

*This paper reports on an exploratory study of gay husbands. The social construction of reality framework is employed in addressing a central question: how do gay husbands structure a reality that allows them to solve their contradictory statuses? A four-cell typology is presented of husbands who participate in same-sex sexual behavior by living arrangement and occupational autonomy. Discussion follows on their lifestyles. Strategies of coping, career patterns of coming out, and processes of gay identity development are detailed. Major findings include: (1) gayness and traditional heterosexual marriage are discordant; (2) gay husbands achieve a sense of increased psychological well-being as their stigmatized careers progress. Analysis of the changes in the respondents' lives indicates suggestions toward a theory of adult sexual resocialization.*

# **ADULT SEXUAL RESOCIALIZATION**

## **ADJUSTMENTS TOWARD A STIGMATIZED IDENTITY**

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In the popular imagination, the term faggot husband is a paradox.<sup>1</sup> Being gay and being married are thought to be mutually exclusive phenomena. Sensation-seeking journalists have written some melodramatic articles exploiting this paradox for pulp magazines (Anonymous, 1968, 1977; Hartman, 1977), but generally the topic has been considered too idiosyncratic to warrant attention.<sup>2</sup>

The assumption that no married man could be homosexual and the concomitant lack of empirical research in the area have resulted in questionable methodologies in several studies. Hatterer (1970) claims to have cured homosexuals—the proof of this being they subsequently married heterosexual women. Bieber et al. (1962; and Bieber, 1971:

63, 67) define homosexuality as completely separate and distinct from heterosexuality. The implication is that men who have married or fathered a child cannot be genuinely homosexual. Mathes (1966) makes a similar mistake. She presumes a sample of married men provides an adequate heterosexual control group for a sample of gay men. Information on gay husbands is likely to make investigators of homosexuals more cognizant of the fact that married and gay are *not* mutually exclusive categories and, thereby, ensure more precise research designs.

### PRESENT KNOWLEDGE OF GAY HUSBANDS

The amount of available data tangentially related to gay husbands is surprising, given the general ignorance on the topic. As yet, no study is able to estimate the prevalence of gay husbands, but some research lends sensitizing, albeit oblique, data to the question.

Deggeller et al. (1969), in a Dutch survey, report that 1.3% of the married men in a random sample of Holland are "exclusively homosexual." Blumstein and Schwartz (1976), in their excellent study of self-reported bisexuals, find a number of husbands who engage in more homosexual than heterosexual behavior. Ross (1971, 1972) reports the marital adjustment of 10 self-identified homosexual husbands. Dank (1974) finds 25% of his sample of self-identified gay men have been heterosexually married. Ponte's study (1974) of participants at a homosexual drive-in finds "several" are married. McNeill's study (1976: 136) of annulments in the Roman Catholic church reports that one-third result from the homosexuality of one or both partners. The Kinsey Institute for Sex Research, in a study of gay bar patrons, finds 20% of the homosexual males interviewed have been heterosexually married at least once (Bell, 1972: 46).

Not all marriages of gay husbands are merely platonic unions of convenience. Studies show a number of gay men have children. Saghir and Robins (1973), in a questionnaire study of 89 homosexuals belonging to gay organizations, find 50% have experienced heterosexual intercourse; 18% of the total sample have been married, and 44% of those once married have one child or more. Since it could be argued that gays who are willing to be interviewed in such studies are more open about their homosexuality and more active in the homosexual subculture than those not interviewed for such studies, it is probable that even larger percentages of gay men have been married and fathered children.

Four studies of *covert* homosexuals suggest that possibly even greater percentages of them are family-men. Humphreys (1975) notes that 54% of his sample of tearoom participants are married. They have an average of 1.9 children as compared to 2.6 children for his heterosexual control group. Slater (1958) finds a sample of married, psychiatrically hospitalized homosexuals have an average of 1.41 children. Cory (1951: xv, 200-221), a homosexual father himself, reports in a pseudonymously authored study the marital adjustments of a sample of covert, gay fathers. Twenty-eight of the fifty men Troiden (1974) interviews as participants in same-sex sexual encounters at a highway rest stop are married, and at least twenty-one of them are fathers.

There is considerable archival and anecdotal evidence to suggest the presence of large numbers of gay family-men in Western societies. Magazines, ranging from *The Advocate* to *The New York Review of Books*, periodically carry advertisements in their "Personals" section from married men and fathers seeking same-sex liaisons. The following plays all have gay family-man characters: *Boys in the Band*, *Find Your Way Home*, *That Certain Summer*, and *Coming Out*. The same is true with a number of novels: *An Idol for Others*, *The Lord Won't Mind*, and *The Front Runner*. His-

torical evidence tells us that such well-known figures as Oscar Wilde, Socrates, and Paul Goodman were married, fathers, and homosexually oriented.

