associate with. Normally, when questioned why they did not want these individuals in their company, people responded that it was because these "outsiders" seemed to have broken some code of conduct and, in at least one case, of attitude. Ostracism is a typical sanction of normative systems (Hebding and Glick, 1976:305).

It could be concluded that such ostracism was a manifestation of closure among individuals in a transitory aggregate. Members were aware of former group members who had long since left the area. Even members who had no personal knowledge of certain former members could identify these individuals if only in name. Former members and past escapades and experiences formed part of the lore of the group, and such accounts were circulated among members. It appeared that knowledge was often transmitted in conversation that was not manifestly didactic. Bits of information could be gleaned from casual conversation, and the neophytes in the group were exposed to important pieces of knowledge of the gay world, for example information about bars, good and bad cruising spots, and techniques of cruising.

The group appeared to have a sense of temporality. Though many gays apparently passed through the area before and since this study, the group often bounded its beginning with the formal founding of its community social organization. It seemed that this seminal organization was, for the group, the focal conception of its identity.

Knowledge of the group's history was recited to every newcomer, and every neophyte seemed interested to know how to meet other gays in the area. They were able, through the group, to find places to go and things to do within a homosocial milieu. Such knowledge seemed to be a primary reason for the group's continued existence.

The group was composed mainly of younger gays and many members had "come out"³¹ initially with this group. On the other hand, there were those newcomers to the group who brought with them a legacy from previous (and often unsevered) memberships in gay communities elsewhere. In many cases, this latter group was instrumental in forming a bridge between the gays in the research locale and gays in neighboring communities. Even membership in the core group was mutually inclusive with membership in groups in other areas.

Members assumed many roles. Some were leaders, others followers; some were activists, some sages. Roles of friend, lover, guide, clown and organizer were assumed and abdicated by individuals over time.

A particular role provides an individual with the need for, as well as "the entrance into a specific sector" of, the group's total stock of knowledge (Berger and Luckmann, 1966:77). By way of illustration, Berger and Luckmann (1966:77) provide an example of a social

³¹Coming out refers to the conscious allowance of letting others know a person's homosexual identity. Coming out may include different phases. First the gay person realizes and admits to herself or himself that she/he is homosexual. Another phase of coming out involves associating with other gays as a homosexual. Coming out may also involve telling or allowing straight friends, relatives, parents and professional associates that one is gay. Coming out is a process of redefinition of one's identity within and without the gay subculture.

situation produced by a triad composed of a man, a bisexual woman and a Lesbian:

Here some knowledge is relevant to all three individuals (for instance, knowledge of the procedures necessary to keep this company economically afloat), while other knowledge is relevant only to two of the individuals (the *savoir-faire* of the Lesbian or, in the other case, of heterosexual seduction).

For the most part, the particular units of a stock of knowledge (such as the Lesbian's "*savoir-faire*") are taken for granted. To discern and describe such knowledge and recipes for behavior requires a researcher to challenge a member to make explicit heretofore implicit patterns of logic; it invites the researcher to "make sense" of the way people "make sense" of their actions.

In the case of cruising, the data collected offer an opportunity to do just that. There appears no mystical mechanism by which gays meet other gays. While no two gay men and women operate in exactly the same manner in cruising, some definite patterns appear to exist.

Patterns of Cruising

The game of recognition. The learning of techniques and tactics which are incorporated into the methodologies or recipes for cruising are refined within a gay province of meaning. The process of recognition is highly symbolic (Plummer, 1975:179), and within the context of cruising is essentially interactive (Gallo et al., 1966:796). In many ways cruising is what Goffman (1961) calls a "gaming encounter" (see Chapter IV of this thesis).

As a symbolic and interactive process it involves certain tactics or methodologies, reflected by rules, signs and symbols. Consider the

following interview:

- R Well, in a gay bar, you know someplace that you can take for granted as being gay is one thing, but like when you're shopping--where there's straights--you don't know who's gay and who's straight. Have you ever met someone like that?
- S Oh ya, I've met people like that, that looked at me and then they came and talked with me--mostly pick-up tricks--
- R So this is cruising then--this is when you are cruising or someone else is cruising you?
- S They were cruising me.
- R How can you tell when someone is cruising you?
- S The look they give you.
- R What do you mean by "the look"?
- S It's either a "what is it" look or it's "I like it" look. It's a funny, you know "Go to Hell," strange look on them and then when they like it--they have that real nice look where you can tell and all you do is just look back.
- R Can you describe that look, though, or what differentiates it from just other looks--just other "go to hell" looks, or something like that?
- S They stare at you when they like it.
- R Staring, in other words they're looking at you for a long period of time?
- S Uh huh, with, just a smile and their eyes look really nice, and they're looking at you with the "go to hell" look and they're still staring, but the expression on their face--
- R The "go to hell" look now that would be somebody that's straight looking at you?
- S Uh huh, or gay, just you know that's turned off to you, that don't like you.
- R O.K. so they stare at you for awhile, and smile, you know and everything, how does it proceed?
- S Usually, we just are shopping, this doesn't happen a lot, this just happened a couple of times, and then went down, you know I'm leaving, and they just meet you in the parking lot.
- R You mean, they just walk up to you and they say hello?
- S I smile and he smiles and then usually I'll wave and he'll wave and then I'll ask him his name and then usually he'll stop and ask what I'm going to be doing and then I invite him over,

if he wants to come over and then he comes,
usually they come over and we trick.

(Interview #011, Male)

An analysis of this particular segment began with a consideration of the individual. Interviewee #011 is a young man who in his own opinion is effeminate. He had "been out" for a number of years and had been involved in various aspects of the gay world, both its public (bars) and private (friendship networks) institutions. In describing cruising, he related particular experiences and did not make any claims to a set body of methodology. However, even in descriptions of particular episodes, there was evidence that his actions had become somewhat generalized (" . . . and then he comes, usually they come over and we trick" [my emphasis]). While he consciously used the technique of eye-to-eye contact, he also made metaphysical claims to "feelings": ". . . it's just a feeling, by looking at them. . . ." While interviewee #011 could hardly be considered a stereotypical male homosexual,³² his responses dealing with cruising behavior mentioned two phenomena quite often mentioned throughout the other interviews. Refined usage of eye contact and intuitive "feelings" play an important part in "spotting" and cruising.

Eye contact: establishing an "awareness context." In the excerpt just quoted, an active interchange of identity information can be discerned. Through mutual glances, eye contact is used to develop what Goffman (1961) calls an eye-to-eye ecological huddle. Smiles and hand

³²The stereotype of the gay man is one of a limp-wristed, lisping faggot. Most male gays belie that stereotype. While most gay men are indistinguishable from their straight counterparts, camp involves an exaggerated personification of the stereotype.

signals (such as a wave) serve as mutual acknowledgement that a cruising encounter is in progress, and serve also as a signal for the "game" to continue. Such signals and acknowledgements are possible only because the situation has been given social significance, and they become tactics for action which falls within the actors' experiential and epistemic provinces of meaning.

Eye contact appears as a method of cruising among both males and females in the gay community. The following is an excerpt from an interview with a Lesbian in which she describes eye contact:

- R Basically what I'm interested in is how you meet other gay women, whether or not you can tell if another girl is gay, either if you just are out doing whatever you're doing or when you're cruising, on purpose.
- S Okay. One thing is eye contact.
- R Eye contact?
- S Usually, some straight gives a 'hi' or just minimal eye contact. But with some gay women usually you look at them and they still look. . . it's just the way they look, at you.
- R Is it a longer contact?
- S Yeh, a longer eye contact. Maybe a double take.
- R Is there anything else that accompanies that eye contact?
- S Maybe a smile.
- R A smile?
- S Uh-huh.
- R A smile of recognition, or just a smile?
- S Maybe a smile of recognition. No, you really can't tell if you don't know the person it may be just a lot of, well, some gay women might think if they smile at you 'Hey, they're gay!' They know I am.
- R They know you are?
- S No, I mean, some gay women they'll think they know I'm gay just so they smiled at me.
- R When they look at you they just look right into your eye?

S Uh-huh. They look straight into your eye and just kinda make it a little longer and maybe a little smile. That's how I've seen, like, well, like maybe in one of the bars. . . . That's how I've noticed.

(Interview #003, Female)

"Radar": a metaphysical guide. Eye contact and "radar" (or something akin to it, like "feeling," or "sixth sense") were frequently mentioned by gays as being useful in spotting and cruising other homosexuals. Radar is curious to the observer because it has seemingly been given metaphysical qualities similar to those given to a "woman's sixth sense." While sight is one of our five senses and the consequences and social importance of eye contact can be explained and understood without much ado, radar requires more inspection. As a so-called "sixth sense" it lies beyond the conventions of the five senses; it is more complex and appears transcendental.

An ethnomethodological program is designed to de-mystify, at least for researchers and their audience, such metaphysical claims as "radar." By ethnomethodological analysis, the meta-nature of radar can be broken down into tangible, discernible units.

In essence, instead of relying on the more common and accepted stereotypes of homosexuals (see Plummer, 1975:181), the accomplished cruiser relies more on subtle cues. These cues are often so elusive that, when questioned as to their existence, gays often implicitly deny them. Rather, the gays might claim some mystic phenomenon intercedes to aid them as they evaluate the identity of a potential trick. For example:

S You just, have to look at the person and know. I mean they don't have any distinct physical features, saying I'm gay.

- R What is it that says they are gay?
 S It's just the second sense I guess.
 R So you just get this feeling this person's gay, you don't know what it is?
 S Right. No.
 R Try and think about it.
 S . . . I don't know, I guess I just see characters that I've seen in gay, characteristics I've seen in gay people. Associate them or--
 R What kind of characteristics?
 S I don't know it's just--
 R I know it's kind of hard to--
 S It's hard to describe someone because it's just like anyone else, except there's, just have that feeling, that they're different. They're--maybe it's their, sometimes it's mannerisms, sometimes it's, you know, the way they talk--
 R Mannerisms--what constitutes a gay mannerism?
 S It doesn't always--you know their hands in the air, or they say certain things girl and they're talking to the guy or some girlfriend or something like that, very obvious.
 R What about the less obvious?
 S It's harder to tell.
 R But, you still can tell?
 S Ya.
 R How?
 S I don't know.
 R But you do.
 S I've really--it's hard to say someone, just look at them and say 'you're probably gay but'-- I don't know.

(Interview #006, Male)

Respondents at first often seemed hesitant to redefine what they meant by "radar" or its synonyms. Upon further questioning, however, it usually became apparent that many subtle cues interact to produce what gays refer to as radar. The hesitancy of interviewees to examine radar, in fact much of the cruising process, may be attributed to the fact that suddenly the respondent is placed in a situation where she/he is being asked to question and examine a heretofore taken for granted phenomenon. In some respects, the interview situation is itself a problematic episode.

It was determined from the interviews where the subjects problematically explained their "mystical radar" that radar is most likely a subconscious interface of inconspicuous evidence. Such cues, it seems, may be flashed in the form of more obvious behavior such as mannerisms, speech, deportment, and the like. More often, though, they seem to be flashed in the form of less obvious modes of dress. In some respects, phenomena attributed to radar can be traced back to behavior and observations in gay bars and other non-problematic situations.

Gays apparently learn to disregard stereotypical notions of homosexuals, ideas that they acquired while being socialized into the larger social system. Instead, they realize that a majority of gays do not fit typified descriptions. Males, for instance, note that a majority of men they observe are not of the "limp-wristed" variety. This observation, too was readily made apparent to me. What seems to be the case is that habitués of bars begin to notice other subtle distinctions over a period of time:

- S I don't know, it's these vibes, like I walk in somewhere, usually they can know, they know I am by looking at me. And I just look at them and these weird vibes from in me.
- R How do, how would you describe those vibes?
- S I--it's just a feeling, by looking at them, they're looking at me and usually they try to turn or hide or if they know me, they holler and say hello.
- R I mean if you know them then you know they're gay?
- S But if not knowing them and they don't want to be known they've got this like--haughty look, they'll look at you and then turn away like they don't want to be seen, and then usually they are. I see them later.

- R What is it that sets off these vibes?
- S If I see someone, and I keep looking either he is, or I think, I think he has the potentials to be. Usually every time I was right.
- R Well, what is it about this other person? Is it their reaction to you? Or is it the way that they look or the way they act or what?
- S It could be all three. Sometimes their reaction towards me, sometimes they don't even look at me.
- R If they're not looking at you and you can still pick them out, what is it about them that. . . ?
- S Usually I can pick the ones out that are very pretty. There's something about them, they don't look totally masculine--they're a pretty man. And the way he carries himself or walks, the way he sets down.
- R Well, how would you describe that deportment?
- S Just has a sway to him--you ever notice that all gay men have that?
- R -----
- S No, you know how he walks or something--and to me I think if you put a gay guy from the bar next to a straight one and you know someone comes alone--I think after five or ten minutes with them you can tell. I can--
- R By the way you say, by the way they walk--
- S Usually, by their walk or by their actions.
- R A feminine action? Is it--
- S Its hard to explain. You have to see--
- R But it takes about ten minutes--it takes awhile, looking at them and everything.
- S To some people, but I can look at one and usually say, ya know . . . he's gay they'll say no he's not and I'll say 'I'll bet he is.'
- R So, o.k., just looking at him, you haven't observed him, walking that much or sitting down or anything, you just observe the person?
- S Observe them, the way they're dressed usually not very high fashion, or tacky looking like . . . Straight guys don't dress like that.
- R So there's something about the--
- S Their dress, their hair, the way they wear their hair, the way their face is, their make up and all,
- R Their make-up?

- S Not wearing make-up, you know, the make-up look of their face. Straight guys don't dress like that.
- R Well, is this--this isn't true for all gay males is it?
- S No, look at those ugly, tacky ones, 'Mary's gang' and all. Like motorcycle dudes, I just, now those I cannot tell. Those just, they're sick, they're weird.
- R So, basically what it is almost, is somebody first that you're attracted to?
- S Uh huh.
- R And then you start from there, but can you tell if someone you're not attracted to is gay?
- S Oh, ya, most of the queens I see, and then some of the, the masculine-looking dudes that are queens, just by, some of their walks, their dress, their looks, their hair--like I said, straight guys, you know, the majority of them, they don't dress like that. Now they're coming out with their hair styles and doing it.
- R Well most of their, maybe this is just an overgeneralization but isn't that most people that cut their hair, are more associated with gay people?
- S Uh huh, most of your beauticians, your hair dressers.
- R So that may have something to do with why their hair is that way?
- S Not really, because if you're in that chair and you don't want your hair that way you don't tell that guy--'I don't want it that way'--when you get out of there if you cut it in that style you're going to comb it in another way or get someone to fix it another way until it grows out to be cut again. That's how I am, if I don't like it, I'm not going to wear it that way when I get out of there. I won't say anything to hurt the guy because, it will hurt his ego and he's there thinking he's doing a good job. In going to hair dressing school, you know, I know that. But I would never cut another one's work down to him. But if a guy don't want it, he's not going to wear it.

(Interview #011, Male)

While the gay individual may not be consciously aware of these fine distinctions she/he is making, she/he begins to utilize them, often attributing evidenciary comparisons to "radar." Where the cruising process takes place over an extended period of time, the individual may count as evidence other cues and clues gleaned from interactive processes:

- R O.K., let's go into a situation here into a fairly straight area, and you see someone that you get the vibes with--how would you go about cruising them?
- S Well, I tell you it wouldn't be so much me cruising them because I don't like to endanger my wellbeing that way. I go some-- What I do is I listen to the way he talks, I watch his eyes--
- R You mean start up a conversation with him?
- S What I'm doing is, I analyze his character, I don't so much cruise him, you know first you know, like the time that I meet someone straight or they appear to be straight and I think that they might be and I listen to the way they talk or the things they say, how open minded they are.
- R Well, what kind of things would a gay person say?
- S Well, a gay person would say something like ah, well like they would notice what someone was wearing, uh, or they would notice some new clothing that you had on, or they would have some expensive cologne on or uh, they would drive a fairly nice car, or they would not be so closed minded about gay rights or gay issues and they would not be so uh, they would be more--they would lean more to intelligence than they would toward ignorance. And they would also be more educated in the arts they, would probably know how to dance, so there's a lot of things that you can spot a person by and if this person that I know like say, I meet someone who I think is gay, I look for these qualities in them.

(Interview #015 Male)

By using some form of verbal contact, the actors mutually minimize social distance between themselves, and as the verbal contact proceeds, a strengthening of an "awareness context" occurs (Glaser and Strauss, 1965). At this point each person in the interactive exchange begins to fit together certain identity cues that the other(s) has (have) allowed to be transmitted or failed to hide. At some point a practical gamble must be made. This may take the form of an invitation (see #011) or a stating of a desire to see one another again. Rarely is a goal abruptly stated (i.e., "Let's trick") unless mutual identities have been most assuredly ascertained.³³

The conscious cue: key chains and handkerchiefs. It has already been established that within the gay world there exists a special argot or slang. As a dialect used by subcultural members it promotes an ingroup feeling, provides ready identification of particular experiences within the gay reality, enables gays to communicate with one another in problematic situations without fear of discovery, and often serves to reduce the problematic nature of cruising in non-gay settings by providing points of reference in the processes of cruising where one gay is attempting to uncover the sexual identity of another. As to the last point, there exist certain code words which may be taken for cues

³³Such abruptness is curtailed possibly due to the possibility the police officers engaged in "queer-baiting" may be present. Queer-baiting, according to gays, is a common tactic of vice officers charged with apprehending and harrassing homosexuals. Typically, a vice squad officer will make himself (for this is most common among male clients) available to be solicited by a male for sexual activity, encourage the offender to make some "illicit" suggestion, and then arrest the fellow for indecent solicitation.

as to one's gayness. There also exist other, non-verbal, symbols which serve as passwords within the gay community. At one time, the wearing of key chains on the outside of pants pockets served as notice of the sexual preference of the wearer. Though this symbol fell into disuse, it is apparently experiencing a resurgence, especially as it seems to fit with the new "machismo" grooming habits of many gays. As a "cue" among gays it serves a dual purpose. While a subtle code that the wearer is a homosexual, it also is an indicator of "dominance" or "passivity" in sexual behavior. The key chain most closely resembles the type worn by building supervisors and foremen, a round key clip with numerous keys attached. When worn outside on the left, it indicates that the wearer is dominant or aggressive in sexual conduct. Worn to the right, the wearer indicates a preference for being passive or submissive. Keys are worn alongside the front or rear pockets.

A more complex method is a system of color-coded handkerchieves. Like the key chain method, it provides a subtle display of one's sexual activity preference. Preference is indicated by color and placement of the kerchief in either the left or right rear pocket. Regional variations are reported to exist, and it would be difficult to establish whether the practice originated on the East or West Coast. Placement in the rear right pocket indicates a preference for passive behavior; on the left it signifies dominant behavior. Variations of sexual behavior are indicated by the color code.³⁴ For instance, a dark blue

³⁴The following chart is taken from an article given me by a respondent. It appeared in This Week in Texas, a Houston-based gay publication distributed throughout Texas. It refers to the color code

handkerchief in the left pocket signifies that the wearer enjoys anal intercourse and prefers being the insertor. Some thirteen other color codes exist. The use of such techniques seem successful only in those

and placement of handkerchiefs. The chart below contains euphemisms for some of the categories originally published. The original appeared in TWT, March 4-10, 1978:46.

<u>COLOR</u>	<u>LEFT SIDE</u>	<u>RIGHT SIDE</u>
Red	Inserts fist	Wants fits inserted
Dark Blue	(Penis) Insertor	Insertee
Light Blue	Wants fellatio	Gives Fellatio
Robin's Egg Blue	Performs "69"	Performs "69"
Mustard	Has a large penis	Size queen (likes big penises)
Orange	Anything, Top	Anything, Bottom
Yellow	Golden Shower Giver (Urination)	Golden Shower Receiver
Green	Hustler, Selling	Buyer
Olive Drab	Military/Uniforms	Looking for same
White	Wants masturbation	Mutual Masturbation
Gray	Gives bondage/Light S&M	Desires same
Brown	Defecation, Dominant	Defecation, Passive
Black	Heavy S&M, Dominant	Heavy S&M, Passive
Purple	Piercer/Genitorturer	Piercee/ etc.

Presentation of this chart is not meant as a typology of normal homosexual conduct. Rather, it reflects the range of color codes which represent the wide variety of homosexual activity. Many similar types of conduct can be found in heterosexual behavior.

communities in which a strong and identifiable gay community has been established, i.e., in the larger cities.

Rules of the game: two examples. Certain facets of cruising indeed resemble what Goffman (1961) called "gaming encounters." As was discussed in Chapter III, cruising involves the use of certain tactics, methodologies, various rules, signs, and recipes for behavior. The initial part of the "game" is to establish, reciprocally, the identities of the parties involved. There are certain rules (for specific examples of rules see Humphreys, 1970), which if followed, can successfully culminate in a liaison between or among actors. Two methods of cruising follow specific strictures: "cruising the circuit" and cruising among truckdrivers in the open highway.

In most metropolitan areas there is at least one "circuit," usually close to, if not in, the gay "bohemia." The circuit is a commonly known-about area where gays (mainly male) walk, park, loiter and slowly drive around, hoping to pick up or be picked up by a sexual partner. There is a mingling of "hustlers" (male prostitutes) and "pickups" (sexual partners not specifically interested in money). The circuit is especially trafficked after dusk. All the aforementioned types follow certain procedures to achieve their evening goal, while at the same time avoiding being picked up by law enforcement agents. Men in cars drive by prospective "tricks"³⁵ until mutual signals are

³⁵"Trick" is slang for a sexual partner. It also connotes the homosexual act. Apparently it is derived from the argot of prostitutes where a trick is a customer.

exchanged between consenting individuals. The briefest of conversations take place, rarely going beyond "How-are-you-doing, what's-going-on?" types of conversation. People on this particular type of cruise quickly get to the point with a "Want-to-get-together, your-place-or-mine?" routine. Such conversational tactics are more direct and abrupt than in cruising in other situations, mainly because unaccompanied males in such situations are assumed to be homosexual. Individuals (or groups for that matter) also cruise one another in automobiles mixing the standard etiquette of the circuit with techniques borrowed from truckers. (The example of truckers follows shortly.) Autos pass one another slowly. They make corners and take turns so as to eventually meet head-on, thus allowing each to assess the other. They then drive around such that one car will eventually land up in front of the other, both now going in the same direction. The driver of the front car usually pumps his brake lights, signals a turn down some inconspicuous street, pulls over to the curb and waits for the other driver to follow suit. The driver of the latter car gets out of his car, walks to the car in front and begins the small-talk conversation with the other driver. As soon as it appears that both are amiable to continuing the "game," one will proceed with the "Want-to-get-together?. . ." dialogue.

Even though people who cruise the circuits know what others on the circuit are there for, and even though few "straights" appear on the scene, the situation remains problematic. Cruisers must be aware of the possibility that uniformed and undercover law enforcement officials will arrive. Many instances were recounted (usually second-hand) of cases where police acted as decoys in order to arrest homosexuals for solicitation.

Another form of cruising that was recounted to me involved a "game" like situation. Cruising among and for truck drivers occurs on the open highways. Participants follow certain rules and patterns. Through a series of passing, slowing down, allowing one driver to pass again, drivers who are cruising one another use head- and taillights to signal that they are available or desire sex. The signals are well known among these motorists. They involve using the brakelight in conjunction with left and right turn signals.³⁶

Third person confirmation. While individuals may use various techniques which characterize cruising as a "gaming encounter," several interviews indicate that gays at times also rely on "second-hand information" when attempting to piece together another's identity. If the use of such information leads to a "gaming encounter," we can only conclude that one player has "cheated," or tipped the scales of information in his or her favor. Regardless, seeking second-hand information represents a cautious use of resources for the gay individual who wishes to meet other gays.

In addition to, or in the place of, evaluating first-hand evidence (including that sort which may be referred to as radar), the cruiser may seek or use existing "information" about a particular person. Three forms of evidentiary "second-hand" information predominate and, taken as a whole, represent "third person confirmation." First, the individual who cruises may count as evidence of another's sexual identity

³⁶ Several males explained the process to me. However, it was so complex that I failed to understand the subtleties of the ritual.

that person's presence in or interaction with another third party whose "gay" identity has been or can readily be established. Second, confirmation may seem warranted because of the social milieu in which the individual is observed. Finally, and most salient, stands positive identification by some third person.

In some cases, it is quite conceivable that the third person making the identification may not be gay, associated with the gay lifestyle, or even be aware that such information is being evaluated for such a purpose. To the cautious gay this form of positive identification provides a most useful source of information to be used in identity deciphering.

Little mystic or even subculturally specific characteristics can be associated with third-person confirmation. Heterosexuals often label "queers." Implicit and explicit sexual identifications are as common among heterosexuals as they are among homosexuals. As a rule, however, third-person confirmation is a relatively safe "gaming encounter," as it assures the cruising individual of a decidedly one-sided awareness context.

At times, gays seem to rely on the judgement of others in evaluating the sexual propensities of others. In certain circumstances the process of third-person confirmation comes to resemble the interaction of small-group decision making. For the sake of example, I will introduce persons A and B, who are friends.³⁷ Both A and B happen to be

³⁷ Such an occurrence was not reported per se in the interviews, but was observed to have occurred.

gay. A spots C, a person neither A nor B knows. B states that C surely looks gay. A, indecisively, agrees. As A agrees, though, he begins to notice certain aspects about C which might be taken as indications or evidence to support B's assessment. A, it seems, is not completely sure of B's assessment. He nonetheless strikes up a conversation with C, and in doing so, has speeded up the cruising process in a way he normally would not have. A has accelerated his cruising methodology because B had proffered an initial assessment. A judgement in this case is the product of social interaction, the final decision in this situation of uncertainty being made by A primarily because of A's reliance on B's judgement. B's assessment was all the more important because it stimulated A's attunement to certain other cues which he might not have noticed as readily. The additive effect of B's input can be seen as geometric. In this sense, the interaction of A's and B's decision making process in the face of risk and uncertainty can be viewed as a form of small-group interactive decision making. In essence, A's decision to strike up a conversation with C is a de facto manifestation of a decision mutually reached (see Bales, 1950; Davis, 1969:57-67).

Another form of pseudo-third-person confirmation occurs primarily among gay males. Whereas in the previous example both actors were gay, in this type one actor is gay and the other is heterosexual. Several respondents indicated that they had used information provided by a "fag hag"³⁸ to meet other gays. The heterosexual female who consorts with

³⁸ Though this term is basically derogatory, I use it only for lack of a better one. It refers to a straight female who most often is

gay males may find herself as a definite part of the process of gays meeting one another.

Some "fag hags" easily spot gays and are regarded as competent and reliable. On such an ability often hinges their own entrance into a gay social network. That is, a "fag hag" must be acutely adept at spotting gays in order to meet them, gain their confidence and friendship, and thus gain entrance into the gay community. She may also provide information to neophyte gays and provide them with the necessary introductions into the gay world. It did not seem unusual for some homosexuals to come out first to their female heterosexual friends:

- R What I'm basically interested in is how meet other gay people. How you've met the other gay people that you've met.
- S Mostly at the gay bars.
- R Mostly at the gay bars?
- S Ya, and through other people that I met at the gay bars.
- R How did you learn about the gay bars?
- S Hmm, through a friend.
- R The friend is gay?
- S No she's not.
- R She's not, but she hangs around with other gays, she knows a lot of other gays, she goes to the gay bars?
- S Ya.

(Interview #012, Male)

In serving as a "go-between" among neophyte and the gay subculture, the "fag hag" serves as an intricate medium in the socialization

accompanied by male gays. Fag hags are immersed into the gay subculture to varying degrees, and are found most specifically within the male domains of the gay subculture. For this reason, except for sexual affectivity and preference, they may be termed "gay." Hags are an integral part of the gay male world, though Lesbians quite often as not reject the contention that fag hags are gay. The involvement of fag hags, though is salient, complex, and germane. So much so are they an integral part of the gay world that separate discourse and research is called for.

processes of the gay subculture: her "mothering" image cannot be discounted nor taken lightly.

