Entendidos:
A Study of Emotional Communication Among Gay Men of Barcelona

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Abstract

This thesis offers an analysis and a reconsideration of the emotional needs and emotional-moral experiences of a group of young gay men of Barcelona. It focuses in particular on: (1) their growing up different in the context of their predominantly heterosexual society, (2) their relationship' experiences of intimacy, love and sex and (3) their friendship and socialisation experiences both with other gay and/or straight men.

In depth interviews were carried out with a student friendship-group of eight young gay men, using elements of psychoanalytic interviewing, friendship as a relational emotional paradigm and an adapted version of a voice-centred relational method to deal with gay male experience. Findings suggest that: (a) young homosexual men of Barcelona do not necessarily assume the adoption of a gay identity (in the Anglo-Saxon way) as the only way to make sense of their homosexual emotional needs nor do their way of speaking and sharing their emotional experiences assume a linear, straightforward discourse to articulate their emotional needs and homosexual experience; (b) the cultural specificity of emotional development should be fully acknowledged and incorporated into the structure of psychoanalytic practice, instead of assuming clinical competence to deal with gay men by simply framing their experience according to heterosexual assumptions and paradigms on male emotional development, and, (c) that there is needed further sensitivity and awareness of the cultural specificity of male homosexual experiences that incorporates issues of identity, emotional needs, love, intimacy, sexuality and morality within current sociological research on gay experience, instead of reducing gay experience to mere discourse or rational narratives.

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Acknowledgements

To my lovely husband James

INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the Study

This study aims at a discussion and a reconsideration of the emotional needs of young gay men of contemporary Barcelona and its relevance for contemporary sociological and psychoanalytical theory and practice.

In order to explore the emotional needs and experiences of Barcelona gay men I interviewed a friendship group of eight middle class gay men from Barcelona. They are:

Miguel 22, born and raised in Barcelona. Of Andalusian and Catalan parentage. A design student , he lives on his own as an openly gay man in a flat owned by his family. He works part time as a courier, does voluntary work in a gay phone line and is currently the boyfriend of Xavier.

Xavier 21, born and raised in Barcelona. He lives as an extravert gay son with his Catalan parents. An arts student he also works part time as a waiter.

Paco 27, born and raised in Barcelona. He lives as an introverted gay son with his Catalan parents. Paco has recently finished his finance studies and is planning to start working professionally soon. Paco and Miguel have been partners in the past. Nowadays they remain good friends.

Salvador 27, born and raised in a Catalan province outside Barcelona. He lives at present on his own as an openly gay man in a rented flat in Barcelona. Has a BA in technology and works professionally in the field. Salvador and Miguel were also partners in the past and nowadays they remain good friends.

Sebastian 21, born and raised in a Catalan province outside Barcelona and living currently with his Catalan parents as a straight son. An arts student, works also part time as a salesman. He has not had gay male romantic-sexual experiences yet, but is willing to do so.

Manuel 22, born and raised in a Catalan province. Of Catalan family, he lives currently in Barcelona on his own as an openly gay man in a rented flat. An arts student, he has had a few boyfriends who are not part of this friendship group.

Jose Maria 24, born and raised in Barcelona. Of Andalusian and Catalan parentage, he lives with his parents as a straight son. An arts student, he also works part time in educational affairs. He has not had any boyfriends yet and sees himself as a bisexual man.

Sergio 24, born and raised in Barcelona. He lives with his Catalan parents as a straight son. He is an arts student also working part time as a waiter. He has also had a few boyfriends who are not part of this friendship group.

The study of the emotional development and emotional needs of Barcelona gay men has been largely neglected within Spanish, Latin American, United States (US) and British psychoanalytic and sociological research. Most of the currently available data on gay male experiences deals basically with US and British gay male experience, (Bergler, 1947; Bieber, 1962; Gagnon & Simon, 1967; Plummer, 1975; Socarides, 1978; Weeks, 1981; Berger, 1993; Green, 1987; Lewes, 1988; Hadelman, 1991; Nicolisi, 1991; Connell, 1992; O'Connor, 1993; Frommer, 1995; Domenici, 1995; Rosen, 1996; Golding, 1997; Horrocks, 1998).

While these studies do resonate in various ways with different aspects of Barcelona gay male experience - for they allow some

understanding of various ways US and British gay emotional culture and developmental patterns have articulated notions of male intimacy, love, desire and sex - these notions do not bear the same relevance for a clearer appreciation of the cultural context of Barcelona gay male emotional experience and emotional expressiveness.

In this sense, the present project is also an attempt to voice and articulate some of the ways in which "we" (Mexicans and Barcelonian-Spaniards) have actually experienced homosexual desire and tried to recognise and make sense of our emotional needs in a relational framework, and how these experiences have also shaped our identity and emotional expressiveness.

In raising the possibility of addressing these different cultural ways of experiencing homosexual desire, I am not assuming that Barcelonian and Mexican homosexualities are never associated with, and even sometimes framed according to, dominant US and British paradigms on homosexuality, identity, desire, love, intimacy, sexuality and morality. But then the specificity of Spanish-American gay male experience threatens to get lost by either homogenising and/or distorting it by framing it merely as exotic, and somehow unintelligible "others." (Murray, 1984; Guasch, 1991; Murray, 1995; Llamas, 1997; Aliaga, 1997; Buffington, 1997; Murray, 1997; Smith, 1997; Llamas, 1998; Llamas, 1999). Some aspects of Mexican homosexualities have been studied mostly by US anthropologists and to a lesser extent Mexican anthropologists and sociologists since the seventies. Although throughout these years some interesting data have been gathered the main focus of this studies has been on issues of sharp gender role dichotomies, machismo and sexual behaviour that do not quite convey the complexity of their emotional

development. (Carrier, 1971, 1976a,1976b; 1989a, 1989b, 1995; Murray, 1987; Taylor, 1978; 1986; Alonso, 1989) Issues of Mexican gay male emotional development, emotional needs, emotional communication, desire, love, care and affection remain largely neglected. Likewise there are no studies contrasting Mexican and Barcelonian gay male emotional needs and development. Therefore in this study I have drawn mainly on studies which bear relevance to Barcelona gay male experience and from these I have attempted to make some contrasts with my interviewees and my own experience.

On the other hand, the US gay male identity initially evolved as a result of political activism, and as a strategic defence, that US homosexual men started to use to defend themselves against a hostile, homophobic society. However, this initial form of political identity has been reinvented by the market and often been transformed into a sort of commodity that can be purchased (Altman, 1982).

It is precisely this new commodity version that has been exported and imposed worldwide. In the case of Spain, the expansion of this gay commodity-identity has almost replaced its local cultural resources of articulating male homoerotic desire, by increasingly reproducing the gay-commodity sort of theme park for the happy and well adjusted, i.e. most notably in Ibiza, Barcelona and other Spanish cities (Guasch, 1991).

In this context, I would like to place Barcelona gay men experiences, with their concepts of "entender" and "entendido" (see below) not only as a way of indirectly highlighting multiple forms of cultural oppression, misrepresentation and misunderstanding, but also to place Barcelona gay men as the site of a different consciousness

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and affection with a heightened appreciation of ambiguity and multiplicity rather than cultural fixity and certainty.

This project is also a personal reflection on my training and clinical practice as a psychoanalyst in Mexico City, and the circumstances that eventually led me to move across disciplines, (from medicine, psychiatry, psychoanalysis and now sociology) as well as cultures (Mexican, Spanish and at present English) and languages (Spanish, Catalan, English) in order to refigure my personal and professional experiences as a gay man.

I was trained as a psychoanalyst at the Mexican Institute of Psychoanalysis, (in Mexico city, which was founded by Erich Fromm in 1960). Fromm lived in Mexico for 25 years, (1949 to 1973). During this time, he published most of his books, (i.e. Escape from Freedom, The Sane Society, To Have or To Be, The Art of Loving, etc.).

He started teaching psychoanalysis in Mexico in 1950. He was also an early founding member, together with Max Horkheimer and Herbert Marcuse, of what became known as the Frankfurt School for Social Research (critical theory). Fromm's work is crucially concerned with a socio-political critique of the burgeoise, normalising and universalising elements within Freud's work and the unfortunate rush into normative- adjustive theory that his theory underwent since the forties as well with a revision of the place of psychoanalysis in contemporary culture and society, infusing and interweaving psychoanalytic theory with the insights of Marxism. He also combined these with a thoughtful blend of humanism and existentialism, mediated through the prism of German Enlightenment and neo-Kantian thought, and infused with traces of prophecy and mysticism.(Burston, 1991).

My Interest in this Subject

As a gay man, I have always had a particular interest in the development of gay men and the difficulties that move them to do something about their situation, particularly when they decide to consult a psychoanalyst. While I have never believed that homosexuality is pathological in itself, my initial attempts at working with gay men sprang from a conception of human development that offered little support to any outcome not representing an "adequate" heterosexual resolution.

These heterosexually-oriented psychoanalytic learning experiences did not help me to listen to myself, and the gay patients I worked with, in a more resonant, flexible way. The reasons for these are varied (i.e. perhaps the long psychoanalytic institutional transformation of its initial radical questioning of bourgeois sexuality into normative theory, as a way of obtaining " scientific" quasi-medical status, has not allowed them to be open about their gay members and so dealing with homosexualities. On the other hand, my own insufficient emotional-sexual gay experience when I started my analytic training at 23 probably did not allow me to reflect thoroughly enough and address these issues more openly and directly. At that time, this had a somewhat unclear and perplexing effect on my identity and my professional practice in various ways.

On the one hand, although the Frommian "school" in which I was trained as a psychoanalyst does not explicitly describe homosexuality as pathology, in clinical seminars and supervision sessions it was seldom mentioned, let alone sufficiently addressed. In this way, homosexual experience indirectly became rather

"unrecognised" and "unspecified," by privileging instead universal human issues of character orientations, i.e. "biophilia" (the channelling and deployment of all productive human psychosocial potentialities that are oriented toward being and affirming life) and "necrophilia" (the non- productive, destructive deterioration of these human potentialities).

These general and universalised personality orientations towards human existence were regarded by Fromm as being more structural, and in this sense, more crucially related to the development of personality.

On the other hand, although Frommian psychoanalysis is not centrally concerned with only the pathological side of every human experience, but, also specifically tries to address and highlight the creative potential that each person can develop; in practice however, when it came to dealing with homosexual patients, there was a diluted sense in which their particular homosexual experience was grist to the analytic mill. For most homosexual desire and feeling could somehow easily get subsumed and enmeshed within a general, basically heterosexual universalising view of "human" development, with not much sense of gender and sexual variation and differentiation, and so gay patients' experiences could end up being indirectly framed in the context of deep, unresolved, heterosexual conflicts.

This "unspecificity" to deal with gay experience did not allow enough space for the articulation, let alone the voicing, of different gay experiences and needs that could not be clearly addressed. This resulted in strange silences and unspoken accommodations; so we would often end up adopting rather "neutral" and/or (by implication) a

heterosexual stance and assumptions as a way of dealing with homosexual problems.

At my psychoanalytical institute, there have always been lesbian and gay psychoanalysts, and being gay or lesbian has never been an exclusion criterion to become a Frommian analyst. However, this very fact was not clearly and openly acknowledged and the general implicit message that I got (both during my training and also afterwards when I started my professional practice) was that, somehow, "we all" were, in principle, supposed to be and/or act heterosexual.

I discussed these issues on several occasions with my training analyst, and he agreed with me about the necessity of being more open and interested in homosexuality, both in theory and in practice: i.e., that analysts should not assume clinical competence with gay patients if they had not devoted enough time and reflection to increasing their knowledge of and sensitivity to these issues and to learning specific clinical skills for dealing with gay experience. But although these ideas were welcomed, it was not clear to me who we were going to start taking more seriously (or when) - i.e. by developing ad-hoc seminars and clinical supervisions that eventually had to be incorporated as part of the compulsory courses within the plan of studies.

Eventually, I decided to look closer at myself, and to come much closer as well to the sociological dimension and accounts of the subject - which are already implicit in many ways, although not fully developed in Frommian theory - in order to explore interdisciplinary and multicultural approaches to homosexual experience.

Later on, I started a PhD in Sociology at Barcelona University, where I began the present project and, eventually, chose to work with

a gay professor who has actually done work on Spanish gay experience using mainly anthropological concepts and methods.

I discussed with him my views and interest on the relevance of emotional communication among gay men, as a very important, valid source of understanding and appreciating gay experience, as being much more than just sexual lust. However, to my surprise and disappointment, I eventually came to realise, through hearing his views and ways of approaching the research questions I wanted to explore, that on the one hand, psychoanalysis was largely ignored and rejected, and was considered as not sociologically relevant. Psychoanalysis was viewed as being only concerned with a "micro" level, which is too individualistic and therefore inappropriate and unrelated to a "proper" sociological approach - i.e. within a sociological ethos, still pretty much based on a broader social structural and social categories.

On the other hand, I also realised that issues of emotional development, love and male affection were almost ignored. When they were mentioned, they were basically framed according to interactionist and constructionist approaches that do not really provide a space nor a language to explore the emotional-moral dimension and dynamics of gay male experience.

Thus I started looking around, and contacted different researchers abroad, in order to find more theoretical and methodological support to carry out my project. Eventually, I came across the work of different sociologists, including Victor Seidler's (my actual thesis supervisor). Although he has not directly and consistently worked with gay male experience, his work on heterosexual masculinities and his concern with the split between intellect and affect as central to the construction of male subjectivity,

as well as his interest in psychoanalytical accounts of male subjectivity, seemed to me more relevant. His work is closer to the type of approach to gay male emotional communication that I wanted to explore. As a result I contacted him, and discussed my project and my interest in his work. He was also interested in working with me, on a project which also tries to make some sense of my past and present personal and professional gay experiences.

Psychoanalysis, Sociology and Gay Men

The insights of Freud's psychoanalytic notions of the unconscious and desire initially opened up important new ways of understanding the cultural ordering of sexuality as well as the shaping of homosexual and heterosexual desire, by claiming that object choice is a cultural necessity rather than a biological given. It also made it possible to see homosexuality as a wider human potential and not just the expression of a sexual minority. Freud's notions of the unconscious, sublimation, transference and resistance also opened up ways of understanding homosocial relations and desire in a more reflexive, dialectical and emotional way instead of subsuming them into current merely linear and consciously discursive approaches (Elliot, 1996, 1999, 2001).

Freud's profoundly significant perception that heterosexuality and homosexuality are phenomena to be understood, and not taken as unproblematically "natural" or "fixed", together with his generally open attitude that he adopted towards the social regulation of homosexuality, has also opened up fruitful possibilities to understand

these issues. However, these insights were soon abandoned in the fatal rush into normative and adjustive psychotherapy that psychoanalytic theory and practice underwent from the forties onwards, especially in the United States, (Fromm, 1970; Friedman, 1986; Lewes, 1988; Domenici, 1995).

This unfortunate normative and adjustive shift within U.S. psychoanalytic circles which was later followed also in some European and Latin-American psychoanalytic schools leading many, until very recently, to frame and study homosexuality basically as a pathological condition by appealing to rather univocal, unidisciplinary, deterministic and universalistic medicalised assumptions (Bieber, 1965; Socarides, 1979). However, during the late eighties and along the nineties there has been a modest but consistent increase in studies that address the biases, heterosexism and insufficiencies of psychoanalysis in relation to homosexual experience. (Friedman, 1986, 1995, 1996; Lewes, 1988; Isay,1989, 1996; Domenici,1995; Cornett,1993, 1995; Frommer, 1994, 1995; Drescher, 1998).

On the other hand, within mainstream sociology, there has also been a growing interdisciplinary study of homosexualities, that attempts to combine in different ways a number of aims, theories and methods mainly with anthropology, social psychology, linguistics geography, law, queer theory. (Halperin, 1990; Duberman, 1997; Nardi & Schneider, 1998; Parker & Aggleton, 1999;Nardi, 2000; Murray, 2000 Sandfort, 2000). These efforts have resulted in an increase and diversification of debates mainly around different aspects identity, gender, culture, communities and gay emotional emotional experience (Plummer, 1998).