Gay family-men have been mentioned in recent news stories involving attacks on homosexuals in Toronto city parks and in an Ottawa male prostitution scandal. In the latter case, one father who was arrested on the premises contemplated suicide when his nine-year-old son was harassed by indignant neighbors (*Body Politic*, 1975, 1976). Similar scandals have revealed gay family-men in such out-of-the-way places as Boise, Idaho (Gerassi, 1966) and Waukesha, Wisconsin (Lloyd, 1976: 56-60).

## THE STUDY

### METHODS

The above examples testify to the existence of gay husbands, although the area has been seldom researched in its own right. This is unfortunate, especially since the topic points to such theoretically interesting concepts as role conflict, moral careers, and adult sexual resocialization. The present study investigates these areas by addressing the following questions: what are the components of the gay husband role? how do these men negotiate, formulate, and maintain the role? what is the career of their role development? what constraints are placed on this role by culture, lifestyle, and the interaction process itself? what are the implications for self-identity and how do changes here relate to concepts of adult sexual resocialization? In short, how do gay husbands structure a reality that allows them to solve their contradictory statuses? The data are analyzed in the social construction of reality framework (Berger and Luckman, 1966). This posits that the fundamental nature of one's personal world is, in concert with objective reality, socially negotiated, situated, and emergent.

The findings reported are based on 2- to 4-hour, audio-recorded interviews with 30 men who identify themselves as presently homosexual on one or more of the sexual scales employed, who have been or currently are heterosexually married. Since this report is part of a larger study on gay fathers, all respondents are fathers, as well as husbands. However, given the greater salience of the husband role relative to the father role in accounting for marital adjustment and sexual resocialization, in this paper the husband role receives more focused attention. The respondents were located through snowball samples that were started in New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary, and a number of smaller communities.

The husbands studied range in age from 24 to 64 and exhibit the full range of homosexual covertness to overt-ness. They also manifest a variety of living and child custody arrangements: living with wife and children, living away from wife but with children, visiting rights to children, adoptive gay father, split custody ("one for you and one for me"), divided custody (child spends part of the year with mother and part of the year with father), gay grandfather, gay stepfather. A variety of occupations are represented, indicating a wide range of socioeconomic backgrounds: florist, interior decorator, minister, psychiatrist, oil pipeline worker, stock broker, janitor, lawyer, professor, and so forth.

The semistructured interview probed for information concerning the respondent's family of orientation, family of procreation, relationships with spouse, children, employer, gay and straight friends. In order to enhance internal validity, a triangulation of techniques was employed (Webb et al., 1966; Webb, 1970). Where possible, the respondent was interviewed in his residence; and details via pictures, hobbies, and mementos were also sought. Interviews with the children, wife, and gay lover were recorded where possible. Interaction with significant others and peers was noted at parties, hustlers' cruising spots, gay baths, and

bars. Owing to time constraints and the covert homosexual lifestyle of some of the men, such detailed research was not possible with all respondents. In all cases, however, enough information was gathered to make a satisfactory assessment of the validity of each participant's responses.<sup>3</sup>

Each gay husband was asked to indicate, using the Kinsey seven-point sexual orientation scale, the following: (1a) orientation of his sexual behavior over his lifetime; (1b) orientation of his sexual behavior presently; (2a) orientation of his sexual fantasy over his lifetime; (2b) orientation of his fantasy presently. Since a person may be gay in a number of different ways (in sexual behavior, in sexual fantasy, in culture, in romantic preference, in self-identity, and so forth), the scale provided material for assessing the standing of each respondent in comparison with the perceived orientations of other respondents. It provided a bench mark to compare the levels of gayness among the respondents and to assess the lifetime integration of their homosexual to heterosexual responses. Given the complexity of the issues involved, limitations of the available sample, and the exploratory nature of the research, the conclusions are suggestive and tentative rather than definitive.

## FINDINGS

Data are organized into an ideal-types<sup>4</sup> typology (see Figure 1) whose two variables are living arrangement and occupational autonomy,<sup>5</sup> the two most important criteria for increasing personal freedom to operate in the gay world. These dimensions form four cells with varying levels of freedom along which the gay husband can integrate his hetero- and homosexual lifestyles. A description is presented of each husband's lifestyle: (1) trade husband, (2) homosexual husband, (3) gay husband, (4) faggot husband.<sup>6</sup> Coping strategies employed within each cell are enumerated and contrasted with strategies employed by those

OCCUPATIONAL AUTONOMY  LIVING ARRANGEMENT	DEPENDENT OCCUPATION	INDEPENDENT OCCUPATION
LIVING WITH WIFE	1.  TRADE HUSBANDS  N = 5	2.  HOMOSEXUAL HUSBANDS  N = 7
LIVING WITHOUT WIFE	3.  GAY HUSBANDS  N = 8	4.  FAGGOT HUSBANDS  N = 10

Figure 1: Typology of Husbands Participating in Homosexual Behavior by Living Arrangement and Occupational Autonomy.

in other cells. Career progression of the lifestyles is detailed, followed by a theoretical discussion of the respondents' identity development.