The Bar

Undoubtedly the most common place for gays to meet one another is through the various institutions of the gay community. Such means are most readily available to gays, as opposed to homosexual non-members (Nyberg, 1976).

The data indicate that assessments by other researchers that gay bars are primary institutions of the gay community are indeed correct. Gay bars are especially important as a means for entering the gay community in a new city:

- R When you moved up here to how did you meet the other gay people that you know and that you hang around with?
- S Found out where a bar was and I went, and I made friends the first night and through them I met other people and got to know everybody and everybody knows me in the bar.

(Interview #011, Male)

While the importance of the bar as an institution and social instrument can be readily determined, the exact extent of its use remains unknown. "Going to the bar" is alternatively admitted and denied by the respondents. Denials, it seemed, were made not only to the researcher, but also to other members of the community. Observations indicate that such denials may be more vogueish than truthful. The studied impression is that, as a whole, naivete of the bar "scene" indicates an undesirable lack of sophistication which gays (especially men) are hesitant to admit. On the other side of the coin, it appears

equally undesirable to be labeled a "bar fly" or "disco darling." Such labels apply to those who frequently go to gay bars. Curiously, the terms have been observed to be applied in some rather ironic circumstances. "I see him at the bar a lot" apparently is a subtle pejorative which indicts a certain individual while preserving the esteem of the accuser, who, it seems, unwittingly admits to being at the bar at least as much.³⁹

Observational data confirm previous conclusions that men, more than women, in the gay communities frequent gay bars. A gay magazine⁴⁰ lists for one major city, nineteen bars which primarily serve males and two bars for females. Bar operators indicate that one reason for this differential is that men's bars are far more profitable. It is more likely for Lesbians to frequent gay men's bars than for the men to frequent the women's bars. Some bars are rididly single-sexed and intrusion by the opposite sex is often met with covert and overt hostility.

Within the local area of study, no gay bars per se existed. However, both men and women usually congregated at several night spots

³⁹This recalls the adage that he who points a finger in another's direction also points three in his own. The meaning of this folk saying provides a useful tool to the researcher who wishes to determine the degree of veracity of statements. On more than one occasion I overheard various bar exploits by individuals (and of individuals) who had otherwise indicated minimal or non-participation in the bar scene.

Hence, it can be seen that interviewing and observation must be used hand-in-hand to reach a more complete picture of reality.

⁴⁰This Week in Texas is a weekly Houston-based publication distributed at various gay establishments throughout Texas.

during the weekdays. Gay women in the local community frequently gathered at a beer and billiard parlor close to the university to "drink beer and shoot pool." Their gatherings were less noticeable than similar gatherings of men in other straight clubs, primarily because the local Lesbians fit the pattern of other females in the community. The men, however, exhibited more gay and camp behavior at their gatherings and thus seemed to draw more attention. In some cases, they expressly tried to "wreck" the clubs they were at. To "wreck" is to call special attention to oneself through the use of camp, thus "disturbing" or "wrecking" the other customers.

Joining the Community

While gay bars provide an important place for subcultural interaction and the facilitation of sexual expression, the researcher learned that a great deal of cruising occurs outside of the bars. The basic component of the gay community is the friendship circle. This has been previously reported by Clinard (1974). Bars remain an "in-spot" for the young, though mature Lesbians apparently interact more successfully with younger females than do their male counterparts. The conclusion is that the look of perennial youth is more prized among men. Lesbians, as a whole, seem to value the maturity and independence which comes with age.

Bars provide entrance into the gay community, facilitate gays meeting one another, and most important, provide many of the introductions upon which future friendship networks are established. Obviously, this is most common in the larger cities, which can realistically support

a bar network. It is interesting to note, though, the number of gays who travel to nearby cities specifically to meet other gays. Bars provide the most facile port of entry. This is true for both males and females. Within the sample studied, several local contacts were made initially outside of the community in metropolitan areas. For example, Miss X might meet Miss Y in Gotham City and later learn that they are both from Smalltown.

It did not appear uncommon, then, for gay people in this locale to make contact with other locals in out-of-town bars. It can be assumed that it is more likely for a sample such as the one I studied to travel for the purposes of meeting and interacting with other gays because of the high degree of transience among university students. It is also logical to assume that it occurs among others who are gay but reside in non-university settings. The local gay community has many friendship ties in other cities and towns which bear this out. For example, interviewee #012 resided in a small community approximately thirty miles from a large metropolitan area and about 140 miles from the sample community. Yet basically his friendship network included individuals in the large city and in the local sample.

The most predominant methods of entering the gay community seemed to be through introductions at out-of-town bars, publications, and through friends. Additionally, people seemed to meet each other through cruising and later being introduced by their former "tricks."

Publications. While many gays in the community made their initial contacts with the local members of the gay community via out-of-town institutions, many also entered the local gay network without resorting

to travel. Subject #013, for instance, said that he first became aware of the existence of a gay community by reading various gay publications, especially those which incorporate advertisements for gay establishments, and ads run by individuals who wished to meet other gays:

- R How did you meet the individual that you had your first gay experience with?
- S I answered an ad in the Advocate.
- R And he happened to be in the same town that you were at?
- S No, he was in Los Angeles, which was about a thousand miles away. But after we wrote and talked on the phone awhile, he decided to come to the town that I was going to school in and visit.
- R Were there any other gay people in the town that you were at?
- S I know now that there were, but at the time, I didn't know of any.
- (Interview #013, Male)

This particular respondent first became aware of the community being studied when an organization within the community filed suit against the university in an attempt to receive official recognition for a gay student service organization. He thereupon contacted the leader of the organization, who was named several times in the news media, and was eventually introduced to other members of the gay community. Several instances were reported of individuals who first learned of the community through the legitimate press as a result of this lawsuit.

Cruising. Other members came in touch with community members through happenstance occurrences such as cruising situations:

- S . . . And I started to associate with him and his friends, and that's how I met a lot of gay people.
- R How did you meet him first? Was it an accident?

S He picked me up--it was an accident,
pick-up.

(Interview #014, Male)

Friends. In other cases, an individual "came out" to friends who were gay or knew other gays and who could be counted on to be sympathetic, helpful and trustworthy:

R How'd you meet your lover?

S Going to school.

R How'd you meet her in school?

S Ah--it was an all girls school and they had uh what they termed a "big sis", "big sister" program in which within each dormitory the upper classmen would ah, put down one to five people, I believe, or 1-3 people whom they would like as their little sis and the upper classmen would do the same--choose so many girls from the dormitory whoe were upper classmen and then the housemother would try and match up the names. Some of the larger dorms had to do it different. But thats how our dorm did it and we got to know each other first as friends and things just evolved.

R She was already gay. Well, did you know that you were gay before that?

S No, I didn't--as a matter of fact I even denied it up until the very last minute.

(Interview #010, Female)

R Did you come out a home or did you come out at school?

S Well, I came out a little, some friends of mine from high school, took me to the bar in over Christmas but at the time I wasn't going to I was going to another school, so consequently, I went to the bar with them over the Christmas holidays a few times. We went back up to school and didn't do anything until the spring break when I cam back and went out with the same friends of mine, and then went back to school.

R How did you meet them?

S I met them in high school, they were high school friends.

- R So then it was several years before you knew they were gay before they knew you were gay?
- S Right, ah, these friends of mine, 'came out,' had 'come out' during, well, o.k., one friend of mine had a lover in high school and ah, the other two friends of mine, we were all friends, the other two 'came out' while they were at the school during that first semester and decided that ah, I was a closet case that needed help, so they decided to help me and we all. . . .
- R Well, I mean how did you approach the subject?
- S It was the day after I'd come back from school, I'd just gotten into town and I called this one--I called John, one of my best friends in high school and he said that he was going to come over so we could visit and so he came over and we decided to go out and do something and ah, we drove over to another friend's house who wasn't home and on the way back to my house we started discussing what we wanted to do and he suggested that we go to the local gay bar and I said alright, it was fine, so we went back, got back to my house and I changed clothes and we went to the bar. On the way he told me I probably would see some other people I knew there, but he didn't tell me whom I would see. So, I got to the bar and I ran into Charlie and Ricky two other good friends of mine, and they were probably more wrecked than I was, seeing me. They weren't expecting me to show up. John had not told Charlie or Ricky that he was bringing me, you know so. . . .
- R What do you mean by wrecked?
- S They were very surprised and somewhat upset, at first.

(Interview #009, Male)

- R How have you met most of the people that you know that are gay?
- S How have I met them? Well, ah, the first few people that I met, I met them through R... ah, and ah, he introduced me to most everybody. He was, he knew quite a few people, he'd been out about two years. So he knew a lot of people and he introduced

me to most of the people that I know now. And I met some people through dancing and through bars and through friendships.

R These friendships, were they already pre-existing?

S Well, ah, a few of them were, mainly what it was like introducing to one another, like this is my friend so and so and this you know, meet so and so and ah, we would start talking and we would become friends. And then ah, it wasn't until here recently that I started making friends on my own because I wasn't really that confident, you know.

R How do you go about making friends on your own?

S Well, like ah, well usually, like I meet a person to go out, and ah, what's the word that I'm thinking of to cruise somewhat. I'm more the passive type, I'm not the aggressive one, unless its someone that I really like and ah, that's how I met some of my friends, by cruising and by. . . .

R Oh, you cruise in bars, do you cruise outside of the bars?

S Sometimes when I feel confident, I don't know, I have this feeling, I can spot people and ah, when I meet someone, I usually get vibrations if they're gay or not and a lot of times I just tell myself that they're really not that way, it's not so much the characteristics because a lot of them cover it up very well, it's just that ah, I get that feeling, its kind of like a sixth sense that I get, that ah, lets me know that they're gay although that I'm just infatuated with them and I wish that they were. And then later on it turns out to be true that they were gay. I usually meet them in a bar or something, or I run into them somewhere or they make a pass at me.

(Interview #015, Male)

Friendship networks spread from the core of the various gay communities to their periphery. One might make a allegorical comparison of the basic friendship unit of the gay community with the family, which

is the basic institutional unit of the larger social structure. There are core nuclear friendship circles much like straight nuclear families. There nuclear friendships provide a degree of substitution for the primary support, affection, and cohesion occasionally lost when individuals enter the gay subculture.⁴¹ From these, it was observed, emanate extended friendship networks which traverse various cliques and primary friendship associations (Cf. Clinard, 1974:559). Either type--and no attempt is intended at putting forth an "ideal type"--includes not just gay men or just Lesbians, but in many cases gays of both sexes, straight women who may or may not be categorized as "fag hags," straight men, bisexuals, and relatives.⁴² For the most part, the institutions of "lover" did not appear to be as institutionalized as the primary friendship network, if only because the pressures of the straight world and of the gay world combine to make it less stable

⁴¹I remind the reader that this is only an allegorical comparison for the sake of illustration and not a fact for demonstration. Caution in such a case must be maintained to avoid reification. Similarly, no attempt at devising an ideal type is made or intended.

⁴²It was observed that some gay males referred to one another as "sister" or "daughter" or "mother," albeit in a camping manner. Camping notwithstanding, there is an underlying affection giving substance to such terms.

Apparently such designations were based on length and degree of association with a particular group, affective components and supportive roles played. Close friends often referred to one another as "sisters"; individuals who consistently played a counselling or mediating role were referred to as "mother" (this also seemed applicable in some cases where one "brought out" the other); and "daughters" who refer to others as "mother." Age did not seem to play a significant part, though probably because of the understandable age bias in this particular sample of university-related persons. It seems that unless both individuals were already members of the same group or clique, "lovers" did not assume any titular significance.

and less permanent.⁴³ On the whole, friends were more persistent, more valued, and more central than paramours.

Observations indicate that sexual relations among clique members are proscribed (Cf. Warren, 1974:75). Early in the observational stage, I attended an arranged meeting of the gay university community. Before my arrival, a reporter from the university press requested and was given an opportunity to interview the group. For convenience sake the group leader had decided to combine both our visits. In the course of the ensuing dialogue, questions about sexual encounters were posed. In answer, one individual adamantly stated that it was in "poor taste" for group members to "trick with one another." He further made such sexual behavior comparable to incest. The rest of those present agreed.

Characteristics vs. Stereotypes: Radar Revisited

That the bar remains a strategic institution for gays is undeniable. It serves as a social and sexual outlet for members of the gay community, and as a mode of initiation for neophyte gays. Its presence, though, goes beyond the walls of any bar and, as such, maintains a somewhat existential relationship with the community. Bars, it seemed in the data, provide "codewords" ("Will we see you at the bar tonight?" is as an innocuous a statement as any) and conversational topics for the gay who must exist "out there" in the straight world. In many ways the bar also serves as a "training ground" for cruising. Several

⁴³ Gay marriages are for the most part idealized and not actualized.

respondents reported using techniques they first mastered in bar settings in non-gay settings.

The ability to cruise successfully depends to a large measure upon the ability to relate certain characteristics of individuals to characteristics often seen in taken-for-granted gay places, such as the bar. This ability to associate characteristics is not easy, especially to the novice. As can be expected, the novice usually depends upon commonly accepted stereotypes (i.e., those typifications usually held by the straight majority) such as effeminacy in males and masculine behavior in females. The more experienced cruiser, however, becomes aware of the inconsistency of such stereotypes, and instead comes to rely on associations with past experiences.

R Well, what is it about a gay person that stands out?

S Well, usually you know, the majority of gay people, you can spot them by their impeccable taste. Or by their appearance, usually they'll have clear skinned complexions, and crystal clear eyes, and their eyes will be piercing, in fact you can spot almost any gay person with their eyes because that's their main tool in cruising.

(Interview #015, Male)

In some instances, such associations become subconscious and are referred to as "radar."

Summary of the Methods of Cruising

I have discussed some of the factors involved in gays locating and meeting other gays for social and sexual interaction. The factors are varied and complex. That cruising for the most part is problematic can be seen. The gay is confronted by multitudes of consequential

decisions dealing with identity and interaction. The cautious gay seems to be an individual who has accepted his or her identity but continues to interact with the larger society, maintaining social ties with it in spite of his or her negative status.

In many instances such a gay individual rejects the common stereotype of his or her identity, and chooses not to act in accordance with the commonly "acceptable" expectations imposed by a deviant status. Many "obvious" male gays feel tolerated only in such occupations as hairdressing, design, or theater. Similarly, fewer options seem open to the Lesbian since the occupational spectrum for women is traditionally narrower. Through stereotyping, straight society expects gays to join certain "peripheral" occupations to which their "temperments" suit them, and is unable to cope with a disvalued person outside of these prescribed fields. Society finds it difficult to deal with deviants who overstep their taken-for-granted boundaries.

The outspoken gay who does not hide his or her identity either does not maintain strong ties with the larger straight society or is content and able to cope with the imposition of a deviant label. In some instances, the consequences of refusing to hide the deviant identity do not significantly impair the ability to operate within the larger society, and in other cases the individual emotionally removes him- or herself from interaction with the straight world. The closeted gay, as well as the homosexually oriented person who is not involved with the gay subculture, is motivated to restrict behavior because she/he is unwilling to sever ties with the larger social group and

thus, it seems, internalizes the "deviant" aspect of his or her identity more than any other (Cf. Weinberg and Williams, 1974).

Cruising involves to certain degrees the ability to pass as straight yet remain visible enough in a gay capacity to be able to share and interact with those of similar orientations. I have discussed ways in which gays attempt to "flash cues" to others who they suspect to be flashing cues or who, for various reasons, appear to be of the sort to favorably receive and/or acknowledge such cues.

The techniques involved in this simultaneous broadcast of "What's My Line" have been discussed and placed within a "gaming encounter" paradigm. While no definite procedure for cruising could be determined from the data, several patterns could be discerned and described. Analysis resulted in the conclusion that these patterns reflect an organized body of "recipes for behavior" within an organized "stock of gay knowledge." The methods of cruising appear to be sharpened by emergence into a gay subculture. The degree to which such tactics are refined and relegated to the individual's "sixth sense" or "radar" can be used as a reflection of a personal "stock of knowledge" and also as an indicator of acculturation into the subculture. Weinberg and Williams (1975) used a similar assumption when they utilized the acceptance and usage of various techniques surrounding homosexual intercourse as an index of acculturation into the gay subculture. Where social affiliation is defined as the voluntary and intentional actions surrounding various group-defined interests (Neuhring and Fein, 1976), the utilization of refined cruising techniques can plausibly be used as an instrument to qualitatively measure affiliation, commitment and

acculturation of gays into their subculture. The stronger the acculturation processes and the greater the sense of affiliation and commitment, the more likely we are to find a commonality of subjective meanings, corresponding and mutually agreed upon ways of ordering phenomena (logic) and the basis of a shared "stock of knowledge." The degree to which individual "recipes for behavior" coincide indicates the existence of a shared perspective and an organized "finite province of meaning." Similar experiences of role enactment in particular situations serve as evidence of a psycho-social structure through which identities may be defined. Such structures support the learning of norms, role patterns and methodologies, invite conformity and provide mechanisms for affiliation.

Affiliation with a homosocial community provides many advantages for the gay person. Of particular and peculiar interest is a vantage (i.e., safer) method of cruising. The data indicate that along with certain direct methods of cruising, some gays utilize some form of third-person confirmation to meet other gays.

Third-person confirmation provides a means by which a gay person gathers primary or ancillary information about another's sexual orientation without the usual risk normally entailed with cruising.

Their modus operandi is of noteworthy interest for several reasons. Previous researchers (Warren, 1974; Hooker, 1967) have described cruising behavior as a solitary activity--which it oft times is. The use of "eyes" and "eye contact" in identity information exchange has been previously documented (Glaser and Strauss, 1964). While Warren (1974) and Hooker (1967) reported the manners in which gays relay

"tidbits" of information about community members, cruising has been described as a lonely, somewhat sinister (if not pathetic) sex-hunt. But scant attention has been paid to the communal aspect of cruising, which third-person confirmation seems to represent. This form of meeting other gays sharpens the indication of "community" among gays.

Having described the patterns of how gays cruise it is left to discuss reasons why gays cruise. In this way a more comprehensive understanding of the meanings associated with the techniques of cruising and logic formed by those meanings might be gained. This can be done by relying on the data, particularly field impressions, as well as existing literature.

Why Gays Cruise

It is important to reiterate that this particular study of the cruising practices of gays is not a study of the sexual practices of homosexually oriented persons. If that were the case then a more apt title would have incorporated the idea of "cruising or mating habits of homosexuals." Instead, this is a study of the social nature of the gay world. The techniques of sexual conduct, though, provide a useful tool in studying the social atmosphere of a group. This is especially true of the gay world. Societal reaction to gays has placed the focus of their identity on sex. Sex, then, becomes a focal concern for those within and without the subculture. In this sense, it can be assumed that sexual techniques of gays can be used as an indicator of acculturation into the subculture (Weinberg and Williams, 1975). Within the arena of sexual techniques falls the phenomenon I have been discussing, that is, cruising.

Perhaps cruising is necessitated by the loneliness engendered by a deviant identity (Weinberg and Williams, 1975). Gay liaisons encounter only negative sanctions in our society. They are often unstable and short-term, in part due to the damning pressure of the society. Cruising, it seems, is an attempt to alleviate this sense of loneliness. It can also be viewed as an adaptation of gays who, in desiring some sort of sexual release, cannot afford or maintain some type of longer-term relationship. The ability to maintain long-term relationships is hindered because of social, psychological, and even economic factors.

General impressions from field observations are that once the cruising process has culminated, i.e., once the individuals have implicitly agreed to engage in sex, there is very little apparent social intercourse between the individuals. The sex may be directly consummated and the actors may separate without any responsibility or relationship having been borne. This is unlike most heterosexual "dating" situations but bears a resemblance to the cruising phenomenon which is growing in "singles bars." Heterosexual courting devotes more time to the ritual of establishing some sort of relationship. Cruising, though, can be compared to heterosexual courting patterns in the similarity of the underlying competitiveness surrounding the mating game. Both the straight and the gay may experience rejection in their attempts to find a partner. The fear of rejection, however, is greater on the whole for the gay than it is for the heterosexual simply because the gay is all too aware that rejection not only represents one individual rejecting another, but may encompass a whole host of societal reaction. When cruising primarily or exclusively for sex, the homosexual

generally cruises alone. Why, then despite the competitiveness, the greater fear of rejection, the ever-present possibility of severe social retribution, and the solitary nature of the phenomenon, do gays cruise?

Most gays will admit that they cruise for sex and/or a sexual partner (there is a fine distinction between the two, for the former represents a physiological release and the latter combines the former with social meaning). That some deny that they cruise for sex is significant. Their denial represents an inability to come to terms with their sexuality or admit their sexual nature. To deny the sexual aspect of cruising may also represent an attempt to legitimize their deviant status. The Gay Rights movement represents such an attempt to achieve normalcy without being "normal," that is, to make homosexuals normal where the standard is definitely heterosexual.

One way that this is done is to emphasize the person while minimizing the act. In a game of "I'm okay, you're okay" the aim is to ignore the sexual aspects of both sides. Though this occurs on a macro level, it appears that respondents who attempt to deny the sexuality of cruising are playing this game on a personal basis. Whether it is a legitimate tactic is not for the researcher to say. That such a mask is being used does fall within the analytical realm of the researcher.

The fact that there are those who feel guilt and self-reproach about their sexual activities is an important statement of the internalization of the deviant master status. Regardless, the principal basis of cruising is sexual; there is, though, the social aspect. The Malthusian notion that man is a sexual creature with an insatiable

sexual desire is debatable. That man is social is not (Berger, 1967). The effort to be among others is most common. The homosexual in the closet suffers most from the feeling that she/he is "the only one in the world who feels this way," and isolated homosexual acts do little to resolve this feeling. Instead, through fear, mortification, and denial the homosexual remains in the closet.

In talking with members of the gay community, I was given several accounts of the feeling of great relief one feels when she/he discovers the existence of other homosexuals and gays. In some ways, cruising can be seen as an extension of "coming out of the closet." Cruising in public places provides a way of keeping the closet door ajar while realizing that one must also live in the larger straight world. The gay who practices cruising in public places is quite possibly making a subconscious denial to retreat totally into either the gay or straight world for social existence. Then again, there are those for whom cruising is compulsive and who find it impossible to control their sexual aggressiveness. But these, it is clear, are a minority, and represent a psychological anomaly within the gay community.

That gays cruise in public settings and may chance upon a sexual partner in any situation is not to say that the gay, anymore than the heterosexual person, is constantly on the sexual prowl. Indeed, the situation can be more likened to the instance of a person who is shopping for clothes and who happens by a shop in which the person notices an interesting painting. If the individual likes art and the particular piece is of appealing style, then one of the three alternatives seem likely. The art lover may continue on her way either because she is

not interested, at the moment, in viewing art. However, given the time and the inclination, she may choose to stop for a moment to study and enjoy the work. Given the further inclination and the wherewithal she may even entertain the thought of inquiring about the price of the painting or whether the particular work of art is for sale at all. In the proper circumstances, she may purchase the object or agree to purchase it at a future date. All of this is of a completely different nature than of that of the compulsive buyer who indiscriminately buys paintings regardless of price, circumstance, need or affectivity. Then, too, there are times when the art lover may purposefully set out on a shopping expedition with something in mind. On the whole, studies have shown that homosexuals are psychologically indistinguishable from heterosexually oriented persons in terms of patterns and desires (Hooker, 1957, 1958; Sagarin, 1977).

Nevertheless, the notion of cruising implies to many that gays are promiscuous. Within the general pattern of norms of the larger society, gays do indeed appear to be promiscuous, for promiscuity connotes sexual behavior which lies outside of institutional patterns of sexual activity, regardless of frequency. The family is the principal institution through which our society organizes and regulates the satisfaction of sexual desires. Unfortunately for the gay, in providing guidelines for heterosexual activity the family offers only one sanction for homosexual conduct: that it must not occur. While our society allows for a degree of sexual variety, sexual activity between individuals of the same sex falls within that complicated system of sexual permissions and taboos which is not clearly understood and goes beyond legitimized

accessibility, even beyond that grey area of tolerable violations from the sexual norm.

Among man and woman's most essential wants is the desire for intimate human response. Psychiatric studies indicate that the single greatest cause of emotional trauma is the lack of "love," the lack of warm, affectionate relationships with intimate associates (Fromm, 1956; Scindler, 1954). Such a need goes beyond the simple desire for sex. However, the institution which most adequately and effectively provides such intimacy within our society is the same institution which also regulates sexual activity. So it is not entirely implausible to say that sex, intimacy, and family have become closely synonymous within our cultural system. Sex becomes a principal means of acquiring intimacy and vice versa. The individual who, for whatever reason, has a sexual preference for others of the same sex is condemned to a life without legitimate sex, intimacy, and love experiences, especially once she/he leaves the nuclear family upon adulthood.

The heterosexually inclined are provided with a variety of impediments, requirements, preliminaries, rituals and other guidelines through which sexual needs and intimacy may be acquired. The same is not true for the homosexual. Gay subcultures have arisen primarily out of the need for homosexuals to establish companionship and methods of meeting one another. To a degree, the gay community offers guidelines which control sexual satisfaction. However, the guidelines are not nearly as effective as those of the larger society since, for the most part, the subculture exists within a demimonde of condemnation. There are few sanctions outside of ostracism which compel the gay to adhere to

gay norms, and even the degree of toleration of violations of normative standards is greater before an individual is severely ostracized. There are few norms which sustain a completely exclusive social and sexual relationship between individuals. The lack of sustaining norms promotes the instability of monogamous relationships, and hence, the gay is more apt to find him- or herself without an intimate sexual partner at times. Cruising is an attempt to minimize the absence of partners.

Even so, the search for sexual companions must not always be associated with a constant search for intimate long term relationships. While "tricks" do indeed allow for a semblance of romantic intimacy, it should be noted that for the most part involvements with tricks are seldom long term: they rarely extend beyond the time spent in sexual play. Those who cruise for sex are often searching for a partner to relieve sexual urges and nothing more. Few words need be exchanged, and the encounter may last several minutes or hours. However, it seems significant that where two individuals spend some time together, for example, the evening and the following day or two, there often seems a drive on both sides to achieve instant intimacy and affection, though both partners often realize that once they part company they probably shall never see each other again.

What seems important is that within the gay world sex and intimacy are not necessarily synonymous with one another as they are within family circles. This appears more true among male than among female gays. Many gays seem to go through periods of acknowledged promiscuity. Some gays, for personal reasons, are unable to maintain a long-term relationship nor desire to establish one. They are similar to their

straight "swinger" cohorts. The difference is that sex without responsibility is more readily available in the gay world. This can be understood by considering several related factors.

As already mentioned, there are few sanctions which compel gays to establish first a social relationship with potential sexual partners. Commitment is not an essential part of the sexual bartering process. Then, too, they have very little at stake by going from sexual partner to sexual partner. What further condemnation can society place on them? They have already assumed a master status far worse than that label of "loose."

Some groups, to be sure, desire some type of commitment. It must be understood, however, that within those settings in which partners are readily identifiable, e.g., bars, it cannot be taken for granted that one's partner is at all willing to make a similar commitment. In a public setting, it is problematic enough to discern the gay from the straight without compounding the issue with attempting to discern the gay who is willing to offer commitment. It may even be that there exists an unwritten code which keeps one from offering or demanding commitment. One gay told me that it was "bad news" to fall in love with a trick; if he were to fall in love with a trick, he wouldn't think of telling him so.

This lack of commitment creates a dilemma for some gays. However, over a period of time, it appears that gays learn to control their emotions with their tricks, learn to keep from getting "involved" with them and yet maintain an acceptable degree of congeniality with their occasional partners. The norms against adultery and promiscuity

apparently do not apply within the gay world in the way they apply to the larger society.

Norms against adultery and extra-marital sex are designed to protect the family structure. They preserve birth rights and legal descent, maintain the economic structure and responsibilities inherent in reproduction, socialization and marriage. Such things obviously do not concern the gay. Sexual intercourse between persons of the same sex cannot produce offspring. There exist no legal responsibilities in bonding and pairing or to provide for the economic duties adjoined to heterosexual marriages. There is no responsibility to family stability because gay relationships fall outside the bounds of the family.