Similarly, the committed efforts of identity movements feminism, gay and lesbian and queer movements have made since

the sixties challenging academia, have exposed not only the extent to which they had been omitted from prevailing theoretical traditions. They also show how the exclusion of cultural and sexual diversity from Western dominant theoretical models resulted in the imposition of a master term whereby the dominant groups have not only constructed "serviceable" others, but also defined how these others ought to feel and think about themselves.

By unmasking the biases behind paradigms hitherto regarded as objective, identity movements have revealed the extent to which all epistemology is discourse-specific, and how, for too long, "our" major cultural and scientific views have been monologic and self-celebratory. Thus, both gay and feminist movements have, in their own ways, illustrated the various ways, often subtle, by which dominant groups both wield their power and ensure its maintenance by engaging in monologues masquerading as dialogues, thereby obscuring diversity and disagreement (Foucault, 1980; Sampson, 1993; Seidman, 1996).

Similarly, from the fifties onwards there have also slowly emerged other studies that are more concerned with the effects on gay men's self esteem and identity of continuous and prolonged social and institutional oppression and homophobia. (Cory, 1951; Hooker, 1957; Brown, 1976; Adams,1977; Morin, 1977; Davidson, 1978; Maylon, 1982; de Monteflores, 1986; Friedman, 1986; Bayer, 1987; Gonsiorek, 1991; Duberman, 1991). In other similar studies, the development of psychological resilience and vulnerability among gay men as part of their emotional and social responses to these institutional oppression, tends to treat gay subcultures as ethnic-like minorities, sometimes framing these debates around different views about the rise, meaning, and changing social forms of homosexual

identities and communities, (Murray, 1979; Pattison, 1980; Anzaldua & Moraga, 1983; Lorde, 1982). These, in turn, have started to be contested by queer theory approaches, which have sought to shift the debate somewhat away from explaining the modern homosexual, to questions of the operation of the hetero/homosexual binary, from an exclusive preoccupation with homosexuality to a focus on heterosexuality as a social and political organizing principle, and from a politics of minority interest to a politics of knowledge and difference, aiming to transform homosexual theory into a general social theory or one standpoint from which to analyse social dynamics (Rich, 1980; Plummer, 1981, 1992, 1999; D'Emilio, 1983; Weeks, 1996; Weinrich & Williams, 1991, de Laureatis, 1991; Wittig, 1992 Stein, 1992, Seidman, 1995, 1996, Butler, 1997).

Although, some studies have highlighted the vital intersections between the emotional dimension of identity and self-development, love, desire, intimacy and care (Thoits, 1989) as well as the cultural meaning of love as an emotion (Cancian, 1989; Chodorow, 1999) within mainstream sociological accounts on gay male relationships their cultural changing ways of emotionally experiencing homosexual desire and love have often been neglected and reduced to issues of sexuality and sexual orientation (Weinberg & Williams, 1975; Harry, 1978; Kronemeyer, 1980; Pattison, 1980; Klein & Sepekoff, 1985, Nicolisi, 1991, 1993).

At best, issues related to emotional gendered differentiation and its effects on lived experience get subsumed in discussions around subjectivity, language and power (Duncombe & Marsden, 1993; Bendelow, 1998) whereby subjectivity tends to be seen basically as mere discourse or narrative (Jackson, 1993; Butler, 1990, 1997).

Homosexuality appears as a concept and as a category of discourse, which may acquire different meanings, depending on the cultural context, i.e. it may be seen a privilege, a condition, a convention, a sin, social perversion or illness.

In this sense, homosexuals are supposed to identify themselves cognitively and emotionally with these language categorisations, and that is supposed to account for their alleged unified homosexual identity and subjectivity. However, this type of discursive appropriation of homosexual experience places the emphasis on the representational capacities to use and accommodate language, in order to position oneself as the owner of such concepts and to gain self-discoursive control, all of which ignores the fact that many men, gay or straight, have not yet developed an emotional verbal language that allows them to voice and articulate their emotional needs in their own cultural terms, instead of simply trying to conform and be blinded by normative rhetorics and discursive strategies that indirectly silence their own emotional experiences.

Additionally, within the new literature on masculinities, there have been efforts to connect experiential issues in men's emotional and sexual lives, particularly the repressed aspects of their emotional involvement with others i.e. "emotional-work" (Hochschild, 1989) including discussions connecting sexual politics with political forms of group therapy ("red-therapy") as well as other consciousness raising groups (Seidler, 1985, 1989, 1992; Wild, 1999).

But most of all, the majority of these efforts deal either with heterosexual male experience or with US or British gay male experience which bear little direct relevance to Spanish and Latin-American communities.

The Notion and Experience of "Entender"

Regarding their experiences of socio-emotional relatedness and self definition, the term applied in Barcelona as well as in Mexico to men who have socio-sexual relationships with other men is "entender" (from the Spanish verb "entender" = in the know, to understand; hence "entendido" = the one who understands).

In an encounter between two Barcelonian or Mexican men who during their conversation want to know if the other is capable of, and interested in, having socio sexual relations with other men, they would normally ask each other if they "understand", i.e. "entiendes?" = "do you understand?". If one or both of these men respond that, yes, they "understand", that means that they are primarily interested in men as their preferred and/or exclusive emotional and sexual object choice.

Thus, even when the verbal form of "entender" (to understand) is a usual way in which men refer in spoken language to their sensual interest in men, in the context of this thesis, the term "Entendido" (in the know, the one who understands) - the nominative form of "entender" - will be used in this project to refer to men in Barcelona and in Mexico who have socio-sexual relations with other men, as a way of highlighting and contrasting its particular cultural and emotional specificity.

It is also worth mentioning that, in local usage, "entender" is not a scientific, medical or religious term, but is rather a suggestive popular Spanish- American term to refer to homosexuality that, when used in spoken language, conveys some sense of a common, shared code i.e. that a man can have socio-sexual relations with other men, (Guasch, 1991).

In this sense homosexuality is presented not as a nocturnal act that takes place behind closed doors as being part of a secret intimacy, but rather as a process that takes place in broad daylight, but in which not everyone is one, or can participate. Thus, entendidos are the ones who know the code, its norms and particularities (Mira, 1999). However, the Anglo-Saxon term "gay" is also well known and has gained increasing acceptance, and even preponderance over the term entendido, - which is actually disappearing both in language and in its cultural ideological sense and function. These changes also have to do, to some extent, with heterosexuality being recently increasingly questioned in Barcelona as the only valid means of being and living an interesting fulfilling, democratic life in society,(Guasch, 2000). In this context most entendidos do not need to hide their homosexuality and feel ashamed as often as they used to and therefore the use of the term entender as a kind of code or secret term to refer to themselves as homosexuals in society is gradually disappearing. Instead many entendidos, including all my interviewees use indiscriminately entender as conveying gayness. However, in the context of this thesis the referring to my interviewees and Barcelonian and Mexican homosexual men as entendidos already reflects a different process of cultural assuming and understanding of their socio-sexual relationships that deserves to be highlighted and respected in its cultural specificity.

The term entendido does not denote pathology (homosexual) and does not denote the construction of a particular form of identity around a particular sexual preference (gay). An entendido is every man who voluntarily engages sexually with other men, regardless of the frequency of these engagements and without necessarily

developing a particular identity around it, as in the case of gay identities (Guasch, 1991).

Entendidos' experience has its own ensemble of sexual meanings and categories for sexual actors and scripts that circumscribe their emotional and sexual behaviour. Thus every gay man is an entendido but not every entendido is a gay man. This is particularly evident in the context of Barcelona where not every man having socio-sexual relations with other men develop a specific gay identity around it.

In the context of Barcelona, not only does the local culture ascribe certain traits to men and women and then refer to those traits in terms of "proper" masculine or feminine emotional behaviour, but those expectations are also attributed to sexual desire, especially homosexual desire, which is often seen by heterosexual people not only as enclosed within the privatisation of the family and disjointed from heterosexual desire but also as not being fully articulated, and as coming through as disturbance, tension, blockage or emotional trouble preceding cultural practice and identity. In other words the homosexual boys' gradual awareness of their needs is seen to affect their early same-sex interactions, which also affect later their adult intimate relationships.

By contrast to the cultural confusion between homosexuality and sex-role inversion that prevailed prior, during Franco dictatorship years (1939-1975) and until the late seventies, contemporary entendidos of Barcelona - at the end of the nineties - have managed to refigure their homosexual experience according to a mix of male homosexual/heterosexual imaginary which accommodates both a reassertion of homoeroticism as a valued and desired aspect of the male self combined still with the embracing of traditional masculine

heterosexual values, i.e. the relative suspicion and disdain for male to male affection as encompassing feminine weakness which further inhibits their emotional intimacy and emotional expression. To the extent to which entendidos are in conflict about their homosexual needs, because they have internalised the homophobia of the dominant culture, they will be prone to experience a sense of "confused" homosexual identity which inhibits their intimacy, i.e. by uncritically assuming and reproducing different aspects of his dominant culture, particularly the emphasis on conformity, sexuality and masculinity. In this way, entendidos may also be further prevented from questioning their masculinist, traditional socio-cultural assumptions, biases and institutional structuring of male desire and sexuality.

This threshold between public and private, the rational and the emotional, is historically constructed in dynamic changing ways i.e. post-Franco democratic transition, AIDS and the recent emergence of rather androgynous loving styles, [Llamas, 1997]).

Thus, entendidos' contemporary relative emotional inarticulacy represents a specific time and place where their changing social relations redefine this threshold and the structural conditions for their homosexual identities. Therefore, in order to understand further the evolution, of both homosexuality and gay culture, it will be necessary to locate them within the wider context of large-scale historical processes of social control that have sought to de-legitimise emotional expression among gay men by reducing their subjectivity as dealing primarily with pure sexual expression and/or by stigmatising and denying the emotional, caring and sensual needs, by contemptuously referring to these aspects of their selves in pejorative sense, i.e. as the "feminine" side of the male, whereby "feminine" refers to any

emotional affectionate element that is valued negatively and considered inadequate for men.

Being Different in Barcelona: Changing Images and Experiences of Homosexual Desire, Self and Identities

In *La Sociedad Rosa*, (The Pink Society, 1991), Oscar Guasch observes that during, but especially at the end of, the Franco dictatorship period, (1939-1975) a clear, visible dissociation between the "real" and the "official" Spain, (i.e. between what people really thought and felt about themselves, and what the official discourse prescribed for them) became more evident. This change in thought and attitude was motivated by a generalised sense of a need for change and the pursuit of freedom, and involved many areas of cultural and social life. This eventually gave rise, in Madrid, to a general cultural tendency known as "la movida" (= "on the move" - see also chapter one). Within this new social context, issues of sexuality as conveying gratifying pleasure in itself, and not just moral duty related to biological/catholic reproduction, began to be looked at with a sense of increasing curiosity openness and tolerance - although it is not clear to what extent this curiosity about pleasure overtly included homosexual pleasure, as a positive and valid form of emotional-sexual expression, for male homosexuality was still considerably stigmatised. Later on, however, this increasing social and sexual curiosity and tolerance provided a more open space, which also facilitated the emergence of a "homosexual transition" (Guasch, 1991) - as clearly evidenced by the taking place, in

Barcelona, of the first gay Spanish pride in 1977. Guasch describes this homosexual transition as also corresponding in time with a "pre-gay model" that involved a process of redefinition of homosexual phenomena; namely changes in the heterosexual perception of male homosexuality. Thus a gradual shift took place from seeing it as merely conveying gender inadequacy, i.e., effeminacy, or a woman's soul in a male's body, to a masculine redefinition of male homosexuality, i.e. as men who are capable of having socio-sexual relations with other men as a manly homoerotic experience - that, resulted in variations in the self-conceptions of male and female homosexuals, as well as changes in their respective lifestyle and sexual habits, and that eventually led to the construction of a "gay-model" at the beginning of the eighties, encompassing wider possibilities for the development of local gay identities.

During the pre-gay model, (that spanned from before Franco's dictatorship period up to 1977), Guasch also observes that within Spanish heterosexual cultural images of homosexuality - whose Mediterranean assumptions around male honour precluded any sensuous approach among male to male social interactions - two types of homophile behaviours could be distinguished: "marica" = an effeminate homosexual, and "maricón" = a virile homosexual. According to these heterosexual definitions, male homosexual behaviour was not framed either on notions of virility or in a relationship among equals, but rather, the assumption was that one of the actors renounced playing a sexually active role, and therefore he was identified as effeminate. In this sense, a marica was supposed to show a pseudo-feminine external appearance, a delicate mode of behaviour, weakness, sensitivity, affectation and to behave not only as sexually passive but also submissive.

Thus, so long as the marica agreed to conform to this heterosexual stereotyping, he indirectly functioned as a reference point for other heterosexual men who, by comparison seemed to affirm their virility. Likewise, maricas could also become socially "functional" i.e. as in the case of young Andalusian rural maricas, who - in the context of limited sexual access to women - could provide heterosexual men with some sexual gratification, including fellatio, as well as doing both masculine and feminine domestic activities. In this context, Spanish maricas became an institution, because they were visible, relatively tolerated, and relatively harmless because they were considered to be non-violent.

On the other hand, a maricón, a virile homosexual - the second heterosexual stereotype of a male homosexual - had much less social acceptance because he is less visible and recognisable and this generates heterosexual fear. A maricón does not serve "social functions" i.e. he cannot be used sexually by heterosexual men as a substitute for women, and does not function as a reference point for heterosexual men to reaffirm their virility. In this sense, maricones became much more stigmatised and generated much more anxiety among heterosexual men, for maricones are not only sexually active but can also be physically violent. This fear of being raped by a maricón has eventually led heterosexual people to further stereotype and extend the "threat" of the maricón by equating him with a paedophile that seeks to satisfy his perverse instincts by deceiving those who cannot defend themselves.

But these two terms are not just part of the dictatorship years, they still resonate within current popular language in Barcelona. For example, the term maricón, among gay men, translates also as an offence and an insult, whereas within common heterosexual parlance,

some derivatives of the terms marica and maricón, are used as verbs and/or substantive nouns, i.e. "mariconear" and "mariconadas" (to perform the marica, and/or to do silly, worthless things) that still convey a sense of being and doing something negative. Therefore, these terms are avoided selectively among gay activists when they discuss their points, because these terms are not perceived as sufficiently respectful.

Consequently, within the years of Franco's dictatorship, being homosexual was quite difficult not only because homosexuality was legally punished but because the generalised climate of repression led many entendidos to experience their homosexual desire with guilt, shame, confusion and with a sense of being abnormal or ill, leading them to live a double life, and lacking support from their peers and society.

Thus, in the pre-gay years (before 1977) entendidos, lacking a clear, more positive sense of their own difference and belonging to a gay community or subculture, with defined gay identities and institutional support networks, usually attempted meeting and sharing their emotional and sexual needs by socialising and cruising in the streets. In this way, however, after having spent some time engaged in this activity, they also developed a kind of specialised sense of guessing if the man speaking with them may also be an entendido, by using a complex intuitive system of signs and codes, that acknowledges the context in which a social interaction takes place, the appearance and the attitude. These strategies helped them recognise each other and define the nature of the relationship and experiences they wanted to share, although these mutual recognitions were usually not affirmative enough to allow them to see and feel themselves as resolutely proud of their difference.

Under these circumstances, entendidos eventually developed resilience and psychosocial skills as a way to adapt their behaviour and appearance, in masculine code, to cope with their homophobic environment. This is what Guasch calls the "gay" model, whose defining characteristic features are the attempt at a virile redefinition of homosexuality, as well as the institutionalisation of the homosexual universe – the creation of gay associations, clubs, bars, discotheques and saunas that reached its peak in the eighties - which contrasts with the non-institutionalisation of the previous, pre-gay model.

Guasch considers that the institutionalisation of the homosexual universe was possible in the context of a wider tolerance and clear signs of economical and social development that accompanied a process of generalised democratic transition. Their economic growth also allowed Barcelona entendidos to contrast their ways of assuming their homosexuality with those of foreign visitors who increasingly started practising sexual tourism in Spain.