### TRADE HUSBANDS

Trade refers to a man who engages in furtive same-sex sexual behavior and who is reluctant to accept this behavior as anything more than a genital urge.<sup>7</sup> Typically, such a man has a wife and children, the accoutrements of heterosexuality. Outwardly, he is indistinguishable from family-men of working-class to middle-class suburbs; consequently, his public identity is heterosexual. The majority of respondents in Humphreys' *Tearoom Trade* (1975) exhibit these characteristics.

Engulfed in a heterosexual role, the trade husband is marginal to the gay world and has proved to be the most difficult type to locate for the study. His social isolation from others who share his sexual interests burdens him with the only-one-in-the-world syndrome: "It's a relief to

find out there are others in the same boat. How do they hack this?"<sup>8</sup>

Trade husbands are loath to put a name on themselves or their behavior: "I hate labels; I'm not a category; I'm human; I'm just myself" are common responses to questions about sexual orientation. The wife and children are ostensibly unaware of the trade husband's outside sexual activity. One respondent says: "I never walk in the door without an airtight excuse of where I've been." Some describe elaborate rendezvous strategies; others avoid the strain of remembering stories by intimidating the wife into silence: "She knows better than to question my whereabouts. I tell her, 'I get home when I get home; no questions asked.'"

Extramarital sex for the trade husband is characterized by clandestine, impersonal encounters in parks, tearooms, highway rest stops, and with hitchhikers or male hustlers. The proverbial one-night stand necessarily becomes telescoped into the five-minute quickie. More sociable gay scenes such as bars, discos, parties, and homophile organizations are not available to these men because of the fear of discovery. In fact, they are largely unaware of sociable gay scenes in their communities and have no idea how to join them. Moreover, trade husbands who have any inkling of such places are ideologically repelled by them, believing that they are frequented only by "screaming queens," not men like themselves.

All trade husbands in this sample have had premarital sexual experiences with men. Typically, they were explained away with, "Christ, was I drunk last night!" Others report arranging heterosexual double-date situations in order to "watch my buddy fuck his girl so I could get it up to fuck my girl." At the time of these early same-sex encounters, no respondent perceived the acts as having a homosexual element.

The trade husband reports tumescence is achieved for marital coitus primarily by his ability to fantasize homo-



sexual erotica. One respondent has never had an overt homosexual experience during the twenty years of his marriage. Instead, he masturbates to muscle magazines, discards them before going home, and fantasizes about weightlifters during coitus with his wife. On the Kinsey scale, all trade husbands state their sexual fantasies are presently homosexual, and all but the previously mentioned respondent have experienced some homosexual contact in the past month.

They give several reasons for their extramarital sexual activities: "I only go out for it when I'm drunk or depressed." "I might be ok if my wife learned to give good blow jobs." "I'm straight trade (perform only the 'male-' or 'insertor-role'), but I get a kick horsing around with the gay kids." "Easy chicks are hard to find." "Fooling around with guys doesn't threaten my marriage like adultery would." Repeated themes in these accounts stress, for the participants, the inconsequentiality and nonseriousness of the behavior.

None of the men sees himself as "really homosexual." Most see their behavior as homosexual, although one states he does not see his behavior as even sexual: "I go to the truckstop and meet someone. We're just a couple of horny, married guys relieving ourselves. That's not sex."

No respondent rates his marriage as "happy" or "successful." Using Cuber and Harroff's (1965) assessment of marital adjustment, "devitalized" is the most appropriate description. Typically, marriage and coitus are regarded as duties to be endured, rather than intrinsically pleasurable. In spite of their accounts, all say they experience a great deal of uncertainty and guilt about leading double lives. All have had some form of counseling, and some are presently in therapy.

They view alternatives to marriage as severely limited. For example, none sees the gay world as a viable option. Frequently, they describe it as "superficial," "bitchy," "shallow," "unstable," "full of blackmail and violence."

When asked what they see for the future, the typical response is "to go on like this, I guess."

Other than the perceived lack of viable options, the main reason trade husbands give for remaining with the wife is the children. All rate the experience of fathering as central to their lives: "In this horrible marriage, [the children] are the consolation prize." Another says: "My children are the only humans I have ever loved. My parents, my brothers, my wife don't mean beans to me. I need my kids; they're what keep me going."