This is not to say that committed relationships do not exist within the gay subculture. Despite the barriers erected by the larger society and the lack of normative protection coming from the gay community, individuals can and do form bonds. They may be relationships which last for a long time, with love and security, or they may be of a shortlived intensity which knows neither victory nor defeat but only exhaustion. But they do occur.

CHAPTER VII

EPILOGUE

I have discussed various methods by which gay persons are able to come together as individuals and as a subculture in a hostile environment. For the most part, gay individuals who seek out others find themselves engaged in "chancy undertakings." Until the individual is comfortably situated within the contexts of a social structure amiable to his or her lifestyle, any attempt to come into contact with another who shares a similar deviant status is highly problematic. Even when such social interaction takes place within a subculture, individuals find themselves thrust into problematic situations. The gay, as a deviant, must still struggle with the categorization imposed by pursuing a disapproved lifestyle. It is a psychological category as well as a social one.

There is a point in the study of human behavior where the scientist must take into account the correspondence between social structure and epistemic structure. This study has concentrated on a particular activity of a particular group. In reducing cruising to various components it becomes apparent that there are various sources and determining factors which make it a "sensible" activity. There are alternative paths to particular goals. Such paths may be embodied in methods, and such embodiments can be shared phenomena. In such shared phenomena is evident the incorporation of unique logical systems of knowledge into viable subcultures.

We are members of a plural society. The boundaries of our society mesh with those of countless other societies. It is increasingly difficult for groups and subgroups to isolate themselves. We find ourselves not only involved with one another as co-members of primary groups with specialized interests, but also caught in the intricacies of a meta-society. It is a paradox and the contradictions of such an existence must be studied at all levels. In a prepared but undelivered speech, Franklin Roosevelt surmised: "If civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships--the ability of all people of all kinds, to live together and work together in the same world, at peace."

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APPENDIX A
INTERVIEWS

INTERVIEWS

The following interview accounts have been included as they were received from a transcriptionist. They represent verbatim accounts of the interviews done for this study. In some cases, miscellaneous dialogue has been deleted in the interest of clarity. Additionally, certain deletions were made to protect the identities of the interviewees. The tapes from which these accounts were transcribed were subsequently destroyed in the interest of confidentiality.

001 - Female, 22 years old

R Hi, this is the first interview. How old are you?

S 22

R 22, and you're gay?

S Yeh

R Do you go to the ----?

S Yeh

R Basically what I'll be asking you, is if you can tell if other people are gay. Can you?

S Well, sometimes you know, mostly when you think you can tell if people are gay you're just going by their outward appearances most of the time. You know sometimes you can tell by the way people look at you. I think most people look at guys and if they're a little feminine, well then they're gay, or girls if they think they're a little masculine, people will assume that they're gay because they're not, and that's how I used to feel. When I first started really thinking about the whole scene and people that are gay -- and really thinking about the whole thing I used to look for girls that were a little dykey because I thought they were gay.

R Dykey?

S Masculine looking. Not someone that's 36-24-36 and has long hair. You know, I don't know . . .

R Is that what you mean by outward appearance?

S Yes, their outward appearance would be more masculine than somebody that was more feminine. But then when I started going to the bars and everything, I started realizing that there's just as many girls or guys that are just average everyday looking people, they're not one way or the other, that are gay. Then I met people that I thought definitely "they're gay" just because of their outward appearance. Then I found out they weren't so right now, I don't go by their outward appearances so much anymore. I have my doubts.

R What do you go by? You mentioned looking.

S Well, I really don't go around looking very much anymore. I'm just not, well when I first started meeting people up here there was like three or four other girls that we knew were gay. Then I met in a group on campus I met one person and then they knew three or four other people so there was about five of us. So we used to spend a lot of our time cause we knew there has to be more people in College Station that were gay girls. But nobody knew each other because we didn't have any way to, or any place to meet or any to get in touch. But we knew that there had to be other girls that were gay so we used to look a lot. Like we'd go into the stores and you might see somebody. We met one girl that used to work in a film processing, you know one of those drive-in ones, and we'd go by there a lot and we would talk to her. Then we found out that she was gay.

R Were you the ones that brought it up, or did she bring it up?

S No. She thought the same thing about us. She thought we were and we thought that she was. So we started going by there a lot. Then we met someone else who knew her and they found out that, yeh, she was. But it was just a real long process to meet anybody else, so yeh, we used to look a lot then, but now there's quite a few

girls in town now that we know that, we have like a little social deal. There's about 30 or 35 girls.

- R If you were in a new situation and didn't know anyone . . .
 S Then I'd have to start all over again.
 R And then again, you'd go by their outward appearance first?
 S Well, yes, probably. Outward appearances and then like you can, well, I think I'd just go to the bars. I don't think I'd start looking around to meet someone. If I saw someone in a store that I thought was gay I wouldn't just go up to them and put the move on them. I'm not like that.
 R But then you might be able to tell, in a store for example, if someone was gay, not that you'd go up to her, but you might sense that she is gay?
 S Yeh, I don't know how to explain it because a lot of times you just have this feeling, some people call it, they just get vibrations or like you have a little radar that you can just tell. I don't know what it is but I've met people like that, you know that are, and even if you don't talk to them there's sort of a little communication that's like ESP or something cause you might see somebody, that somebody might come in here and I might, you just sort of just look at them and they look at you and you sort of have this little feeling.
 R Through the eyes?
 S Yeh, or sometimes you can pass people like riding across campus, you can pass somebody or walking across campus you can look at somebody and they can look at you and there's a little shit-grin that's like a solid communication. You see somebody and they just look at you well you just think they are.
 R Is that for both guys and girls?
 S I don't know about guys -- I'm just saying this from the girls' standpoint. I think guys are more open -- forward, maybe.
 R Can you tell if a guy is gay?
 S Well, as far as guys, I probably go by what most people go by that aren't gay, because unless they're real feminine, really Nellie acting -- or if that's the way they are cause I've been wrong that way too, cause I thought, you know . . .
 R Well, have you been in a situation like you start, like you walk across campus and see another girl and vibrations or whatever be there, smile or whatever?
 S Yeh
 R Has that ever happened with a guy?
 S What? Me to a guy, no.
 R Yeh, I mean a guy walking across might recognize you as being gay and . . .?
 S Cause I don't ever look at guys that much unless they're really built good, then I might. Then if they would smile at me I would just think, you know, this guy is, you know, cause I'm a girl and that's a guy.
 R A smile between a guy and a girl is a little different than between you and another girl?

- S I don't think it'd be any different because if some guys are at a bar and a girl's in there and thinks he's real good looking and he thinks she's real good looking and they start looking at each other, he'll go over. If he smiles at her and she smiles back he'll go over and ask her to dance.
- R This is in a straight bar?
- S Yeh, a girl and guy. I don't think the situation is any different except that if I'm walking across campus and I see this girl and I think, well for whatever reason, I think she's a nice looking girl, and I'm looking at her and all of a sudden she looks at me and just rips off a grin, well I'm not going to immediately run over there. I'd probably keep on going.
- R Have you ever been wrong?
- S Huh?
- R Have you ever made a judgement that a certain girl is gay and gone up to her either for cruising or just to get to know them?
- S Well, yes. You can say, like in my department, there's a lot of people you might think, girls, that might be gay and later you find out that weren't gay.
- R What department is that?
- S You want me to say my department?
- R Yeh
- S In the P.E. Department.
- R So you're a P.E. major?
- S A lot of people, and I probably fall into that rut too, a lot of people think that girls that are real athletic are gay. Well, that's not really true because there's a lot of girls I thought were gay and I found out later they weren't.
- R You don't cruise that much, like some guys do, then?
- S No, I don't. Like I said, when there was only three or four of us and we didn't know anyone and we wanted to meet other people, we did.
- R You did it basically just to meet people?
- S Yes, because we knew there was other people, but now there's enough of us that . . . well I'm pretty settled too.
- R You're living with someone?
- S Yes, so I don't. I don't really know anyone else that does. You might be driving down the road and look. Everybody looks. People are people watchers. I don't go out looking for other people that are gay, no.
- R When you said you went to the bars, did you go basically to girl bars or did you go to guy bars like the Old P?
- S Yeh, like the OP.
- R Was there a problem there where, like at the OP, you have a lot of fag hags (straight girls) or whatever?
- S No, you mean like if I went up to someone I found out that they were straight? Well, you can usually tell . . .
- R How?
- S Like if I wanted to ask someone to dance, I wouldn't just look at somebody and instantly go over there. You can watch and see who they're with, if they're with anybody. Cause a lot of times they get mad at you if you ask whoever they're with to dance. You sorta

- look them over so you can know if they're straight or gay. Like some straight girls just go there to find out what it's like.
- R Have you ever had an experience like at work where someone would come in here and you'd think they were gay?
- S Yes, well like once. There was this softball tournament in town and it's just a known fact that a lot of women that are gay are softball fans. So this girl came in and she wanted to use the phone and call somebody she knew in town and find out where the softball tournament was. Well at first I thought she just wanted to know where the softball tournament was. You know, I could tell here that then I got this real strong feeling that she was gay. I don't know why, I just . . . I think it was more the way she talked to this girl on the phone. When I heard the conversation I just knew this girl had to be gay. She was sort of talking but not saying anything really. Like I do sometimes when I'm talking on the phone. So, I didn't say anything to her, you know like "are you gay". I just told her where the softball tournament was. So she got back into her car and as soon as I got off work I hopped it down to the softball tournament and when I got there I saw her car. So I parked right beside her, in fact, I got out and they were sitting right there in the car. There was another girl there with her and I said something like, "well, I see you found the tournament." So I went on into the game and I was talking with one of my friends and they said that they had a friend coming into town and they said they were going to have a party after the tournament and I said why don't you bring her over. So we were at the game and all of a sudden, this girl comes by and starts talking to the girl I know. So I said, "you know, I thought you were gay when you came into my station." We were laughing about it because I had been right. But that doesn't happen all the time. Like you might think someone's gay and never find out or even see them again.
- R Are there like any little games that you might play, like if you were in a situation where you can't come out and say "you're gay" but both of you might really think you're both gay? Like rituals or little games?
- S I don't know. I'm not that outgoing. But I was dead sure they were gay, like if I saw them in class and sat right beside one, I wouldn't say anything.
- R Sometimes guys do that -- I mean they'll never come out and say that they're gay but they'll say, like that's a nice shirt that you have or a nice pair of pants, little small talk, the whole time smiling at each other.
- S I don't take any chances, especially in my department. Everybody knows everybody and you don't want it all over the department.
- R Have you been out very long?
- S I get mixed up when someone asks me that because as far as actually being out and going to the bars and everything, I've only been out for 4 or 5 years. My freshman year up here, as far as having feelings towards other women and knowing that I liked girls I can't remember not knowing or having these feelings. I used to sit down and think I had girls friends in third grade and crushes on my teachers in junior high. The first girls I ever did anything with

was when I was a sophomore in high school and was dating a girl for about a year and a half but we didn't know any other girls or know where any bars were in Houston or know any place to go.

R But you knew there were bars?

S Yeh, but we didn't know where they were. There was no way for me to find out about them. That's why when I came up here I didn't do anything right away. I didn't start, but I knew there were other people that were gay and I wanted to find them and I started looking around.

R So you haven't really associated with other gay people except for the last 4-5 years? So where did you come out, here or Houston?

S Here, where I met the other people. They had been to the bars and I started going. Though I was aware of my feelings I wasn't aware so much of the gay stuff and started going to the bars, and started paying attention to it.

R Has your perspective changed since you started associating with other gays?

S The only thing that's changed, I didn't think about my rights and the way I was going to live until I started being around other people that were gay. I just didn't think about it. Some people have trauma when they find out they're gay, but I never went through all that. I just accepted that that's the way I was supposed to be. I had a hard time believing that other people thought I was strange, because I was gay. I didn't see myself as different from anybody else. It wasn't until I started talking with other gays that I realized that others were prejudiced against me because I was gay. I've become aware of the pressures -- "the way that I am is against the law". You know that kind of stuff.

R Being gay isn't against the law, it's just doing the things that . .

S Well . . .

R Except, in some people's eyes . . .

S I can't just go around you know . . . I have a lot of respect for being at A&M when I was living in the dorm I was on the dorm council. Ah, I knew a lot of people that were straight, and I always felt strange cause I just had to hide everything and have one person for the people that were straight and one person for people that were gay. The way I felt when I met other people that were gay, I just felt this great relief, you know, wow, like you know you've been gone on a long trip and you get home. I don't know why, I guess it was just nice to be around people you could be yourself with and not have to be living a lie all the time.

R Well, did you date guys?

S I went out with guys, even when I was in high school and I had a girl friend, there was this, I guess we were more friends though. We didn't really date but we did stuff together and then when I came up to A&M, I was on this "straight curiosity kick". I guess I wanted to find out what it was like to be with a guy, sexually and cause I had kissed Al and everything. So I decided I was going to find out what it was like, so I dated all these guys. It wasn't any problem when I went around with these straights, so I just went out with their friends. But I never could do anything -- I tried -- but I felt "queer". I tried, tried, tried, and then I

just gave up because it was really getting to be a bore and then after I met these other people that were gay, I just quit dating guys.

R How did you first meet the 2-3 other people up here?

S In a club on campus. I went to a meeting. I just met them. I had this feeling they were gay. I just started hanging around there and trying to be friends with them. They didn't know if I was or not. I didn't know any of the words they were taking about.

R So they used gay words?

S They were dropping me hints and I wouldn't catch on to them because I didn't know what they were talking about.

R So they were consciously trying to find out if you were?

S Yes. Then, someplace in town they danced together. That's when I figured out they were gay and I told them about my girl friend. From there it's been my whole college life the last 3 years. The end of my freshman year is when I met them. I would be with my girlfriend on the weekends and then all week with straight people. I never dated one guy more than 3-4 times. Because they'd start getting on my nerves, wanting to do things more than I wanted to experiment with.

R It's easier for a girl to say no -- you know if a guy goes out with a girl -- like when I was dating after about the 3rd or 4th date, instead of meeting them in Commons, I would pick them up at their room and drop them off at their room before hours. I kept getting the hint, "why don't you do something"?

S I never thought of it the other way around, cause most of the guys I went out with, with a little encouragement, it wasn't hard . . .

R That's what I'm talking about, it's harder for a gay guy to keep up a pretense, if that's what he wants to do, cause you're a girl and a girl can say no and the guy would attribute it to her just wanting to be a virgin, but a guy, it's always hints, making up excuses or whatever.

S I don't know if I was dating a guy and I went out with him a lot and he didn't ever try to do anything except kiss me goodnight -- I wouldn't think there was anything wrong with him. I would just think that he had . . .

R I mean let's say, if you were straight and you wanted to have some-

S Yeh, but there's not an awful lot of girls that wouldn't that, I wouldn't.

R I've been in situations where women invite me over to their house to eat supper and the night would drag on and on . . .

S Maybe so, I just thought . . .

R The guys were the aggressors.

S I mean if I were, all I ever had to do was let them know, then there was no problem. I don't really know that much about guys, dating them. I just was never around anybody except my father, brother and Allen (we were just such good friends). I never talked to them that much. Didn't develop communication. Like I said when I would try to do something sexual I felt strange. It didn't seem right or natural.

- R Well, that's about it. Basically, I was interested in, is if you can tell if someone else is gay?
- S Well, sometimes a lot of people go by appearance and sometimes people will look at people and give this shit-grin back.
- R I wanted to ask you about appearance. Just what is it about appearance?
- S Clothing, the way they're people. General appearance. It's not always appearance, not always conversation. It's a lot of things. Situations you're in, like in the bar in Houston, or if you're walking down the street in College Station . . .
- R Well, in the bars you take it for granted?
- S Yeh, but a lot of straights go to gay bars.
- R But even in a situation like that, a girl wouldn't throw a big scene if you went up would they?
- S They might not say they were straight, they might just say they didn't want to dance . . .
- R But I imagine if you were at the library and you made a mistake . . .
- S Well, I don't like to put myself in that kind of a predicament, so I never do it . . . That's about it if you don't have any other questions.
- S I appreciate it.

002 - Two Females, 20 and 21 years old

- R First, let me ask you, uh, how old are you?
- S1 You want to know when my birthday is? I'm 20 years old.
- R 20 years old. Do you go to the University?
- S1 Yes
- R And you are gay?
- S1 Yes
- R Uh, how long have you been out?
- S1 About 5 years.
- R Is that just to everyone, or just to people that are gay? Are you totally out to everyone or are you just out to other gay people?
- S2 You know you're not going to go out to straight people and make a point of telling them you're gay.
- S1 Oh, just to gay people.
- R Okay. How old are you?
- S2 21
- R 21. You're a student and you're gay?
- S2 Uh huh
- R And about how long have you been out?
- S2 I've always been . . . (laughter) . . . this is always what kills me, I never, you know, I never went through a period of coming out, I just . . .
- R Well, when did you start associating with gay people?
- S2 You mean like being with a lover, or . . .
- R Participaing
- S2 You mean with a group of gay people?
- R Yeh, a group of gay people.

- S2 I never really got with a group of gay people until I came up here 2 years ago.
- R Two years ago. Okay, basically what I'll be asking my questions on, if and how you can tell if other people are gay. Is there any way that you can tell if other people are gay . . . if you're not in, you know a bar where everybody's gay, or at a party where it can be assumed that everybody's gay, can you tell if someone else is gay?
- S1 I think it's kind of harder for women, because you're kind of in two categories. You know, either they're obvious like you know, butch or something like that or they're just, you know feminine, and you don't know if they are. See . . . that's the problem, we can always, you know, pick out the girls that are "butchy".
- S2 Unfortunately, the stereotypes is what is what goes for the female.
- S1 In girls, it's there.
- R So you pick them out by stereotypes?
- S2 Right, for girls.
- R Do the stereotypes always hold?
- S1,2 No.
- S2 Because it can simply be a country person you know. Okay, if you're talking about girls, you know it can be just real country, ah, tomboy type girl. I mean doesn't necessarily mean they're gay but I, I don't know if a lot of times, but a lot of times they are gay, you know have butched hair.
- R Well, how can you differentiate between, let's say a butch girl that's gay and a butch girl that is not?
- S2 Are you just talking about a regular setting?
- R Yeh
- S2 You can't, I don't think you can.
- S1 I couldn't. Even if they're not gay, but they look like they are, you can tell by the way they act towards other women because they, they . . . I don't know, they're more open, they're more physical, even though they're not gay.
- R You mean physical, by touching.
- S1 Uh huh
- R And you said, butch, what differentiates a butch woman from . . .
- S1 Dress, appearance, short hair . . . (laughter) . . . well how they wear their hair you know, just their appearance, I guess, dress is the main thing.
- S2 Uh huh
- R What about more feminine type women? Is there any way that you might tell that they are?
- S1 Well, the only way that you could tell is the way that they act toward other girls. That's the only way because . . . the stereotype's there, if they're feminine you won't really think that they're gay, you know by the way they dress. The only way you can go by is the things they say, the way they act, if they are physical . . . that's the only way.
- R So you just basically go by the stereotypes?
- S1 Unfortunately.
- R What about in the bar, in a gay bar? Okay, what type of gay bar do you go to? Do you go to one that's say, a girls bar or one of the

- larger gay bars like the OP?
- S2 I don't know, oh either kind, I mean it doesn't necessarily have to be a girls bar.
- S1 Me too, same way. Because of the fact that well, like, where I'm from there's not many girl bars. There's just really one, so we like to go to different places.
- R Well, what when you go in there and you see someone that you're interested in, how do you come to meet that person?
- S1 "You want to dance?" . . . (laughter).
- R You just walk up to them and say, "you want to dance?"
- S1 That's how it starts and then you just start talking to them.
- R What about, okay, let's say you go to a larger bar, like the OP and okay, you have a lot of girls that are stragglers, how would you know whether to go up to them or someone that's gay?
- S1 Well, even if they are straight and I know it, and they're in a gay bar, I'd still ask them to dance, because I figure that they either get off to being in a gay bar, I wouldn't see why they wouldn't want to dance.
- R So they're basically just cool about the whole thing.
- S1 Yeh
- R But could you tell the difference between the straight girl and the girl that's gay in a gay bar?
- S1 Well, I guess the only way I could do that is by watching them.
- R Watching them?
- S1 Yes. Say, to see their reaction to the whole thing first, and you did ask them to dance, and they do, then just see how they act towards other gay people you know.
- S2 You still couldn't really be sure, because it could be a really shy person or, real, you know somebody that's maybe . . .
- S1 Well, more than likely though if you ask them to dance, they'll say no, then if they're straight.
- R No, but like last night . . . there was one girl that was straight, another one that was gay and they danced in a straight bar. Would you just ask her "are you gay?"
- S2 Maybe . . . after you've danced with them for awhile, I mean they accepted and they danced with you and you got into a conversation with them. Then you know, if you talk for awhile, then you could ask them, I mean I sure wouldn't go up to someone and say "are you gay?" before I ask them you know . . . (laughter).
- R It's a little bit easier for the guys cause most of the guys there will be gay. I was just kind of interested in how, say when you came to A&M, how did you meet other girls that were gay?
- S1 Well, in my situation, I went for the stereotype, and I guess through athletics, that helped a lot.
- R Is there a stereotype? In athletics?
- S1 Well, I say that, there's really not, because there's really a lot of athletic women that look like they are, but they're not. Just, I guess, that they can't help the way they look physically . . . (laughter) . . . they dislike looking like that.
- S2 There's a need to keep short hair and you know . . . wear sweats and that's not saying necessarily they're gay, but . . .

- R Well, you know do you just talk to them after a long period of time and decide that they were?
- S1 Yeh, well, a friendship was built up at first. And I guess it just came out, you know, I guess in conversation. A warm setting . . . (laughter).
- R You arranged, I mean after awhile, a setting developed where you could talk about it?
- S1 Yeh
- R How did you know when the time was right?
- S1 Well, really I didn't talk about it. Really, I guess the physical thing happened first before anything, then after that it was obvious.
- R It just kind of happened?
- S1 Obvious that they had gone through that situation before.
- S2 I never met anybody by, ah, I mean, thinking they were, I didn't get into a conversation with someone, you know, get to know them and then ask them, I just kind of met through chain reaction. Like there were three of us sitting around together and you know, one of my roommates would meet somebody else and she'd introduce us and that other person would introduce us and it just kind of went through a chain reaction.
- R Well, how did she meet, did she meet people the same way?
- S2 Okay, the first way it started, the first person we met outside, you know, just us three is ah, she knew a girl in our class she thought looked gay and ah, they started talking and just one day one of them mentioned a gay bar, and the other one, my roommate picked up on it. . .
- R Is that on purpose? (mentioning the gay bar)
- S2 Yeh, I think, yeh, it's kind of clear you know . . .
- R What about using other words, would you all maybe drop other words, in the conversation?
- S1 Well, I don't think we have a gay dialogue, there's just not one you know.
- R Does that just pertain to the guys?
- S2 I think a lot more so. Because girls, I know a lot of gay girls and I've never heard a special jargon or anything like that but I always hear from the guys. I would never use it, I don't know any of it.
- R That girl that she thought looked gay, she just went on the stereotype?
- S2 I'm not sure just what it was, I think the first clue she got was just because she kept staring at her, you know she'd make eye to eye contact and my roommate would stare back at her and she wouldn't turn around.
- R The eye to eye contact, last longer?
- S2 Yeh, it was longer than, you know, usually you turn you head or something . . . (unintelligible) . . . that was the first clue, she said that she had, and then the girl just talked to her a lot and paid a lot of attention to her, wanted to be her partner. They seemed to get close, you know, be closer friends, but it was kind of a quick thing, over a period of time.
- R And it all started with eye contact?

- S2 Staring, cause she didn't . . .
- S1 That is how eye contact is used in bars.
- S1 Like if somebody is straight, well, in fact, they are not going to sit there and stare at you.
- S2 Yeh
- R So eye contact used in a bar, it can be taken for granted that either the girl is cool or gay, if you're interested, is there more eye contact?
- S2 Yeh, sure there's something about you, there's a difference, it's not . . .
- S1 It's a glare . . . (laughter).
- S2 It's not like you just, well, I'm not sure, but I think I could tell the difference if someone was looking at me saying "so that's gay" or if they're interested. I think you can tell if they are interested, a certain look in their eye, there's a difference.
- R Is there anything besides the eyes?
- S1 I get gross looking lips . . . (laughter).
- S2 (silly laughter).
- S1 Don't get vulgar. I just think sometimes casually trying to meet somebody, I've never experienced it.
- S1 I have, I met a girl once, she was just on the make and she would do that and I knew it and I just got completely turned off. . . (laughter) . . . because she was so obvious.
- R Have you ever gone out cruising?
- S1 I guess every time we go out to a bar we cruise . . . (laughter) . . . well I do if I'm not with someone.
- R Like cruising, you mean like for sex or just to meet people?
- S1 Yeh, I guess . . . (long pause) . . . I don't think girls cruise like guys, just because of the sex but there are people that I know that do that but I'm just not like that.
- R You do go out just to meet people?
- S2 Yeh, to meet more friends or to get to know them, it doesn't necessarily have to be sex.
- R Do you dress any different when you go out to cruise?
- S1 Well, we just dress up.
- R Any particular way?
- S2 Well, I've never worn jeans, I don't want to look tacky.
- R Is there a special look that . . .
- S1 To be nice looking and appealing . . . (laughter).
- R What do you think is appealing to other people?
- S1 I think really truly, if you're a gay girl, this is my opinion, I like women to be feminine.
- S2 I don't like them to be butchy because if that's it, then why would I want to be involved with women, then I would just be involved with men, cause they're the masculine type.
- R So you dress in a dress?
- S2 Or a nice pant suit.
- S2 When you say cruising do you mean just for sex or like when I say cruising I just mean looking?
- R Yeh, so do I, when I say cruising, I mean like sometimes, you'll cruise for sex but sometimes a lot of us get together just to see what we can see any other queers, for the fun of it or just to meet them or just to spot them. Walk around campus and say, yeh

- he's queer . . . (laughter) . . . Maybe I know the guys camping up sometimes. You all camping up?
- S2 I don't, I don't think girls do. There's a lot of difference between gay guys and girls.
- S1 Well, there are those . . .
- S2 Well, there are some, yeh.
- S1 So we're really just a part of a group that doesn't like butchiness but we don't put them down for that because we, maybe our friends, aren't like that, but it doesn't bother us.
- R That's their way?
- S2 Yeh, we're kind of restricted here because for both of us this is the first setting of a group that we've met and we're all pretty close and we're all about the same type of people and we haven't gone out and taken part in different groups and seen the differences between them, the guys and the girls.
- R Are you from a big city?
- S2 San Antonio.
- R How about you?
- S1 Houston.
- R Were you involved in the gay group there?
- S1 Well, not at that point because I was pretty young. I was just starting to go to the gay bars.
- R So you had gone to the gay bars in Houston before you came down here?
- S1 A lot of times.
- S2 Yes
- R Down here is where you basically . . .
- S2 Got involved in a group, like there were always three of us that ran around together. Then sometimes there were four of us, but no more than four, we just didn't know that many people. We might have met a couple of others, but not close.
- R Did you all learn anything within the group that you couldn't have learned on your own?
- S1 Well, I think I've developed my, the way I think through the way other people think. Either I like the way they thought or I would go to an extreme and say that's not the way I was going to be. I'm not the kind of person that would like to cram my "gayness" down someone else's throat. If they know that I'm gay and they accept it, that's alright, and if they don't, then I'm not going to be the kind that would say "why don't you think the way that I do, you're just closeminded". I don't want to push anything. Cause I like my life and they can live their lives, if they want to be straight, that's alright.
- R So you don't wear it on your sleeve?
- S2 No, sometimes, it's not necessary for everybody to know, I mean, like the people you work with, you work with them and there's no reason. I think the best thing I learned was to be strong within myself. I never rejected myself for being gay, I've always been this way. I never went through a period of coming out. I didn't date guys and stuff, but I've never rejected myself but I wasn't strong enough to be able to, if someone were to come up to me and say, "are you gay", before I would have said no (before meeting

group). Now, I'm not so sure I would say yes, I am, but I'd probably say, "does it make a difference". And if it didn't I would probably say, "yes, I am". I'm not sure. I've never been faced with it, but I'm more ready to admit that I am gay and this . . .