In terms of the impact that these changes had on the reshaping of entendidos identities, Guasch coincides with Llamas, (1996) and Aliaga, (1997) in that this new gay model is a virile-masculine redefinition of male homosexuality, as well as a qualitative change in relation to the way in which entendidos started seeing themselves as homosexuals, that - unlike the experiences of the entendidos of the pre-gay era - enabled them to gradually re-appreciate their difference in terms of feeling positive and proud of it; this in turn facilitated the adoption of the Anglo-Saxon term "gay" as a way of articulating their sense of difference within their self-male image and identity, and with a sense of purpose and continuity, i.e. as a positive lifestyle and political project.

However, this new virile-gay redefinition was not a mere straightforward, mechanistic adoption of Anglo-Saxon gay standards. As Guasch observes, in Spain, before entendidos decided to reaffirm and redefine their difference and to reconcile it with a masculine-virile referent - that eventually gave way to the emergence of a kind of new gay Anglo-Saxon macho-cowboy types - they also felt some resistance to the Anglo-Saxon gay model, for many entendidos considered that apart from reaffirming their right to virility they also needed to revalorise and reaffirm their right to effeminacy in a positive way and as opposed to the devalued status that heterosexual men had traditionally given to it.

Thus, the first of these adaptive attempts is the emergence of the "loca" type, a queer, in the feminine declension. This homosexual adaptive type has also become a sort of a generic term, for it also started to be used among heterosexuals, to refer to those maricas whose appearance and behaviour are a bit too overtly and exaggeratedly effeminate. Within a homosexual context, however, a loca is any male homosexual who reproduces the heterosexual stereotype of male homosexuality. In this sense, Guasch coincides with Michael Pollak (1983) when he notes that the loca type, is also a rather sad, desperate homosexual attempt to cope with a homophobic culture, whereby these men ended up identifying themselves with the caricature that heterosexual society has devised to oppress, denigrate and control them.

However, the loca has not been the only homosexual adaptive strategy. When some entendidos could not or would not want, or would not know how to adapt, in feminine code, to their homophobic environment, other masculine homosexual strategies also eventually emerged. This is the case of the "reprimido" = the repressed, a type

of entendido who does not want to give up his masculine role and instead opts for systematically hiding his homosexuality, to the point that they cannot recognise themselves as homosexuals. In this sense, Guasch observes that the reprimido type is not a mere transposition into their homosexual universe of a heterosexual stereotype, for, on the one hand, reprimidos certainly do not see themselves as maricas or maricones, since they have a perfectly manly appearance and behaviour, and they also reject the loca feminine homosexual adaptive type; and, on the other hand, they also clearly try to avoid the negative stereotyping of homosexuals as paedophiles. In these circumstances many virile reprimidos have ended up, since Franco's dictatorship period, seeing themselves as not homosexuals, although more recently, with the emergence of the gay model, reprimidos' adaptations have undergone further transformations, i.e. some of them see themselves as "open minded" bisexuals.

This cultural resistance to the Anglo- Saxon gay model has been associated with a questioning of the way the gay model was being implemented in the United States and the rest of Western Europe, as merely conveying pretty much only a sense discursive self assertiveness, political agency and responsibility, and thereby lacking the cultural vitality, cheerfulness and relatively social tolerance and mobility that Latin locas have traditionally had - so long as they remain feminine looking and refrain from playing masculine roles - in the context of Mediterranean cultures (Hocquenghem, 1977).

In this sense, the emergence and expansion of the gay model in Barcelona and the rest of Spain did not involve the political activism implicit in the Anglo-Saxon gay movement. Thus, the Spanish implementation of the gay model, including the institutionalisation of the gay presence and space (gay associations, bars, discotheques,

saunas) took place basically through private channels, i.e. the investment of private impresarios trying to reproduce mimetically the commercial success of the gay commercial arena fashionable in other Western countries. Thus, this particular form of introducing the gay model meant, on the one hand, that some elements of the previous pre-gay model did not disappear but rather remained and mingled with the new gay-male institutional model, i.e. the existence of an entendido pre-gay ghetto, in the form of an exclusive and hidden social network. Similarly, the expansion of commercial gay venues also added new elements to the ways in which entendidos could socialise, i.e. a concentrated sexual market (discotheques, saunas) in which the sexual offer and the sexual demand was higher and therefore could now be measured in terms of sexual efficacy and productivity - a higher number of anonymous orgasms in less time. This new gay form of socialising in private institutional spaces also contributed to a reduction of street romantic socialising, that used to be equally valued as the sexual socialising during the pre-gay years.

Thus, during the eighties, for the first time, the new generations of entendido-gays could now opt for a variety of ways of meeting their emotional and sexual needs, i.e. the social ghetto, street cruising, and the new commercial gay venues and gay support associations, and all of these in a climate of much greater social and legal tolerance. In this new context, the extension of the gay model as well as its mingling with numerous elements of the pre-gay model, gave way to the emergence of other new types: the gay, the transvestite, the macho, the "blando",(a soft gay) and, the "carroza" (a "loft" gay).

These new gay types, together with the maricas, maricones, locas and reprimidos of the pre-gay years, represented, according to

Guasch, most of the Spanish homosexual universe at the beginning of the nineties. Regarding the new gay types, particularly the macho, the blando, the loca, the carroza and the reprimido, they all correspond to a homophile typology, in the sense that their construction retains the local cultural parameters, usually in heterosexual perspective, whereby masculinity is defined according to fixed sexual roles: masculine = active, feminine = passive.

In particular, the macho, the blando and the loca types are constructed according to the degree of masculinity that they show, while the reprimido type is constructed according to the relative degree of self acceptance of his homophile desire, and the carroza type is constructed in direct relation to age.

For example, the macho type is the most evident, in terms of its revalorisation of the masculine. The appearance of the macho evokes a foreign, imported macho cowboy image that has no clear tradition in Spanish culture, but rather resembles the stereotype of the United States homosexual. The macho rejects camp and/or effeminate behaviour and image. His outlook accentuates conventional heterosexual virility, i.e. he wears paramilitary outfits, or leather or checked shirts, a beard or a moustache or both, and his body resembles that of a tough, muscular truck driver. In terms of his sexual behaviour he is supposed to be sexually aggressive and tough, and usually uses this hyper-masculinity as a way to reinforce his virility in front of the locas. However, in the intimate experiences of the locas with the machos, they quite often tend to become sexually passive in private. For this reason, some locas call the machos, the "machas" = a macho in the feminine declension.

By contrast, the blandos' (soft gays) – which nowadays constitute the majority type within contemporary homosexual

Barcelona universe – have an image and behaviour that resembles those of ambivalent adolescents, i.e., a young masculine body combined with a certain sexual non-definition. This type of image is much closer to the ideal of male beauty and desire that is common in the context of Mediterranean and Latin American cultures. In this sense, the blando type is a much more appreciated gay type in these cultures. Sexually, the blando tends to put emphasis on affection and caresses than on penetration, without being especially romantic, although he also practices both active and passive roles, depending on the type he is with. His outlook usually does not include a beard or a moustache, and his behaviour is rather that of a soft male, i.e., not particularly macho, nor particularly camp.

In this cultural context, the carroza type represents the old gay, usually those aged fifty and above. Their participation in the gay scene is reduced, for usually they are not seen as attractive types. Usually they have to pay, usually to prostitute men, especially if they want to share their sexual needs with younger men. Carrozas are usually referred to in the masculine form, although sometimes they are named in the feminine form when they try to look and behave as if they were much younger. Thus, regardless of their type, all men become carrozas when they get older.

These traditional sex-gender accommodations are still present in Barcelonian culture and have often been associated with notions of machismo that are also shared in different ways and with varying degrees in other Latin American and Mediterranean cultures e.g. Mexico, Argentina, Brazil, Portugal, Italy, (Buffington, 1997; Murray, 2000). However, although machismo can be identified as part of these adaptive responses, to assume that the notion of machismo is in itself an adequate analytic category that can "explain" the whole

gender system in contemporary Barcelonian gay male culture would be a misleading reductionism. Importantly, while the experience of gay men in Barcelona has specific features, e.g. the relative centrality of the family and the impact of Catholicism on dominant ways of assuming sexuality and homosocial desire, the overall situation of Barcelona gay men is not peculiar in that it is affected by heterosexist conventional gender hierarchies and the disdain of the feminine as part of male identities.

Although the central project in the self assertion of metropolitan gay men since the Stonewall riot in New York in 1969 has been to rehandle gender assignment and gender hierarchy in order to challenge homophobia and the stigma of effeminacy by reclaiming masculinity for gay men and claiming that gay femininity is all right and welcomed, within US and western European countries various local forms of gender hierarchies and male machismo still operate in various overt and symbolic ways retaining its perplexing, distressing and limiting effects upon Anglo-Saxon and Western European straight and gay men's identities and emotional expressiveness.

Beyond this, Alan Sinfield (1998) has noted that the persistence of oppressive gender hierarchies among Anglo-Saxon and Western European gay communities has been further complicated by the fact that gay men have often pursued divergent modes of validation, i.e. some gay men claim that their gender attributes (whatever they are) do not make them very different from other people and that homophobia is just a misunderstanding, while others have claim that gay and lesbian gendered attributes are fundamentally dissident and also subversive of hetero-patriarchal structures. Thus, while gay liberation movements worldwide have been broadly egalitarian in tone and have tended to disavow or evade other hierarchies of class, age

and gender, it appears that masculine/feminine boundaries still remain largely unchallenged.

The dominant sex-gender ideology is still present worldwide and is unlikely to be overthrown by gay men either in Barcelona or in many Western and non Western countries. It seems doubtful moreover, whether without a huge change in hetero-normative patterns society can rid itself of homophobia and incorporate the feminine as a valued aspect of both straight and gay masculinities.

The locating of Barcelona gay male emotional culture in the context of a global oppressive gender order, helps us appreciate how in the final analysis the social-moral situation of gay men in this context may have less to do with gayness, than with the dominance of heterosexual men over women, and other men. So long as women are regarded as feminine and inferior, lesbians and gay men will be in difficulty. A change in their current oppressive situation requires a shift in the entire sex-gender system, and that will not occur without both men and women's liberation.

The Emotional Experiences of Entendidos

In contemporary Barcelona, the social practices in which young male homosexuals grow and construct their relationships involve a complex interaction of different phenomena that pose significant questions to current theoretical accounts on male homosexual experience.

The key emotional dynamics that lead to the development of certain forms of affective relatedness among young gay men of Barcelona include the centrality of the family as the source of

affection and emotional control, the socialisation experiences around traditional and normative values and expectations of what it means to be a man which almost invariably assume a male heterosexual power ethos where issues of male to male desire often remain silenced and, to some extent the Catholic ethics and moral beliefs around male homosexuality, which often tend to be homophobic and guilt-inducing.

These elements combined may shape, in different ways, gay men's sense of self as not masculine enough, not normal, or even pathological. In developmental terms this means that, apart from learning to cope effectively with socialisation experiences that identify and reinforce maleness with heterosexuality, young Barcelona gay men have also learned to hide the personal and social tensions that arise between these expectations and their homosexuality and corresponding emotional needs.

In this context, these young gay men often grow up isolated, with varying degrees of inadequacy, discomfort and/or rejection about their self-worth. These tensions reinforce their isolation and difficulty in sharing their emotional needs not only in relation to a highly heterosexist context but also in relation to their homosexual friends and relationships.

The associating homosexuality as synonymous with effeminacy and non-maleness in men is at the core of why homosexuality in heterosexual men is feared by many, including gay men and why both straight and gay men fear expressions of intimacy and emotional closeness, although in the case of Barcelona gay men the connection between homosexual behaviour and homosexual identity accepts other possibilities, i.e. the idea of entender, which is not commonly seen in US and British gay contexts.

The structure of contemporary Barcelona's homosexualities, although clearly influenced by US and to some extent British gay imagery and commercial culture, still retains to some extent, elements of a "Mediterranean" model of homosexuality, (Dall' Orto, 1990).

According to this model, in each relationship an "active" and a "passive" individual used to be identified. The active individual was the one who anally penetrated (the insertor) and the passive individual was the one who was anally penetrated (the insertee). These two roles determined to some extent, each one's identity, and not the fact that the relationship took place between two men. In this context, the "active" individual did not necessarily see himself as a homosexual and kept intact his virility while the "passive" individual was usually labelled pejoratively by using different names, namely "maricón"= (queer, usually used in the feminine declension).

But these heterosexual distinctions between these two roles are much less common among Barcelona entendidos in the late nineties and are also seen as unnecessarily hierarchical and perhaps as belong to their past. As their views on relationships have evolved, contemporary Barcelona homosexual men have come to incorporate both "roles" as part of their sexual-emotional repertoire. Among my interviewees these distinctions are seen as unnecessary and as conveying a heterosexual power view of relationships that they try to be critical of and distance from. However, the symbolic significance of these roles in terms of the balance of power and the reshaping of their emotional needs and their identities within their relationships in the context of a heterosexist and homophobic Barcelona larger society may still have a relevance that has not been explored.

For instance, within current wider processes of assimilation, while some of elements of gay culture (i.e. traditions and values) have become more accepted and incorporated into mainstream heterosexual culture, some other defining features of gay culture (its particular investment with the arts and camp, and the highly mannered style of humour are disappearing (Harris, 1997; Hequembourg, 1999).

Therefore, within the scope of social/psychoanalytic inquiry, the practice of various relationships that are at the heart of different social-psychological processes of change (i.e. the crisis of heterosexuality) and its repercussion in the context of contemporary, post-Franco, democratic-transition Barcelonia homosexual life, also deserves a careful interdisciplinary consideration, for all the features that traditionally have defined heterosexuality – except homophobia - are showing clear signs of crisis (i.e., marriage, the stable couple, reproductive sexuality) in Catalan society, (Guasch, 2000).

Similarly, in tracing these social and moral processes affecting contemporary male identities, some other issues could be seen as still central to the experience of entendidos growing up in a homophobic Barcelonian society, namely: the difficulties in maintaining self-esteem: a coherent internal image of the self, having to deal with almost daily challenges to their esteem and identity: and also the experience of alienation from the self.

In these circumstances, entendidos' emotional responsivity still seems to undergo a complex process involving psychological vulnerability and resilience that their heterosexual peers do not undergo (i.e. suppression of homosexual feelings and desires, an elaboration of a heterosexual persona and an interruption of the process of identity formation [Maylon, 1982] often combined with

distrust and loneliness, and difficulties in intimate affectionate relationships [Beard, 1994]).

The psychic consequences of this adaptation are varied and unfortunate. The most likely outcome is an interruption (sometimes temporary, but often lasting a decade or more) of the process of identity formation and maintenance of ego integrity. (Cass, 1978 Bell & Weinberg, 1981; Harry, 1982; de Monteflores, 1986; Green, 1987; Isay, 1989; Boxer & Cohler, 1993; Goldberg, 1993; Cornett, 1993, 1995).   Thus, conformity to role expectations consistent with the prevailing heterosexual standard precludes their psychological integrity.

The ego must necessarily be fragmented, and those parts that significantly define the self-concept, and furnish the basis for intimacy, must be suppressed or denied (Cornett, 1985; Isay, 1989). This adaptation is inherently conflictive. As a result, psychological defences become highly elaborated to bind the accompanying chronic anxiety and to maintain a tenuous and brittle identity. These complex adaptations are central to me and many Mexican and Barcelonian gay men and, as I have mentioned, they have not been mentioned let alone specified and articulated within the whole Frommian psychoanalytic paradigm of "human" development in which I was trained.

Likewise, there is no such thing, for the moment, as a sociological account on Barcelonian and/or Iberoamerican gay male development which is adequately sensitive to and inclusive of these dimensions of their emotional lives. Thus, in this thesis I explore and describe different aspects of contemporary Barcelonian gay male identity, gay self-emotional development, intimacy, homosexual desire, love and care.

The specific research questions that I explored with my interviewees include:

- How do entendidos experience their sense of difference in terms of their emotional development?
- What do entendidos share emotionally in terms of their language and emotional and sexual behaviour in the context of their gay romantic relationships / friendships?
- How do affection, sex and love correlate in entendidos' friendships / relationships?
- How do entendidos relate emotionally to their heterosexual peers in the context of public interaction and in the context of friendships?