#### **HOMOSEXUAL HUSBANDS**

Homosexual refers to a man who engages in same-sex sexual behavior and whose self-identity, but not public identity, is consistent with it. Such a man is marginal to the gay community since he, like the trade husband, has a heterosexual public identity and a conventional, heterosexual family lifestyle. Although the homosexual husband is just as closeted as the trade husband to his wife and friends, he is much more comfortable with his homoerotic behavior and is more likely to admit his sexual orientation to other homosexuals.<sup>9</sup>

Compared to the trade husband, the homosexual husband has independent employment and tends to be more upper- to lower-middle class. This provides him the resources for an expanded repertoire of sexual outlets. Granted, he has relatively more to lose if caught; but he also has relatively more resources to prevent his apprehension and to defuse any compromising situation in which he might be discovered. Visiting call boys or maintaining a pied-a-terre provide relatively safe sexual outlets. Gay bars and baths are somewhat inaccessible since they often start too late, and homosexual husbands cannot regularly find excuses to stay away from the wife that long and that late at night. Those who travel as part of their business enjoy relative freedom.

I live for every business trip. Then I can hold a man in my arms all night. I hate rushing away from every guy so that I can be home to [the wife] by seven. How many nights a week can I tell her heavy traffic delayed me? How long 'til she realizes the only heavy traffic is cruising the hustlers in the park?

Those homosexual husbands in the sample who circulate in the field or the arts are able, at least in part, to mix their homosexual and heterosexual worlds (Hooker, 1965: 101). In this wealthier, more tolerant community, the epithet "perversion" is replaced by the more neutral "eccentricity," and variant behavior is accepted as long as you are discrete and "don't rub your wife's nose in it." This adjustment, however, is tenuous.

The hypocrisy of pussy-footing around at mixed parties is terrible; you know, pretending I don't know she knows and our friends pretending everything's as usual—or worse, pretending it's only mod-bisexual chic. I know I'm homosexual. Until it's out in the open, I'm afraid someone will pull a Virginia Woolf party number, expose the game; and wives and lovers flip out.

Homosexual husbands express ambivalent commitment to their marriages, which tend to rate as "passive-congenial" or "conflict-habituated" (Cuber and Harroff, 1965). In contrast to trade husbands who report considerable loyalty to their wives, homosexual husbands frequently entertain the idea of divorce.

Since the beginning, I've kept saying, "next year I'm leaving as soon as the children are bigger." Now that they are in college, I can't leave because they are my judges. They'd never forgive me for doing this all these years to their mother.

Considerable anxiety and guilt are felt by homosexual husbands, as the above quotations illustrate. The perceived

lack of a viable alternative, commitment to children, and the decreased standard of living necessitated by a divorce combine to keep the homosexual husband married.

I've spent 35 years achieving this comfortable, family life in suburbia and all I've really got is a split-level closet. So what do the gay-libbers expect *me* to do?

#### GAY HUSBANDS

Gay refers to a man who engages in homosexual behavior, whose self-identity and, to a limited extent, public identity reflects acceptance, not denial, of the validity of his behavior. Warren's respondents in *Identity and Community in the Gay World* (1974) are an example of these people. The gay husband's lifestyle approximates that of the bachelor since he is not living with his wife,<sup>10</sup> and he is well acquainted with the social institutions of the gay world: bars, clubs, and private gay parties.

Persons most likely to know about the gay husband are his ex-wife, his gay friends, and possibly his parents, but not his employer. Consequently, the degree of passing and compartmentalization of gay and straight worlds is much less than that required for trade and homosexual husbands. Anxiety is considerably reduced, but some cautions exist.

I'm straight only with the people at work. They're nice, but socializing with them is a hassle 'cause when they visit, I have to hetero-proof my apartment. I used to worry I'd bump into them in the [gay] bars. Now I figure, if they're there, we're both probably trying to keep the same secret from our boss.

Few gay husbands live with their children; rather they have structured a regular visiting schedule with them. They do not have the financial resources either to persuade their wives to relinquish the children or to hire surrogate care for them while devoting needed time to rise in their

careers. A minimum of openness about homosexuality exists with respect to their children. Typically, only older children are told, and it is not considered a topic of general discussion. There is some fear that, if it becomes widely known in the same community that he is gay, his ex-wife will become irked and deny him visiting privileges or his employer will dismiss him. The likelihood of successful legal appeal for gay men in such matters is minimal (Boggan et al., 1975).

Gay relationships approximate "open unions" (Knapp and Whitehurst, 1977) where supplementary sexual liaisons are mutually permitted. Nonsexual relationships with gay friends also assume considerable importance in the definition of self. Extensive socializing and modestly priced, but conspicuous consumption are central traits of the gay husband's lifestyle.

Institutions in the gay world for impersonal sex, tea-rooms, hustlers, roadstops, are patronized relatively infrequently by gay husbands. Preferred contexts for making sexual and social contacts include not only the bars and baths, but the churches and synagogues, restaurants, discos, residential areas, gay sports clubs, medical and counseling clinics, shops, theatres, charity clubs, and gay special-interest organizations such as those for antique collectors and motor cyclists.