R To go back to another side issue, can you tell if a guy is gay?
 S1 I think it's easier for us to pick out guys. It's not that they act -- I go a lot by dress. I think, you can just kind of tell by the clothes they wear, how tight the pants are . . . (laughter) . . . the way they dance, different, I think.

003 - Female, 22 years old

R You say, what are you now?

S I'm a senior now.

R What's your major?

S Health and Education.

R And, ah, how old are you?

S 22

R How long have you been out in the gay community?

S Wow, going to bars, you mean? Well, you see, I've known I've been gay since my sophomore year in high school, and I couldn't start going out to bars until I was 18.

R Well, how long have you been associating with other gay people?

S The only other person I knew that was gay in high school was _____, but since I started meeting other gay people, I think it was my senior year in high school.

R And then? You started hanging around other gay people?

S I just started hanging around other gays.

R Was it very traumatic when you came out?

S No. It was like I was born this way. I just knew I liked girls. I liked women. I liked being with them. I could date a guy but I knew it wasn't really exciting. I didn't really get emotionally involved with them like I do with women.

R How did you go about meeting other gay people?

S I just looked for the butchest ones. From there they took me to the real fluff ones.

R So if you saw someone that was butch, you would assume that they were gay?

S Usually.

R Were they?

S Not all the time. But the ones I did meet, well, I can just remember one, I figured she was, but I guess we met later, we graduated.

R Can you tell if a fairly feminine girl is gay?

S No, I can't, not usually. I'd have to listen to them talk. Listen to what they say.

R Like?

S I really can't remember because it's been a while since I've met a really feminine woman that's gay.

- R Are there certain words they might say?
 S I can't remember. I can't think of anything right off hand.
 R Basically, what I'm interested in is how you meet other gay women. Whether or not you can tell if another girl is gay, either if you just are out doing whatever you're doing or when you're cruising, on purpose.
 S Okay. One thing is eye contact.
 R Eye contact?
 S Usually, some straight gives a "hi" or just minimal eye contact. But with some gay women, usually you look at them and they still look . . . it's just the way they look at you.
 R Is it a longer contact?
 S Yeh, a longer eye contact. Maybe a double take
 R Is there anything else that accompanies that eye contact?
 S Maybe a smile.
 R A smile?
 S Uh huh
 R A smile of recognition, or just a smile?
 S Maybe a smile of recognition. No, you really can't tell if you don't know the person it may be just a lot of, well, some gay women might think if they smile at you "hey, they're gay". They know I am.
 R They know you are?
 S No, I mean, some gay women, they'll think they know I'm gay just so they smiled at me.
 R When they look at you, they just look right into your eye?
 S Uh huh. They look straight into your eye and just kinda make it a little longer and maybe a little smile. That's how I've seen, like, well, like maybe in one of the bars . . . That's how I've noticed.
 R This was in one of the gay bars?
 S No.
 R A straight bar?
 S No, I mean in the bars you know how some gay women will cruise you. Like it would be the same out on the streets, is what I'm trying to say.
 R So there's really no difference from what happens in a bar where you know the person is gay and out on the street, like downtown or say on campus where you can't assume that someone is gay?
 S You really can't assume someone is gay out on the street, you just kind of have to get to know the person.
 R Do you have any experience cruising?
 S Out on the streets?
 R Anywhere, on campus, downtown. When I say cruising I mean either for sex or . . .
 S Just for the sake of cruising. Well, that's what I usually do, just for the sake of cruising. Of course, I always cruise. I think it's natural. Most, well, I'll go through spells. There's days I'll cruise 24 hours a day, but . . .
 R Could you give me an example of one particular instance where you've gone out and cruised? What you did?
 S What I did was sat and watched, right in front of the MSC and just . . . If I sit down by myself and cruise it's not obvious but if a

- group of people sit down . . .
- R You mean a group of girls would . . .
- S I mean tell just "OO, look at that". It bothers me sometimes but I'd rather sit down and cruise by myself. Just kinda look. I might make comments to myself.
- R Such as?
- S Such as, "what a woman" or "look at that ass."
- R Is this any woman?
- S Well, if she's good looking. If she's got a nice body and then if she smiles and tells you "hi". You get, my God, heart flutter.
- R Can you given me an example of one time where you've gone out and cruised and where you've met the person or at least there was some type of interaction?
- S There was this one really good looking girl. I really didn't know her name but I'd seen her in the MSC. I'd seen her on campus. In fact, I ran into her everyday practically. And so, well, she had to know I was cruising her because everyone just teases me about it, in front of her. She might be a couple of tables over in the MSC and they'd just say "hey-ey".
- R Were you obvious?
- S I think I was really obvious.
- R Not subtle?
- S Really obvious. And then one day out of the . . . I just started telling her "hi" and she started saying "hi" back and then she, well she just looked like a real friendly type. She's kinda like a snob, she walks like a snob.
- R She walks like a snob?
- S She kind of has her nose in the air, and "hey, look at me, I'm beautiful".
- R Was she feminine?
- S Real feminine. Very.
- R Did it turn out that she was gay?
- S No, I really didn't . . . I'd talk to her but it was like a "getting to-know-you" and if I could have talked with her more. I didn't really ask her or make any hints about me being gay. But I'm pretty sure she thinks it already.
- R Do you recall any instances where you've been cruised?
- S No, I might have.
- R You're the aggressive person?
- S Uh huh
- R Have you ever had any problems like with straight girls who might flirt with or tease you?
- S I have this real good friend. I work with her, and she's fun to be with. Like we went out to the lake the other day, but, like I'll be just . . . well she knows I go to gay bars.
- R She knows you're gay?
- S She doesn't know that I'm gay but she knows I go to gay bars. And she has to know that I cruise because everytime I make it obvious. But like she'll just flirt with . . . Well, I don't know if it's flirting or her just being friendly. She doesn't know that I'm gay and I don't know if she'd do anything.

- R I've heard several people say in instances where people have known that they're gay, persons that were straight would kind of lead them on. Lead them to believe that they were gay, "prick tease" or something like that you know.
- S No, I can't think of . . . I have a lot of straight friends that know I'm gay but they don't tease me.
- R Almost as a side issue, can you tell if a guy is gay?
- S If he's nellie.
- R If he's nellie? You mean if he fits the stereotype?
- S Uh huh. That's the only way I know. Not unless, well some of the guys have nellie voices. But I can't . . . I mean there's a lot of guys in the bars that I've seen that I couldn't picture being gay. They look straight.
- R So, basically . . .
- S Most people that you perceive as being gay have to fit the stereotype. It is kind of hard for a real butch man or a real feminine woman to really look for someone that doesn't fit the stereotype. I think not unless it's in a gay bar.
- R So, outside of the gay bar, you either go by the stereotype and/or eye contact?
- S Uh huh
- R And in the bar by the eye contact?
- S Uh huh. I sure do. Well there's so . . . yeh, eye contact.
- R You were going to say?
- S Nothing.
- R Has being associated with the gay community helped you learn anything about other gays? About yourself or other gay people?
- S No. . . I just know we all have the same problems. Like trying to find someone to settle down with. Problems with parents. Trying to tell parents you're gay, or whether to tell them at all. Some people, well, I really don't have this problem about trying to see what I want you know, at least I really haven't . . . it hasn't given me any problems yet.
- R You mentioned that in a gay bar you notice people that didn't fit the stereotype.
- S Uh huh. I've often wondered if they're fag hags, or whatever.
- R For the girls?
- S Yeh
- R Has it ever happened that in a gay bar you've been interested in someone and gone up and they turned out to be a fag hag?
- S No. I'll just ask them to dance and carry on a conversation. I don't really hustle them. I don't really . . . if I met someone and try and get them in bed . . . I don't do things like that. I really haven't been brave enough to do something like that. I think sex is more meaningful if you know them.
- R So, basically when you cruise you do it either just to spot them or to meet them and be able to talk to them.
- S Yes. If anything sexual happens, well that's later.
- R What I was interested in was how you can go about telling if other people are gay, because if you were the only one. I think people go through periods where they think they're the only one.
- S Uh huh

- R And somehow they meet other people and it's kind of necessary, especially like when you come into this town.
- S When I first came up here the only ones that I knew were my roommates, that's it.
- R And then how did you meet other people?
- S There was, well my first semester here, I didn't see anybody. I mean, I didn't, well I had a lover at the time so I wasn't really interested in knowing anybody, which was kinda sad on my part. The second semester I was here I saw somebody that possibly could be, so I just started talking to her and getting to know her and then one day she said something about a gay convention. I said "oh, that sounds interesting".
- R So she dropped a hint?
- S Uh huh. So after that I started getting to know her. She had a lover, and had had problems with her lover's parents. She introduced me to other people; this one girl introduced me to some other people. So, for my roommates I made progress, so they could know other people too.
- R So, basically, you met people, through your friends, being introduced . . .
- S Yes.
- R But what about this other girl that you thought was gay? Was it because she fit the stereotype?
- S No, she didn't. She, she was real, well she didn't have, like well a butch women is like jeans or men's pants or men's shirts and real short hair and walks like a man. Well, she didn't. She was feminine, but she had some mannerisms that just didn't fit with her.
- R Do you recall what those mannerisms were?
- S Well, like she'd dress up in real feminine attire but she would carry her books like a guy and she'd walk with a long stride.
- R So her walking was masculine?
- S Yes.
- R Was there anything else?
- S That was it.
- R Just because the way she walked and carried her books you thought . . .
- S I can't really describe it, what it is about them.
- R I know it's hard to put into words.
- S It is. It might have been the way some gay people isolate themselves. They don't talk to anyone else and she started sitting by me.
- R So she might have picked you out as being gay?
- S Uh huh. She might have. But after that we started talking. She got all embarrassed. But I put her at ease. I said "I'd like to go to one of those".
- R So she did bring it up?
- S Yes, by saying "I'm going to a gay convention in San Antonio this weekend".
- R Did she know you were from San Antonio?
- S Uh huh. I had said something about me being from San Antonio and I said "oh yeh, there's a gay convention there", and I said "that sounds interesting".

- R So she must have been already pretty confident that you were gay.
 S Must have been. It was kind of strange, it just popped out of her mouth. I don't think she meant for it to come out of her mouth, because this was in class. She got real, well she's Mexican and you can't tell when a Mexican blushes but I could tell she was. I think she might have picked me out as being (gay). I think her lover did too because she didn't like me too much because I used to talk to her.
- R When you first saw this girl and she started sitting down by you, did you try and let on a little that you were gay?
 S Yes.
 R How?
 S Well, I, we, really didn't talk about guys for one. So that kinda, well once you start talking about guys, that kind of blows it. To me it does. Like dating them.
- R Is that common among straight females, to sit down and start talking about guys?
 S Very common. They just "Joe this or Bob that . . . or me and so and so are going to . . ." Just kind of turns me off.
- R So the subject of other guys was avoided?
 S Yep
 R Well, what were some of the things you'd talk about?
 S About going to bars. I didn't ask her which bars she'd been to.
 R About when you went to San Antonio and went out to bars?
 S And dancing.
 R This is before she told about the gay convention?
 S Yes. But she didn't mention any name of bars until later. She said something about going to bars in San Antonio but she didn't mention any names till later.
- R Was there any eye contact during all of this?
 S There was a lot of eye contact.
 R Do you ever just get a feeling that someone is gay, without all the eye contact or stereotype?
 S Just being with the person and feeling that they're gay? Yeh.
 R You have had that feeling?
 S Yes. But I really didn't pursue it to find out if they were gay. Maybe because I wasn't interested, is the reason.
- R Could you describe that feeling?
 S Your heart just kind of goes boom-boompt, boom-boompt . . .
 R What leads to that boom-boompt, boom-boompt?
 S It just kind of . . . I don't know what it is . . . I can't really describe it . . . it's kind of hard . . .
- R What about which some people call vibes or sensation or whatever? Do you put stock in this?
 S Vibes? Not usually. I don't really go out and check. You really can't tell much about vibes. At least I can't.
 R That's basically what I was interested in. Thank you.

004 - Female, 25 years old

- R So you're female?
 S Definitely.
 R And you're gay?
 S Yes, definitely.
 R How old are you?
 S 25.
 R You go to college?
 S Yep.
 R What year are you?
 S Senior.
 R Senior, okay, and you also work full time?
 S Part-time
 R About how long have you been out, being gay?
 S Since around September of 1970. So what's that, almost 7 years.
 R Yeh, 7 years. Did you just come out all at once or had you had any ideas before you . . .
 S It was kind of a hard struggle through high school. I had a lot of conflicts that, I suppose most adolescents that age go through and . . . but mine seemed a little bit worse than everybody elses and I kind of pushed them back and said "no, not me, no, no way" and then you know I went through the marriage thing.
 R Guys or . . .
 S Yeh, I was married two years.
 R Was this just when you were out of high school?
 S Uh, I went to college for one semester and then couldn't afford it, so I started working and I worked for a couple of years, uh, I got married. I have to take that back, it wasn't 70 it was 72, so it's almost 5 years, since I've been out, I'm sorry. I got married in 70, and was married for almost two years, right at when the divorce was final. And while I was married I met a couple of girls who were gay. One of them was a super fine person. She was 27, 28 at the time. Everyone knew she was gay. She lived in a small town.
 R A small town?
 S A very small, red-neck town. Everybody knew she was gay, but they didn't care, it didn't matter. She was that type of person. She had a personality that well, made people say "big deal."
 R So everybody liked her?
 S Exactly. Her sexual preference was of no concern to them, even though it was such a red-neck town.
 R So she was an exception?
 S Uh huh. By far. If she wanted to visit any of her gay friends she'd have to drive 150 miles to see someone else that was gay.
 R Were the other gays in town afraid to talk or associate with her?
 S Well, she really didn't know any others, except for a scattered few, 2 or 3 within a 50-mile radius.
 R How did you meet her?
 S She was sitting on a coke box one day, at a little drive-in store and I happened to walk in with a friend of mine. I knew the girl that was working at the store. She was one of my really close friends, had been for awhile. I asked the friend of mine "who was

the girl that was sitting on the coke box the other day when I was in there?" She told me who she was, where she was from. And I said she seemed like a really nice person. She in fact, well the reason I went in there was to get a cold drink and she had to get off the box.

R Is that what brought her to your attention?

S Yes.

R What drew your attention to her?

S Her personality.

R Just sitting there you could read her personality?

S Yeh. I'm very perceptive. I can pick up personality vibes of people who are also sensitive people.

R Was there anything that kicked it off in your head that perhaps she was gay?

S If I were in another part of the country I would have said her dress but in that part of the country, it was perfectly normal for a woman in that area.

R Do you think your attraction to her was because you thought she was gay?

S Yes, possibly. Because at that time I was, what, 19? Twenty and I was beginning to get the feelings more and more. I suppose I thought she possibly was gay.

R So she was instrumental in your coming out?

S Very. We became very good friends, never lovers. When I was separated from my husband I lived with her for a month and a half. She was, just her very being, the kind of person, she was all the things . . . All the things, the social whatever, that say don't be gay, don't come out, it's bad . . . it didn't pertain to her at all. I saw that she was the type of example that . . . I felt that if she could be that type of person and people didn't care whether she was gay or straight or whatever, that I could also be that type of person.

R Did you ask her about it?

S Yeh, I talked to her a lot about it. She tried to discourage me, in what she said and the things she'd tell me.

R The horror stories?

S Yeh. She'd tell me the fact it's called gay, but it's anything but.

R So you asked her about it?

S Yes, that was my initial contact with anyone that I knew was gay.

R Then what happened when you left that town?

S We remained friends. We'd write, I'd tell her about my lover . . . I went back to my hometown. Midsized town. Larger than where I had been.

R Did you meet any other gay people there?

S No. I don't think there were any there.

R You didn't know any then?

S No, not until I had been there awhile.

R How did you finally meet these people?

S Through the school I was going to at the time. A junior college. There I met another extremely fine person. I actually had no idea that she was gay, when I met her. I met her totally on a friendship basis. We became lovers. She was gay when I met her.

- R Was that how you made contact with the gay community?
S No, she had none. She didn't run around. She still doesn't.
R What about you?
S I knew 2 or 3 other women.
R So there was no gay "community?"
S Oh, no, not at all.
R How did you meet these ladies?
S The same way. Pure happenstance, in the student center. Picked up
vibes that somebody across the room, and 2 or 3 times later in the
student center you'd eventually start a conversation, somehow.
R Is that the way you met most gays you know?
S Yes. Most gays that I have come into contact with because I have
never really lived in a town where there was a gay community, or a
town that had bars, or anything at all.
R So it was "vibes?"
S Yeh. Whatever type of attraction for someone that you, oh, I don't
know how to describe it.
R You're attracted to the person first . . .
S Yeh, just as a person they seem sensitive, someone who cares about
others, everybody they were just . . . it just happens along.
R Could you describe these vibes?
S I actually have no idea. I cannot. I have tried. I have sat down
and tried to explain to someone else what the vibes consist of.
How it feels or what you feel when you get the vibes. I cannot
honestly tell you what it is. It's just something that runs through
my "astral body." My whatever. I don't know what it is.
R So you might be in a student center or wherever, walking, notice
someone. Suddenly you're attracted to a person somehow.
S Their actions. The way they talk to people in their everyday way
. . . sitting at a table in a conversation with people drinking a
coke or a cup of coffee at break in the morning or whatever.
R So these people you've met you've observed over a period of time?
S More or less. Not extended periods of time. A couple of weeks, at
the most.
R Can you tell the first time you meet that they're gay? Or when do
the vibes hit?
S Usually immediately. The first or second time that you talk to the
person.
R Can you describe conversations in a situation where the vibes occur?
S Okay, for example, I'll use my first lover -- I hate the term lover,
but for lack of a better word, I'll use that term. We met on the
gym floor playing cards with three other girls who weren't gay, I
thought, though one eventually turned out to be gay. Anyway, I found
that out 9 months later.
R In a way, you were wrong. Your vibes didn't work?
S Yeh. Nope; they didn't work with that particular one. Not at all.
In fact she was my first lover's roommate for 9 months before either
one of us knew. In this particular case, though, I was smoking
a cigarette which was a no-no in the gym. Anyway, I was a P.E. major
and so they were all giving me flack about smoking in the gym and
this girl comes up to me. I didn't know her, but I had been
observing her in some of the intramural activities and around campus.

She runs over and grabs the cigarette I'm about to put in my mouth and crunched it all up in her hand. You just don't do that to my cigarettes.

R A very abrupt thing.

S Yeh. Bam. I said "don't do that, whoever you are! Cut it out, it really offends me terribly. Besides you owe me 2 pennies for the cigarette." I just went ahead and reached for another one. Before I had a change to get another one completely out of the pack, she'd grabbed the entire pack and was standing there fixing to destroy the whole pack.

R Was she in charge of the gym, or something?

S No. Just another student in on a free afternoon in the gym. She grabbed the entire pack and pretended to crunch it with this sheepish grin on her face.

R Was she trying to get your attention?

S Yeh. She was doing it intentionally to get my attention. So when she grabbed the pack her intentions materialized because I stood up.

R Then what?

S She ran out the door and I chased her about 1/4 mile. It was strange because I didn't have to chase her very far or very hard because she ran around one side of the tree and I ran around the other to "cut her off at the pass." And she stopped. Turned around, faced me. I ran smack-dab into her at which point she grabbed me (I'm kinda small) and practically threw me over her head. It scared the daylight out of me. Rather abrupt. Later on that evening I ran across her on campus. We said "hi" and did small talk then went about our own business. About 2 or 3 days later she said so-and-so were going to eat something, a sandwich, would I like to go? We went, ate supper and talked about school, etc. Later we went to the big park (it was in the fall). Being football season we took a football with us and played catch.

R Was that standard for most girls to play football like that? Sports?

S Oh, yes. There were less than 5,000 students and over 60 percent were women and 60 percent of those women were intramural participants . . . Sports activities were normal.

R So sports didn't characterize woman as . . . ?

S No, no, no, no, no . . . The school was very sorority oriented and every sorority on campus had an intramural team and participated in it. Even the most feminine femme fatales. Football, volleyball, everything.

R I've heard it said that it is very common for gay women here to be P.E. majors. What do you have to say about this?

S I wouldn't even make that statement. I know that, well I am in that department here and very few of the women in the department are gay.

R So you can't stereotype . . .

S No.

R Like if you play softball

S No.

R What I meant, though, was not that if you play softball or if you're

- a P.E. major you're gay but that if you're a gay female you might be likely a P.E. major and play softball. There is a distinction.
- S. Yeh. If it does, it runs that way. But still, take summer softball here. It's very popular. I'd say 50-60 percent of the women are married and have children. It's a physical activity.
- R. When you came here, how did you meet the other gay women here?
- S. Very slowly. Extremely slow. I was here for an entire summer and half of another semester before I knew there was another gay woman within a hundred miles of this campus.
- R. How did you meet this person?
- S. She tried to run me over on the sidewalk with her bicycle.
- R. So the first girl you met at the other school tried to crunch up your cigarettes and the first one you met here tried to run over you with her bicycle?
- S. That's right. I've decided that meeting other gay women can be hazardous to your health.
- R. So, was it intentional?
- S. Yeh. She didn't run over me but she came close enough to get my attention, which I assume was her point. And turned around after she had ridden off about 2 feet and grinned a very sheepish grin, which I returned and assumed at that point that she was gay.
- R. Explain.
- S. She was a stereotype.
- R. What do you mean?
- S. Masculine in dress, the way she rode her bicycle. Short hair, extremely short hair.
- R. So, except for the, uh, chest you'd have thought she was a guy?
- S. Yep. Possibly, yes. Well, she rode on off. I thought "Well, if you're gonna turn around and grin at least come up and introduce yourself. Don't be so chicken." But then again, I don't look that gay, so maybe she didn't know.
- R. Like . . .
- S. Like maybe if I was bigger and walked around real macho.
- R. Do some of the girls dress and walk masculine just to get attention, to say, look I'm gay?
- S. Yes. I think so. The first 2 girls did. One was notorious -- the one on the bike and one of her friends -- for going to some of the places around here like T.J.'s with a necktie on. I think that's a stereotype, done simply because there were so few women.
- R. Camp?
- S. Yeh
- R. Did you meet the girl again?
- S. Yes. She rode her bike up to the corner and waited for me at the intersection. When I got there she came down and introduced herself.
- R. When did it occur to both of you that both of you were gay?
- S. When she introduced herself she used two initials instead of a first name. I thought that that was a little macho. And she said something like "let me give you my name and address and give me a call sometime. We can go get a beer". Okay, I took it. Apparently, she had already written it down.
- R. So she had it all planned out?
- S. Oh, yeh. Very schemish.

- R A very accomplished cruiser?
S Oh yes, very efficient.
R Did you call her up?
S No.
R Did she call you up?
S No. I didn't give her my number or anything. I told her what my name was.
R Well, then?
S I happened to run across her on campus again. Pure coincidence. At that point that other friend was with her and they made some comment about a bar in Houston which really didn't register with me at that time cause I'd never been.
R Did they say it on purpose to . . . ?
S Oh, I'm sure. "Drop a name of a gay bar, and see how they react."
R Did you react?
S I didn't react to the name at all. I'd never been there and knew none of the names. I think I reacted to their expectations of a reaction from me.
R Had you had an idea that it was the name of a gay bar?
S I had an idea that it probably was. But I didn't know for sure. We did small talk for awhile. The next time I ran into them was at one of the organizational meetings of women's awareness.
R Was that organization stereotypically for gay women?
S I met two other gay women there. Later on, I met a few others at rough meetings.
R Why did you go to the meetings?
S At the time I was going through a crisis of breaking up with my lover and didn't care to get involved.
R Support?
S Support. I was into the feminist movement pretty heavy. I wanted to keep up with the women's movement. In a small town that's not easy and I thought that organization would be the best way
R Is it common for gay women to be feminists?
S That's hard to answer. I don't think so. It depends on your definitions of feminist. "Equal pay for equal work, equal promotion." Yes, definitely. Face it, gay women don't have a man at the head of the household. They support themselves. Of course they'd be concerned about job rights.
R Back to meeting other gay women, in this case through that organization . . . ?
S Pure happenstance. Sometimes after the meetings we'd go over to T.J.'s or someplace and have a drink before going home. It eventually turned out that there were seven gay women in that organization that would go and have drinks and maybe three or four heterosexual women.
R Were the heterosexual women aware that . . . ?
S Yes. They were very open minded.
R Were you aware that maybe 75 percent of those women having drinks were gay?
S Yes. But I didn't go for very long. The feminist movement died down and so did the organization. I didn't care for some of the purposes, that's why I quit, not for any other reasons.

- R And you kept up your ties with the girls you met there?
 S Yes.
 R Did the fact that the other girls were hanging around the four girls you already knew about have any thing to do with you realizing they were gay too?
 S I think so, "guilt by association." Innuendos in the conversations. Things like that. Even with the other women not gay there, it was a very relaxed thing.
 R So that's basically the way you've met people. You didn't have to relay on the "vibes" routine that much.
 S No, I was introduced to a lot of them.

005 - Female, 23 years old

- R How old are you?
 S 23.
 R Do you go to the University?
 S No.
 R Did you used to?
 S Yes.
 R What was your major?
 S Animal Science.
 R Did you graduate last year?
 S Yes.
 R Basically, what I am interested in is whether you can tell if someone else is gay. Can you?
 S Sometimes I can.
 R When you are able to, how can you tell?
 S If you run into them at a gay bar, you know they're gay.
 R What about in a situation that's not in a gay bar? If it's just out in a situation that you can't define as being gay?
 S Then it's harder, because I really don't go out looking for gay women.
 R Still, are you able to sometimes tell if someone is gay?
 S If the woman is out, active in the gay subculture, they pick up on the lingo and certain mannerisms and that makes it obvious to another gay that's also out.
 R Lingo?
 S Words that they use. Mannerisms.
 R Like what? Can you describe them?
 S The old standby, eye contact tends to be longer.
 R Is that true?
 S Yes, I think it is. Because the straight women that I know usually break eye contact sooner.
 R Have you used eye contact before in trying to find out if someone is gay?
 S Yes. That and a combination of other things. Like they'll say something or I'll say something that only another gay might possibly pick up on. Words, for instance.
 R Are those words or phrases dropped on purpose?

- S Definitely.
- R When you came up here, did you know anybody that was gay?
- S No. My freshman year here I didn't know anybody that was. I really wasn't specifically looking for gays.
- R Were you out then?
- S I was still coming out my first year up here. I'd known a lot about gays in Dallas and had associated with them and going to the bars and everything. When I came down here I was hesitant about being as open as I had been in Dallas.
- R Well, how did you meet the people here?
- S That was three years later. I'd been looking for other people for about three months. I went home (to Dallas) and somebody said, "Hey, there's a friend of mine that's in Vet school, you might give her a call". And all of a sudden it all came together at once. I gave her a call, met her and there was another girl in my class and like the next week she and I were sitting and talking and happened to have a mutual friend who was gay and that came out and all of a sudden it was "Let me introduce you to so and so" and so and so would say, "Hey, I just met . . ."
- R So it was by introduction?
- S Yes. And it was really strange for all of us had been here for three or four months and hadn't met anybody and then in a period of two weeks suddenly there was about a dozen of us gay women that we knew.
- R So you didn't meet people up here by chance, by running across them, etc. You were introduced or given names of people?
- S The one girl that had been in class with me, I thought she was gay. She was very butch and we got talking and we had a friend in common that was gay and she said "Are you?" and I said, "Yes, are you?" and she said "Yes, hurray".
- R You thought the girl was gay because she was butch looking. Is that what cued you in on her? She was the second person up here and you used the first name as a name drop?
- S Yep. And I was really hesitant even then to go up to someone even if she looked butch and doing anything because even three years ago there were a lot of girls up here from the country or farms who were very butch just because of that environment yet who were also very straight. I was very leery.
- R Could you tell the difference between a straight girl that looked butch and a girl that was kind of butch and gay?
- S No.
- R But you went on stereotypes?
- S Not really stereotyping. Gay women aren't butch. Not all the time. Some of them . . .
- R But if you see a butch woman you think she might be gay?
- S Not necessarily
- R So you don't even use the stereotype. But you said awhile ago that when you met that girl she looked butch and that's why you thought she was gay.
- S It didn't, with her.
- R What else about her?