Homosexualities, Psychoanalysis, Clinical Practice

Current reports from US and Britain gay men often focus either on their conversational interaction in terms of their gendered dimension using models of gendered speech which assume that gay identity is a rather monolithic construct that leads to predictable forms of relatedness (Tannen, 1984; De Cecco, 1988; Nardi, 1992). Others attempt to seek the meaning and sometimes the value of verbal interactions (Tannen, 1990; Plummer, 1992). However, my aims are to focus on the substance of what is emotionally shared contextually.

Such an analysis, applied to entendidos' experiences, is concerned with emotion and not just cultural representations. Its use as a tool of cultural analysis is dependent upon grounding it within the

logic of the structures of feeling. These are to be located in the changing practices and ideologies of becoming a man in society, the family, and particularly within an analysis which encompasses the psychodynamics of emotional language and subject formation for the exploration of the disjunction of their homosexual feelings and desires from their language and how it affects their subjectivity.

Thus, it is in the area of identity (Coleman, 1981; Richardson & Hart, 1981; Weinberg, 1983; Cass, 1984; Troiden, 1988; Eribon, 2000) self development and relationships (Kohut, 1971, 1977; Gilligan, 1987, 1996, 1988; Elliot, 1996, 1999, 2001) where I expect to explore further how gender and sexual orientation interact relationally in such a way that gay male emotional development tends to reproduce the tensions and limitations that are prevalent among male heterosexual relationships (Nardi, 1992, 1999; Price, 1999) while, at the same time, facilitating particular forms of emotional resilience and vulnerability for gay men.

Too often there is a growing disconnection from interdisciplinary thought and a perpetuation of old assumptions within psychoanalytic practice. For example, the "regressive" use of the biological and the causal, the unreflective incorporation of social norms into notions of maturity, the difficulties of really letting the patient speak and engaging with this, and, especially, the complexities of rendering social forms of gay oppression psychoanalytically (O'Connor, 1993).

Despite the declassification of homosexuality as a mental health problem by the American Psychiatric Association in 1973 and by the World Health Organisation in 1992, many therapists working with gay people nowadays are still using paradigms based on heterosexual coupling and partnerships and many are still encasing the experiences of gay clients according to Oedipal "universalistic"

explanations which imply a "normal" heterosexual resolution (Lilling & Friedman, 1995).

Additionally, an increasing body of research has shown that many gay people would not consider revealing their sexuality to therapists not only for fear of discrimination and abuse, but also from concern that their right to confidentiality might not be respected (Paroski, 1987; Getty, 1990).

The health problems of young gay men have also been reported as differing from those of heterosexual youths, including increased depression, suicidal behaviour, substance abuse, homelessness and school dropout. Moreover, the long term effects of bullying in the development of gay people include attempted suicide at a rate as high as 40 per cent in some reports (Gibson, 1989; Golding, 1997).

Nevertheless, within the psychoanalytical literature on male homosexuality which do not see it as a pathological condition (Kwawer, 1980; Mitchell, 1981; Isay, 1985, 1989; Leavy, 1985; Friedman, 1988; Blechner, 1993; Frommer, 1994, Domenici, 1995; Cornett, 1995) some issues have particular relevance for the experiences of Barceloninan entendidos. They can also highlight common and recurrent issues around entendidos' actual emotional experience and the current ways these experiences are being insufficiently addressed within current psychoanalytic clinical practice, namely:

- The centrality of identity, reflected as an inability to achieve a positive sense of self, as a result of the specific developmental difficulties of growing up gay in the context of a homophobic culture.

- The failure to acknowledge the significance of homophobia as a problematic element in "normal" male heterosexual development.

- The internalisation of varying degrees of homophobia among gay men as an "unavoidable" consequence of the developmental difficulties of growing up gay in the context of a homophobic culture.

- The lack of recognition of the problems and the insufficiencies of adopting a "neutral" stance on behalf of the analysts in working therapeutically with gay people.

- The need to acknowledge and incorporate the relevance of friendship as a key relational paradigm within the analytic setting which transcends the older Cartesian notion of separateness and predicates instead non hierarchic intersubjectivity, attunement, reciprocity and caring in dealing with issues of gay male affection and desire.

- The harmful consequences of ignoring and misunderstanding the complex dynamics of transference and counter-transference in working with gay people.

These issues are central for this project and their relevance will be discussed throughout the whole exposition of this thesis.

Similarly, of particular relevance for the delineation of my project are issues concerned with trying to develop a friendly relational listening perspective and methodology which enables both the analyst and/or the social researcher and the patient and/or participant to explore together and reintegrate entendidos' lived emotional experience more effectively. Friendship as a key relational paradigm among gay men cuts across conventional hierarchies and

emotional boundaries common among men allowing them to connect emotionally and share and validate together their experiences almost regardless of class, ethnic and cultural background. However, a language and a praxis of emotional boundaries and relative emotional distancing is still very present in the structure of the psychoanalytic setting and predicated and rationalised as the best objective approach to deal with emotional experience, i.e., Freud's rule of abstinence. Although there are a number of technical reasons why this is so, it is also true that these technicalities have been subject to reevaluation in order to accommodate issues of cultural background, class, race, gender. Although the behavioural emotional attitude of analysts towards their patients has been subject to reassessment and redefinition in many psychoanalytic schools for many years by incorporating many useful reflections and guidelines around issues of empathy, transference and countertransference and the centrality of relationship between analysts and their analysands, issues of friendship still remain largely neglected and misunderstood. Part of this has to do with issues of unacknowledged heterosexist biases, fear of erotic transferences, tension around homoeroticism, especially among male analysts resulting in gay male patients still being treated with subtle and overt forms of emotional neglect, distancing and distrust, as reflected in the empathic lapses that too often take place between a male heterosexual analyst and a gay male patient. Therefore, in terms of method, I decided to use friendship as key emotional relational paradigm and then also adapted Carol Gilligan's (1992) voice-centred relational method as well as Erich Fromm's redefinition of free association, and Carlton Cornett's (1995) redefinition of transference and countertransference to deal with gay

male experience in order to better approach emotionally entendidos' homosexual experiences.

Chapter Plan

This introductory chapter has highlighted the relevance of emotional communication as a vital, yet quite neglected, source of further understanding and strengthening gay male emotional experience in current sociological and psychoanalytic theory and practice.

By situating the purpose of the study as well as my personal involvement in it, as a gay man, within a broader interdisciplinary and multicultural context on gay male emotional experience, I also highlight the relevance of contrasting Barcelona's gay male friendly emotional communication in its cultural specificity with dominant US and British accounts of gay male experience.

Chapter Two, on Methods, presents a new account of gay emotional relational development and communication, centred on the importance of relationships and particularly friendship as a relational emotional paradigm to further enhance emotional experience and knowledge, i.e. the relational abilities to listen and come closer to oneself and to contemporary Bacelonian entendidos, in a friendly, empathic, less cerebral and less discursive way. I focus on the polyphony of emotional voice in order to highlight and contrast the limitations of dominant current discourse-centred approaches that too often neglect and minimize the relevance of emotional knowledge

for further understanding gay male emotional needs and development.

The combined voice-centred/psychoanalytic/friendly relational method I used in this study to work with my interviewees, is also illustrated with examples of the interpretative procedures.

Chapter Three discusses Erich Fromm's as well as other relevant psychoanalytic notions on friendship as a key relational emotional paradigm and assesses its relevance in trying to incorporate a friendly non-pathologic developmental view of entendidos' emotional needs within the analytic setting by rethinking issues of relationality, empathy, tenderness care and homoeroticism, disclosure of the analyst, transference and countertransfrence in dealing with gay male experience.

Chapter Four discusses different possibilities of seeing and approaching the notion of "difference" as an organizing notion around the emotional experiences of my eight interviewees, as entendidos and/or gay men. Some examples of coping emotionally with difference are also introduced, within the context of clinical psychoanalysis. The translated abstracts from our conversations focus on my interviewees' own experiences of growing up different in Barcelona, and are also interweaved with both my personal experiences and relevant Frommian and related theoretical accounts on the subject, as a way of highlighting their cultural emotional significance and as a way of illustrating my interviewees' own "different sense of difference".

Chapter Five explores my interviewees' relationship experiences of "intimacy, love and sex," focusing on their cultural emotional specificity and on the issues that emerged as central to their own emotional-relational experience, i.e. the need to balance a

sense of attachment and autonomy in their relationships. Again, both my personal experiences and relevant Frommian and related theoretical accounts on this subject are interweaved as a way of highlighting and contrasting their points of relative similarity and/or dissimilarity.

Chapter Six presents different aspects of my interviewees' experiences of "friendships", both with gay and straight men, focussing on the emotional impact that these experiences have had on their sense of self and on their shaping of a wider and enhanced sense of male emotional relationality and communion based on their experiences of friendships. Issues of trust, self disclosure, desire, sexual attraction and sexual and emotional intimacy and vulnerability in straight and gay male relationships are discussed and contrasted with my personal experiences on these issues and with relevant theoretical sociological research on this subject.

Finally, Chapter Seven, on Reframing Entendidos' Feeling Voices in the Analytic Setting and in Social Research, synthesises the main "findings" in this study and reconsiders their crucial importance within the analytic setting. Issues of connecting self and voice in relation to the centrality of identity for entendidos, as well as a clearer sense of the development of gay local identities through a friendly relational approach, are discussed in the context of the need to challenge the traditional heterosexual, inner outer divide, common in sociological and psychoanalytic theory, that limits and distorts gay male emotional relational possibilities to share and validate their homoerotic desire.

Issues of care, intimacy, friendship and love among entendidos are also used as a way of illustrating the difficulties we (my interviewees and I) found in trying to grasp how we distinguished

between the way we felt, how we wished we felt, how we showed to each other what we felt and the way we acknowledged and made sense of what we felt. The need to further explore these questions and how the experiences they encompass are often neglected in the process of writing in academic language about these issues is also highlighted.

II.   THEORY AND METHOD

In this chapter I first discuss the difficulties in articulating entendidos' and gay men's experience and emotional needs within prevailing psychoanalytic and sociological theory and methods. In particular I consider Erich Fromm's as well as Carol Gilligan and Lyn Brown's feminist reworking of the Oedipus complex as a "relational crisis" that marks the painful entry into patriarchy for girls, boys and women and how there are interesting similarities with Barcelona's pre-homosexual boys' own entry into their local "patriarchal" society whereby they also end up silencing their self and emotional needs by developing a heterosexual persona in order to avoid heterosexist and homophobic rejection.

However, I also mention that although both Fromm and Gilligan's reworking of the Oedipus complex as a difficult and painful entry into patriarchy is useful in a methodological sense for it allowed me to appreciate some interesting similarities with entendidos' own emotional-moral   vicissitudes   in growing up within a heterosexist Barcelonian society, these two approaches   nevertheless do not quite convey the whole range of emotional-moral dilemmas that pre-homosexual boys in Barcelona undergo. This is in part because both Fromm and   Gilligan   are   dealing   primarily   with   heterosexual emotional-moral development and therefore adopt a heterosexual stance to discuss these experiences. For instance Fromm focuses on issues of irrational patriarchal authority affecting equally the development of all boys self esteem and sense of self regardless of whether these boys are straight or homosexual while Gilligan focuses on issues of self-silencing heterosexual girls' voices without

addressing issues of non verbal language and unconscious dynamics and motivation.

Therefore, I also discuss the implications that this relational crisis framework has for the particular images of the self and moral dilemmas that entendidos face while growing up different in Barcelona, i.e., how entendidos break up of relationships while entering into their local patriarchal order does not follow an Oedipalised path but rather a long relational impasse which leads entendidos to distance emotionally from themselves. Given that neither Fromm nor Gilligan addressed issues of male homosexual subjectivity and given that Gilligan's voice relational method is primarily concerned with listening, reading and representing but not with the active dialogic process of eliciting feeling voice during the interview process, I also decided to combine this methodological framework with other psychoanalytic concepts as part of the interview framework for our conversations, namely: (a) free association as redefined by Fromm, (b) transference and countertransference as redefined by Carlton Cornett to deal with gay male experience and (c) "friendship" as a key relational emotional paradigm, that is more suitable to deal with my interviewees for it allows a more emotionally resonant, homosocial, direct and less hierarchical (heterosexist) approach to entendidos' emotional experiences.

I then describe how I contacted my interviewees through friendship networks, and how we conducted our conversations. The use of friendship as a relational paradigm and its potential usefulness and limitations within the current structure of the analytic setting is discussed in detail in chapter three on friendship and psychoanalysis.

Thus, my decision to listen to oneself and entendidos' experiences through a combined voice-relational/psychoanalytic/friendly approach

stands apart from standard procedures for "analysing discourse or interview data", for it allows a clearer appreciation of the emotional-moral struggles that often are not explored and expressed in discursive strategies. Entendidos' ways of reflecting on their emotional experiences involve not only conscious language strategies but also unconscious and unspoken motivational accommodations where issues of self, identity, desire, love, and care remain central. Within discursive analytic strategies, these issues are often neglected for the emphasis is put on the fragmentary quality of the selves and where the emotional quality and cultural specificity of gay male experience is often neglected or almost disappears in a web of ideological intellectual rhetorical strategies that are more concerned with acquiring discursive rational control rather than dealing with emotional connectedness, care, affection, desire and love among gay men. Finally I outline a brief discussion of the particular ethical issues raised in doing our work.

Oedipus Complex and the Difficulties of Articulating Entendidos' Emotional Needs

The research carried out by Carol Gilligan, Lyn Brown & others at Harvard University on girls' emotional development and their psychological initiation into patriarchy through their voice-centred relational method (1982, 1992, 1996) has allowed me to appreciate and further reflect on some interesting similarities between girls' emotional experiences of losing their voices with the early developmental experiences of pre-homosexual boys in Barcelona.

Gilligan has observed, for instance, that the Oedipus complex that Freud formulated as the turning point in boys' psychological development actually corresponds to a "crisis of relationship," although Freud did not conceive it in those terms. Gilligan's reframing of the Oedipus complex as a relational crisis allows a clearer image of the pressures that not only girls but also young homosexual boys undergo when they take into themselves the structure and moral order of a patriarchal civilisation, and how this type of identification forces them to internalise a patriarchal heterosexual moral voice.

These complex processes signify a definite taking into the psyche of the outer world, setting not only the connection between inner and outer worlds and thus establishing the structure of character, but also the structure of neurotic suffering.

In this sense, I believe young pre-homosexual Barcelona boys, apart from undergoing this relational crisis, also come under additional pressure, both from without and within, to give up close relationships and to cover their vulnerability by separating their inner world and their self, i.e. the hiding and/or suppressing their emotional needs for male affection and caring from the outer world of relationships.

The tension between their homosexual desire and their necessity to stay in a relationship with their predominantly heterosexually oriented environment forces a compromise between voice and relationship that leads to an additional break in relationships. As Gilligan puts it:

> To see the relational crisis of boys' early childhood and girls' adolescence as an initiation highlights the break in relationship and exposes the psychological wound or scar. This is the mark of psychological entry into a patriarchal society or culture. At these points of crisis or impasse in psychological development, where vulnerability is intensified and psychological health is at stake, the joining of inner and

outer worlds raises a political as well as a psychological question: What if boys did not psychologically disconnect from women and dissociate themselves from vital parts of relationship? (Gilligan: 1996:251)

The additional pressures to hide their homosexual desire that Barcelona pre-gay boys undergo involves puzzlement and confusion, distress and a change in voice and language – the signs of relational distress. At the same time, their desire for resonant, affectionate and sensual male relationships creates vulnerability and signals vitality but also leads directly to a long relational impasse for gay men that has not been fully addressed by psychoanalysis or sociology.

What are at stake in these periods of crisis are the basic human capacities for emotional communication and responsive relationship. It is in these terms that gay men's resistance to simply silence and submit and mould their specific affectionate needs to a pattern of heterosexual male emotional detachment takes on its full implications, for if young homosexual men resist the break between their inner and the outer world, they are also resisting an initiation into a heterosexual masculinity or manhood as it is defined in patriarchal societies.