#### FAGGOT HUSBANDS

Faggot refers to a man who not only engages in same-sex sexual behavior and has a self-identity reflective of that behavior, but who proudly acknowledges his lifestyle, even if such candor entails abuse. Faggots comprise the main focus in Teal's *The Gay Militants* (1971) and Humphreys' *Out of the Closets* (1972). Originally faggot referred to the bundle of twigs that, during the middle ages, was ignited to burn persons who were openly gay; hence, today's meaning of faggot as an up-front champion (Dodge, 1977):

I: Are you homosexual?

R: Homosexual? [Laughs] I am a matriculated cocksucker.

Men in this category comprise the largest section of my sample, primarily because such men are highly visible in the gay world and are more ideologically motivated to cooperate with such a study. They are from the full range of class backgrounds and have occupational autonomy; that is, they will not be dismissed from their employment if it becomes known they are gay. Some are employed by tolerant bosses; some are full-time gay activists; others are self-employed, often in businesses that have large gay clienteles.

Faggot husbands organize their symbolic world, to a great extent, around gay culture. Much of their leisure, if not occupation, is spent around gay culture. Much of their leisure, if not occupation, is spent in gay-related pursuits. Their outlook characterizes them as "born again gays." They have experienced the trauma of bitterly unhappy marriages, the struggle of achieving a gay identity, and now feel they finally have arrived at a satisfactory adjustment:

Don't ask me why I'm gay. Ask me why did I persevere. I've always been gay; it's just that I tried everything to prove to myself and the world that I wasn't. At last, with all that pain and shit behind me, I'm living my way.

A number of faggot husbands have full-time custody of their children and are living with a lover. In all cases, the children are aware of their father's sexuality. Problems with child-rearing are not foreign to faggot fathers; but they appear to be no more than those reported by single, heterosexual fathers with custody (Hetherington et al., 1976; Keshet and Rosenthal, 1976; Mendes, 1976a, b; Orthner et al., 1976).

Those who live with their children and lover are more sedentary and more apt to have a close circle of gay friends, rather than being at the center of gay social institutions

like the gay husbands. This reflects two conditions: first, childless gays, like childless people in general (Veevers, 1975), have a lower tolerance for children. Consequently, it is difficult for gay parents to establish and maintain friendships with childless gays. Second, most of the faggot husbands waged difficult battles to obtain custody of their children and express concomitantly high commitment to spending considerable time with them.

### MORAL CAREERS

The four preceding categories of husbands can be viewed as points in a moral career. Career is a heuristic device, not a concrete one, for detailing the stages or sequential development of status passage. Lemert (1967: 51) adds to this by saying a career is "the recurrent or typical contingencies and problems awaiting someone who continues in a course of action." Studies detailing specific career paths include those of marijuana users (Becker, 1953), polio victims (Davis, 1961), delinquents (Matza, 1969), strippers (Skipper and McCaghy, 1970), and unwed mothers (Rains, 1971).

By using career sequence, we are not implying that anybody can become homosexual or that no one has to. Too much contrary evidence exists to present male homosexuality as completely voluntaristic (Cooper, 1974; Meyer-Bahlburg, 1977). However, given a basic erotic attraction for persons of the same sex, there are a number of variable paths one can choose to express his desires. Four such lifestyles have been described above. The relationship of each lifestyle to the others is shown in the following career framework.

Typically, the faggot husband career progresses from cell one through cell four with respondents picking up only some of the traits from cells two and three. The tendency is to leave wives and, as far as possible, secure relatively

independent employment, the two dimensions for increasing one's personal freedom to move in the gay world. Six salient trends accompanying this movement are listed:

- (1) knowledge of the gay world increases;
- (2) attitudes toward gay sex become more accepting and casual, less desperate and furtive. Gay sex becomes integrated into the fabric of everyday life;
- (3) reference groups change so that significant others are acquired who support homosexual identity;
- (4) self-concept stabilizes. Commitment to a homosexual identity increases;
- (5) psychological health and self-esteem increase. Anxiety and depression about being gay decrease;<sup>11</sup>
- (6) the degree to which respondents achieve congruence between their public identity and self-identity increases.<sup>12</sup>

Career movement is an attempt to reduce the cognitive dissonance created by being marginal to two worlds (Festinger, 1957; Lindquist, 1976). Pull from cell to cell, however, may be blocked by economic considerations, lack of access to a viable gay community, inability to secure occupational autonomy, inability to leave the wife or ill health.