- S There were other things. There was, like we had a class together, and an hour break and another class together and we'd sit together between classes just bullshitting about what was going on in class and, she'd been up around Dallas and we'd talk about places in Dallas. But there was this other girl who kept coming up all the time.
- R This was the girl who introduced you?
- S No. Another one, the girl from the class's lover at the time, though I didn't know this.
- R Did you know this other girl at all?
- S No. But she kept coming up and there was this certain look in her eyes, they'd kind of brighten up and the conversation between them was obviously more intimate. This other girl was feminine, not a fluff or anything, but just naturally feminine and they seemed very close. Some of the things they said, didn't fit for just friends or roommates, there was obviously a relationship there.
- R So when you were talking and this girl's name would come up, it would come up in a place where a guy's name would normally come up?
- S Most likely.
- R Did you all talk about guys that much?
- S No. Zero.
- R Was this something that might have cued you?
- S Yeah.
- R Did you intentionally avoid bringing up the subject of guys?
- S I just don't talk about things like that.
- R Well, is that a cue -- if you know a girl well and you don't speak about guys?
- S Pretty much so. Unless, like now, I know a lot of friends that are guys -- but they're all gay -- and I talk about them and one thing or another. Like at work, we'll talk about what we did last night and I'll say I went out with such and such a guy. But until this year I didn't know that many guys and so I didn't have anyone to talk about in such a conversation.
- R Is there anything different about gay women than about straight women that you might pick up on?
- S No.
- R Well, earlier you mentioned eye contact. When do you use it?
- S In situations like parties -- usually mixed, but there is a good chance that there are gay women there.
- R On whose part is there this intentional eye contact?
- S Both parts.
- R You letting them know you're gay?
- S You let them know and also you find out that someone else is gay. Just out of curiosity.
- R So if you were at a totally straight party and someone really looked at you would you take that as "eye contact"?
- S Possibly.
- R Has it happened to you?
- S Once.
- R Could you describe it?
- S I was at a, not a party, but a gathering of friends, and there were some good looking women there. I was just standing around, talking

- to some. One was there, just staring at me, well, I just started staring back at her.
- R Did she turn out to be gay?
- S I don't know. We stared at each other for awhile and then some friends of mine came up and started talking to me and we moved on, she vanished. I don't know.
- R Have you ever been to a gay bar?
- S Yes. Both a girl's bar and a mixed (guy's and girl's) bar.
- R If you saw someone you were attracted to at the bar, how would you go about her?
- S Never happened. I always go with a group of friends.
- R So you don't cruise?
- S What is your definition of cruising?
- R To me cruising has two different meanings. For sex or to just spot someone else or just to go up and talk to them. Just to know someone else is gay. What does cruising mean to you, just the sex aspect?
- S You can go out to pick up a trick or go out just to meet people or see who's gay and who's not. I've never been much for going up to strangers. I'd rather be introduced to somebody.
- R Is that so you won't make any mistakes?
- S No. Just basically shy.
- R Do you put any faith in what some call "vibrations"?
- S Some.
- R What are they?
- S Just a feeling you get that a person might be gay. Really, I think part of it is just sensitivity to another person.
- R Let's see you've been out for . . . two-three years?
- S Uh . . . (long pause).
- R How long have you been associated with gay people?
- S Since I was 16.
- R That's when it all congealed. That everyone I was running around with was gay and I could really care less. I liked them. I knew they were gay. I knew my two best friends were gay, lived together, never talked about guys, did everything together, very happy with each other. And one day it snapped . . .
- R Did you know what "gay" was?
- S I was becoming aware of it.
- R Did you know you were gay?
- S That's when I became aware that I was never attracted to guys. But to girls, female company. Around 16 I was becoming aware that there was such a thing as homosexuals and my friends were, though I didn't ask.
- R So you've been out for about eight years?
- S Yeh, don't remind me how old I am.
- R Yet when you came up here you were in your closet?
- S There weren't that many people up here. It's changed a lot since then.
- R So you lived a double life. Up here you were straight, but back home you were gay?
- S Yeh.
- R Did you date?

- S No, just ran around with friends, until I started to meet gay people.
- R Okay, well, thanks, that's basically all I wanted to ask. If you could tell when other women are gay? Did you have anything else to add?
- S I don't think so -- I have a couple of girls I know that are always out looking to find other gay women -- but it's never been a driving force to me to find out who's gay.
- R Would you almost describe it as an art?
- S Yes.
- R Developed by those who do go out. Thank you, I appreciate it.

006 - Male, 19 years old

- R You're 19 and how long have you been out?
- S Mmmh, socially since I was seventeen.
- R Socially, you mean other gay people or everybody?
- S Well, with myself, really -- I've had earlier experiences.
- R So, at 17, you accepted the fact that you were gay? Do you go to college?
- S Right.
- R Sophomore?
- S Right.
- R Your major?
- S Agricultural Economics.
- R Well, basically what I'm interested in, is whether you can tell if someone else is gay or not, by looking at them?
- S Yeh
- R You can?
- S On occasion.
- R On occasion? What type of occasion?
- S You just have to look at the person and know. I mean they don't have any distinct physical features, saying I'm gay.
- R What is it that says they are gay?
- S It's just the second sense, I guess.
- R So you just get this feeling this person's gay, you don't know what it is?
- S Right. No.
- R Try and think about it.
- S I don't know. I guess I just see characters that I've seen in gay people. Associate them or . . .
- R What kind of characteristics?
- S I don't know it's just . . .
- R I know it's kind of hard to . . .
- S It's hard to describe someone because it's just like anyone else, except there's, just have that feeling that they're different. Their,--maybe it's their, sometimes it's mannerisms, sometimes it's, you know the way they talk . . .
- R Mannerisms, what constitutes a gay mannerism?
- S It doesn't always -- you know their hands in the air, or they say

certain things and they're talking to the guy or some girl friend or something like that, very obviously.

R What about the less obvious?

S It's harder to tell.

R But, you still can tell?

S Yeh

R How?

S I don't know.

R But you do.

S I've really -- it's hard to say, someone, just look at them and say, "you're probably gay but" -- I don't know.

R When you came into this town did you know any gay people?

S No.

R How did you meet gay people?

S Well, I met some people in front of the Academic Building.

R Were you cruising?

S Not really. I was getting ready to go on that help session.

R Well, why were you at the Academic Building?

S To go to a help session.

R Did you know it was a gay cruising place?

S No, I didn't.

R Well, what turned it into a cruise session?

S Someone cruised me.

R How could you tell you were being cruised?

S Obvious glances in my direction on several occasions. Conversation build up around, built up to a tone, I could hear and detect.

R So, there was more than one person?

S Right, there was more -- I could detect, you know gay overtones. You know . . .

R Well, how did you react to all of this. I mean did you let on that you were gay or that you knew what was going on?

S I kind of giggled. I thought it was kind of funny.

R Did you giggle louder than you should have normally, in other words, so that they could hear you giggle?

S Yes.

R So you were letting them know that you knew what they were talking about?

S Yes.

R Could you tell if these people were gay otherwise?

S Not really.

R Not really?

S No.

R How'd you meet other gay people?

S I was introduced.

R By?

S My friend.

R By friend, the same person that you . . .

S Right. And then, they took me to Jess's. Somebody introduced me to everybody and I met more people.

R So you try to meet other people through other people?

S Right.

R Do you cruise a lot, or do you cruise ever?

S I do some. I don't know if . . .

- R What do you do when you cruise?
 S I think I'm very obvious when I cruise. I stare quite a bit.
 R Eye contact?
 S Uh huh
 R Do you try to get them to return the eye contact?
 S I do, but then I get nervous when they return it.
 R Besides your eye contact, how different do you act when you cruise?
 S That's hard.
 R Do you dress any different, do you walk any different?
 S No, I usually, especially in the dress, if I'm going out, if I'm going to the bar a lot of times, I'll wear what I wore to school that day. I don't . . .
 R What bar, do you mean gay bar?
 S Right. I'm not a person that really worries about what other people think of me as far as dress and way I look. I mean I won't shave or something like that. It doesn't bother me.
 R So, you don't dress either way to signal that you're gay?
 S I won't say that. I mean, it just depends on your mood. Sometimes I have some clothes that are more feminine looking than others, and at times, when I first came out, I tend to wear those more than others.
 R On purpose?
 S Uh huh. They made me look more chicken than I already was.
 R Do you go to any special place to cruise or do you just cruise anywhere?
 S If I see someone cute, I just cruise them.
 R Okay, describe when you see someone that's cute and you cruise them.
 S Oh, I just kind of stare at them a little, and try to get them to return the glance, and if they start to return the glance, I kind of look away and then I kind of continue.
 R Do you do this to anybody that you're attracted to?
 S Sometimes. Not just get people that I really think are gay. I think I will at times with people that are gay that I don't know so, I can know them, I don't mean . . .
 R I mean people that you already know that are gay?
 S Maybe, if I've never met them, I'll cruise them. But not just somebody I know you know.
 R Well, how do you know if this person is gay?
 S Say, I know as a fact that someone's told me I feel like you know, that somebody says you know, well, I look at a person and think, well, they're gay -- I'll try to cruise them a little, so I can meet people and help bring them out, you know socially, if . . .
 R What is it that makes you think that he's gay?
 S Oh, the way he walks sometimes, the way he's dressed.
 R Describe the dress.
 S Tighter fitting jeans, ah, it's hard to describe.
 R Is this just here at A&M?
 S No.
 R It's anywhere?
 S Well, it's . . .

- R Tighter fitting jeans?
S Tighter fitting jeans, like maybe, ah, real thin, you know body type shirts that stick close to your body.
R Do you think that's stereotypical of gay people?
S A little.
R You're not wearing that, you're wearing very loose fitting clothes, very normal looking clothes.
S Well, you can't always, sometimes I don't know, there's the type of person that surprises, look very butch and sometimes, they just try to look too butch -- and you know they like to have the mustache and the, you know, big muscles and you know, maybe that's when I look through someone like that it's more physical attraction than saying well, I think they're gay. If they're gay that's great.
R But you're not sure -- have you ever made any mistakes?
S Not really. I'm pretty careful about my cruising. If I'm going to be very obvious and try to come on to someone I'm going to be pretty sure they're gay.
R Okay, well, what is it that finally says, well okay, I know for a fact this person's gay, so I'm going to . . . ?
S If they start cruising me back, if . . .
R What do they do when they cruise you back?
S Normally, if someone in a situation like, they will cruise me, I won't be doing it.
R So, you don't usually initiate the cruising?
S Usually not.
R You're cruised first?
S Right.
R How do you sense that you're being cruised.
S You know that someone's looking at you, yet you don't know who. So then you try to figure out who it is, like, maybe the way they're people around you the way one person tries to stick closer to you than others, you're followed or they just look at you . . .
R Well, how's the contact finally made?
S Basically, it's the eye contact.
R Okay, you have this direct eye contact -- what brings you all together? If you all do make contact.
S Okay, well, I think as far as gay people go, a gay person can hold, hold direct eye contact much longer than another person does, it just happens, once you start staring at someone, you know that eye contact comes, you get that eye contact, compelling a staring contest, to see who breaks it.
R Is everything else besides what goes on involved in eye contact as being . . .
S Not really, for me there is not.
R Okay, but okay, you've made the eye contact -- how do you make . . . ?
S The physical contact?
R Yes. The verbal contact.
S Oh, I don't know. If you're in a store or something you can both accidentally pick up the same book or something and make a comment or you can say hello.
R You're staring at this person in a public area. When you're staring

- do you just get up and walk across and say hello?
- S No, you usually, you kind of move around and generally kind of cross paths and then you kind of cross paths again and then you cross paths again and get, you know each time the distance becomes less and less, until you know.
- R Finally you have to say hello?
- S Right, till finally say, you're sitting on the bench and he's sitting on the other end of the bench, you know.
- R What do you do, just turn your head and tell this guy hello?
- S Usually sit there for a little while and there's a little silence and someone will make some kind of remark like, you know, about the weather, or something else, like you want to do when you're meeting someone.
- R So, something that's so obviously trite it . . .
- S Right, just like what time is it or . . .
- R When you're wearing a watch?
- S Right, do you have the time or can't talk, you know.
- R So what you say is, you're making verbal contact but you're making it, you're just saying something that's really just unnecessary to say?
- S Right, you don't come up to somebody and say what are you doing? Do you want to go to bed? Or anything like that.
- R Why not?
- S Cause that's rude. Though you both may be thinking it, which usually I'm not. I'm not, if someone cruises me, I'm not the kind of person to just get up and go to bed with them.
- R But you go ahead and cruise, why?
- S It's an adventure, it's, curiosity?
- R To find out if the person is gay?
- S Uh huh, it's a game.
- R What's the prize?
- S I don't know. It's just a game to play. You play with yourself or with other people.
- R You don't recognize a cruise?
- S Sometimes I do. I'm pretty good at that, you know. If somebody, well, I don't know, may be it's the more obvious ones. In a bar, I'm much more susceptible to cruises than you know -- in a gay bar. Usually when I refer to a bar, it's a gay bar.
- R How much different is cruising in a public place you don't know, that's not a queer area? How much different is that from cruising in a gay bar or someplace that is definitely gay?
- S If you're in a gay bar you will be, will tend to be more directly, more direct, cruising and you will know probably be more closer and you won't try, you know -- In a public area you try to avoid the issue as long as possible just to make sure you're safe. In a private place, you know, in a gay bar or at a beach or something you're going to be a little open about it.
- R Because there's not the risk?
- S Yeh, the risk, because of the risk of being beaten up or something like that.
- R Okay, go back to the public area, what is it that vitally says that you are safe? What you've said is that given the eye contact . . .

- S We never know if it's safe or not.
- R But what is it that makes, you've given several of the necessary things, what is that final thing that says okay?
- S I don't know, maybe it's kind of raised eyebrow or something like that toward each other.
- R A raised eyebrow?
- S You know, kind of like . . .
- R Do something?
- S Yeh, like, you do something, but that isn't always safe either, because there will be heterosexuals who are very knowledgeable as to gay cruising methods and they will try to do it.
- R Do you think straights do that?
- S Not really.
- R Really just a . . .
- S Not so much as gay people. I don't know as far as cruising a gay person or cruising with a gay person, I think most heterosexuals get rather uptight when someone is looking at them, makes direct eye contact, they kind of tense up and they feel like, well we better move on, you know. They don't want to stick around and worry about it.
- R Well, have you ever made a mistake? Did you ever say, well this is cruising and this person is gay and do something about it and all of a sudden it turned out that this person is not gay?
- S No, but I know someone who has. They . . .
- R Who's this, I mean don't say . . .
- S There was a couple, gay couple, and they were in a large shopping mall and they were cruising this sixteen year old, and Rick was, he was quite friendly to them and they were carrying on a conversation and then after about 20 minutes, he asked him if he wanted to go home with him.
- R You mean the straight person was first?
- S No, the gay, this boy seemed like he was gay and just overly friendly towards these people and so, my friend probably made a proposition toward him and the kid ran over immediately to the mall security and told them.
- R And they got them in trouble?
- S No, they left, the mall security got there . . .
- R They'd all left?
- S Right. I don't know, the gay people are more worried about what they look like too and you can usually . . . gay people tend to primp and prime so to speak. Before they'll go anywhere, you know, if they're going out shopping, in Houston or something, they'll dress up a little more and do that little . . .
- R Dress up?
- S Yeh, maybe things like that, kind of looking a little better so they can, in case they're seen cause I know a lot of gay people say well, you never know you walk out the door and your next lover may be there.
- R Has being around gay people, or you know the gay world, whatever it's called, has that facilitated you recognizing other gay people?
- S What do you mean?
- R Has it given you a better sense, an awareness of who else might be gay?

- S Oh yes, oh yes, definitely
- R How so?
- S I don't know. I think when I first came out I was quite naive. I was. I came out through a tea room and that was the only way that I knew about cruising. I mean, was how I'd met people there, and then you know I could go through the little game stage outside, but other than that I hadn't done any cruising and, the first time that I went to a bar this guy goes "well if you want to go home with me why don't you just let me know".
- R He was a friend?
- S Right, the person that brought me out. I was very nervous about it and there was only one person that cruised me that night. Well, that I noticed.
- R That you noticed?
- S But, ah, I don't know, I was just kind of standing there and felt weird. I was very uptight about being there anyway and I know someone was kind of half staring at me and I think, once you return the look, then they're going to do it more and that starts the game again, and even if you really don't want to, sometimes, if you return the look then you're going to start meeting people more and more. They're going to be less apt to leave your area and meet someone else. Because you know if they're cruising you, they'll just kind of cruise you.
- R What is your definition of cruising?
- S I guess it's staring at, kind of a stare or maybe, I don't know it's a lot of people, like, for me it doesn't facilitate picking up people if that, it's more . . .
- R For sex?
- S Right. It's meeting people, you know, not really meeting people, it's just kind of a nervous feeling really, I don't like being cruised.
- R You don't?
- S Well, if they're someone I think is cute and interesting, well, fine but if there's somebody that I really don't, most of the time I don't care to see anyone anyway. I have a lover and that doesn't I really don't care to meet anyone else or have sex with anyone else.
- R But you cruise still?
- S I do to a certain degree. I don't do it to the degree, I mean my kind of cruising is more or less now, like well he's cut, gee that would be fund kind of give a half cruise and just kind of let it go.
- R Just to keep in practice?
- S Well, a little, it's just kind of like a guy looking at a good looking girl and saying gee, she's not you know, kind of following her with the eyes.
- R If you were to move to a big city, no, let's say, if you were to move to another town where you didn't know anybody straight or gay, how would you go about meeting some gay people?
- S I really wouldn't know. Ah, that's very hard to say because if you don't know someone, if you don't know anybody, I don't know how I would do it because here it's just by chance I heard someone, you know, I caught a cruise, if somebody was cruising me. I could do it but, I don't know.

- R So you'd rely on being cruised first?
 S Probably.
 R Is there any sign or anything in a particular public place that might be more popular for cruising than another place?
 S Tea rooms and large malls all tend to be cruising. But most of the time, tea rooms don't have the openly accepted, you know, people . . .
 R ??????????
 S Host, openly accepting gays. Don't frequent them that often, it's more or less the type crowd that is either by themselves are gay. There's two or three of them and they're older or else it's people that really don't want to admit to themselves that they're gay from my experience.
 R Or straight people that have homosexual ??????
 S Right, but other than that, parks tend to be cruisy.
 R Parks?
 S Yeh. Like people will just, I don't know, parks just, it's hard to tell in a public place if it's gay unless you know it's gay. Like you know, Hippy Hollow is gay in Austin, or Stewart Beach.
 R How do you know it's gay? How do you know Stewart Beach is gay?
 S Because people have told me as such. I've never been. I've been to Stewart Beach once and I didn't really know it that well -- you know it was just . . .
 R You didn't know it was gay while you were there?
 S Right.
 R Now you recognize it as being gay?
 S Uh huh, and ah, like Hippy Hollow. That's where you go to one section and everybody there is gay and of course, I was with someone who was gay and they told me this. There was lots of cruising going on. Well, there wasn't really, but there was more than in other areas. Not being much help am I?
 R Well, you've ?????????? insights. I'm primarily interested in cruising. How do you meet other people?
 S Mostly through other people, I don't know it's . . .
 R Mostly through other people?
 S I'm introduced.
 R Introductions? Formal introductions or what?
 S Well, this is so and so, or like, not really formal, just say someone's there and you're casually introduced, then you can speak but I don't like to just stand next to someone else and then start talking to them, after the person they've been talking to had gone off. Unless the person's really good looking, get overly excited or something.
 R So all the better looking a person, more of a chance you're going to take?
 S Right.
 R Well, I guess basically you've answered most of my questions.
 S To no avail I'm sure.
 R No, to my ?????????? and I appreciate it.
 S You're most welcome.

009 - Male, 22 years old

- R Listen, you're 22 years old right?
S Right.
R How long have you been out?
S Three, let's see, 3-1/2 years.
R Is that to anyone or just other gay people?
S The last I . . . the first time I started going out to the gay bars, up to February, would be about eight months, nine months. And that's absolutely everyone. I just don't care anymore who knows I'm gay, and ah, through certain of my political activities, everybody, all of my friends and most people who don't even know who I am know, well they've heard the name before.
R Did you know that you were gay before you came out here 3-1/2 years ago?
S Well, in a sense I knew I was, you know, attracted sexually to men and not to women. Not in the sense that I knew anything about gay life. Let's put it this way, I knew that I was homosexual before this but making a distinction between gay and homosexual I did not know I was gay, but I did know I was homosexual.
R Did you come out at home or did you come out here at school?
S Well, I came out a little, some friend of mine from high school, took me to the bar in San Antonio over Christmas, but at the time I wasn't going to A&M, I was going to another school. So consequently, I went to bars with them over the Christmas holidays a few times. We went back up to school and didn't do anything until the spring break when I came back and went out with the same friends of mine, and then went back to school.
R Uh huh, how did you meet them?
S I met them in high school, they were high school friends.
R So then it was several years before you knew they were gay, before they knew you were gay?
S Right. Ah, these friends of mine, came out, had come out during, well, okay, one friend of mine had a lover in high school and ah, the other two friends of mine, we were all friends, the other two came out while they were at the school during that first semester and decided that ah, I was a closet case that needed help, so they decided to help me and we all . . .
R Well, I mean how did you approach the subject?
S No, ah, it was the day after I'd come back from school, I'd just gotten into town and I called this one, I called John, one of my best friends in high school and he said that he was going to come over and we decided to go out and do something, and ah, we drove over to another friend's house who wasn't home and on the way back to my house we started discussing what we wanted to do and he suggested that we go to the local gay bar and I said alright it was fine, so we went back, got back to my house and I changed clothes and we went to the bar. On the way he told me I probably would see some other people I knew there, but he didn't tell me whom I would see. So, I got to the bar and I ran into Charlie and Ricky, two other good friends of mine, and they were probably more wrecked than I was, seeing me. They weren't expecting me to show up. John had not

told Charlie or Ricky that he was bringing me, you know so . . .

R What do you mean by wrecked?

S They were very surprised and somewhat upset, at first.

R Why would they be upset? If they were gay . . .

S Well, they weren't sure that I was gay, you know it was just . . .

R You know it upset them to find out that you were?

S I'm sorry, what?

R It upset them to find out that you were?

S No, it upset them that they ran into me. As I understand it, what upset them was that they didn't know that I was coming, and it surprised them and they didn't exactly know how they were going to handle it. But it took about ten minutes to get over it.

R This is the reason why they were taken back?

S Yeh, that's a pretty good explanation. They were just, Charlie was just very, very surprised. Ricky was a little bit more than surprised because, as Ricky walked into the bar -- Ricky is black and as Ricky walked into the bar, ah, we were sitting at a little table, right off, just off the entrance. Charlie and Johnie and I were sitting there drinking, ah, as Ricky walked into the bar there were these three black drag queens standing right by the entrance and as he walked in, they all started whistling and waving at him and hooting and hollering, so Ricky was also a little bit embarrassed. Cause right after he passed them, then he saw Charlie, Johnie and I. And he had sort of expected to see Charlie and Johnie there, but he didn't expect to see me there. So . . .

R Are other universities known to be gay?

S Not exactly. That's another strange thing, a good friend of mine there, the people that I ran around with most, none of them were gay. You know, I know that, ah, one friend of mine I thought might be gay, because after we got back, we got talking about strange things we have done, and he happened to mention that he went to a bar called the River Queen, in Madison, Wisconsin and we got to laughing and talking about that, so, I thought ~~mmmh~~. I didn't find out he was gay until ah, after I had transferred away from that school and had gone back for a friend's wedding the following January. I was staying with Pete and then we got to talking about it and both of us admitted to each other, yes, that we were both queer.

R You thought he was gay because he talked about a place called the River Queen?

S No, it's just that he, ah, in getting, well sort of, just sort of the sixth sense, that somebody might be queer. I mean, I never said anything to him. I personally never had the nerve. I would, at first I was not embarrassed, but just trying to be very cautious, ah, I felt very strange because this particular school was ah, very similar to A&M, in that it was very butch and very male oriented, very sports oriented. And gay lib, they were trying in the fall to organize a chapter of Gay Lib, and there was a lot of people screaming and hollering about it and then, nothing more was ever said. So I wasn't exactly sure how people would react and I wasn't really that sure of my friends to know how they would take it and I wasn't sure of myself to be able to just have the nerve to come

out and say, "I'm queer". So nobody ever really said anything, one way or the other about it. By the time I got back the following January I was secure enough in myself to be sure what I was doing, and so I didn't mind, you know, in fact Pete and I were . . . It was right before this guy's bachelor party -- the bachelor party was over at Pete's house and Pete and I had tapped a keg a little earlier, while we were getting everything ready, so by the time the party started we were already pretty well taken care of.

R Would you tell me a little bit about the sixth sense that you were talking about that you mentioned?

S Well, it's, it's kind of hard to describe, other than, because being gay involves ah, participating, usually pretty heavy in a subculture. You know, there are certain mannerisms and certain ways of dressing and things of that nature, that most gay people have in common. Or a lot of people have in common at least. And subconsciously, if you're gay and you know what you're looking for or if you've been around gay people enough to where, ah, you're familiar with those things then inevitably, you know, if you're involved in the gay subculture, those things carry over into your just normal everyday habits. Even if it's just some little word that happens to be popular, like okay, good thing. Not too long after I came out it became very, everybody, everybody, was calling each other "honey" and it was "honey" this and "honey" that -- "honey". Ah, every once in a while, somebody that wasn't watching themselves very closely would, it'd slip out or something -- you just learn to pick up on little things like that and you kind of ah, your mind just sort of clicks and you think well, maybe, you know, but usually it's not anything so definite that you're absolutely sure if someone is gay, and just think well, there's that possibility.

R Well, you've mentioned several things like know what you're looking for. What do you mean by that?

S Well, if you know the little things that most gay people do. Alright, you know like the speech patterns or the way people are dressing, the way people dress, those kinds of things. In other words, if you know what those things are and being gay is no different than anything else in that, that ah, certain things are fashionable. At that time, within that particular little subculture and most gay people pick up those fashionable things and go ahead and incorporate them into their own personal life styles to a certain extent.

R Like you were talking about speech. If somebody was trying not to be obviously gay they wouldn't be using words like "honey" and stuff like that. Wouldn't they be on guard not to use that?

S Usually yes, but like I said, every once in awhile when I was, usually very, very adamant about not ah, being very careful about watching what I said and how I said it and all those kinds of things. But every once in a while I'd get carried away or become distracted, you know. It usually happens, it's usually noticeable like, at least with me, I found I usually did it when I'd been really heavily involved, say like when I'd go home for Spring break and I was really involved in the going out to the bars and running around with gay people and all that kind of thing. Then

I'd come back when I was home, or something like that, you know. I'd just keep on doing it -- and I have -- you'd have to make a real conscious effort not to. And you can. I don't know, you just sort of pick up on things like that.

R You mentioned dress, so standard type of dress . . .

S Again, it's like I said, it's nothing, it's nothing definite. It's nothing that you can say that all gay people wear low rise blue jeans or something like that. You know, the ah, as a rule, not as a rule, ah, generally speaking, usually, ah, gay people tend to be rather meticulous about what they wear.

R Are you talking about gay people in general or gay men in particular?

S Gay men in particular. For gay women I think that there is another, again, there's another little set of things, of things you wear, of things you do, ways you act. Okay, so I'm not quite as, I'm not as involved with that part of it. It's all part of, you know, the cruising process. Right, you know everybody dresses a certain way, depending on how you feel best and what, based also on what other people are wearing and ah, what seems to be fashionable at the time, what seems to go over big, and ah, you just kind of continue on with that, that thing . . .