Similarly, by contrast to Freud's view of the Oedipus complex, my psychoanalytic training in Erich Fromm's theory and methods allowed me not only to further appreciate not only a scenario of libidinal sexual rivalry but also to connect Gilligan's work to Fromm's views of the Oedipal Complex also as a psychological entry into patriarchy. Forty three years before Gilligan reframed the Oedipus complex as a painful entry into patriarchy Fromm had already reframed Freud's Oedipus complex as a relational crisis. In his essay *Oedipus Complex and its Myth* (1959) Fromm observed:

...Quite regardless of the question of whether or not Freud's clinical description of the Oedipal complex is correct, we arrive at the result that the complex centred around the boy's incestuous strivings toward his mother and his resulting hostility against the father is wrongly called an Oedipus complex. There is a complex, however, which fully deserves to be called and Oedipus complex, the rebellion of the son against the pressure of the father's authority –an authority rooted in the patriarchal, authoritarian structure of society.

The child does not meet society directly at first; he meets it through the medium of his parents, who in their character structure and methods of education represent the social structure and are the psychological agency of society, as it were. What happens then to the child in relationship to his parents? He meets through them the kind of authority which prevails in a patriarchal society, and this kind of authority tends to break his will, his spontaneity, his independence.

... In this struggle some children are more successful than others; most of them are defeated to some extent in their fight for freedom. The ways in which the defeat is brought about are manifold, but, whatever they are, the scars left in the child unsuccessful fight against irrational authority are to be found at the bottom of every neurosis.

Such a scar is represented in a syndrome the most important features of which are: a weakening or paralysis of the individual's originality and spontaneity; a weakening of the self and the substitution of a pseudo-self in which the feeling of "I am" is dulled and replaced by the experience of self as the sum total of expectations others have about the self; a substitution of heteronomy for autonomy... It is the child's proprietary paternal authority in all its various forms which can be properly called the Oedipus complex... Does our interpretation of the Oedipus myth and the Oedipus complex imply that Freud's theory was without foundation? ... Individual and anthropological data gathered since Freud formulated his theory, however, have shaken our conviction as to its validity. These data have shown that the Oedipus complex in Freud's sense is not a universal human phenomenon and that the child's rivalry with the father does not occur in cultures without strong patriarchal authority. Furthermore, it has become evident that the tie to the mother is not essentially a sexual tie – in fact, the infantile sexuality when not suppressed has as its normal aim autoerotic satisfactions and sexual contact with other children. Moreover, it has become evident that pathological dependence on the mother is caused by non sexual factors –particularly by the dominating attitude of the mother, which makes the child helpless and frightened thus intensifying the need for the mother's protection and affection.

Freud's concept of the Oedipus complex is part of a broader concept in which neurosis is explained as the result of a conflict between the irrational passions of the child and the reality represented by the parents and society. It is the child who is the "sinner", and neurosis is the punishment, as it were... While Freud assumes that the conflict arising from the child's incestuous strivings is rooted in his nature and

thus unavoidable, we believe that in a cultural situation in which respect for the integrity of every individual –hence of every child- is realised the Oedipus complex will belong to the past. (Fromm Erich, "The Oedipus Complex and its Myth" in: Ruth Nanda Anshen (editor): The Family: It's Function and Destiny. [1959] Pp. 445-448)

Although Fromm's critique of Freud's Oedipus complex does not address its gendered dimension i.e. how it is centred around boys' heterosexual development, while neglecting girl's development as well as the particular heterosexist implications of using this complex as if it was equally applicable for gay men in the analytic setting. Nevertheless Fromm clearly addressed many of the issues raised by Gilligan, i.e. the crisis effects on relationships and identity that the entry into patriarchy via the Oedipus complex has for men and women. Furthermore, Fromm assigned the entry into patriarchy even more significance than Gilligan does, by stating that this conflict is actually not only a childhood-teenage relational crisis but in fact the most important cause of neuroses, that eventually led him to abandon Freud's Oedipus complex and his libido theory.

For instance, Fromm speaks of the "marks" of the failed struggle against irrational authority/patriarchy which manifest themselves as a weakening and/or the paralysis of spontaneity and originality, the debilitating of the sense of self, the substituting of the "I" by replacing it instead with the expectations of others which force men and women to further silence their own voices, while Gilligan speaks about the psychological "scar" and the break up in relationships and the points of crisis and/or impasse in psychological development.

However, unlike Gilligan, Fromm who speaks about the ethical dilemmas and challenges around different ways of being in society, - i.e. being and having and their relevance for notions of the self and

forms of social relatedness - but does not address issues of the divide of inner and outer, the public and the private, with a clearer sense of its gendered emotional and sexual dimension that is a central element in the emotional and moral development of gay men's identity. Thus in the next section I will comment briefly on Gilligan's discussion on the moral dimension of the break up of relationship and I will also highlight its relevance to gay men's emotional development, since Gilligan does not address these gay male issues.

Dominant Images of the Male Self and the Moral Development of Entendidos

Although a capacity for friendly engagement - for compassion and for response to another's pleasure and distress - is an essential element in our childhood and teenage experiences of relationships and shared sensuality that are common in Spanish and Latin American emotional contexts and moral images of the male self, this relational capacity is usually neglected or simply ignored in current accounts of gay male emotional-moral development. This may be in part because it is at odds with prevailing US and British dominant images of the gay male self where values of assertiveness, autonomy, and self-sufficiency seem to me to take precedence over emotional issues. In this sense, it also seems to me that issues around emotional experience, and the lack of an emotional language of needs among gay men often gets framed and structured, in a somewhat compensatory way, through argumentative discursive strategies in order to assert the rights of US and/or British gay men (Chesebro, 1981; Plummer, 1981, 1992, 1995).

Often, notions of the self and morality are depicted in terms of individual autonomy and social responsibility, which imply a sense of an internalised conscience that is guided by will, and also by duty or obligation, conveying a sense of reciprocity, that can be expressed as moral codes and principles. (Seidler, 1994)

However these types of descriptions tend to neglect the relational emotional aspect of identity and self development, and the ability to put oneself in another's position gets mostly linked to rationalist, somehow contractual, ways of seeing and experiencing self-development.

A different way of describing the self, generally confused with a failure of self-definition, has been clarified in recent years by Carol Gilligan's work on the developmental experiences of women (1977, 1982, 1987, 1988). In Gilligan's account, the self is known in the experience of connection, defined not by reflection but by interaction, the responsiveness of human engagement. While she acknowledges that, within current descriptions of the self, the relational context of identity formation is usually present, she also observes that issues of attachment and detachment as basic elements of the emotional-moral relational development somehow get dissolved in mainstream representations of the relational self, when she remarks that:

> From George Herbert Mead's description of the self as known through others reflection, and Cooleys's conception of the "looking glass self", to Erickson's emphasis on the discovery of the self in others' recognition and the current psychoanalytic fascination with the process of "mirroring" the relational context of identity formation has been repeatedly conveyed. But the recurrent image of the mirror calls attention to the lifelessness in this portrayal of relationships. When others are described as objects for self-reflection or as the means to self-discovery and self-recognition, the language of relationships is drained of attachment, intimacy and engagement. The self, although placed in a context of relationships is defined in terms of separation. Others disappear, and love becomes cast in the depersonalised language of "object-relations" (Gilligan, [1988] Mapping the Moral Domain p.240)

The close links she observes between self-description and moral judgement highlight the significance of this distinction by indicating how different images of the self give rise to different visions of moral agency, as they are reflected in the dissonance between women's rather self silenced voices and normative psychological theories of self development.

Exploring this dissonance, Gilligan defined new categories of moral judgement and self-description to capture the experiences of attachment and interdependence, which override the traditional contrast between egoism and altruism. This enlarged conceptual framework has provided a new way of listening to differences - through the use of the voice-centred relational method - not only between but also within the moral thinking and feeling of women and men and among men. This has helped me to reflect further on the emotional-moral experiences of entendidos as crucially conveying notions of care, responsibility, moral conflict and choice.

Although the voice-centred relational method that Gilligan & others have developed is basically concerned with the psychological-moral development of heterosexual girls and women, her description of the process of self silencing their experiences of heterosexual male oppression that girls undergo in their childhood and teenage years seems to me to have an interesting similarity with the process of alienation and self silencing that pre-homosexual boys undergo, as part of being raised as "straight boys" in a homophobic heterosexual society. Pre gay boys like girls often learn to silence their feeling voices and although the reasons for these differ between pre-gay boys and girls, they both have in common a self silencing attitude and the taking oneself out of relationships in order to fit the

heterosexual expectations of what a man or a woman must be (Isay, R. 1996). For example Gilligan observes that:

> At adolescence, however, a shift takes place for many girls, as they experience a relational impasse and a developmental crisis. To be in relationships at this juncture often jeopardises "relationships". Girls are under pressure from without and within to shape themselves in accordance with the dominant cultural ideals of femininity and womanhood or of maturity and adulthood. This creates tension when the ideals of womanhood and femininity are those of "selflessness", and the ideals of maturity and adulthood are those of separation and independence. Girls experiencing this initiation into dominant cultural ideals and values often perceive that, either way, they will lose relationship; either they will give up their voices to others, learning to think, feel and say what others want them to think, feel and say, or they will give up their relationships with others and learn to be self-sufficient, entire unto themselves. In the face of this relational crisis, a pre-adolescent resilience can give way to an increasing uncertainty, a hesitancy in speaking, and a tendency toward self-doubt that questions the validity of their feelings and dismisses the value of their experience. (Gilligan, C. [1995] "Holding Difference, Sustaining Hope" in: Between Voice and Silence, p. 23).

These processes of self-silencing and giving up voice are similar to entendidos' process of growing up as a male in homophobic contexts like Barcelona, for they have often had to silence their needs and voice since childhood to conform to a heterosexual male image.

At adolescence, pre-gay boys' ordinary courage and seemingly effortless ability to speak their minds by opening up their hearts become restrained, and often they become increasingly reluctant to say not only what they are thinking or feeling but even not thinking what they are feeling, all of which leads to a gradual dismissal of their own experience (Isay, 1996; Drescher, 1998).

Speaking and Listening with Feeling: A Combined Voice Relational/ Psychoanalytical Approach to Exploring Entendidos' Emotional Experiences

Gilligan's notions of the relational self, and her voice-centred relational method put a great emphasis on the development of the "ability to listen to oneself listening to others". Methodologically this implies the development of a relational and resisting way of listening to others' emotional and moral conflicting experiences. Thus, from a "resisting" listening position, one has to listen to others' emotional experiences for and against the conventions of a culture rooted in many ways in a male heterosexual dominant perspective. In this way, listening to the experiences of gay men both from a relational and from a resisting way allows a useful space for the exploration of diverse feelings and emotional experiences that is not present within the structure of the analytic setting, where a heterosexual Oedipus complex is often considered the normal psychological development for everyone.

To put into practice this ability to listen to entendidos in a "resisting way" in order to understand better their particular experiences of emotional connection/disconnection leads to a process of remembering and with it, issues of closeness and vulnerability –the condition of relationship. In this way, the tension between closeness and vulnerability becomes more clearly linked with the regeneration of a patriarchal social order that depends on a disconnection with the emotional and affectionate needs of men, the unacknowledgement and the denial of difference, and on the establishment of hierarchies among men.

In this sense, Gilligan's voice-centred relational method is clearly concerned not only with learning to voice and articulate our feelings but also with listening in a resisting way in order to re-define one's relational abilities to connect and to respond emotionally not only to oneself but also to the emotional needs of gay men:

> As resisting listeners, we thus are aware of, and through this awareness attempt to extricate ourselves from the constraints of a patriarchal logic, to create a space to define or "revision" the experience of self and the nature of relationship in a way that is in tune with the voices of both, men and women. We do this by listening in the interviews for signs of self silencing or capitulation to debilitating cultural norms and values – times when a person buries her feelings and thoughts and manifests confusion, uncertainty and dissociation, which are the marks of a psychological resistance. We also listen for signs of political resistance, times when people struggle against abusive relationships and fight for relationships in which it is possible for them to disagree openly with others, to feel and speak a full range of emotions.
> Our voice-centred method thus is an attempt to maintain the relationships, which are central to the process of psychological growth and also the process of our inquiry by maintaining voice and thus articulating difference (Brown & Gilligan, [1992] Meeting at the Crossroads, pp.30).

The relevance of these notions for entendidos is that their particular relationships with others constitutes the way of knowing and sharing emotionally *from* the particular experiences and meanings they assign in the dailiness of their past and present lives, as opposed to merely forcefully framing their experiences according to heterosexual, and alleged "universal" Oedipal scenarios and related diagnostic terminology common in the analytic setting (Fraiberg, 1961; Laufer & Laufer 1989). This 'daily-ness' can be manifested emotionally in fragmented and unspoken ways, which in turn reflect entendidos public and private ways of being.

Similarly the term "voice" in Gilligan's approach is clearly centred on personal experience in relationships and its moral vicissitudes within public and private spaces. Methodologically, its

overall structure is organised around "hearing" and "representing" not just words but crucially feeling voice:

> Four questions about voice attune one's ears to the harmonics of relationship: (1) Who is speaking? (2) In what body? (3) Telling what story about relationship – from whose perspective or from whose vantage point? (4) In what societal and cultural frameworks? To ask who is speaking tunes one's ear to the voice of the person as a distinct voice, a new voice – a voice worth listening to…. These questions about voice reveal the dominant voice in the field of psychology (the voice generally taken to be not a voice but the truth) to be oracular, disembodied, seemingly objective and dispassionate. Yet paradoxically, this "objective and disembodied" voice has presumed, at least implicitly, a male body, a story about relationship that is, at its centre, a story about separation and a society that men govern within the framework of Western civilisation… Maintaining voice, and therefore difference, we ask not only who is speaking but who is listening, and this relational understanding of the research process shifts the nature of psychological work from a profession of truth to a practice of relationships in which truths can emerge or become clear. Instead of holding as an ideal a no-voice voice or an objective stance – a way of speaking or seeing that is disembodied, outside of relationship, in no particular time or place - we seek to ground our work empirically, in experience, and in the realities of relationship and of difference, of time and place…. We know that voice, as a channel of psychic expression is polyphonic and complex. Our listeners guide lays out both a literary and a clinical approach – a method or way of working that is responsive to the harmonics of psychic life, the non-linear, recursive, non-transparent play, interplay and orchestration of feelings and thoughts, the polyphonic nature of any utterance, and the symbolic nature not only of what is said but also of what is not said (Gilligan & Brown [1992] Meeting at the Crossroads, pp.21-23).

So relationships is the way of knowing and connecting self and other that creates a channel for relational feeling and knowledge. In practice, this implies listening to oneself and others in different relational ways, for the emphasis is put on becoming an empathetic and responsive listener. This is what is meant by 'relational method', while maintaining a sensitive ear for important contextual issues i.e., cultural ways of assuming male desire, emotional needs, care, love, sexuality in connection to the conflicts and passions that attend these realities.

1) *Talking with Feeling*

As I mentioned earlier, given that Gilligan's relational method is primarily concerned with reading, listening and representing but not with the active process of talking and dialogically eliciting feeling voices during the interview process, I will first introduce the psychoanalytic notions and method of free associations as redefined by Fromm (1955), and then transference and countertransference as redefined by Carlton Cornett (1995) to deal with gay male subjectivity. I willthen explain how I used these to connect emotionally and to elicit feeling voices embodied emotions and desire consciously and unconsciously as part of the dialogic interview structure with my interviewees.

The inclusion of these elements facilitates a closer emotional approach to our particular ways of talking and reflecting about our experiences as gay men. For instance, among gay men in Barcelona and Mexico the use of non verbal attitudes and emotional dispositions while talking about personal experience as a way of making sense of our emotional needs is quite common, especially when trying to share experiences for which there may not be a sufficiently emotionally sensitive language and terminology, but rather a heterosexist pejorative one, e.g, the experience of anal penetration as encompassing desire and love among gay men, and not just as conveying subordination and effeminacy, as it is commonly contemptuously assumed within a male heterosexist and homophobic discourse.