Movement is not unilateral. There are many negotiations back and forth, "in and out of the closet," to use the argot. "Doing" and "being" gay entail complex processes with numerous gradations. Lines separating the cells blur due to the movement of men among categories. Consequently, it is more accurate to talk about career paths, or sets of careers, rather than a single path. As Watson and Weinberg (1977) so cogently point out, a deviant career concept neglects the intricacies of the homosexual identity process. Additionally, it is important to stress that few respondents accidentally stumble from stage to stage in this career sequence. Rather, each level is achieved by a painful searching process, negotiating with both the self and with the



larger world. The following section details the social construction of this complementary process.

### **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITY**

Major findings are that (1) for the respondents gayness and traditional marital relationships are discordant compared to relationships established when they move into the gay world, and (2) gay husbands, in spite of increased public stigma, achieve a sense of psychological well-being as their stigmatized careers progress. These findings suggest increased congruence between one's public persona, behavior, and self-identity reduces the cognitive dissonance and marginality inherent in living in two worlds. What are the symbolic interactionist dynamics involved in this process? How do respondents actually formulate an authentic sexual identity in the face of the faggot husband paradox? By looking more closely at the lifestyles of each type of husband, this process becomes clearer.

The trade husband finds it important that his publicly recognized, heterosexual identity not be disturbed. Elaborate covering devices are used to conceal his extramarital behavior and to protect his discreditable identity (Goffman, 1963). This gives us insight into the motives behind his refusal to label his same-sex sexual behavior as homosexual. It is not so much that he hates labels, *per se*. After all, he accepts a heterosexual label; rather, he dislikes labels that identify behaviors he would prefer to forget. He cannot see himself simultaneously as a worthwhile person and as a homosexual. He cannot reconcile the cognitive dissonance created between his masculine self-image and the popular image of gays as hatefully effeminate. The most he can acknowledge is that he often gets together with other men to ejaculate and that he fantasizes about men during coitus.

Realizing this behavior is inconsistent with his heterosexual identity, he truncates his cognitive dissonance by compartmentalizing his two worlds. Additionally, he tends to employ verbalized styles of stigma evasion that refuse to grant significance to his same-sex sexual behavior.<sup>13</sup> Although some of these have been detailed in the previous section, two additional examples extend the point: one typical account of trade husbands is, "Sex with men is a minor aspect of my life that I refuse to let outweigh more important things." This ideal might be laudable if the trade husband could support it. It becomes evident, after listening to his experiences, that his sex with men is not so minor an aspect after all. Much of his time, money, effort, and anxiety are employed in rearranging his schedule to accommodate sex: searching to find willing men; spending money on his car and on gasoline to cruise; constructing intricate stories to fool fellow workers, tricks, and friends; lying to his family about his activity; and buying his wife penance gifts. Some have endured unpleasant encounters with police and queer-bashers, and more have experienced near misses of the same. It becomes clear that men who repeatedly endure these conditions in order to pursue a behavior cannot really dismiss the behavior as unimportant to them.

A second rationalization employed by the trade husband is, "I'm not really homosexual since I don't care if it's a man, a woman or a dog that's licking my cock. All I want is a hole." Humphreys (1975) reports this statement to be especially prevalent among his tearoom participants. My data also support this finding. Humphreys, unfortunately, has to accept the statement at face value since his disguised research technique did not allow him to probe for verifiable evidence. Gay and faggot husbands in our study, however, give some background on their former use of this statement. They say that, in their past tearoom experiences, they were not looking for just an obliging orifice; rather it was equally important that they persuade the most attrac-

tive man there to fellate them. These men go on to say that the rationalization eventually breaks down and the tearoom participant must confront his behavior and see it for what it is. Wiseman (1970) refers to a similar rationalization by alcoholics: "I'm just between jobs"; and Cressey (1971) does likewise with respect to embezzlers: "I'm only borrowing."

Techniques used to neutralize the homosexual label and to reinforce the heterosexual identity construct a world view for the trade husband in which he can see himself as genuinely heterosexual. All his significant others, his reference groups, are heterosexual.<sup>14</sup> By contrast, his restrictions on his activities in the gay world only allow him to construct this world as unappealing.

Not all of the trade husband's negative perceptions of the gay world, however, are voluntarily constructed. To be an overly orthodox social constructionist is to miss this observation: some of the conflict trade husbands find between the heterosexual married world and the homosexual sexual world is a factor of the two worlds being inherently, structurally antagonistic.

A case in point is the sexual cruising pattern of the trade husband. For him, the choice is not between immediate gratification and deferred gratification, but rather between immediate gratification and no gratification at all. For example, if he does not seize every gay sexual opportunity, he may wait a long time for the next one. For the many trade husbands who are able to get away from home only one night a week, cruising is necessarily rushed and desperate. Ironically, failure is structured into this cruising pattern since successful cruising necessitates that one be cool and play the waiting game. Not only does his cruising pattern sabotage his aim of obtaining sex, but it may lead him into dangerous situations if he is imprudent in his hasty approach to the situation.