R Can you give me some examples about dress?

S Okay, ah, it was my experience, okay when, it was a couple of years ago, not that long even. Yeh, I guess it was a couple of years ago when the ah, ah, nylon type, you know, real tight fitting, the knit type shirts came out, it was knit shirts, were just unbelievably popular with gay people in the bars. You could go into the bars and people would be wearing knit shirts or that type of shirt, that sort of deco type print with ah, on a nylon kind of thin, sleazy type of fabric and they just became very, very popular.

R So it's kind of like . . .?

S Now those things kept carried over, now you know, right after they became very fashionable for everybody to wear them, but oddly enough when everybody else started wearing them you could walk into any bar and see thousands of people dressed in those sleazy kind of shirts. All the gay people started wearing cotton shirts, khaki, and those kinds of things.

R So, the way of dress is a carryover of the way people dress in the bars?

S Yeh

R What about mannerisms and stuff, you mentioned mannerisms?

S Uh yeh, again mannerisms. Okay, that just goes sort of, go back to the way people carry themselves, more than anything else you know uh, I think in a bar situation, gay people get into the habit of remaining somewhat aloof. You know, you kind of carry yourself as being, you're always, you, most people in the bars seem to be very conscious of their appearance, and that includes not only the way they dress but also the way they walk, how they carry themselves, how they look, are they standing up straight, you know, everything is done with a certain amount of flair, that I feel a lot of times you don't see, I mean in other people. I think gay people, just as a matter of habit, more or less, just start, they just do it unconsciously, you know, when they get into the thing.

- R Well, you were talking about the sixth sense. Picking up on things and you said coming from dress, mannerisms and things like that,
- S it's almost like your sixth sense is, depending on the stereotype? No, stereotype, the way I conceive of the stereotype, is being uh, all gay people are "nellie" and ah, swish around with very little brisk, you know, and that kind of thing, that's stereotypical.
- R If you saw somebody like that would you automatically assume they were gay?
- S No. Because there's nothing about it. The only definite way to prove somebody is gay is either for them to tell you or for you to know someone that's gone to bed with them, or for them to have gone to bed with you. I mean that's the only concrete way of knowing that a person is gay. Everything else, it's sort of establishing . . . see you come into the problem, in our society people are assumed, everybody is naturally assumed to be heterosexual, right? The presumption is that people are heterosexual. When you are in a classroom or any kind of public environment like that, the natural assumption is that everybody there is heterosexual. And consequently, if you are gay, then what you have to do, what you do is watch out for these little things that you see within the gay sub-culture. To see if you can spot the people that might be gay. You know, that there is that possibility, a lot of times you know you are totally wrong. Ah, there are, and this is going back to a stereotype, but there are effeminate men who are totally heterosexual and there are gay people who are not effeminate in the very least. You'd never suspect them of being gay. So that there's no steadfast rule or anything that, that . . .
- R So in essence what you're doing . . . ?
- S The easiest way to find a gay person is to go to a gay bar or something.
- R It sounds like what you're looking for is . . .
- S Including . . .
- R A carryover from . . . ?
- S Things that you might see in a gay bar, right. In other words, in another situation, you're looking for things you would see in a totally gay situation. Uh, things seen in a totally gay situation, you're looking for carryovers, into what is typically a heterosexual situation. And when I say looking for, it's not to say that every time I'm out someplace I'm looking for "queers", you know trying to find gay people that's just not true. It's just that ah, if you are looking in a heterosexual environment, mainly A&M, that's the kind of things, that you know, you pick up on. You know it's not very, it's not very easy for me to pick gay people at A&M. That's not, there's no bars and if you happen to converge into certain other places that . . .
- R Such as?
- S Such as the tea rooms and that kind of thing. Then, if you happen to verge into those places then you just kind of, it's all by chance. Either you meet them in a bar, someplace else, or you just kind of chance onto it.
- R How did you meet people up here at all? How did you run into each other?

- S I ran into a, I ran into a guy that was in one of my classes, at a gay bar in Austin. And we recognized each other and even though we couldn't remember each others name, we knew we were in the same, we knew we had a class together. And so we ended up going over saying hello, we introduced ourselves and he invited me to a party and I met other people and it just kind of mushroomed from there.
- R So you didn't meet other people by cruising?
- S No.
- R What is that cruising process you were telling me about? When do you consider cruising the gay people?
- S I consider cruising to be really boring. What it boils down to, okay, in what kind of situation?
- R Outside a gay bar?
- S Outside of a gay bar?
- R Or anything that is definitely gay.
- S Outside of anything that's definitely gay? Okay, uh,
- R Something specifically gay.
- S Well, it's very hard to say because I've never picked up a person. You know, I've never established the fact.
- R You never cruised?
- S No. Cruised in the sense that I've watched somebody, you know, and said he looks like he's queer but never gone over and started talking to that person and established the fact that they were queer and we go up and go to bed together or just become friends, because we both figure one is gay. No, I've never done that.
- R So the difference between different types of cruising is cruising a gay bar or some places that are gay, where you're looking for what, sex?
- S Yeh, usually. In a gay bar or anything that's well, again there's sort of a pattern. Some places are specifically sex oriented. Right to the point where almost nothing else matters, ah, bookstores, tea rooms, that kind of thing, and people there are usually there specifically for sex. I don't like those kind of places. I've been to a bookstore once and it absolutely grossed me out. I've never been to a tea room, I just avoid it, because the people there are just concerned with, their whole concern is getting their rocks off, you know, period. The bar is a little bit different situation in that a lot of people there, even though they're looking, probably looking, possibly looking for sex or for a sex partner. There's also a lot of people that are there just to meet friends or their there with friends, or just there generally to have a good time. So that the bar is not strictly a sex oriented type environment.
- R When you cruise in a bar, you are cruising for sex?
- S Yeh. I mean you're not cruising for a, you're not cruising for an acquaintance, or a friend.
- R We were talking about cruising in the bars. Tell me about cruising in straight, nongay settings. Are there two types, cruising for sex and just cruising to get to meet people, or just . . .?
- S Well, most of the time in a nongay setting, it's cruising, ah, like just sort of watching somebody, "he looks pretty or he looks like he's gay" or something like that.

- R Is there anything you use to pick out, you know, like little clues that you pick up that might . . .
- S Yeh, but usually that's not, you know, to go over and pick a person up and ask if they want to go home. I mean, I guess some people do that but I don't. It's risky business.
- R How so?
- S Well, if your little signals are wrong and you walk up to somebody and say "Hi, do you want to go home and fuck". It could be rather embarrassing.
- R Well, how can you be totally sure that someone is gay? People you went up to?
- S Well, again that's ah, a sort of personal thing. A lot of people, ah, do that ah, people that are, some people that I know that are very outgoing and all, just walk up to somebody and start talking to them. Eventually, it is somehow established that ah, one and or both of them are gay, something like that. I personally don't get off to that kind of thing. You know, I'm not, I'm just not that hung up. I won't say hung up, but I just really don't care that much about finding, discovering other gay people. You know, ah, to run around in a straight environment and see if I can spot the ones that are gay and then go out and see if I can establish whether or not they are gay. I just don't. I don't see the reason for it, or need in it. I just don't do it. You know, it's the type of cruising that is sort of, like with a friend, somebody is gay, you know we're just kind of watching people.
- R There's no way to establish for a fact that that person is gay?
- S No, not unless it's one of those three-way, you've been to bed with them, somebody you know says they've been to bed with them, and then I suppose that's debatable, and then, of course the last one, that person tells you you've been to bed with them. Yeh, that's proven. Those are the only ways that I can think of to establish someone is gay. I mean you certainly can't establish the fact that someone is gay just by looking at them. Anymore, than if you really think about it, that you can establish the fact that a person is heterosexual just by watching him. There's no way to spot a person's sexuality by, I mean by . . .
- R Well, just say you're out there with a friend and you thought he was gay or queer or whatever . . .?
- S Well, we're not saying the person is, the idea is not that we know for a fact that person is, he looks to us like to might be . . .
- R You know in all fun, you're sitting there and there is something about that person that marks him for you as being gay?
- S Yeh, but you know like I said, there's nothing to assure that that person is.
- R What are those little things, like signals to you that says, besides dress or mannerisms or something like that . . .
- S That would be the only way I could think, that's the only way I could think, that's ah. It strikes me as though you are trying to get me to say there's some way to spot the "queer", and there's not. Even in the bar there's no way of knowing if the person is gay. When you really get down to it, for a long time -- not for a long time. One summer when I was in San Antonio. I mean I'm definitely

gay, right. Ah, well at least I say I am, ah, I was, ah, had a girl friend and we enjoyed going to the bar, gay bar in San Antonio. So we went and most of the time that summer I didn't enjoy going out in San Antonio that much. And ah, so when I was at the bar I was usually there with her, this girl. And then one night I did go by myself, she couldn't go and I decided to go out, so I went by myself. And a lot of people that I'd met with Jeanine, came up to me and said, "oh are you gay?" And I said "yes" and they said -- you know, like sort of surprised, they would ask, you know, if they didn't know. And ah, well, we just thought you were another straight guy that was visiting the gay bar. And there are a lot of straight guys that do go into gay bars.

R So a gay bar is not all that unproblematic, when you assume that everybody there is gay?

S Right, I mean you really shouldn't assume that. Most people do.

R Well, the consequences aren't really all that great. If you were to go there and cruise that guy, he's not going to beat you up or

...

S Right. If he's in the bar, then it's already established that he doesn't care.

R So it's problematic only so far as there might be a chance that he might be straight. If the tables are turned outside, is there a chance maybe that one of the people might be gay?

S Right.

R In the bar if someone might be straight?

S Might be straight. Right, yeh, it's sort of ah, . . .

R In a kind of wrap-up, how would you say in general, gay people meet other gay people? Beyond going to the bars, going over to friends houses, or where other gay people are, say in a small town where a gay person would show up, you would tell him, how would you go about meeting other gay people?

S That's a really good question. I don't know that I can even say because, first of all, I'm from a large town, so I don't know that I could really answer that. I would assume that it would be strictly by chance. Okay, I assume that it would be sort of the same type of thing as it is here at A&M, in that it's by chance. Okay, you either happen to meet someone, it's, the only way I could imagine it happening, is to somehow or another to meet one person that was gay and then from there it goes on. Unless there's . . .

R You kind of assume though, that everyone becomes or enters the gay subculture?

S What do you mean enters the gay subculture?

R Starts associating with other gays more and more.

S No, not really, not necessarily. But your question was "how would a person that is gay meet other gay people in a small town?"

R What you said was that they meet other gay people by chance. You know, that one person turned to other gay people.

S Okay, my assumption in that case would be that if the person didn't want to meet other gay people at all, then there wouldn't have been a need. He wouldn't have been looking to meet other people. Okay, if that person didn't want to get involved in that subculture at least to some extent, then there would have been, your whole question

would never have come about, he just, he would totally avoid the subculture completely. Would avoid any place that he could possibly meet another gay person. That would be my assumption. That's what I would do if I were in that situation. Right, if I was gay and wanted to block it out in my mind, did not want to meet, have anything to do with the gay subculture, then I would just avoid it. I'd avoid anything that I thought might have, ah, might put me in a situation where I would meet other gay people, that I would know. A lot of people do that, I mean, ah. Then again, there's a lot of people that go to the bars, associate with gay people at the bars and don't associate with them any place else. Or people that know that particular, people that say, know a particular bathroom, you know where gay people go for sex. So they go there and have sex and never meet the other person or anything like that, and disappear. You know, that would be the only contact that they would have with gay people.

R How about cruising and things like that, tea rooms, are usually in a straight setting, and it's . . . ?

S Well, again, that's, I can't say from personal experience, because I don't go to tea rooms. Okay, I don't . . .

R But you know people who do?

S Yeh, and I would say as far as finding somebody in a tea room to have sex with, that's not problematic at all, because usually word gets around, and straight people avoid it, and it's no big deal. The problem comes in, in that when word gets around that that's what's going on at that particular tea room, you take an awfully big chance of the place being raided by the plice. You could get into a lot of legal hassels.

R Let me ask you something else too. Okay, given the example of that certain famous building on campus, that's well known, if you were walking around there and you saw someone gay around there, would you assume that person might be gay?

S No, because there's a lot of people that walk around on campus that aren't going to that particular building for that particular reason. Ah, in fact, people that I know that go to that particular building, or that are seen around that building, usually it's more of a, from what I understand, it's more of a process, you know where you walk around and you notice other people walking around and you walk around some more and you notice that peron is walking around some more and then you know, finally, somebody says hello and then somebody else says hello and you start talking and eventually it becomes evidently apparent as to what the two parties are doing there. Um, that's usually the way, as far as I'm concerned, ah, I personally don't consider, I personally feel that sex in a public place is repulsive, and that doesn't . . .

R Not all sex comes out of that place is public, you know a lot of . . . ?

S Oh, people meet each other and then go home. Yeh, I suppose. Okay, to me just the whole idea of that, it's just ah, in a certain way, kind of surreptitious. I don't know, I just don't like the whole connotation of it.

- R In the absence of bars, what are the options?
S There's not much of one. I mean, if, I personally would rather take the two hours to drive to Houston, to go to the bar than to go to this building.
- R What about in the case where somebody is just coming out? They don't know about the bars.
S I mean, well that's, you're getting involved in politics.
R No, I'm not.
S I could give you a way for a person that's just coming out to meet another gay person on this campus without having to bring him to the tearoom.
- R How's that?
S Call the gay student services.
R How do they find about that?
S The number has been published in the paper and, ah, hopefully, the University will recognize the organization soon, or at least hopefully the law suit will go through soon. It's my feeling that . . .
- R Okay, there's an opportunity now, before that, before that was there.
S Well, that's the whole reason the organization was established. It is my feeling . . .
- R The organization is not just for people to meet each other is it?
S Well, no, no, what I'm saying is that the idea is that to me and to a lot of people, both gay and straight, the idea of meeting people in the particular building that we were discussing, is rather, well repulsive isn't exactly the word, it's just rather aggggh. Okay, that's not any better word and you'll never be able to spell that. Repulsive to a certain extent, and the idea is, for the group of people that don't like that, don't like that particular idea, people that are gay, that are secure with themselves. Okay, for somebody that is just coming out, since there is no place else to go in town, if there is an organization or something else there that a person just coming out, just getting into A&M, if there's a way for that person, a place to call just to say hello, know that there's another gay person kicking around without having to go into an environment that's pretty much explicitly for sex. I mean, people that are at this particular building aren't there just to find friends you know, and they usually, it is my understanding, that whether it's at the building or someplace else, sex is the thing that comes out of it you know. And there's no reason in forcing a gay person whether he's already out of his closet or he's not sure yet whether he's gay or not, there's nothing forcing him into that kind of environment. You know the person should have the option of just being able to talk intelligently with another person. You know, nothing more than just a discussion of you know, this is what's going on in my head, what's been your experiences, keeping sex totally and completely out of it, because I really don't think -- there's a lot of problems with coming out and sex as much as possible should be left out of it. If that makes . . . To me it's bad to force a person, just coming out into a sexual environment, you know when they are sort of confused and when they're not sure of what's going on, when they're not sure of what's going on, when they're not sure what's

happening. Because there's no place else in this town that, there's no other way to meet people, the only thing they can do is go to a sexually oriented environment. And to me that can be really psychologically disturbing to the person. And hopefully, a gay organization on this campus will supply that person with just another human being to talk to intelligently, in a group can provide referrals with professional counseling because a lot of people need it, you know. Without that organization the only thing you've got is a tea room and to me the choice . . . I'd certainly much rather have a person, meeting some people and just realizing that people exist, that gay people exist to help this person to tell him, "okay, this is what it is. And recommend a professional if that person so desires. Rather than forcing that person into a sexually oriented environment.

R Well, thank you very much. Is there anything else that you'd like to add?

S No, ah, this interview might be rather hard to keep my identity concealed, but I don't care, so don't worry about it.

010 - Female, 24 years old

R Let's see, how long have you been out?

S Since . . .

R Which has been?

S Four months.

R How long have you been out to other gay people?

S Two, two and one half years.

R Two-two and one half years? Before that did you know that you were gay or did you have suspicions, or were you straight?

S I assumed I was straight. I knew that, with the issue coming up previous to my ever getting involved personally, was my brother, who had a roommate who was.

R How did you meet other gay people?

S Through my lover.

R Through your lover? How'd you meet your lover?

S Uh huh, my wife.

R How'd you meet your lover?

S Going to school.

R How'd you meet her in school?

S Ah, it was an all girls school and they had what they termed a big sis, big sister program, in which within each dormitory the upper classmen would, ah, put down one to five people, I believe, or 1-3 people whom they would like as their little sis and the underclassmen would do the same. Choose so many girls from the dormitory who were upperclassmen and then the housemother would try and match up the names. Some of the larger dorms had to do it different. But that's how our dorm did it and we got to know each other first as friends and things just evolved.

R She was already gay? Well, did you know that you were gay before that?

- S No, I didn't. As a matter of fact, I even denied it up until the very last minute.
- R Did she know that she was gay?
- S Uh huh. I think she referred to herself as bisexual. As to having any other lovers, I didn't know of any, or she didn't let me know of any previous female lovers.
- R So you met other gay people through her?
- S Friends of hers.
- R Well, how do you go about meeting other gay people?
- S Before I got to know the call signs it was just, ah, one friend knowing some other friends and going to parties or going over to their houses or their living facilities, visiting, that kind of stuff.
- R What did you mean by call signs?
- S The, some of the characteristic traits.
- R Such as?
- S Ah, for the females, more or less, acting mannish, not the total feminine look. This was influenced more because, these are the first women that I ever saw out publicly, like at the gay bars or such. They assumed mannerisms characteristic of males, as opposed to being ah, the feminine look. I'm sure if I lived up North it probably would have been the exact opposite. That's my assumption, I've never proven it. Somehow I imagine . . .
- R So you kind of go by a stereotype?
- S Sometimes until there, ah, came across some of the ladies in some of the bars in Texas as well as some friends, local friends that are ah, not totally butch, they're more feminine which has altered my outlook towards them.
- R Can you tell if another girl is gay just by . . . if you're to see them?
- S No.
- R You can't?
- S No, not on an individual basis. I would never make that assumption.
- R Does it cross your mind? If another female is gay?
- S Not unless I'm either in a gay bar or see her in a gay bar or see her with someone whom I know is. Then it crosses my mind whether or not she is. The question arises.
- R But if you see a girl by herself, just out in public with these call signs . . . ?
- S No, because there's many females who aren't gay and just have a tomboy type outlook on life and besides, I've proven myself wrong many times like that. So I quit doing it.
- R So you make the assumption cause somebody fits the stereotype?
- S If I'm working with a person or if I'm in association with a person for a set amount of hours during a week and get to know the individual, I will notice mannerisms and have upon one occasion, made the minimal assumption that they both were and found out later that one of them is now and the other one, a very close friend of hers is very anti.
- R So?
- S So it just, it affected me in that when I first got to know the one that is now socially outside of a work situation she wasn't.

She liked to associate, she was never afraid of us, of any of her friends that she later found out to be gay. But she wasn't then gay, and I do not know now and I never will know if it was that she just became gay.

R Oh, she did become gay?

S Because of her association with gays, in the fact that she fit the niche, adjusted very well to these new friends.

R So, in a sense you really weren't wrong?

S I wasn't wrong and I wasn't right. But I don't like, in viewing people's lives, I don't like making these judgements and, ah, it segregates.

R Are these games, not games but types of rituals that you all might go through in a public setting, a non gay setting to meet each other? Let's say that you were cruising, just walking around, and happen to see another girl and you thought maybe she might be gay, you weren't sure?

S I wouldn't know, I just, I don't cruise. So, I don't pay any attention, really.

R What happens if you see a girl in the company of a girl that you know is gay? How do you go about asking or finding out if she is?

S I'm sorry, could you repeat the question?

R If you see another girl in the company of a girl that is gay, how do you go about confirming the fact that the girl is or is not gay?

S I ask my friend.

R You don't ask her?

S No.

R What about in a bar? In some bars, you know, there are a lot of straight girls that go.

S I'd watch the girl, see who she's with, if she's with some people then I'd watch her actions. If she's ah, if she's with a group of all females sitting at the table then, ah, I'd more or less make the assumption she was and then, continue to observe and if she danced a slow dance, I would know for sure that she was. By the same token, if ah, by observation the lady seemed to be at a table that was mixed, but if she catered more to the males of the table, then I would have strong hesitations about making any assumptions and if I did make an assumption, it would be that she was just a, ah, friend of some gays.

R When you first came up here how did you meet the other girls?

S Through my lover. She'd already met some people here in town. And by meeting one it grows into many.

R Is this the same lover that you met in the all girls school?

S Yes.

R How did she meet the people?

S Ah, I believe the first person that she met in this town, she met, it was a girl that she was in a class with and they had both been assessing each other during their classes, and finally one day they, ah, met in the ladies room and ah, the other party asked my lover if she would like to have a cup of coffee. She didn't drink coffee, she said yes and they had coffee and things went from there. They got a house in which they were roommates and this is where I entered the scene. And ah, ah, then ah, that girl moved out. I think she had already known some people that then, her new friend had known

some people in the town that were, and she introduced my lover to them and then there was a party thrown in, which the password to get into the party came to be known as, you knock on the door and they say who are you, what do you want. The password got to be "I know (the lady's name)", and this allowed her to go into the party, because apparently most of the males there knew the lady and they ah . . .

R This is quite interesting?

S What?

R The fact that there was a code to get into the party.

S That's the only time I've ever known it to be in this town, but it did, it did. This was more or less almost three years ago. I think it'll probably be three years the beginning of the year, because my lover didn't know any of the other people in this town, she only had acquaintances with these two females, three females. Oh, that's how she got to know one other person. She had known some people from her home town and when they told, found out that she was going to school down here, they told her to look up this lady who was also going to school here, and ah, she might have introduced her to the other person. I'm not sure where this third person came in, but it was somehow a connection with these other two females that she knew, but anyway, it's basically by word of mouth.

R So basically the way you meet other people, being that you don't cruise, is by either seeing them with someone else and then asking someone if they are or being told by someone else that they are gay?

S Uh huh, Yes. I do look, it's just I don't cruise. I don't go out with the set intention of ah, finding a partner.

R You know but you don't see a girl and wonder "is she gay"?

S I, I'm trying to train myself not to, the same as I'm trying to train myself not to look at a black and say they're black, or a Mexican and say they're Mexican.

R But still you do have that tendency to . . .

S We all do, we're raised in America, Anglo Saxons.

R Okay, well then, I guess that's all we need to do. I appreciate it.

S You're welcome.

011 - Male, 19 years old

R Okay, you've been out since you were thirteen and that's when you had your first lover?

S Uh huh

R And ever since then you've considered yourself gay?

S Yes.

R When did you start hanging around other gay people?

S When I was seventeen.

R Is that when you moved up here or was this back at home?

S Home, that's when I started going to gay bars.

R How did you meet the other gay people that you started to hang around with?

S My best friend was gay that I grew up with.

- R Was this your lover?
S Oh, no, we was just good friends, and one night we decided to go where they were and then we went to one.
R Gay bar?
S Gay bar and just started going ever since on Bourbon St.
R When you moved up here to Houston, how did you meet the other gay people that you know and that you hang around with?
S Found out where a bar was and I went, and I made friends the first night and through them I met other people and got to know everybody and everyone knows me in the bar.
R Have you ever met gay people outside of the gay bar, in what would be a predominantly straight setting?
S What do you mean by that?
R Well, in a gay bar, you know someplace that you can take for granted as being gay, is one thing, but like when you're shopping, where there are straights, you don't know who's gay and who's straight. Have you ever met someone like that?
S Oh yeh, I've met people like that, that looked at me and then they come and talked with me, mostly pick-up tricks.
R So this is cruising then, this is when you are cruising or someone else is cruising you?
S They were cruising me.
R How can you tell when someone is cruising you?
S They look they give you.
R What do you mean by the look?
S It's either a "what is it look" or it's "I like it look". It's a funny, you know, "go to Hell", strange look on them and then when they like it, they have that real nice look where you can tell and all you do is just look back.
R Can you describe that look, though, or what differentiates it from just other looks, just other "go to Hell" look, or something like that?
S They stare at you when they like it.
R Staring, in other words, they're looking at you for a long period of time?
S Uh huh, with just a smile and their eyes look really nice, and they're looking at you with the "go to Hell" look and they're still staring, but the expression on their face . . .
R The "go to Hell" look, now that would be somebody that's straight looking at you?
S Uh, or gay, just you know, that's turned off to you, that don't like you.
R Okay, so they stare at you for awhile, and smile, you know and everything, how does it proceed?
S Usually, we just are shopping. This doesn't happen a lot, this just happened a couple of times, and then went down, you know I'm leaving, and they meet you in the parking lot.
R You mean, they just walk up to you and they say hello?
S I smile and he smiles and then usually I'll wave and he'll wave and then I'll ask him his name and then usually he'll stop and ask what I'm going to be doing and then I invite him over, if he wants to come over and then he comes, usually they come over and we trick.

- R It's very straight forward then, right?
 S Uh huh
 R What's the name of the place where you do this at, is it a place where there's a lot of gay people?
 S Nope, it's usually, the guys usually ----- or straight, that's never done it before.
 R Is this like at the Galleria?
 S Uh huh
 R But the Galleria is known to be . . .
 S A pick-up thing?
 R Yeah, so it's not that problematic? What about, are there any other places where the . . .?
 S Stores.
 R Shoe stores?
 S Grocery stores.
 R These places aren't considered pick-up places?
 S No. Brazewood, around in the southwest part of Houston, Bellaire and all places where I used to live.
 R And those aren't considered pick-up places, but you could still meet gay people that way? And you'd still cruise for them?
 S I didn't consider the men gay that I picked up. I've never seen them in the bars. They were just horny men. I mean they were straight or bisexual. There might, being a straight, they'd look at me and I was so feminine and, ah . . .
 R Do you consider yourself feminine?
 S To a certain extent?
 R What about, can you tell if, just like walking down a street or seeing somebody in a restaurant, or in the stores, if, can you tell by looking at them if they're gay?
 S Usually nine out of ten times I can.
 R Nine out of ten times you can?
 S I always could.
 R Well, how do you do that?
 S I don't know, it's these vibes, like I walk in somewhere, usually they can know, they know I am by looking at me. And I just look at them and these weird vibes come from in me.
 R How do, how would you describe those vibes?
 S I, it's just a feeling, by looking at 'em, they're looking at me and usually they try to turn or hide, or if they know me, they holler and say hello.
 R I mean if you know them, then you know they're gay?
 S But if not knowing them and they don't want to be known, they've got this like, haughty look. They'll look at you and then turn away like they don't want to be seen, and then usually they are. I see them later.
 R What is it that sets off these vibes?
 S If I see someone and I keep looking, either he is, or I think, I think he has the potentials to be. Usually every time I was right.
 R Well, what is it about this other person? Is it their reaction to you? Or is it the way that they look or the way they act or what?
 S It could be all three. Sometimes their reaction towards me, sometimes they don't even look at me.