When I speak of the cultural specificity of Barcelonian gay male emotional experience and its similarities with Mexican gay male experience here, it is important to recognise that I am referring to shared cultural understandings and aims

in relation to sensual desire, feeling sensibilities and even sense of humour. For instance, I found that our ways of speaking, listening, sharing and making sense of our emotional needs are culturally related and primarily concerned with issues of care, pre-verbal emotional connection, e.g., touching, affection, tenderness and shared beliefs, and that these elements combined allowed our emotional interaction to flow in a way that does not need to control the meaning of all our interactions and experiences. Nor were we often concerned with classifying and coding our experiences according to rational, discursive often binary oppositional lexical categorisations. Although we acknowledged that when verbally reflecting upon our experience there was a clear sense that everything we said was preliminary, not fixed, fluid and even fragmentary (as post modernist language specialists like to put it). At the same time, there was also among us a sense of permanence and continuity in our sharing and making sense of our lives that allowed us to reflect on our emotional situation as gay men in dynamic, rich and fluid ways that included more than verbal language categorisations.

This does not mean, however, that we did not have personal and cultural differences as well, in all these aspects of our experience. We also recognised that we had our differences but we did not use these as a way to impose unnecessary boundaries and intelligibility to our capacity to emotionally connect. Overall, we found more affinities and similarities than irreconcilable differences.

In practice, this meant that during our interactions we failed at times to grasp and fully share some cultural understandings and assumptions in relation to some aspects of our experience. But at the same time, we were not particularly worried about trying to "explain" what our "patterns" of emotional and sexual behaviour might mean.

It also happened that we did not need to understand all the possible meanings behind our perceptions, values and behaviour; all we needed to know was how to respond empathetically to the often non-verbal but emotive cues signalled by each other. Thus, we realised that issues of meaning did not always need to enter fully into consciousness and so our variations in preferences, taste and performance never meant for us over-deterministic culturally fixed differences. In terms of written style, when describing our conversations and shared emotional experiences, I have attempted to offer a polyvocal analysis weaving both relevant earlier research as well as interviewees and my own voices and experiences, rather than abstracting the sources and coding their contents.

Free Association: among the three psychoanalytic methods for the observation of the unconscious: the interpretation of dreams, the analysis of transference, free association allows one to hear the voice of one's unconscious, provided one does something which seems very simple: namely that one leaves the realm of conventional, rational thought, and permits oneself to voice ideas and feelings which are not determined by the rules of normal conventional thinking and behaving. If one does this, ideas and feelings emerge, not from one's head but as the Chinese would say, from one's belly: ideas and feelings that are not part of one's official personality. Furthermore, if one permits oneself to associate freely, then these very thoughts that come from this dissociated realm attract other relevant and germane thoughts coming from one's unconscious.

As Fromm noted, the word *free* here refers only to the relative suspension of conscious control. The patient in psychoanalytic treatment is asked to express all thoughts, feelings, wishes, sensations, images and memories, without reservation as they

spontaneously occur. These are the associations, and the emphasis is put on the intimate connection between language, reason, consciousness and feeling. Similarly, in his essay *Remarks on the Problem of Free Association,* Fromm (1955/1995) also criticized the ritualised and indiscriminate use of free association in the analytic setting and highlighted the importance of distinguishing free association from (a) the request for more information and (b) the request as to what the patient *thinks* i.e., about a dream or an occurrence. He also suggested that analysts should also free associate in response to their patients own free associations to make the fullest use of their imagination and relational abilities in order to enhance the emotional communication with the patient and to avoid transforming the analytic experience into mere intellectual words and chatter.

Accordingly, during our conversations I used free association in three specific ways: (a) asking my interviewees to tell me what were they feeling in relation to specific issues raised during their reflections about their life experiences and (b) asking my interviewees to concentrate and try to feel the experience of the "I" about themselves and to say what came up in their minds in relation to specific experiences they had during their growing up years and finally (c) I also used free association myself in order to connect better emotionally with my interviewees' own free associations.

Transference: the displacement of patterns of feelings, thoughts and behaviour, originally experienced in relation to significant figures during childhood, onto a person involved in a current interpersonal relationship. Since the process involved is largely unconscious, the person does not perceive the various sources of transference attitudes, fantasies and feelings (i.e., love, hate, anger).

The phenomenon appears unbidden from the point of view of the subject and is at times distressing. Transference is the core relational construct of psychoanalysis, for it recognizes the centrality and intense emotional quality of the relationship between the analyst and the patient in the analytic experience. However the phenomenon of transference is not restricted to the analytic setting; insofar as it is an essential element in social relationships and insofar as in every relationship there is a re-editing of previous emotional attachments, transference is ubiquitous.

Extra-analytical transferences occur in a wide range of circumstances, i.e., interpersonal, institutional and social interactions, including obviously the research interactions.

The concept has been subject to many revisions and redefinitions. Intrinsic to the early understandings of transference was the idea that it represented a distortion of the *real* person of the therapist and of the *real* relationship between analyst and patient. Because of the therapist's alleged relative anonymity and neutrality, transference was seen from this perspective as being constructed upon qualitative distortions of reality that resulted from unresolved Oedipal conflicts and yearnings.

However, soon afterwards it was also observed that transference phenomena often developed both prior to the Oedipal period and that the transference reactions were actually tailored to actual characteristics of the analyst, which highlighted the importance of the therapist as a full participant in this process.

For the purposes of this study, I am using Carlton Cornett's (1995) *relational view of transference* that is suited to deal with gay emotional experience. According to Cornett's relational view - which draws on object relations, Fromm's interpersonal psychoanalysis and

Heinz Kohut's work on self development - transference is based on the realistic existent qualities in the person/analyst/researcher with whom we are interacting (Gill, 1982; Winer, 1994).

In the relational transference phenomenon there is not an Oedipal "distortion" based on simple projection of the patient's internal world onto the receptive blank screen of the "real" personality of the analyst and or/person, but instead there is an *over-elaboration* of actual aspects of the analyst and/or person with whom we interact. This transference elaboration thus involves a *magnification* of the existing personality qualities of the analyst/person that give tangible substance to the patient's or person's emotional experiencing this relationship. This relational perspective on transference illuminates the importance of the analyst/researcher maintaining an acute understanding of his/her anti-homosexual prejudice. I include in this description also gay male analysts and social researchers whose own anti-homosexual prejudice can present itself as shame, resulting in sustained *empathic lapses* toward the patient/research participant. Striving for anonymity, relative or otherwise, does not hide such prejudice, and the propensity to conceptualise transference as a "projection based distortion of the real analyst" allows the analyst/researcher to deny the existence of such prejudice; but it does not prevent the bias from having a negative impact on the patient/research interviewee. For instance, Erich Fromm's critiques this classical view of transference as a distortion of reality. He links this conception of transference with a social structure that strives to maintain its hierarchy by encouraging childlike helplessness through the arbitration of "reality" and the "appropriateness" of feelings engendered by social interaction. As a corollary of this, Fromm suggests that the more real the analyst becomes and the more he

loses his phantom-like character, the easier it is for the analysed to give up the posture of helplessness and to cope with reality.

Operationally, this relational view of transference to approach the emotional experiences of gay people has two coexisting levels: (1) a *"compensatory level"*, in which the gay patient utilises the analyst as a self-object. This process involves the patient/interviewee demonstrating his/her typical manner of maintaining equilibrium and an accustomed identity. On this level the patient/interviewee reacts to one or more actual characteristics of the therapist/researcher initially to contrast and locate relationally his/her identity. This compensatory element does not imply psychopathology, i.e. in the sense that the identity of gay people is incomplete and so needing a heterosexual identity to validate one's own; rather it is intended to attune the analyst/researcher's mind and ears to the particular experiential processes involved in relating to others when one's identity and feeling cannot be subsumed into a heterosexual Oedipalised understanding of identity and transference.

In this sense, the analyst/researcher's attitude and emotional responses provide a space for emphatic emotional connection that assists in the completion and temporary stability of a gay identity that may be prone to shame based anxiety and/or fragmentation during the analytic and/or research experience, while maintaining a sense of gendered difference.

On a second level of transference phenomena, *"the narrative level"* the patient/interviewee offers a history of how his/her accustomed identity developed. As he/she does so, they offer a narrative emotional explanation of the basis for the compensatory transference. This allows the analyst/researcher to understand and acknowledge how the patient/interviewee has picked upon certain

characteristics of the authentic analyst/researcher's personality to explain his/her story. If the therapist/researcher maintains a belief that the patient/interviewee's reactions are mere distortions of the reality of the analytic/research relationship, he or she will miss that story.

Countertransference: as with transference, this concept has also been subject to many revisions and modifications. In early psychoanalytic theory, countertransference was considered a parallel phenomenon of transference, i.e. just as the patient utilises the analyst via displacement and projection to recreate childhood conflicts, the psychoanalyst, when responding countertransferentially, was thought to be engaged in the same type of interaction. Because of this, countertransference was seen as representing "weaknesses" in the analyst's training, and so analysts tended to loath and deny that countertransference played a role in their work. Nowadays, when an analyst is willing to acknowledge the impact of his/her countertransference in the analytic process this is considered a hallmark of professional maturity (Cornett, 1995).

Again, I used Cornett's redefinition of countertransference to approach entendidos emotional experiences. Cornett defines countertransference in working with gay people as the analyst's use of the patient as a self-object, the impact of which can be either relatively positive, or negative on the analytic process. Regarding the potentially negative impact of countertransference, Cornett identifies three basic scenarios where this can occur: 1) the analyst's use of the patient to confirm a shame-based false self, i.e. as when a gay male analyst tries to adopt an anonymity stance which may function as a cover for the analyst's shame regarding his own homosexuality: 2) reliance on the patient to meet excessive mirroring needs, i.e., this

can occur especially when the analyst technique is founded upon interpretation. Given that many gay male analysts have also experience the full range of contempt and loathing to which gay men are heir in patriarchal societies, they are often vulnerable to fluctuations in their self esteem that can result in moments of fragmentation. The analytic process, with its inherent frustrations and disappointments for both participants, can give rise to this vulnerability: 3) reliance on the patient to meet social needs, i.e., given that analysis can be an isolated profession, this can intensify the analyst's sense of himself as alone and alienated from the rest of the culture. One potential outcome of this situation is that the analyst may use the patient as a source of social fulfilment, thus abrogating the sometimes onerous responsibility of psychotherapy in favour of a pseudo-friendship. These issues will be further discussed in chapter three on friendship and psychoanalysis.

2) Listening with Feeling

The voice-centred relational method revolves around a set of three or more readings of the interview text and the original tapes can be listened to as these readings are carried out. I actually conducted four readings of selected interview transcripts.

However this method is very time-consuming and it often requires a trade-off between depth and scope. A life history of entendidos, for instance, cannot sample a broad population of gay men while gaining any depth of understanding particular intimate situations, i.e. unconscious motives and emotional dynamics. I estimated that eight gay men should be enough in order to explore and illustrate the potential and scope of my interviewees emotional

and moral experiences of conflict and choice keeping the focus on their personal relationships.

Thus, rather than spread the research thin, I decided to concentrate on a few specific aspects of their emotional lives where the personal and theoretical yield should be high. In particular, how the dissonance between entendidos' lived experience and the way in which gay male experience is talked about in US and British psychoanalytic and sociologic texts, highlights the critical interphase between making sense and assuming of one's emotional and sexual life as an entendido and/or developing a gay identity. The recorded conversations (an average of fifteen hours with each participant) took place in Barcelona, in Spanish, in two occasions (Summer 1998 and Summer 1999). In terms of the research design, this is a combined qualitative research study, which involves in-depth interviews (life stories) with a specific friendship group of eight middle class gay male students, ages 21-27 whose familiar backgrounds include mostly Catalan and also Andalusian parents. I chose life histories for they can give rich documentation of personal experience, ideology, subjectivity and social structure.

First Stage: Access to participants, recorded conversations with Barcelona gay men, transcription of conversations, writing up summarised individual stories, selection of conversations transcripts and four interpretative readings.

Instead of using widely recognised techniques in qualitative research concerned with accessing stigmatised groups, i.e. informal snowballing, I used friendship-networks to locate potential

participants. This decision was based on not wanting to advertise and so recruit a self-selected sample or to recruit through health professional contacts.

My concern was that entendidos and gay men recruited through professional contacts, in the context of Barcelona, would be perceived as "suitable clinical specimens" and/or "politically correct, out of the closet and/or activist gay men" which would have given them a particularly biased "socially acceptable and visible identity" that could also inhibit how they feel able to speak in detail about their intimate emotional experiences. I felt this way of accessing participants could, in this context, also indirectly induce them to feel forced to present their experiences in a way that mirrored the public accounts and expectations given by both health and or professional gay organizations.

So, I was introduced to Miguel, one of the eight gay men friendship group with whom I eventually worked, through Bonifacio a straight male friend with whom I was sharing a flat while I did my PhD studies in Sociology at Barcelona University. Then, through Miguel who was then 22 years old, I then met Paco, 27: Xavier, 21: Salvador, 27: Sebastian, 21: Manuel, 24: Jose Maria, 24 and Sergio, 24. All of them are urban, middle class. Seven of them are of urban Catalan ascendancy and one has Andalusian parents. Seven are college students and one is already a graduate student.

Miguel - who at that time did voluntary work in a gay help/information phone line - called home asking to speak to Bonifacio, whom at that moment was not in the flat. Miguel and I kept on talking about our work at college. He was very interested when I told him about the topic for my thesis and we agreed to meet later on to talk about it in more detail. Once I had outlined my idea to him i.e.

that I was interested in talking with them about how they had grown up different, their romantic relationships and their family and friendship experiences, I also told him that I need seven more entendidos to interview.

Miguel was very enthusiastic, supportive and interested in participating; subsequently he introduced me to Paco and the rest who were all interested in participating. I introduced myself as a gay PhD student doing his doctoral thesis. They were very enthusiastic, supportive and generous. We arranged to meet basically at my flat, but then, whenever it was convenient for them or for both of us, we also met in their flats and sometimes even in cafes and/or parks to have our conversations. We agreed to spend an hour and a half to two hours per session, depending on our activities and availability. They all mentioned that they expected confidentiality as well as remaining anonymous in terms of the publication of the thesis. (See further details in the Ethical considerations section of this chapter).

In terms of the framing of our conversations I told them that there was no questionnaire guide nor right or wrong answers, but rather we would maintain a friendly dialogue where we both could address any issues related to the topic of our conversations: our lives as gay men. Usually, I would start by asking them who they were and then we would carry on our conversation according to the issues raised by their own self description interspersed with other relevant questions. We tried to maintain a focus on their intimate emotional experiences, without controlling the course of our conversations. I also asked each of them if they would allow me to record our interviews. They all agreed and often they would switch the tape themselves from side A to side B whenever a 45-minute side was completed. In the first period, summer 1998, I tried to cover with

them all the main points namely, how they had experienced their sense of being different and how this had affected their romantic and sexual relationships with other gay men as well as how they had experienced their friendship relationships with both straight and gay men. However I also told them that still there were other issues that I would like to talk about in a second time, namely issues of local understandings of gayness, their views on their local gay scene, society and gay rights, religion and homosexuality. Actually, it took us a year before we managed to meet again in the summer of 1999.

Between the summer of 1998 and the summer of 1999 I spent six months doing the transcription of the tapes. However, during that time, it was wonderful for me to realize how we just kept in touch mainly via telephone calls and e-mails, talking basically as friends not only about how we felt the first time we met and what it meant for us to have shared our experiences as gay men but also about our initial friendship, our romantic relationships and our work.

The fact that they are a small friendship group of eight gay men also allowed me to have more time to reflect in more detail on my relationship with each of them and reading their letters and e-mails also helped me focus on what particular issues I wanted to talk about in more detail with each of them in our next encounter in Barcelona in the summer of 1999.

I moved to London in September 1998 to continue my work with Professor Victor Seidler at Goldsmiths College, and then continued listening and transcribing the content of all the recorded tapes. Then, after completing our second round of conversations in 1999, I kept on transcribing the rest of the tapes. In total I transcribed ninety tapes, each of ninety minutes' duration, which took

me approximately 6 months to complete. Then I wrote individual story summaries for each of them in English.

Afterwards I did the four readings suggested in the voice-centred relational method using the summaries from our conversations. From these I then selected particular transcripts in order to illustrate both how I used and adapted the voice relational method combining the use of free association, transference and countertransference and a friendly stance in order to address the main research questions.