Trade and homosexual husbands find successful integration of the two institutions, traditional heterosexual

marriage and impersonal gay sex, to be problematical without radically altering their intrinsically incompatible structures. They experience a no-win situation where they feel damned if they cannot have their families and damned if they cannot engage in homosexual behavior. Far from having the best of both worlds, they tend to have the worst of both worlds.

Not surprisingly, all trade husbands report unpleasant cruising experiences. Stories of encountering agents provocateurs are legion. This reinforces their conception of the gay world as an unattractive, unworkable option compared to heterosexual family life. Caught in this combination of socially constructed and structural realities, how do trade husbands move to other cells?<sup>15</sup>

#### IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN RELATIONSHIPS

*The single experience that initiates cell progression, that intervenes to redirect the unfavorable social construction of the gay world is the experience of falling in love with another man.* This may happen when the trade or homosexual husband repeatedly encounters a former trick at a cruising spot or when he goes to the trick's house and meets his gay friends. Relationships develop; and it becomes difficult for the respondent to construct his reality of the gay world as impersonal, shallow, bitchy, ridden with violence, and so forth. It may appear strange that anyone relinquishes heterosexual status and privilege to enter the stigmatized gay world. One must not forget, however, the ironic fact that the gay world, being disvalued and secretive, has for the homosexually oriented a seductive pull. This dynamic, first described by Georg Simmel, is applied to an analysis of homosexuality by Warren (1974: 5, 98-99). Coming out in the gay world offers a clear-cut identity, a close-knit community, and it fosters the sense of an elite, chosen-people status. These factors serve to increase the salience of the gay world to the individual

entering it, to facilitate a positive social construction, and to make it a viable alternative to heterosexual marriage.

Simultaneously, the homosexual husband is constructing his married life in an increasingly unfavorable light. By spending more time away from home visiting gay friends and by "rubbing his wife's nose" in his extramarital sex, he creates marital tensions. These behaviors establish "closure," to use Lemert's (1953) perceptive metaphor, and solve the cognitive dissonance of living in two worlds. Ultimately, the wife makes it impossible for the husband to construct his marriage in a favorable light by asking for a divorce.

The gay husband, away from his heterosexual family and in the gay world, finds it necessary to reconstruct his identity, not only gay relationships, as positive. The bitter experience of dissolving his marriage equips him with a militant stridency for this process. Faggot husbands converted from a heterosexual lifestyle have the same fervor that characterizes all who are "born again," be they Christians converted from agnosticism or abstainers converted from alcoholism. Merton (1968) explains this by stating that people who change their reference group often find it necessary to adopt extreme postures to both their former and present groups. They become "dependently hostile to a negative reference group"; they need to take a stance of "compulsive alienation" (Merton, 1968: 350).

Similarly, trade and homosexual husbands who are compelled by stigma to conceal their homosexuality adopt stridently conservative postures. This "reaction formation" (Merton, 1968) or "breastplate of righteousness" (Humphreys, 1975) insulates the man from competing alternative explanations, reduces cognitive dissonance, and confirms in his mind the correctness of his present reference group.<sup>16</sup> For the respondents, the social construction of sexual identity tends to move from the defensive accounts of trade husbands to the candid gay-identity declarations of faggot husbands.

## **CONCLUSION: TOWARD A THEORY OF ADULT SEXUAL RESOCIALIZATION**

Details have been presented on two central aspects of adult sexual resocialization, identity and culture.<sup>17</sup> Four considerations for developing a theory of adult sexual resocialization follow from this study.

First, sexual identity reformulation is a more complex process than present socialization theories allow. To date, sexual socialization theorists have tended to research only adolescents' sexual awakenings and, consequently, fail to explain the more complex process of adults redefining their sexual identity. Present models of socialization do violence to the intricacies of this development.

Second, resocialization into a disvalued sexual identity and culture does not necessarily reflect personal disorganization or failure as has been speculated by some deviance theorists. To the contrary, it indicates success in establishing a valid, publicly and personally, congruent identity.

Third, sexual resocialization is not age-specific. Contrary to notions about decreased sexuality and decreased learning ability of the aged, several respondents first acknowledged their homoerotic interests in their late fifties and early sixties, when they were already grandfathers. It is possible to alter such major life-organizing components as sexual identity and culture even at a relatively advanced age.

Fourth, sexual resocialization theory must be able to account for the effects of both constructed and structured realities as they facilitate and constrain change. It is difficult to imagine anyone trying harder than the respondents in this study to be heterosexual. In spite of going to great lengths to construct the heterosexual world as favorable, and to equally great lengths to construct the gay world as unappealing, a homosexual identity emerges. Contrary to the many structured supports that buttress heterosexuality, and in opposition to pressure from family, the faggot hus-

band comes out. Any theory of adult sexual resocialization must take into account these four important considerations.