- R If they're not looking at you and you can still pick them out, what is it about them that . . . ?
- S Usually I can pick the ones out that are very pretty. There's something about them, they don't look totally masculine, they're a pretty man. And the way he carries himself or walks, the way he sits down.
- R Well, how would you describe that deportment?
- S Just has a sway to him, you ever noticed that all gay men have that?
- R ?????????
- S No, you know how he walks or something, and to me I think if you put a gay guy from the bar next to a straight one and you know someone comes along, I think after five or ten minutes with them you can tell, I can.
- R By the way, you say, by the way they walk?
- S Usually, by their walk or by their actions.
- R A feminine action? Is it . . . ?
- S It's hard to explain. You have to see . . .
- R But it takes about ten minutes, it takes awhile, looking at them and everything.
- S To some people, but I can look at one and usually say, ya know, he's gay. They'll say no he's not and I'll say "I'll bet he is".
- R So okay, just looking at him, you haven't observed him walking that much or sitting down or anything, you just observe the person?
- S Observe them. The way they're dressed, usually not very high fashion, or tacky looking like ----- . Straight guys don't dress like that.
- R So there's something about the . . . ?
- S Their dress, their hair, the way they wear their hair, the way their face is, their make up and all.
- R Their make-up?
- S Not wearing make-up. You know, the make-up look of their face. Straight guys don't dress like that.
- R Well, is this, this isn't true for all gay males is it?
- S No, look at those ugly, tacky ones, Mary's gang and all. Like motorcycle dudes, I just, now those I cannot tell. Those just, they're sick, they're weird.
- R So, basically what it is almost, is somebody first that you're attracted to?
- S Uh huh
- R And then you start from there, but can you tell if someone you're not attracted to is gay?
- S Oh yeh, most of the queens I see. And then some of the, the masculine looking dudes that are queens, just by, some of their walks, their dress, their looks, their hair. Like I said, straight guys, you know, the majority of them, they don't dress like that. Now they're coming out with their hair styles and doing it.
- R Well most of their -- maybe this is just an overgeneralization -- but isn't that most people that cut their hair, are more associated with gay people?
- S Uh huh, most of your beauticians, your hair dressers.
- R So that may have something to do with why their hair is that way?

- S Not really, because if you're in that chair and you don't want your hair that way you don't tell that guy "I don't want it that way". When you get out of there if you cut it in that style you're going to comb it in another way or get someone to fix it another way until it grows out to be cut again. That's how I am, if I don't like it, I'm not going to wear it that way when I get out of there. I won't say anything to hurt the guy because it will hurt his ego and he's there thinking he's doing a good job. In going to hair dressing school, you know, I know that. But I would never cut another ones' work down to him. But if a guy don't want it, he's not going to wear it.
- R Earlier, you said when you talk about gay people, it seems like the people that you win that are gay, are the ones, generally that go to the bars. Is this the way you define a gay person, if he goes to the bar?
- S No, some gay people aren't into the bars. The operas and some just sit at home.
- R What I meant was, when you were giving me your description of the way gay men looked, it seemd like you were . . .
- S From what I've seen at the bar.
- R That's the way you define gay people, basically that's your reference point, the bar people?
- S The look of them and they're very much in style, the majority of them. Always dress fine, there's nothing too expensive for them. What they want, you know, they'll have, if they have the money to get it.
- R The way you cruise in a gay bar, is it basic? How would you differentiate that from the way you would cruise in a public place?
- S I don't, I get scared in the bar.
- R You mean, you're more comfortable cruising in a public place?
- S I am, in a straight place I am more comfortable.
- R Why?
- S I don't know. Well, in a gay bar, you know, like last night we was there. Three guys was cruising, was standing up there talking, three of us and these three guys in the wild --, you know, just looking and smiling and Robert could see them, and kept saying, you know they were crusing me. I don't know, I got scared, they told me to go talk to them, and I said, "no, you know, I don't want to", so we get scared. I don't know why I just get nervous in there. But in a straight place I'm not. Cause usually I'm with straight people. Straight girls, you know that are my friends.
- R Are the ways that you cruise in a public place, you know, are they different or how are they the same?
- S Oh, they're usually the same.
- R The same?
- S I like the guys. You know it depends on the way, you know if I'm drunk or have had something to drink, I'm more brave in a gay bar. Or I'm more brave in anything, cause when I have the nerve to do something, that I wouldn't do sober, or to go up to someone and ask him something that I wouldn't normally ask him if straight, not knowing then to a stranger not to my friends, you know if I'm sober or straight.

- R How did you learn how to cruise? Is that something you just picked up yourself or did you have help from other gay people?
- S I don't think anyone has help from other gay people on cruising. They want something whether you're straight or gay. You're going to look and you're going to cruise and I don't think anyone teaches you how to do that. I think that's born in you to look at something that you want and then to look at it, you know and keep on and on wishing you had it. I don't think anyone can show you, teach you how to do that.
- R Well, thank you very much.
- S Is this it?
- R Uh huh, unless you had something else to say.
- S No, I was shocked. I thought this would be two hours or something. I was getting scared.
- R About what?
- S I don't like that thing.

012 - Male, 18 years old

- R Okay, so you're 19 and you've been out for?
- S Six weeks.
- R Six weeks. Where did you come out? I mean, here in Houston?
- S Yes.
- R What I'm basically interested in, is how you meet other gay people. How you've met the other gay people that you've met.
- S Mostly at the gay bars.
- R Mostly at the gay bars?
- S Yeh, and through other people that I met at the gay bars.
- R How did you learn about the gay bars?
- S Hmm, through a friend.
- R The friend is gay?
- S No, she's not.
- R She's not, but she hangs around with other gays, she knows a lot of other gays, she goes to the gay bars?
- S Yeh
- R Uh, so you've only been out for six weeks. Have you met other gay people outside of the gay bars in situations that you can't define as being specifically gay?
- S Yeh, yes.
- R How, what situation was this?
- S At work this summer.
- R At work this summer? How did you know this other person was gay?
- S It just came through a mutual understanding.
- R Was this a co-worker?
- S Uh huh, a boss.
- R Oh, he was your boss. Can you describe to me how that happened?
- S Umm, I'd heard rumors and hinted around and just asked, said something about a wrist action one day and he flipped his wrist, and said "you know where I get it from."
- R You'd heard the rumors from straight people?

- S People in town, yeh.
- R Okay, was there anything about him that might have tipped you off that he was gay, might have confirmed those rumors?
- S Oh, a few typical things like bleached blonde hair, wears make-up when he goes to the bar.
- R To the bars, to the gay bar?
- S Right, it was gay bar style. But he came into work one night and had the base on and eye shadow, mascara, etc.
- R So this guy was fairly openly gay?
- S Uh huh, you had to look hard to see the make-up though.
- R So he used make-up and dyed his hair. You say it was kind of a mutual understanding. How did he know that you were gay?
- S Mmmh, little hints here and there.
- R You all were dropping hints to each other?
- S Yeh
- R On purpose?
- S I think so, it was on purpose.
- R So you finally both came out and said you were gay?
- S In so many words, yeh.
- R In so many words? Are you able to spot other gay people?
- S Oh, maybe the real outgoing type.
- R The outgoing?
- S The ones that really let it show.
- R The flamers?
- S Yeh
- R What characterizes a "flamer"?
- S Oh, the typical limp wrist, or like when a certain one runs down the stairs and swings his hips back and forth, screams.
- R Screams, you mean at the top of their voice?
- S Uh huh
- R Yelling?
- S No, high, high pitched, falsetto.
- R Falsetto? Are there any other ways that you might spot a gay person?
- S The way they talk.
- R How do they talk?
- S With certain slang, like some people wouldn't tell you you're a queen, everything's good and little . . .
- R A queen, what does that mean?
- S Gay, I guess, that's the only way I can put it.
- R A gay person, or gay male?
- S A male, yes.
- R Is a gay female that is a lesbian a queen?
- S No, I don't think so.
- R So, it's a gay male that's a queen?
- S Yeh.
- R Do you cruise?
- S I don't even know hardly what the word means, so I couldn't say.
- R What do you think the word means?
- S Umm, trying to pick somebody up, I believe. That's the main idea about it I think.
- R Have you tried to pick up another gay person?
- S Not really.
- R So, you don't cruise then?

- S Probably without knowing it.
- R Have you ever picked up or been picked up by someone in a place that's not known to be gay? Have you ever been picked up outside the gay bars?
- S No.
- R Have you ever picked anybody up outside the gay bars?
- S No.
- R Would you know how to go about it?
- S Probably not, make a royal fool of myself.
- R Considering you've only been out for six weeks?
- S Lack of experience.
- R So, basically your gay activities have been confined to things like the gay bars?
- S Yeh
- R Gay friends?
- S Uh huh
- R And you met these other gay friends at the gay bars you said?
- S At the gay bars and then I met their friends, and friends of friends.
- R Okay, thank you very much.

013 - Male, 24 years old

- R So, you've been out for, since you were in 7th grade and you've only been associated with gay people or you've just realized that you were gay, what, just since you graduated from college for your Bachelors?
- S No, I had my first gay experience in college, when you know, when I was an undergraduate but there was just one after that. I didn't have any others until that summer.
- R How did you meet the individual that you had had your first gay experience with?
- S I answered an ad in the Advocate.
- R An he happened to be in the same town that you were at?
- S No, he was in Los Angeles, which was about a thousand miles away. But after we wrote and talked on the phone awhile, he decided to come to the town that I was going to school in and visit.
- R Were there any other gay people in the town that you were at?
- S I know now that there were, but at the time I didn't know of any.
- R And after that, he was the only gay experience that you had in college?
- S Uh huh, as an undergraduate.
- R Where did you go when you graduated?
- S "Name of University".
- R Between the time of your first gay experience and the time that you came to A&M, you had no homosexual experiences?
- S Well, there was one other exception. On a family vacation to Hawaii, on the way back, I stayed in San Francisco a couple days longer than my parents and had one there.
- R How did you meet that person?

- S I went to a bar that I'd read about in the Advocate.
- R So, the Advocate has been or was a great help in bartering with the gay people, between gays? So between the time that you graduated, between your first experience and coming to A&M you only had two experiences?
- S That's right. Well, the summer before I came to A&M, I, well, I really started to, as you say, associate with gay people.
- R How did you start associating with these people?
- S Mmmh, I went to a bar the first time. Then, uh, I got one of the local magazines that they put out there and they had a lot of numbers, I, that, I called somebody from, uh, I guess I called the hot line and asked what I could do to meet gay people without going to gay bars and he told me about a seminar that they were having.
- R At a University?
- S No, at a church, at a Unitarian church.
- R This was a very large city though?
- S A city of a million people in the mountain stages. Uh, he uh, he said that they were having seminars on coming out at this church sponsored by the, the uh, well the equivalent of the GSSO, and although it wasn't affiliated with the university. There were a series of eight. They were every Tuesday and I was working that summer a hundred miles away but I drove every Tuesday and I was working that summer a hundred miles away but I drove every, drove down once a week for the seminars and met a lot of people through them.
- R Did you meet any people outside of the bars or this gay sponsored organization?
- S No.
- R You didn't?
- S No.
- R When you came here to A&M, how did you meet the other gay people that you've met?
- S Well, I saw an article in the newspaper about the GSSO and I called one of the people it was, uh, whose name was in the paper. I had a time getting his number, but I managed to get it through somebody that I knew was gay, somebody who knew that number and . . .
- R How did you meet this other person that you knew was gay?
- S Well, we worked together and it just sort of came out in conversation about the same time.
- R Had you any idea that this person was gay?
- S Yeh, I had some idea because he kind of flaunted it.
- R He flaunted it, how so?
- S Well, he talked in terms of his experiences on weekends in Houston with people who didn't have any genders. Oh, you know most people talk about, I, my date, she, or my date he, but people he talked about were always neutral.
- R So you had some inclining that he was gay?
- S Uh huh
- R How did it finally come out, that he was gay and that you were gay?
- S Okay, I finally just asked him, well what were the names of those bars that you'd go to down there, and he told me.
- R Oh, he kept saying he goes to the bars, he goes to the bars?

- S Yeh, and he, you know, special kinds of bars.
 R He said special kinds of bars?
 S Uh huh, so I finally asked him and he said well, it was the Old Plantation.
 R Did you know that the Old Plantation was a gay bar?
 S Yes I did.
 R Did you tell him that you were gay after that?
 S No, well much later. I just sort of assumed that he knew because I knew what the Old Plantation was.
 R When did you assume that he knew that you were gay?
 S Well, I've always sort of thought that people could tell.
 R You've always assumed that you thought people could tell?
 S Well to me that was enough. I mean to me his knowing what that was and that he went there was enough to tell me that he was gay.
 R Well, why did you assume that he knew you were gay?
 S Because I knew what kind of bar it was and I just sort of thought, you know, he figured I wouldn't have known if I didn't have a reason for knowing.
 R You said that you always thought that people just kind of knew that other people were gay?
 S Uh huh
 R Why do you think that?
 S I guess, I don't think that now cause I'm always the last one to know. I'd have this kind of radar that I'm supposed to have, if there was such a thing.
 R But you don't have it?
 S I don't have it. I'm the last one to know. If my best friend is, I wouldn't know until he actually told me.
 R So you can't tell?
 S No, I can't tell unless they leave signs around that are pretty obvious. But then I can just take them at base value.
 R What are the obvious signs?
 S Oh, if they happen to use little catch phrases that people use in the bars and if they have a lot of the same kind of music, the way they dance, different things. But none of that means anything, none of it is conclusive. I mean it just sort of gives a hint. Just that I'm never sure until somebody tells me, even if you see somebody at the bars these days you don't, it doesn't have to mean anything.
 R You, ah, going back, you said that you've thought, or you think that other people know. What gave you the idea that, ah . . . ?
 S Oh, I guess reading about it in the regular press.
 R The regular press?
 S Things like Ann Landers and things, you know, they write and say that, and Dr. David Reuben in his book "Everything you Wanted to Know About Sex and Were Afraid to Ask", things like that and say that gays have radar, except they always say homosexuals. Homosexuals have radar and they can spot another one, they know right away when one enters into a room.
 R You don't think that, that is truth in your case?
 S No, I can't tell for sure. It's just too confusing. Uh, I guess it's true to some extent.

- R The gay people that you've met at A&M, then you met through people you knew were obviously gay people that have come out in the newspaper saying that they were gay . . .
- S Uh huh
- R Define themselves as gay?
- S I've met everybody through the GSSO. Or through members of the GSSO. I've never been to a GSSO meeting and I'm not a member of the GSSO.
- R But you have been, the gay people that you know, you've been introduced to them?
- S By friends that I was introduced to, by friends that, the first person I met who was a, one of the filers of the suit against the University.
- R What about the other gays that you know? Do you know other gay people outside of the University?
- S In College Station, no, oh, yes I do.
- R Anywhere.
- S Yes, yeh I do.
- R How'd you meet them.
- S Well, I met one from work. The first person I mentioned, at work told me that someone else at work was gay.
- R You had this introduction or something?
- S No, we weren't introduced, we just sort of . . .
- R No, but you had this, really it was an introduction, this one person said this one person was gay?
- S That's right.
- R You had somebody else identify this person for you?
- S Uh huh, although I didn't believe it necessarily. I wasn't sure it was true and we just got to be friends and then, I found out it was.
- R This is what you've relied on is other people?
- S That's right, I'm not able to identify people.
- R Well, you know other gay people are throughout the world? What I'm saying is you know some gay people outside A&M?
- S Yeh, uh huh, I've got . . .
- R How did you meet them?
- S In bars and things.
- R So you've met people basically through the gay community? The only way that you have of meeting other gay people . . .
- S There's only one other time in my life that there has been someone who I've trekked with that isn't gay, and you know, is really not associated with the gay community and he really found me, if he hadn't I would never have approached him.
- R What happened?
- S Well, uh, not sure how much detail to go into, but basically he just ended up a neighbor and we became friends. One night when he had to much to drink . . .
- R Was this at a university setting?
- S This is at A&M. Although this was a non-student, who still lives and works in Bryan. He just mentioned something about that, you know, have I ever been attracted to a guy and you know, I felt like being honest so I said yes. I didn't, have you, yes, and I

- think it's happened again. But otherwise I wouldn't have had any idea.
- R Do you go to the bars much?
- S I've been a lot lately. Now I will be laying off for awhile. I can't really, for other reasons. I mean not because I don't enjoy them, but because I've got a series of things coming up.
- R In the bars though, how do you go about meeting people that you're attracted to?
- S Okay, I'm very, uh, I take a watching role sort of. I sort of watch and evaluate people but very rarely do I make any kind of move. I just hope that somebody I find attractive will make a move towards me.
- R So, out in the bars, you wait for somebody else to make the move?
- S That's right.
- R How do you know that they're attracted to you?
- S Well, I never do, unless they do make a move. This is something I'm trying to change.
- R But how, okay, if you were in a new setting where you knew no gay people, how would you go about meeting them?
- S I would go the bars and just . . .
- R You'd go through the gay community?
- S Uh huh
- R You'd go through the gay community. You'd take the established institutions or places that are taken for granted to be gay, gay bars or something like that?
- S Uh huh
- R How do you know that something is, can be taken to be gay?
- S How do I know what?
- R That a gay bar or something can be taken for granted to be gay.
- S How do I find out where the gay bars are?
- R Yeh
- S Ah, that's hard. You just, okay, you just, I look in the Advocate or some publication that lists places, or I find out from a friend who has such a list or something. What the name of one place is and generally lot's of cities have a publication that you can get, like when I was in New York City this summer, I didn't know where to go, just went to a bookstore and I found a book, what's available for gays to do in New York and New Jersey. And I looked at that and never could get around to go to any gay bars but I knew which ones I'd go to if I did. Uh, that was a complete list. If you can't find a newspaper or something that, you know that lists all the ones in town, even if you can generally ask around too at the first bar I go to.
- R Have you ever been to a _____ before?
- S I suppose I have.
- R You don't know?
- S I don't know.
- R Would you know if you were?
- S Yeh, I'd have a lot better idea then, then before.
- R How so?
- S Because it's happened. It's happened in bars, now it's happened when I was sure that that was what was going on.

R Do you think that the same thing that happens in bars is what happens out of a non gay setting?

S I think it probably does.

R Well, what would be the conclusive factor for you to assume that somebody is gay, outside of the gay bar?

S Even inside the gay bar I wouldn't conclude that somebody was gay. I guess to conclude it and to be sure, then, I'd have to hear them say it, you know, say "I am gay", cause even seeing someone in the bars doesn't necessarily mean that.

R Okay, thank you very much. Do you have anything else to say?

S No.

R Anything you'd like to say or add?

S Well, on what, what should I say?

R On meeting other gay people.

S Ummm, once you get started it doesn't seem to be very hard. One person leads to another and pretty soon you, pretty soon you know a lot of people.

R Snowball effects?

S Yeh

R Well, thank you very much.

014 - Male, 21 years old

R Okay, you say you came out at A&M. Is this where you met your first gay person?

S No.

R Where did you meet your first gay person?

S Probably in high school. I didn't associate with them but I knew about gay people in high school and I knew some people who were gay. Knew of them, knew them, but didn't associate with them.

R When you came out, how did you meet gay people, gay friends? Through friends, is that how you came out or decided to come out?

S No, oh, I fell in love with someone I was having sex with pretty regular. And when I realized I had really fallen in love with a man, then I had to admit to myself that it was more than just a passing infatuation, that it wasn't a stage, but it was something that was a permanent part of my nature. That I had to admit, that I had to at least admit to myself that I was that way. And I started to associate with him and his friends, and that's how I met a lot of gay people.

R How had you met him first? Was it an accident?

S He picked, it was an accident, pick up.

R Where'd he pick you up at?

S On campus, I think the MSC.

R Well, how did it work? How did it happen that he picked you up?

S I think we were at a movie or something.

R Did you know each other first beforehand?

S No, it was just casual.

R You were at a movie and what happened?

S I was there with a girl friend of mine named Susan that had come up to visit for the weekend, and he was there with three or four

of his friends and ah . . .

- R Were they obviously gay?
 S To me.
 R Why were they obviously gay to you?
 S Ah, I can't put my finger on it, I just picked them out as being gay.
 R What was it about them that . . . ?
 S Their familiarity, just eye contact, and, ah, their attention they paid to me rather than girls around. You know, they were obviously paying attention to guys rather than to girls.
 R But if you hadn't been associating with gays before, how would you pick that out as something?
 S No, because I had picked up, picked up, picked up people for a long time before that, you know for four or five years before that I'd been having sex with people. But I always, just, it was, I was always in control of the situation. I thought, you know, I could cut it off when I wanted to. I could control the situation, whether or not I got picked up by whom and all that mess.
 R Well, how'd you pick up or get picked up?
 S It's really easy on campus at A&M. It's a real cruisy campus. Ah, I don't know if a lot of guys realize what they're doing when they cruise, but they obviously pay a lot of attention to men there. And are very conscious of their male image and look at other men and size them up and all that mess, and ah, when you see somebody day in and day out in classes, or whatever and you have a study situation and something comes out of that, or . . .
 R Such as?
 S You know, a sexual encounter out of a study situation.
 R I mean how would you build up to the sexual encounter from a normal situation?
 S Ask them over to study for a test and then study for the test and then either crash over there or have them crash at your house. It's a good way.
 R Then this is basically, you said you've been picking up people beforehand, this is basically what would happen?
 S In a study situation. But there's lots of other ways. See, I was involved extracurricularly with a lot of theater work and there's a lot of gay contact available in the theater.
 R What about just on campus with people you didn't know?
 S That was usually transient contacts. You hang around pick-up places, the student center or around the Academic Building.
 R Places that are known to be?
 S Known to be gay pickup places.
 R Could you describe a situation were a pickup occurred? I mean could you describe basically what happened?
 S In a tea room scene, or what?
 R Outside of the tearoom.
 S Outside of the tearoom, mostly, okay, during the day between classes is one time I choose to cruise. Very often, I mean, I don't suppose there are a lot of people that do this, but usually at night in the library say, if you went over to study in the library, you walk around and see somebody you like and sit down and study near them and while you're studying, while you're studying

I mean you're going to be there four or five hours studying while you're studying, there's a lot of contact, eye contact a lot of times. And ah, you get up and go get a coke or something and you just come back and you know move closer or what, just positionally closer to, and ah, I don't know, maybe ask him a question about what he's studying or something, just break the monotony or something. That's nothing that get's really overt, yet, and if the right responses are made, if it seems like he's open to ah, to you, you know more, I don't know, you just pick up on it.

R You get closer positionally and then you get closer verbally?

S Yes.

R But when, at what point, can you tell that he's open for sexual encounter?

S Well, most of the time in that situation, you can't till you actually invite him. Say, "do you want to go out and get breakfast" or "do you want to study over at my place" or something like that, and see if he picked up on that line. Even then a lot of times nothing will happen. A lot of times he'll either chicken out at the end. I think most of the time the understanding is there, the understanding and the wants are there, but ah, the ability of another person to follow through with what he wants in order to get it sometimes doesn't occur. And if that doesn't occur, that's fine, because you made contact, and ah, you can see each other again up to the point where you cut off advance. It'll be perfectly alright for him to come over and study at your house the next time. For first, rather than meet at the library and go study and maybe go farther the next time. It's not a, not everything's just an overnight, you know, snap your finger, pickup situation. You know a lot of times you have to work on something you want, someone that you want.

R In the case of the person that you met at the movies, you mentioned that you fell in love?

S It was a pickup situation. He obviously, he said, ah, we got to talking or something. . .

R How did you all meet at first?

S Sitting next to each other.

R Okay.

S By accident, and ah, we ah, just well, conversation during the movie, ah, casual conversation and stuff. Susan and I and Ken and his two friends, three friends, afterwards I think we all went to Sambo's and ordered breakfast and then ah, they said something about going back to the library or something like that. And so, I took Susan home and I went back up to the library.

R You took your girlfriend home?

S It wasn't my girlfriend. It was a friend who was a girl, girl friend. I took her home, she was staying at my place. She was tired, she'd just driven in that day from Houston and she asked if ah, she could go home and I told her that I had to do some studying, that I had to go to the library. That's what I told her.

R Do you think she had any idea what was going on?

S Not at that time. Later on I told her. She does know I'm gay. I told her. She's my best friend.

- R These other guys were going to be at the library?
S Yes.
R You went back up to the library and . . . ?
S I found them and then I followed them around on campus. They were goofing around, went and got a coke at the Academic Building and then read the bulletin boards and went over the the C and went in ah, to see what was finished there, all the stuff on the other side.
- R Were they attractive looking?
S The one I was after was to me.
R And he was obviously gay?
S To me it was obvious that, well, I take that back, I thought he was gay. I didn't know what gay was then. Okay, I didn't really associate gay with any one type of person, ah, in fact I called the ones that were blatantly, obviously gay "faggots". I said, you know he's a faggot because I didn't consider myself, I didn't identify myself with that group of people, so I used very derogatory words about ones that were offensive to me.
- R Well, what was it about him that set him apart?
S Well, he wasn't, he wasn't acting real effeminant and he wasn't, ah, he wasn't being real lecherous about picking up that . . .
R What was he doing?
S He was being real friendly and he was a nice guy. We had a lot of common interests, plants and music.
R Well, straight people are . . .
S That's right, okay. But, but they're not open in the same way, especially when it gets . . .
R What, describe the difference.
S I don't know what, I can't describe the difference. I can't. You want me to try. Well, I tried to tell you, straight guys in my experience, ah, shun male familiarity on a passing acquaintance level. I don't know why but it would be like we could talk. I could talk about plants and music with someone who was gay. That's true, but the depth of conversations, the way you described your likes and dislikes will not in general be as sensitive, ah, with a straight gay as with a gay guy. I don't feel, I feel like a gay man a lot of times for whatever the reason they ah, had to really do a lot of soul searching to come to grips with their sexuality and so they know themselves, their interior selves a lot better, so they will verbalize what goes on inside them a lot better because of that soul searching. That might be a reason. But it seems to me that gay men are a lot more in touch with their feelings than straight men of comparable maturity.
- R And that they are more willing to open up?
S To ah, even to casual acquaintances. They don't fear exposing the sensitive side of themselves to other men for fear of ridicule. Apparently, that's highly valued among gays. That's something that you can pick up on if somebody is talking to you and they're describing things in terms of either artistic critique, or ah, unless they're an expert in the field, but most students up here, especially this type of school, there's no fine arts whatever, and a lot of people, especially straight people here that are in agriculture and engineering, and stuff are not aware what art is

or how to criticize art, what criteria you use to look at art, ah, anything they just aren't aware of it. They haven't been exposed to it and they aren't going to get exposed to it here and you can tell some, you can tell if somebody knows what they're talking about and if they, you know, talk about it.

R That's not what you talk about all the time, what you're doing, are you, I mean . . . ?

S That's what I talk about because I'm not very blatant. I don't say "let's go home and fuck".

R Say I like paintings and you look at someone and say "do you like paintings?"

S No. You go and if you're in the MSC and you are all in a conversation about a movie and you're talking, you can do it a lot of ways. You can, ah, there's all kinds of art stuff around here. You can stop and look at something and they'll stop and look at it too. You can comment about it then. I'm not saying that I hand out them, that's not a line to pick up, that's just, those are conversations to get to know one another.

R Okay, you don't bring up talking about art to see if they're gay or if they're out of a gay . . . ?

S No. To get to know them. I didn't say to find out if they were gay, I said a lot of times in a conversation with someone, you can tell if they're gay or not by the way they talk about it.

R So you usually, to find out if they're gay or not, you have to go through a process of conversation.

S I do, well, I don't. I . . .

R With the ones you like to go home with?

S Yeh, up here. It depends upon the situation too. That's up here, if I'm in a gay bar in Houston or a gay setting in Houston, the Westheimer, Montrose area or something and I see someone and they look gay to me, I don't go through the whole charade of trying to find out what they are.

R Well, what about, what is it that you could say makes them look gay?

S Okay, their grooming a lot of times. Gay men seem, let's put it this way, because not all gay men groom themselves, the type of gay man I'm attracted to, groom themselves well, ah, they're real conscious of what they wear and how they look. They, ah, usually are pretty well mannered, unless they're drunk, which a lot of times they are. Late at night or early, I think they are much more familiar with just the general eye contact with strangers than the straight men are. Ah, also positionally, their body language is a lot more familiar than, ah, I think personal distance around them is ah, a lot less than with straight men. Straight men are not comfortable sitting very, very close to each other unless they're drinking buddies or something.

R If you were to take this person that you were describing, it seems like you are describing him within a Montrose, Westheimer area setting. If you were to take him from that setting . . . ?

S Yeh, I'm from Houston and I live here and there's 30 other thousand students that go here and there's lots of them from Houston and there's lots of them from Dallas, that in that environment are very, very gay and up here, because of the homophobic environment up here are very, very covert about their activity.