I will now illustrate how I did the four readings that comprise the voice relational method, in a way that would enable entendidos' emotional voices to be distinct and discernible.

Reading 1: reading for the plot, and my response to the stories. This first reading comprises two elements. Initially the text is read for the overall plot story being told by the interviewee. The idea is to identify the main events, the protagonists and the subplots and then focusing on recurrent words, metaphors and contradictions in the story. A second element comprises asking ourselves in what ways do we identify with or distance from the person talking; in what ways are our experiences or we similar or different? Where are we confused or puzzled? Where are we certain?

Here's one example of my reactions to my interviewees experiences:

> Paco reflects on his first sensing that he was different:
>
> *I knew I was attracted to boys since I was three years old, that's for sure. When I was a kid, I would not tell anything about my feelings to other boys to anybody. I kept everything to myself.*

During my childhood and early adolescence I simply did not reflect on me feelings for other boys but, at the same time, I did not feel unease either. It was as if I had something added that my friends did not share with me.

While I read these lines I realised that actually I felt identified with some of Paco's experiences, for I had also sensed since I was very young a certain mix of curiosity and attraction for some boys in my class. In the beginning I would stare at them carefully while they were playing or doing classwork, but then I would also realise that their faces seemed particularly attractive to me. I remember how once a boy called Alex reacted to my constantly looking at him by asking me "What are you looking at", to which I replied nothing but his remark left me thinking, he's right, why was I looking at him? At that time, I was six years old, and I did not feel attracted to him in a sensual or erotic way; it was rather the mere recognition that he looked handsome, and so later on I often found myself looking at him and then being aware that I was paying too much attention to him.

In retrospect, I find that Paco's reactions to his own interest in boys i.e. "I simply did not reflect on my feelings to other boys but at the same time I did not feel unease either" were different to mine; for example, I did reflect on my own feelings for boys. Actually I once told Alex "I think you look pretty" - he just blushed a bit without saying anything to me in reply. Since Alex's desk was next to mine in the classroom we sometimes shared class work or playing together and I don't remember feeling worried that I found him pretty, nor seeing myself as a queer. It was rather a pleasant kind of aesthetic feeling, and when Alex and I were together playing or doing classwork we never had problems or arguments about it. He knew that I found him pretty and he did not seemed to be bothered either. So in this

sense, Paco's reactions, i.e. "I kept everything to myself", were quite different to mine, for I shared my impressions directly with Alex. This contrast between Paco's reactions to his interest in boys and mine also left me thinking how he managed to keep everything to himself without feeling unease.

Reading 2: This comprises listening for the self, the "I" speaking in relationships. It focuses on how the interviewee experiences, feels and talks about him/herself before we start talking about them. Once one lets the voice of the interviewee enter one's psyche, one cannot claim to remain in a detached or objective position because one is affected by that voice, and the words they express leads one to think or feel a variety of things.

Gilligan suggests using a colour pencil to mark on the transcripts the use of personal pronouns such a "I'" "we" and "you" in talking about themselves as this allows a clearer image of how the "I" is active in telling a story and how the personal use of these pronouns amplify the terms in which the person sees and presents him/herself. Thus, the marking or underlying the "I's" in a given transcript also helps identifying those emotional moments when the person struggles to say something and how in this process the person shifts between "I", "we" and "you" which in turn reflect changes in how the person perceives and experiences him/herself. I used a colour pencil to mark these pronouns in my transcripts and it did help me concentrate on and appreciate different aspects of the voice of the "I".

Here's an example:

I kept on reading Paco's experiences of difference, still with my question at the back of my mind of how he managed not only not to reflect on his feelings for boys but also keep everything to himself. Paco now seems to give some clues about this:

When "I" walked down the streets, "I" used to look at some boys who seemed attractive to me, but "I" would just look at them and did not try to speak to them. At that time, in my mind "relationships" was something that happened between boys and girls. Later on, when "I" was fifteen, "I" started dating girls and it wasn't until "I" fully realised that "I" was not able to relate emotionally and sexually with my girlfriend that "I" decided to take a step ahead and explore my feelings for boys

Reading for the "I" was particularly useful in pulling out what became a crucial issue in my understanding not only of Paco's but also my other interviewees' own process of self silencing their desire for boys, namely, how entendidos are often caught between two opposing moral "voices" which represent different positions and ways of articulating and assessing their situation. One voice or set of voices reflects their society and their family's expectations of themselves and their interpretation of cultural norms and values surrounding Barcelona's idea of what a boy and/or a man must look like, feel, do and represent.

These expectations and interpretations are in turn related to their personal and family and school contexts in which being a boy or a man occur and how their local conditions facilitate or impede the expressing and sharing their emotional needs. Another voice or set of voices seems to be informing Paco's actual romantic relationships and how by forcing himself to enact a heterosexual persona he eventually found himself frustrated for he could not connect with himself

emotionally as a gay man thereby precluding himself from exploring directly his feelings for other boys and therefore living according to his own desire and needs.

Reading 3. In this reading the idea is to focus on how the interviewees speak about interpersonal relationships with their partners, their friends, their parents and the broader social relationships in which they live. Particular attention has to be paid to how they struggle for their relationships as gay men to be heard, respected and validated - that is, relationships in which they can speak freely about their feelings, their desire and their thoughts.

By focusing on the dynamic of gay male interpersonal relationships, one can also further attune one's listening abilities to the ways in which institutional restraints on men's emotional behaviour - which often favour a rather detached emotional ethos for men - as well as certain cultural norms and values i.e. homophobia and heterosexism (both social and internalised); also become moral voices that gradually silence gay men's own voices and limit considerably the expression of their emotional needs and desire. Listening carefully how these cultural restraints on male emotional communication affect also gay men's development of a vocabulary of emotional needs, further allows making more explicit how in the actual emotional communication between gay men with heterosexual men there are often implicit threats of exclusion, stigmatisation, and violence both symbolic and physical.

Another example:

Sebastian recalls his friendships from school:

With my friends (straight male ones) from school we used to hang out at their favourite bars and everything was ok, so long as I "behaved manly" with them. I am good at this, so that was no big effort for me... But after some time I got bored and so I also wanted sometimes to ask them to come with me to mixed bars, and sometimes not so straight bars. The few times we managed to go together to a mix or a gay pub, my friends became anxious, distant and bored, and after some time they all left, leaving me in the bar on my own... Eventually, I came to realise how some of them had actually accepted to be with me in their favourite bars only because they knew that once the night had finished, I would give each of them a ride home, for none of them had a car. Nowadays, I don't have the patience to hang around with them and we only meet occasionally to drink coffee and talk about their stuff and school

I still remember how sad I felt when I first listened to Sebastian telling me how he allowed his "friends" to abuse him, in order to keep company with them, at an age – fifteen years old - when he was most vulnerable and had no gay friends at all. Reading this transcript now, for the quality of relationships from a "resistant" position, i.e. in this case for and against the conventions of male to male friendships, I could identify fairly easily in this transcript a situation of moral conflict and choice for Sebastian.

Sebastian's conforming and submitting to his "friends" gender conventions on going out by "acting straight" while being with his friends in order to keep their company and eventually be accepted by them as "one of us" allowed me to appreciate further how he, like other gay men, often end up narrowing and further silencing their specific needs.

Sebastian's situation also raises issues of justice and care as moral dimensions in interpersonal relationships that are rooted in specific images and practices of the male self. Thus reading for relationships allowed me to appreciate more closely the interplay and imbalance between justice and care, rights and responsibilities, independence and interdependence and issues of autonomy, care and connection for straight and gay men.

For instance, I could appreciate how while Sebastian's moral attitudes to his friends were those of care - i.e. being empathetic and supportive to his friends by acting straight in order not to upset them, and by accepting going out mostly to heterosexual pubs and by taking them to their homes in his car, his straight friends took this as an opportunity to subordinate his needs, invalidate his identity, abuse his kindness and eventually distance themselves from him.

Similarly, when Sebastian tried to assume a more "equal rights" or just, moral attitude with them, he found himself left on his own. Thus, this way of reading for relationships also allowed me to understand more clearly entendidos' emotional struggles to maintain relationships and its effect on their identities.

Reading 4. Placing entendidos in their cultural context. In this reading I placed entendidos' accounts and experiences within both their local context and within broader social, cultural and structural contexts.

One more example:

Here I tried to highlight the social worlds my interviewees live within and experienced. I was particularly interested in whether and how my interviewees recognized and/or alluded to social factors as

bearing a significant link between their personal experience and their social context in a more explicit and resonant way. In particular I tried to listen to how they describe their institutional and ideological male heterosexual moral order as constraining or enabling their emotional needs, i.e. did they recognize these institutional and ideological moral order as such, or did these deal with these as conveying only personal and private troubles? To what extent were they able to identify them as more public and socially located ills and homophobic and heterosexist restrictions upon their rights as gay men?.

Salvador tells me about his adopting a heterosexual persona at work:

When I am at work, I don't like to talk about what I do and how I live. Before I started my present job I didn't hide my gayness, on the contrary I have always been very proud of myself. However, when I am at work I feel at odds, because if I tell them that I am gay then I will be sacked and I still need this job. I feel I am repressing myself too much. Sometimes I listen to people at work uttering homophobic comments and I have to remain calm and pretend that I also share their homophobic viewpoints. I have been thinking a lot about changing my job, for I simply cannot understand how in order to be considered a good employee I have to be straight! Why do I have to change my identity in order to survive? Why don't they change their prejudices instead?

Salvador's reflections capture how he experiences the particular social and cultural context – exemplified by his work's rigid atmosphere - from within which he is finding himself unable to speak clearly and validate his identity. His struggling voice reflects his dilemma by the use of moral terms such as "a good employee" who "has to be straight". While he clearly questions these moral voices

and the values embodied within them, while he is at work his voice becomes silenced and resentful and he ends up feeling disappointed and frustrated with himself and with his work colleagues.

Thus, this combined methodological strategy enables a great deal of flexibility and depth for, on the one hand, as Gilligan (1992:20) puts it, it "brings the listener into responsive relationship with the person speaking since the voice is inherently relational, embodied, connects psyche with body; the voice is in language joining psyche and culture" and, on the other hand, the use of socio-psychoanalytical concepts and methods is also of particular usefulness for it allows different explorations of multi-layered and sometimes "contradictory" needs and desires that often operate dynamically as unconscious motives. The result is neither a clinical psychoanalytical approach – for we are not framing and interpreting entendidos' experiences according to pre-established diagnostic categories - nor a mere written-voice reading and representing research experience.

Sharing a full range of voices, feelings and thoughts regarding our intimate emotional experiences clearly requires an atmosphere of care, respect, friendliness and empathy and these are certainly affected by the emotional and cognitive attitudes, personality, values, language, transference and countertransference of the participants.

The combined use of free association, transference and countertransference as part of our exploring and sharing of our emotional moral experiences allowed us to appreciate better how *both* researcher and interviewee listened to and relate emotionally to each other, while avoiding minimising, ignoring or denying the significance

of unconscious dynamics and motivation informing and mediating our emotional experiences.

Stage 2. Summaries and selection of transcripts

In addition to the detailed translation of our conversations and the writing up of life history summaries.   I also did thematic transcripts in order to make the huge volume of interview material more manageable. I went on to select from the translations and the summaries particular segments that deal specifically with their experiences of (a) sensing their being different, (b) love and sex and care in romantic relationships and (c) friendship relationships. These transcripts were then arranged into sub-themes in order to identify and link transitional or significant turning points, i.e. engagement with other boys at school, relationships with parents, leaving home, entering college, coming out, engaging in the gay scene and first gay relationships.

These thematic transcripts were then used in the empirical chapters (four and five and six), to address and illustrate specific issues according to the research questions and theoretical issues raised in each chapter and in relation to the particular findings of the study.

Thus the quoted transcripts in chapters four and five - which deal with difference and romantic relationships- are person-centred, focused on the "I" and long enough to give a clearer idea of how my interviewees do not speak in linear, rational discursive/narrative ways but rather in emotionally rich, friendly, non-assertive or argumentative ways in which they often interweave multi-layered

voices and feelings very gradually through their reflections of their intimate experiences.

Similarly the way of quoting and the length of these quotes do not follow some conventions common in sociological and ethnographic research, i.e., where personal quotes can be drained of their emotional context and squeezed into "fact of the matter points" but rather embodies respect for the time it usually took us during our conversations for their individual perceptions and emotional elaborations to show different tonalities within the context of the intimate issues dealt in our conversations.

By contrast, the transcripts included in chapter six on friendship relationships are shorter and have a more thematic and group approach rather than person-centred approach, for in this chapter the idea is to emphasize how different voices interact, engage/disengage, connect and disconnect emotionally. Thus tracing the "us" "we" "them" voices through thematic transcripts links common emotional issues and moral conflicts between interviewees as friends while helping to maintain their differences in dynamic interaction.

Limitations of My Method and Other Qualitative Approaches

The particular combined method I have devised to explore the emotional experiences of gay men, so far as I know, has not been tried before. Attempts at combining psychoanalytic and qualitative methods on the other hand have been tried before in different disciplines but they deal with very different issues.

So I will try to comment first on the limitations I see in my particular combined method and then comment on some research

dealing with the specific limitations of the voice relational and the psychoanalytic methods, as well as those of discursive and narrative analysis methods.

My combined method has been very valuable but I still think it requires further refinement in order to deal with some difficult questions. For example, there is a risk that the use of this method by researchers/clinicians who are not familiar enough with both the psychoanalytic and the voice-centred relational methods as well as with feminist critiques of the unified self may result in them mixing up and subsuming the richness and creative possibilities of the polyphony of gay men's voices in rather essentialist ways, i.e. claiming to have found the "true" or "authentic" universalised voice of all gay men.

There is also a risk of using the idea of "authentic voice" according to a psychological paradigm of health and illness and so what is classified as "authentic voice" is seen as having reached a status of fixed mental health, with all the potential this concept has for obscuring the judgements of the more powerful behind an apparently scientific and neutral knowledge base. By assuming that voice is simply regained unproblematically, we can think that once regained is a marker of authentic relationships and mental health.

Part of the difficulties involved in hearing, representing and theorising about entendidos voices also has to do with the fact that, for the moment, the facilities for hearing these voices are basically inscribed, on the one hand, within predominantly male heterosexual psychoanalytic language, concepts and theory and, on the other hand, the spaces provided by the voice relational method are also inscribed within a primarily female heterosexual feminist approach (De Vault, 1990; Edwards & Ribbens, 1991; Smith, 1987; Gilligan, 1982; Weskott, 1990).

At present, there is no combined psychoanalytic/sociological relational framework specifically built on and designed to deal with the particular emotional-moral needs of gay men, with a clear sense of its gendered and cultural specificity and diversity. For example, the work of Jane Ribbens (1998) raises interesting issues of how paying attention to our feeling voice can potentially give us a sense of greater empowerment or authority rather than the expression of a grand, fixed true self but it can also obscure other issues. For instance, an analyst/researcher trying to listen to feeling voices according to a psychological paradigm of health and illness may implicitly classify as "authentic voice" some voices that may resonate with their psychopathological/heterosexual framework. These may therefore be seen as having reached a status of fixed mental health.

Jane Ribbens' attempt to create a space in which she could know her own feelings and desires within the research process; and how she ended up hearing instead a cacophony of voices, some of which were so effective and powerful that they closed rather than opened the space she was trying to create for listening to and knowing her own feelings: "...It did not seem to be a matter of psychological suppression as a silent and stealthy subversion... This has raised numerous questions. What do I mean by these various "voices" and where do they come from? Might some of them be "imposed" upon me and is there one voice, which is more "authentic" or "truer" to "myself"? " (1998:29-31).

A discussion of how at some point I also found myself almost invisible in the text while attempting to describe in proper academic language the richness of our conversations is also included in the conclusions chapter.

For some researchers the notion of "voice" has become a shorthand way of referring to the person speaking or even to the account or the story spoken. The term "voice" is a concept that can be used with a different set of meanings and antecedents. Its overall structure is organised around "hearing" and "representing". For the purposes of this study, voice is primarily framed as a relational notion conveying both emotional and moral elements, that can be experienced and expressed both in language and in our body guiding our sense of self in dynamic changing relation to others.