This preliminary study indicates that moral careers of homosexually oriented husbands tend to move from covert, highly compartmentalized lifestyles, with all the surface appearances of suburban matrimonial accommodation, toward open, often militant, gay stances. Although ruptured marriages are left in the wake of this movement, these men consistently maintain commitment to and responsibility for their children, insofar as the courts allow. Such resocialization and consequent adjustments to life in a differing cultural milieu are seen as resulting not only from a complex process of negotiation, in which cognitive dissonance is resolved, but also from the initiation of a homosexual love relationship. The latter appears stronger than any other factor in enabling the husband to reassess the potentialities of gay lifestyles and identities.

## NOTES

1. Throughout this discussion, gay husband is the general term employed to describe all husbands who engage in same-sex sexual behavior. As will become clear, however, gay husband also designates a distinct category with its own particular lifestyle. The context of the sentence makes clear whether the term gay husband refers to the general phenomenon or the specific category.

2. The complementary phenomenon of lesbian wives and mothers has received some recent attention (see, for example, Martin and Lyon, 1972; and Pageiow, 1976).

3. In cross-validating findings with significant others, no major factual discrepancies were noted. Considerable differences were observed, however, in the perceived salience of various events. Understandably, each significant other tended to stress events that placed her/himself in the most favorable light. In trying to locate gay husbands to interview, only one potential respondent declined and that was because of "scheduling problems." In several cases, interviews with wives and children were not pursued where emotional or geographical distance or children's ages made such attempts ill-advised.

4. Ideal type is an abstraction of a phenomenon arrived at by emphasizing only its key characteristics, thereby giving it a heightened reality (Rose and Rose, 1969: 590).

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An ideal type is an abstract concept of a class or phenomenon arrived at by specifying what are thought to be the key characteristics common to these phenomenon and exaggerating these characteristics in the extreme. Thus, an ideal type indicates clearly the main characteristics of a class of objects, but such ideal types as unities are too exaggerated to be found in real life.

5. Independent employment is determined by a negative response to the question: "If your employer discovered you are gay, would you be dismissed?"

6. The popularization of faggot reflects the tactic whereby minority groups take a formerly pejorative term and redefine it as a positive expression of their unique difference and, thereby, subvert the sting of prejudicial name-calling. Such is the case with blacks, hookers, and now with faggots. The term expresses pride in surviving past bigotry and self-confidence in achieving a more egalitarian future. The female counterpart to faggot is dyke (see, for example, Mager, 1975).

7. The classic description of trade as given by Humphreys (1975) stipulates that such men prefer the insertor role during sex. Since the sexual patterns of respondents in this category approximate those of trade, they are called trade here, even though most of them do not refer to themselves by this term.

8. Respondents, rather than being paid, are promised copies of all reports published from this study. Sharing information is especially important to trade husbands to reduce their social isolation with respect to the gay world. Ironically, many of these men cannot receive such material at their home address for fear of family discovery. Alternative arrangements have been made.

9. Two of the men in this group refer to themselves as "ambisexuals," meaning they are capable of erotic arousal with both sexes. All respondents say, however, they *prefer* sex with men.

10. It would be more explicit to call the men in the gay and faggot categories ex-husbands since they are not living with their former wives. To keep the labels convenient, however, the shorter term is used.

11. Increased psychological health is assessed by an index that incorporates measures of the following variables: decreased anxiety and depression about being gay; increased stability of self-concept; increased self-esteem and respect for sexual partners, decreased need for professional counseling; decreased use of rituals and facades to pass as straight with significant others; decreased nervous and psychosomatic discomforts.

12. Excellent discussions of the interrelationships of the processes involved in identity development are found in Hoffman (1968), Lofland (1969), Gagnon and Simon (1973), Hammersmith and Weinberg (1973), and Weinberg and Williams (1974).

13. Verbalized styles of stigma evasion (Goffman, 1963) have been discussed under such headings as vocabularies of motives (Mills, 1940), techniques of neutralization (Sykes and Matza, 1957), deviance disavowal (Davis, 1961), accounts (Scott and Lyman, 1969), and vocabularies of adjustment (Cressey, 1971).



14. Wives also contribute to the denial process for their own economic, ego, and social reasons. The entire family develops a conspiracy of silence around the homosexual behavior. These dynamics will be addressed in a future paper (see, also Ponse, 1976: 323-326).

15. In no case is it found that therapists aid the respondent's movement to other cells. To the contrary, all claim their therapist impeded progress by insisting on their being genuinely heterosexual.

16. A similar stridency characterizes those formerly gay men who claim to have been redeemed from homosexuality and become heterosexual. For an example of new-found militant heterosexuality, see Aaron's *Straight: A Heterosexual Talks About His Homosexual Past* (1972).

17. Discussion of the problematic area of sexual orientation resocialization (erotic preference) is beyond the scope of this paper.

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