- R Yeh, but if you were to take somebody out of that environment and put them down here, would you still recognize their gayness? Or is it . . . ?
- S Yes, I could.
- R Well, how does it change from a . . . ?
- S I'm not saying it changes. I'm saying that those areas are very highly gay, the same characteristics are exhibited by gays up here.
- R No, but do you mind when you walk around an area like Montrose, Westheimer, where the probability of someone being gay is high, if they look like someone like you've just described, and they're male . . . ?
- S Okay, the probability.
- R That helps in your finding doesn't it? The fact that the probability is high that they're gay, what happens when you come down to, like A&M?
- S Okay, I told you, a lot of times those people just don't have the guts to carry through and get what they want. Those same kind of people most of the time are gay in their inside, and ah, they just don't, they either are not in touch with their sexuality because of religion or family or political . . .
- R You still consider them gay, you don't consider them just . . . ?
- S I don't consider them, I consider them homosexuals. I didn't know that you wanted me to get involved in, I don't consider many homosexuals gay.
- R What is the distinction?
- S That gay is a label that you apply to yourself. Like a political . . .
- R As opposed to homosexuals who consider themselves homosexuals?
- S That a homosexual is sexual behavior that is exhibited by most gays, but not all. Gay is a life style that accepts personal sexual preference regardless of what that is. It has to be incorporated in a life style, it's not just in a tea room.
- R Well, what goes on in a tea room that's different than cruising outside in still a non-gay setting? What is the difference? What is at a tea room?
- S A tea room is a bathroom that is a pickup joint that may or may not have a glory hole in it, which is a hole carved in partitions between commodes. Either can be used to cruise through or to ah, give "blow jobs" through sometimes. It's usually a place where a lot of people in a sexual market place, ah, occasionally . . .
- R So, it's fairly well known to be a . . . ?
- S Yeh, not every bathroom is a tea room, but I mean every bathroom is a potential tea room. But, not every bathroom is a workable tea room.
- R Well, what's the difference between what goes on in the tea room and what goes on in the areas outside of the tea room?
- S A tea room is very much overt. You're sitting there with half your clothes on when you're sitting on the commode and ah, other than the whole routine about . . . they have their fun and you work it up or they work it up . . .
- R Work? Penis?
- S Yes, that's it. It goes on and on and on and then you can stick

it through the hole and go to heaven or whatever.

R Basically, how do you meet gay people?

S How, I mostly meet gay people, gay people that I have sex with you mean?

R Gay people that you have sex with, gay people that you are friends with.

S Friends, through other people who are gay. I meet their friends who are also gay.

R So, do you cruise?

S I do not cruise campus anymore. I still see people on campus I suspect to be gay, but I don't pursue it, because it's not worth the trouble to me. Ah, usually those people are not very secure with their sexuality and it takes a long time for them to get in touch with it and I've been through that and I'm not willing to deal with their insecurities right now.

R One more question. What is the difference in a gay bar and cruising in a basically straight environment? Is there any difference?

S Ah, only in the type of games that are played. In the gay bar, well, there are different types of gay bars, there are cruise bars where, ah, the intent is ah, stated to be cruising by most people that go there. I mean, they're there to pick up somebody and the advances are a lot more overt a lot of times, and ah, the response is immediate. You tap somebody on the shoulder and you say, "do you want to go home with me", and that wouldn't be uncommon in a cruise bar. And if your response was yes or no, they'd, the person that tapped you on the shoulder, would accept it to be yes or no and would go on if it was no and tap somebody else on the shoulder. And, ah, in a gay bar that is not a cruise bar, either a disco or a quiet bar, there are still games that are played. Usually it is eye contact response, ask somebody to dance, dance with him, find out his name, find you know . . .

R Except for the asking for a dance, it is very similar to what goes on in a straight setting?

S Ah, similar, but the games are different because everybody, at least everybody assumes that everybody at the gay bar is open to homosexual encounters, and that is not true at all. That is one of the things you have to determine when you're talking or cruising somebody in a straight environment, whether or not they're open to that, in either place. You're going to do it verbally either place. But your familiarity in the gay bar, you feel you start off on a familiarity level that's a lot higher than you do in a straight environment because you feel akin to the people in the gay bar, you feel like at least you assume that they're gay also.

R What point in the straight environment can you assume that the person is gay? Or that he can assume that you are gay?

S When he climbs out of your bed to hum.

R That's the only point?

S That's the point that I assume it at.

R At what point can you assume that they are willing to go home with you and climb in bed?

S When you ask them. Not to climb into bed, you can assume that they want to climb into bed when you get them to climb into bed, but you

can assume they want to go home with you when you ask them to go home and they say . . .

- R But there's narrow points aren't there when you feel reasonably secure in asking to go the next step?
- S Uh huh, if they seem, well, if they're friendly enough, if they've carried on a conversation with you, if they look like they'd prolong the contact, ah, ah, if they've been responsive, verbally or with their actions, you know, if they've suggested other things to do to keep you together for a time, you know, go get something at McDonald's, you know or whatever. But ah, you can tell whether they're comfortable with the contact or uncomfortable and whether you would be comfortable in asking for a further step or not.
- R Well, it's getting late and I know you have to be somewhere real soon. Thank you very much.
- S You're very welcome.

015 - Male, 19 years old

- R You're 19 years old and you've been out for 7 months now?
- S Yeh
- R Did you know any gay people before you came out?
- S Yeh, I knew a lot of gay people.
- R How did you know that they were gay?
- S Well, rumors for one, and other things, like ah, some of them even told me. Most of them were girls though.
- R Girls?
- S Uh huh
- R What about men?
- S The men that I knew were teachers, and they ah, they taught at the high school that I attended.
- R How did you come out?
- S Ah, a best friend of mine brought me out.
- R He was gay?
- S Uh huh
- R How'd he bring you out?
- S Well, uh, it was more like ah, what is was, I was taking a sex survey for my Psychology class.
- R Was this in college?
- S No, this was in high school. I was taking a sex survey and I just asked him, cause I thought he was anyhow. I asked him if he was bisexual or if he was a heterosexual or if he was homosexual. He told me that he was bisexual and at that time neither one of us had experienced any kind of a gay, what is it, relationship. And we made an appointment to go rap, one thing led to another and we never did get to go out and ah, then two years later after he graduated, I was working in the store and ah, he came in and we talked a long time and everything, and I asked him to try some clothes on and he liked the clothes and he was in the dressing room and he just ah, said "are you still", and I of course, I knew what he meant are you still, and ah, so I said "still what" and he goes,

"are you still bisexual?" I told him yes I was, but I hadn't been out to any of the bars. I hadn't been out because, ah, I didn't have anyone to take me. I didn't know anyone who went out to the bars or where they were at or anything, but I wanted to go. And we made a date that night and after work he took me to the bar, he took me to my first bar and it was a real experience. That's how I came out.

- R How have you met most of the people that you know that are gay?
 S How have I met them? Well, ah, the first few people that I met, I met them through Revis, ah, and ah, he introduced me to most everybody. He was, he knew quite a few people, he'd been out about two years. So he knew a lot of people and he introduced me to most of the people that I now know. I met some people through dancing and through bars and through friendships.
 R These friendships, were they already pre-existing?
 S Well, ah, a few of them were. Mainly what it was, introducing to one another, like that is my friend so and so and this, you know, meet so and so and ah, we would start talking and we would become friends. And then, ah, it wasn't until here recently that I started making friends on my own because I wasn't really that confident, you know.
 R How do you go about making friends on your own?
 S Well, like ah, well usually, like I met a person to go out and ah, what's the word that I'm thinking of? To cruise somewhat, I'm more the passive type. I'm not the aggressive one, unless it's someone that I really like, and ah, that's how I met some of my friends, by cruising.
 R Oh, you cruise in bars, do you cruise outside of the bars?
 S Sometimes when I feel confident. I don't know, I have this feeling, I can spot people and ah, when I meet someone, I usually get vibrations if they're gay or not. A lot of times I just tell myself that they're really not that way, it's not so much the characteristics, because a lot of them cover it up very well, it's just that ah, I get that feeling, it's kind of like a sixth sense that I get, that ah, lets me know that they're gay, although at the time you know, I'm just thinking that I'm just infatuated with them and I wish they were. And then later on it turns out to be true that they were gay. I usually meet someone in a bar or something or I run into them somewhere or they make a pass at me.
 R Well, what is it about a gay person that stands out?
 S Well, usually you know, the majority of gay people, you can spot them by their impeccable taste. Or by their appearance. Usually they'll have clear-skinned complexions and crystal clear eyes. Their eyes will be piercing, in fact, you can spot almost any gay person with their eyes, because that's their man tool in cruising.
 R How so?
 S Well, that's how they, if a person likes you, even in the straight world, if a person likes you, you can tell it by the look they give you with their eyes.
 R Can you describe that look?
 S Well, it's like a, well if they like you, it's like a smiling look, like a pleased look. It's like a look that sees right through you

in hoping that maybe something can come of it just by the look, like a big come on. It's almost like if you were doing a seductive dance or something. You know, it's the same thing with straight people, you know if you have that look in your eye, then that's the big come on.

R So you say that all gay people are well groomed?

S No, I wouldn't say all gay people. I would say the majority of them. You know and ah, they're not so much well groomed, it's the style that they carry themselves with. They have an arrogant air about them, uh, an air not so much of confidence, but of a suaveness, of dignity and pride.

R What about some of the gay people like the ones that hang around at the locker, the overly butched, levied and leathered ones? Would that hold true for them?

S No, that's why I say the majority of them.

R Could you pick out someone that was into levi and leather?

S No, I don't know any. I don't know too many people that are into levi. Most of the people that I know are the people that I've described to you. I guess it's because I seek out those people.

R Okay, let's go into a situation here into a fairly straight area, and you see someone that you get the vibes with, how would you go about cruising them?

S Well, I tell you it wouldn't be so much me cruising them because I don't like to endanger my well-being that way. I go, what I do is, I listen to the way he talks, I watch his eyes.

R You mean, start up a conversation with him?

S What I'm doing is, I analyze his character. I don't so much cruise him, you know, first you know, lest the time that I meet someone straight or they appear to be straight and I think that they might be and I listen to the way they talk or the things they say, how open minded they are.

R Well, what kind of things would a gay person say?

S Well, a gay person would say something like, ah, well like they would notice the carpeting in a room or they would notice what someone was wearing, or ah, or they would notice some new clothing that you had on, or they would have some expensive cologne on, or ah, they would drive a fairly nice car, or they would not be so close minded about gay rights or gay issues and they would not be so ah, they would be more, they would lean more to intelligence than they would toward ignorance. And they would also be more educated in the arts. They would probably know how to dance, so there's a lot of things that you can spot a person by and if this person that I know, like say I meet someone who I think is gay, I look for these qualities in them.

R Do you think you stand out as appearing gay?

S Well, in my opinion I think that I do. Because, well, I've always been a clothes freak. I've always liked flowers and plants, I've always been conscientious of my room.

R Like you were just walking down the street, do you think somebody could look at you and know that you were gay?

S I think so, because of the way I dress. Because, ah . . .

- R Well, you don't fit the stereotype. You're very masculine, well built.
- S That's true, but there's just a certain thing I've noticed. I guess girls, they can spot it out because . . .
- R Straight girls or gay?
- S Straight girls. They can spot it out, they ah, you, I can't explain it, ah, the reason that I think that I stand well, mainly one of the reasons that I think I do is because of my voice. Because my voice is high, for a boy it's high and ah . . .
- R But it's not wispy or anything.
- S No, it's not. But it's still high. Considerably high and ah, in the way that I carry myself, I care more about things that other men or boys don't take notice in.
- R Such as?
- S Such as well, maybe such as clothes or ah, dancing, or manners and courtesy. Or ah, such as learning certain things, like in the arts, like music, like whereas a lot of your typical male is more interested in getting laid. You know or working with automobiles or playing football. I may be stereotyping but that's usually, of the straight people and of the straight friends that I have, that's what they're mainly concerned with, that and drinking.
- R Can you tell if you're being cruised?
- S Oh yeh
- R How?
- S Uh, by the looks that I get, maybe by the way that ah, by the way that someone, ah, maybe brushes by me.
- R You mean touches you?
- S Yeh, you can always tell by the touch. You know, like if you're standing in the bar and usually if you want to get cruised you stand along the pathways. It's the most convenient, or by the dance floor. You usually try to avoid tables or corners, because if you're sitting at a table, people who are out cruising will think you're already taken by you sitting at a table and that you're waiting for someone or that you're with a group of friends and that you don't want to be cruised and if you sit in the corner you just won't be seen.
- R Is this applicable in a straight situation too?
- S Yeh, I think so. Ah, well of course with me being male and all, I think that it's a lot easier to cruise in a gay bar than it is in a straight bar. Because in a gay bar you can walk up to anyone that you choose. Of course you might be turned down, but chances are if you have anything going for you at all, that you'll succeed, whereas in the straight bar it's more of what you have as in many.
- R What a minute, in a straight bar, are you talking about cruising men or cruising females?
- S Cruising females, cruising the opposite sex.
- R What about cruising males in the straight bar?
- S Well, that's not too healthy because you could pick someone out that isn't bisexual or that isn't homosexual. And you could get hurt doing that and then again you could score at the straight bar. I mean it's not totally impossible, but usually there is someone there that, if there is someone in the straight bar or who is

bisexual, chances are he's not going to be out cruising because he's at a straight bar and he knows, unless he's a latent homosexual who hasn't come out yet.

R Going back, you could tell you were being cruised you said. You were being brushed against.

S Well, like say in the way someone will pass by and they'll place a hand on your shoulder or they'll place a hand in a more personal area.

R This is in a gay bar, but what about in a straight area?

S In a straight area? Well, if you were standing in a gay bar, chances are if a girl, say a girl, a normal heterosexual relationship, if a girl wanted to pick a guy up it wouldn't be so much like a brushing, it would be more like a, just passing by and giving a smile which is the same thing in a gay bar but it's more settled in a straight bar than in a gay bar.

R Yeh, but I'm talking about if you're being cruised by another man in the straight bar.

S Oh, in a straight bar. Well, the way I see it in the straight bar you can't be sure of anything.

R It doesn't have to be a bar, it can be anything.

S Well, a straight place, you can't be sure of anything. If I think I'm being cruised by a straight man, what I do is, I'll maybe smile back, and then I'll leave it at that, because you can't be sure, it could be a bait or a trap.

R But you don't get these vibes that this person is gay?

S Well, if you do, I don't follow every vibe that I get because it could be like I said, endangering to my well-being and ah, you know, it's not that I'm not responding to his forward action, it's more like being safe.

R Well, what confirms your vibrations, what would be?

S Hearsay maybe, or if I see the person, or if they come up to me and they'll ask me if I've been to a gay bar. Like they'll ask me, they'll name a gay bar that everyone knows about and that will be one way of confirming it or he'll ask me if ah, maybe to go out and have a drink or maybe, ah, if I worked there often, like if I was at work and I was getting cruised at work. Or if I worked at that certain shopping area or if I went to that certain store or whatever, very often. That would be a clue. Or if he just came up out of nowhere and bumped into me and started talking to me.

R Straight men aren't that friendly?

S Right, and ah, well like back at the bar, cruising at the bar, it's ah, very obvious. It's very open, it's meant to be obvious so that you won't have any difficulty perceiving it. And ah, you could get anything from a stare, a long warm stare to a very tight hug or a grip, or you could just be praised as you passed by.

R Praised?

S Someone saying something nice, making funny sounds as you walked by. Or you could be, someone could just come up to you and introduce themselves and which is sometimes more appropriate, which is usually the way that it is done, someone just comes up and introduces themselves. And then they ask you to dance. And if you're in a bar where there's just strictly drinking or maybe pool, or whatever, they might ask you to have a drink with them or ask you your name.

Mainly that's all, that's all cruising consists of, it's the knowledge of being cruised and the knowledge of cruising comes with experience. You know, because when I first went to the gay bar I did not know nothing about cruising. I mean I think everyone could tell that I was just coming out because of the way I carried, the way I cruised, I cruised so abruptly. It didn't have . . . See in order to cruise, it takes an art to it. It's like, ah, all it is, is like a big act that you put on to try to meet this person or little body movements on the dance floor. I've been cruised many a time from the dance floor. They'll dance in my direction or they'll move their body a certain way to try to get me on to them or something, to make me notice them. Or they'll smile at me or they'll wave at me from the dance floor. I've had that happen to me, or I'll be dancing and they'll come and step right in front of me, or they'll offer me their poppers, that right there is a sure sign that they like me. Or that they'll offer to do a favor for me, like fine me a table or something to sit at. And well, cruising, like I say, it's an art and it's something that you learn, you just don't pop in there and become good. In fact, maybe the first few times, unless you're exceptionally good looking, the first few times that you go to a bar you probably won't pick up anybody or you probably won't get cruised. Because they'll notice that you stand out, and they might even think that you're straight.

R Think you're straight at the gay bar?

S Right, because of the way you stand out.

R Not too many straight go to gay bars though?

S Well, ah, if it's a big disco and it's known for its music and its dance floor, then chances are you will run into straight people there and they stand out so much more than the other people do because of their mannerisms. They seem more defensive, and when you go to a gay bar the first few times you are defensive. You do have like a little fence around you because you're afraid, cause you know you're not comfortable, you still think you're being judged. You still think you're in a straight bar when you're not, and you have to conform with society's behavioral pattern, whereas, in a gay bar it's not like that at all.

R Just for the record, how did you meet your lover?

S How did, well, this is one of the few instances where I did become the aggressor. And ah, when I met him, I met him through a friend of mine who was hoping to become one of my lovers. He introduced me, well, actually I asked him to introduce me cause I noticed him and I spotted him right off by the eyes. I'm an eye person myself, I look to the eyes. And I noticed him by his eyes, and ah, he was very nice looking and ah, he looked like Italian or maybe Spanish and that attracted me to him also, and he looked very nice, like a very nice person. Very nice person to meet and I just wanted to meet him and I also got a feeling that I hadn't gotten with men before and that was a gut feeling that a little sensuous gut feeling that I'd only experienced with women and this really set me off and I acted quite like a fool because it looked like I just literally attacked him because I asked him to dance and I didn't even wait for him to answer. I just dragged him out on the dance floor. I

had a girl with me who was supposedly my date, and ah, well I just took him out on the dance floor. I just had to dance with him, and when I saw him dancing, he just looked so, so cute to me, and after we finished dancing I just had to kiss him and I kissed him and I asked him if he went there often and if he was going to be there the next Wednesday night, which was when I was planning to go again. You know even if he had told me Saturday night I would have gone Saturday night because I just had to get to know him better and when we went back, we were standing there. He said that he had to go to the restroom and ah, he brushed up against me and I got that same gut feeling again. And ah, he said, I'm not doing this to get close to you, it's just these people are pushing me against you, and I told him I didn't mind at all, and ah, he went up and he left, and we told him we were leaving. He said, "leaving so soon", and that gave me some encouragement, made me feel like he did like me. I wasn't really that sure that he liked me but I just, I knew I liked him and that was enough. Usually when I like somebody or I like something I go after it. In whatever manner it is, especially in the manner that I carried myself that night, it was quite embarrassing when I think back on it, but afterwards, it proved to be, ah, very fulfilling.

R So he showed up at the bar again?

S Uh huh. I seem him again and we danced and we had a good time that night. I went home with him that night and he told me to beware because he got involved with people like me, and that really made me feel good, made me feel like I was important or that I was needed, even though he didn't, he was afraid to get involved with me because he'd been hurt so many times, but we have a beautiful relationship as it stands now. I hope it will grow some more. See the trouble with so many gay relationships and with lovers and all that is that they don't last very long. That is because it's physical attraction, it's just that's all it is. It's only, their only interested in each other because of sex, because maybe the other person has a nice body or because that certain person moves a certain way or because he's got a bigger yang yang than anybody else you know. That's how it is, it's all physical, but this person, although it is physical to a certain extent. But it's like, what you would call a heterosexual relationship, where it's not just physical, it's enjoyment and fulfillment through being with that person. It's an understanding of each others' personalities and souls and a basic understanding and want of the same things. So it's not physical and I think it could last. And that's the pity and the sadness in most gay relationships that they don't last because they lack those things, because they are physical. When I met this person I knew it was going to be something more than that. Because I was not only attracted to him physically, I was attracted to him spiritually, even though I didn't know him yet, I could pick up his vibrations. I could tell that he, well, like I said with the eyes, I could tell with his eyes, that ah, he was a tender person and ah, the type of person I would be looking for and the type of person I would enjoy knowing, even if it just led to friendship. I would enjoy knowing that person and just being a friend of his, if not his lover.

R Well, thank you very much.
S Anytime.

017 - Male, 24 years old

R What I'm primarily interested in is, how you meet other gays in typically straight settings.
S Well, I don't meet many other gays in straight settings, to tell you the truth. I guess I'm kinda chicken. I mean, well, I'm scared of being caught, called "queer." You know what I mean. But if what you mean is can I spot queers, well, ya. I mean that sometimes I get a feeling or something that a guy is gay. You know.
R A feeling? What kind of feeling? Is it usually correct?
S I don't know, just a feeling. A radar. I don't know if I'm usually right because like I say, I'm scared and so I usually don't care to find out. But sometimes I meet them later and I find out I was right. This happened twice for sure that I can recall right now.
R You said radar.
S Well, not a machine or anything, but a feeling. Something clicks. I guess it's the way he looks and looks at you. Know what I mean? No? I mean that, well, not all queens look like limp-wristed fairies. Most look more or less straight--"The Boy Next Door" type. Anyhow, even so there's a look. A look you really can't describe it unless you've been to a gay bar. Really. Like sometimes I look around in there and say to myself that for the most part they look like any straight guy on the street.
R Then how can you tell any difference?
S Oh, there's a difference. You can tell. A sense of self or something. They seem more aware of themselves. Their grooming, the way they walk and talk. A little more contained yet a little more flamboyant. Sometimes the words they use. Key words.
R Such as?
S Names of bars, butch, hot, Mary, nellie, what have you.
R And the way they look at you? What did you mean by that?
S They look at you a little longer, especially when I look at them. Their eyes--that's what's really different. Straight dudes don't look you over as carefully, unless they really know you, and then, not with that lingering look. I guess that's what sets off the radar.
R What else let's you know someone is, or might be gay?
S I don't know. Really I never really thought about it much I guess. I don't cruise that much except sometimes and then it's not really cruising, for sex I mean. Sometimes I just want to know if someone's gay. For the fun of it. Maybe get to know some more queens. It's no fun being the only queer on the block.

O19 - Male, 20 Years old.

R Now before we start, I want to ask you not to mention any names specifically, okay? Okay, now, how old are you?

S Twenty, almost twenty-one.

R How long have you been out?

S Well, I've known that there's something different about me, I guess all my life. But I've only been out since the beginning of the last semester, since I've been up here at school?

R So this is where you met gays first?

S Yes, and no. I knew of some back home, but I never hung around with them cause I was scared that the other people would think I was queer. I mean, I wondered about myself but never could really admit it. I feel kinda bad about that because I always made fun of them and made jokes about faggots and all that.

R And?

S And so, I never really met them. Then, I came up here and I guess being far away from home and everything, well even at first I didn't come out. Then my sophomore year my roommate from the dorms and I moved off campus?

R Was he gay?

S Hell, no. He's straight as a board. I still don't think he knows about us.

R Us?

S Our other roommate. His best friend from home. He came up here to school. Anyway, he was gay. Not then though. He was in the same shape as I was. I mean he was dating a chick and balling her and all that. So was I. But when ah. . . I mean my straight roommate was out of town, well, uh, we'd get drunk or stoned and then mess around. We talked about it once but we convinced each other that it really didn't mean anything, that we were messing around but since we both did with girls that we couldn't be queer. His brother said he used to mess around before he got married, or that's what he told me. I never asked him personally myself. But it was good enough for me. Anyway, the three of us only lived together for a semester. I think things were getting kind tense and all.

R Then what?

S We all went our separate ways. Especially me. One night during summer school my roommate was out of town. No one I knew was in town and my car was broken. I guess I was lonely.

R This isn't the same roommate you were talking about?

S No, he was a friend from home. Anyway I rode my bike to school and went to the library to xerox some old tests and stuff. The place was dead. Anyway around midnight I was in the stacks and I smelled something like something was on fire, so I went to the front desk but the girl wasn't there. I told this dude that was waiting around the desk and he kinda laughed but said maybe we oughta go take a look. We went to the stacks and he said it was just some short in the light tubes or something. Anyway, we rode the elevator down. We really didn't say much but we looked at each other a lot. I was real nervous. I must have known down inside what was going

on because I started shaking, not really visibly but still, like when you are cold. We did a lot of small talk there in the library. The lights were going out because the library was closing so we went outside and kept on talking. Everytime one of us would start to walk off the other would start a new line of conversation. Well, it got real late and he said he wanted a coke so we walked over to the Academic building and drank a coke. Then he said he needed to go to the bathroom so we went downstairs to the tearoom. He took a leak real slow. I took one too, but real fast and stood by the sink while he took his time to tuck his shirt tail. He smiled a lot. Upstairs he said it was late and that it was time to go home but he really wasn't sleepy. I said, neither was I and one of us suggested we go buy some beer. But it was too late to buy any, so I said I had some at home, but I was on my bike. He said to leave it there and that he'd bring me back to get it. That really didn't make any sense but I really wanted, I guess, to go home with him, because I said okay. Anyway, we got to my apartment, and drank some beer. Then this girl from next door came over. I was so nervous she thought I was on Speed. For some reason I said I ad been, but was coming down. In the meantime, this guy fell asleep--or so I thought--on my couch. Anyhow, the chick left. I didn't try to wake the guy up but went into the bedroom and got undressed to go to bed. I had turned most of the lights out and kinda piddled around in my room, making some noise but still trying to listen to hear if he was making any too. Well, he got up and said that he ought to go home. Then he said he couldn't take me back to the school to get my bike dressed like I was. So I said I'd get it in the morning. I was sitting on my bed and he sat down next to me. He said if I wanted he could come and take me in the morning to get it and I said, okay, buy why didn't he spend the night here, that my roommate was home and that his bed was free. He said okay, and started to undress. I got up to turn the light out. I was excited, if you know what I mean. Anyway, when I turned the light out, I started to walk back to bed and he and I bumped into one another in the dark. He touched me and said that I sure must be horny, because I was so hard and all. He kinda joked around and touched. We landed up tricking. That was the first time I'd ever picked up or been picked up. In the morning we went to get my bike. Then he took me over to some of his friends' house.

- R Were these people gay?
 S Yes. We all got to be good friends. They took me to a bar, the next weeken. Boy, was I scared. But I went back a lot and met a lot of people there. I met some people from here too.
 R Well, do you cruise?
 S Not much.
 R Can you tell if another guy is gay or not, if you don't know him but just see him?
 S Not really.
 R So you don't meet many other gays?
 S Yes, I do, but mostly through friends.
 R Can other people tell if someone is gay or not?
 S Some say they can. I don't know. This one queen says he's got a

radar that beeps when he says he sees another queer.

R Do you think he really does have one?

S He must. He's always meeting people new.

R How does he describe this radar?

S I don't know.

R He never talks about it?

S Joking, kinda. He says it's like a sixth sense. Girl's intuition. I think he's crazy. But a lot of people know about him. He really doesn't cover it up but he's not blatant or anything. Not real nellie.

R Do you think gays look any different?

S No really. But some stand out a little but I think it's because I'm gay too, and notice those things.

R What things?

S Oh, just some things like dress and stuff. I really can't describe it. Really, I've thought about it before but I really can't put my finger on it.

R Well, thanks for your time. Is there anything that you might say that you might have forgotten?

S Na.

VITA

NAME: Frank Maurice Staggs, Jr.

DATE OF BIRTH: February 11, 1953

PLACE OF BIRTH: Laredo, Texas

PARENTS' NAME: Frank Maurice Staggs, Sr.
Maria Julieta Farias Staggs

PERMANENT ADDRESS: 2620 Musser Street
Laredo, Texas 78040

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND: Texas A&M University
May, 1975
B.S. Sociology

The typists for this thesis were Lois Saltsman and Patsy Picou.

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