What is significant for the present discussion are the implications of these different ways of being for entendidos' own forms of emotional knowledge and ways of knowing. As Kenneth Plummer (1995) has observed, we "coax" stories and listen with an open mind and heart to this person and his or her story, both of which are ever changing and continually constituted in relationships.

> I have slowly come to believe that no stories are true for all time and space; we invent our stories with a passion, they are momentarily true, we may cling to them, they may become our lives, and then we may move on. Clinging to the story, changing the story, reworking it, denying it. But somewhere behind all this story telling there are real, active, embodied, impassioned lives. Is this a process of peeling back stories to reveal better and better ones? And if so, when do we know a story is better? Or is it a process of constant readjustment of stories to be aligned with the time and the place of their telling? I am suggesting here that multiple stories engulf us, and we need tools for distinguishing between layers of stories or even layers of truth (Plummer, Kenneth [1995] Telling Sexual Stories pp.170).

Nevertheless, while I acknowledge Plummer's emphasis on the dynamic and fluid quality of these stories, I also agree with Mauthner & Doucet (1998) in that there is not only a flux of multiple stories but crucially persons within telling their emotional stories, whom – in those minutes and hours that we come to speak with them - make

choices about what to emphasize and what to hold back. Rather, I pay attention to what I think this person is trying to tell me within the context of our relationship, this research setting and particular location in the social world, rather than making grand statements about just who this person or "voice" is.

In this sense, Mauthner & Doucet also coincide with Lorraine Code (1993) who writes against the idea of the totally fragmented "self" and for the importance of being able to refer to "this person" with whom we had a "fleeting research relationship" and from whom we hear many stories that "engulf us":

> The contention that people are knowable may sit uneasily with psychoanalytic de-centrings of conscious subjectivity and postmodernist critiques of the unified subject of Enlightenment humanism. But I think this is a tension that has to be acknowledged and maintained. In practice, people often know one another well enough to make good decisions about who can be counted on and who cannot, who makes a good ally and who doesn't. Yet precisely because of the fluctuations and contradictions of subjectivity, this process is ongoing, communicative and interpretive. It is never fixed or complete; any fixity claimed for "the self" will be fixity in flux. Nonetheless, I argue that something must be fixed to "contain" even enough to permit references to and ongoing relationships with "this person". Knowing people always occurs within the terms of this tension (Code,L. [1993] p 34).

Mauthner & Doucet (1995:140) also highlight issues of power imbalance between researcher and participants using a voice relational method. They see an omnipresence of the researcher throughout all the stages of the research. Consequently, they suggest seeing it as a process involving a balancing act between three different and sometimes conflicting standpoints: 1) the multiple and varying voices and stories of each of the interviewees, 2) the voice(s) of the researcher, and 3) the voices and perspectives represented within existing theories or frameworks in our research areas and which researchers bring to their studies. I coincide with Mauthner &

Doucet's suggestion of the need to find a balance among these elements of the interviewer/interviewee experience, but I see it as a mutually reflexive ongoing process rather than a continually balanced "act".

On the other hand, from a sociological point of view, the work of Arlie Hochschild (1979, 1983, 1989, 1990) suggests that emotions in contemporary life are highly "managed" through superficial and deep acting. She distinguishes between "emotion work" and suppression (which is a psychoanalytic concept), and so emotion work can also be distinguished from defence mechanisms. She portrays emotion work as concerned with the management (via display/expression, with or without corresponding deep acting) of the feelings that she assumes are unproblematically already known by the individual concerned. Hochschild considers that we are all socialised into "feeling rules" and so it is not so much a matter of not knowing our emotions and feelings as a question of how and when and who to express them.

But, as Jane Ribbens (1998) keenly observes, Hochschild "does not seem to focus on the processes by which the ongoing stream of experience gets articulated and known as particular feelings to be managed" (Ribbens, 1998:31). Nonetheless Hochschild does also speak about the importance of "distinguishing between the way we wish we felt, the way we try to feel, the way we feel, the way we show what we feel and the way we pay attention to, label and make sense of what we feel" (Hochschild, 1990:117).

These distinctions are of particular significance for my study, namely, raising issues of how psychoanalysts and/or social researchers attend to, give meaning to and voice our feelings; this also raises further questions of the language and feeling culture we have to voice these issues while avoiding subsuming these into the

logic of powerful normative psychoanalytical or other normative discursive approaches.

Ethical Guidelines and Related Considerations

In this section I will comment on three British Sociological Association (BSA) ethical guidelines:

1) Issues of "ensuring the safeguard and welfare of all the research participants"
2) Issues of "informed consent",
3) Issues of "anonymity and confidentiality".

1. In its section on "Relations with and Responsibilities towards Research Participants" the BSA states that:

> Sociologists have a responsibility to ensure that the physical, social and psychological well being of research participants is not adversely affected by the research. They should strive to protect the rights of those they study, their interests, sensitivities and privacy, while recognising the difficulty of balancing potentially conflicting interests (BSA, [1996] Statement on Ethical Practice and Research 1996, [a] p.2).

An initial consideration to be made here is that my field research, by definition, deals with intimate and sensitive issues, i.e. the exploring and sharing of the experiential vicissitudes of gay male emotional needs, desire, love and sexuality. A first question for me was: how can I address these issues with my interviewees in a way that they feel is emotionally safe, trustworthy and ethically and socially engaged?

First, I decided to identify myself as a gay man as a way to further our potential identification and mutual interest regarding the

particular issues that I wanted to talk about, share and reflect on with them.

By being open about my identity as a gay man I wished to come closer to them in a friendly manner and to find common points of interest as gay men and a balance between my interests and theirs. This gave us an understanding of our specific emotional and affectionate needs and an opportunity to talk extensively and focus on sharing our feelings and needs as gay men with me in a safe trustworthy and productive environment.

During and after our conversations we soon realised that while the sharing a whole range of emotions, feelings and associated moral concerns would potentially lead, not only to stimulate and enhance our relational abilities for listening, caring, sharing, and mutually validate our emotional needs as gay men, but it could also lead sometimes to - especially with two of my interviewees who at the time were not open about their homosexuality to their families - experiencing anxiety and perhaps potentially distressing situations.

Actually, during our conversations my interviewees experienced a very positive friendly attitude towards all the issues we discussed and while at some point only one of them felt a bit embarrassed, it certainly never led to any serious psychological harm.

The equating of discomfort and/or distress as synonymous with psychological and moral harm is another issue that often surrounds the exploration and the understanding of subjectivity as merely conveying the accumulation of complex and traumatic events and not as a useful way of reflexively re-thinking and assimilating our experiences, while also providing us with insightful recognition and emotional reassurance and resilience.

Psychoanalysis has consistently challenged the belief that it is best to avoid potentially distressing events, on the basis that to re-enter them is necessarily harmful. On the contrary, psychoanalytic practice has shown how the response of most people to distressing events when re-entering them usually results in a relief of further stress, for issues of well being often rest on the making the causes of distress conscious and this is not threatening to the stability and functioning of the self.

On the other hand, in relation to issues of the balance and/ or imbalance of the particular interests among the subjects involved in the research as also dealing with power disparities (BSA, [1996:p.2) there are two aspects worth mentioning here. First, given that my interest was to engage my interviewees both emotionally and ethically in our shared experiences as gay men, I realised that issues of power needed to be looked at and worked through, not simply in the conventional sense of power as an ability or capacity to do or produce some effect or as merely control or dominion (Collins English Dictionary), but also as involving relational emotional and ethical concerns.

Ethical guidelines often focus only on the unequal power in the conventional English Dictionary sense, i.e. the researcher having the power to control the interview, the meanings and so also able to abuse this power to reach his/her aims. While it is a fact that this may happen in different ways and it is important to keep this principle in proper perspective, however this notion does not take into account a very basic aim in my project: my need to depart from such hierarchical authority-based attitudes in order to establish a more relational and an emotionally resonant friendly connection with my interviewees. This is particularly important, especially in the context

in which we worked, where trust is basic and necessary for our emotional relationships to be solid and fruitful, and where I depended pretty much also on their enthusiasm, interest hospitality and cooperation.

I am not denying that my professional background could potentially imply power-knowledge-like differences, i.e. in the ways of addressing verbally our emotional issues; however I decided that I wanted to understand power in a more relational and dynamic sense and as also capable of producing resonant emotional friendly connection between us.

Thus, in part by introducing myself as a PhD student of Sociology doing my research thesis, I also tried to move away from a structural view of power as merely conveying power imbalance and potential harm, and by adopting instead a more friendly attitude I realised that my interviewees felt more comfortable and open about talking with me about their experiences.

Additionally, their enthusiastic cooperation and participation during our conversations did not involve either my paying them money as a way to ensure their participation or as a way of economically remunerating their valuable time with me. Rather issues of empathy, sympathy, shared identities as gay men, and friendliness proved to be crucial in our mutual emotional engagement which also clearly enhanced our relational abilities to understand, respect and accept our capacity to question a merely power structural research approach.

2.   Informed consent

I explained my interviewees that I wanted to quote fragments of our conversations not only as a way to introduce in the body of my

work their own ways of reflecting and experiencing different aspect of our emotional lives but also in order to help illustrate and contrast specific theoretical and methodological issues. They all agreed in giving me their consent, and so we did not sign any contract to further formalise and legalise our work.

In our work, maintaining their willing consent over time was based more on a continuous process of mutual trust and friendly emotional engagement rather than in a "before and after" renegotiation pact as the BSA (1996:2) suggests. This process of mutual friendly trust allowed us to talk frankly about their eventual anxieties, concerns and/or ambivalence about their emotional disclosures, which for some of my interviewees seemed to be dealing at some point with unforeseen delicate events. Thus a trust-based approach to their subjective feelings and concerns allowed us to accommodate conflict and ambivalence as well as unacknowledged misconceptions, as part of the process of mutually gaining and sustaining trust and emotional engagement, rather than basing their consent on fixed, contractual certainty.

3. Anonymity and Confidentiality

While I agree with the BSA that rendering personal material anonymous is a basic ethical guiding principle, the particular work we have done, which is clearly biographical and intimate, could also entail the issue that the uniqueness or recognisability of the quoted material may not entirely be warranted to remain anonymous in the long run.

Basically, all efforts have been made to keep the recorded tapes and transcripts of our conversations secure and confidential, as well

as using pseudonyms instead of actual names and disguising the local environments of my interviewees in order to protect their identities as they expressly demanded it, and in compliance to both clinical and BSA conventions on confidentiality and anonymity.

However, as biographical methods have become increasingly commonplace in contemporary social research, issues about the feasibility of concealing a person's identity in published research have also become more complex.

Similarly, issues dealing with the control that researchers may feel able to exercise over the use of their research have also become increasingly more complex and diverse, as is the case with the recent availability of qualitative data for secondary analysis through "Qualidata" (the ESRC Qualitative Data Archival Resource Centre).

In this case it is not the material itself that is the focus of ethical consideration but what other researchers may do with it in the future, i.e. the using of our quotes and findings for further psychosocial interpretation. Clearly, this applies to both primary and secondary analyses, for researchers in this context do not control subsequent interpretations and uses of their published work. As Hollway & Jefferson (2000; 91) have aptly put it: "the idea that published research can be controlled depends on an idea of language as capable of meaning only what its creator has intended".

Nevertheless, we (my supervisor and I) decided that it was better to try to explain to my interviewees that, while we have ensured that their identities as well as the content of our conversations have been kept anonymous and presented in a secure unidentifiable way, we have nevertheless came to accept our limits by being honest and respectful to them regarding the fact that we are

not completely capable of controlling the uses and interpretations that other researchers may eventually make of our work.

III. PSYCHOANALYSIS AND FRIENDSHIP

In this chapter a number of theoretical and clinical psychoanalytic issues on friendship and their relevance for our exploration of entendidos emotional development are discussed.

Together with my efforts to methodologically combine the voice relational method – which focuses on relationships as the way to create a channel for emotional communication- with psychoanalytic concepts and methods, I find that friendship, as key relational paradigm in social life represents the most basic, common denominator in personal and social relationships. Friendship is the irreducible interpersonal experience present in all relationships including the analytic relationship.

Given that in our conversations, friendship proved to be a crucial relational element in our exploring our emotional lives as gay men and given also that issues of friendship are still largely neglected within the structure of the analytic setting, I will comment first on its central yet contentious place in the analytic setting as well as some beneficial uses and its relevance in working with gay patients. Starting with Freud, who connects tenderness feelings within friendships as encompassing "aim-inhibited sexuality and love" – a derivative or secondary form of love - via desexualised object relations and feelings that allows an unnecessary separation between tenderness, affection and desire from the self.

Then, I will consider an object relations view of friendship as encompassing a more inter-subjective image of the self, yet mediated through forms of bonding and attachment that are less concerned with a gendered dimension of the emotional needs of gay men.

Afterwards, within an interpersonal psychoanalytic framework, friendship is discussed alongside Erich Fromm's theory of love. In this framework, friendship is seen as an element for the capacity for love that serves to overcome separateness and achieve heterosexual union and also as the "mature" and creative response to our need for love and union, which again leaves gay men with no space nor language to express their specific emotional needs.

Similarly, issues of friendliness and empathy within the analytic setting are also discussed in order to highlight the conflictive position of the analyst with the gay patient. These issues are also discussed alongside Sandor Ferenczi's notion of the "rule of empathy" as a better analytic approach to deal with gay patients.

Finally a discussion of how issues of friendliness, disclosure, empathy, transference and countertransference can be redefined within the analytic setting in order to deal with gay experience is also presented.

Freud, Tenderness, and Friendship as Aim Inhibited Love

Within psychoanalysis, to start with, Freud wrote very little on the psychological experience of friendship, i.e. mainly in Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego (1921): Civilisation and its Discontents (1930): and also in his encyclopaedic article on the Libido Theory (1923). He spoke about the experience of friendship in the context of his notion of aim-inhibited sexuality or aim- inhibited love. He introduced this notion as a way of explaining the origin of tenderness feelings, and/or of social feelings in the psychological development of the child. Thus, the emergence of tenderness feelings

in the child represents a further evolution in the quality and scope of his relational capabilities - including friendship relationships – that, originally, had mainly only a sexual aim for the infant. For example, "*In Civilisation and its Discontents,*" (1930) Freud noted that:

> The careless way in which language uses the word "love" has its genetic justifications. People can give the name "love" to the relation between a man and a woman whose genital needs have led them to found a family; but they also give the name "love" to the positive feelings between parents and children, and between the brothers and sisters of a family, although *we* are obliged to describe this as "aim- inhibited love" or "affection". Love with an inhibited aim was in fact originally fully sensual love, and it is so still in man's unconscious. Both – fully sensual love and aim-inhibited love - extend outside the family and create new bonds with people who were before strangers. Genital love leads to the formation of new families, and aim-inhibited love to "friendships" which become valuable from a cultural standpoint because they escape some of the limitations of genital love, as, for instance, its exclusiveness (1930/1961, pp. 102-103).

Freud thought that these tenderness-mediated feelings allowed the child not only to experience a different kind of relationship between him/her and his/her parents but also with others, i.e. friends. But how exactly friendship represents aim-inhibited sexuality and love is not clear. As Freud put it:

> So far, we can quite well imagine a cultural community consisting of double individuals, who libidinally satisfied in themselves, are connected with one another through the bonds of common work and common interests. If this were so, civilisation would not have to withdraw any energy from sexuality. But this desirable state of things does not, and never did, exist. Reality shows us that civilisation is not content with the ties we have so far allowed it. It aims at binding the members of the community together in a libidinal way as well and employs every means to that end. It favours every path by which strong identifications can be established between the members of the community, and it summons up aim-inhibited libido on the largest scale so as to strengthen the communal bond by relations of friendship. In order for these aims to be fulfilled, a restriction upon sexual life is unavoidable. But we are unable to understand what the necessity is which forces civilisation along this

path and which causes its antagonism to sexuality. There must be some disturbing factor that we have not yet discovered (in: Civilisation and its Discontents, (1930/1961; pp. 109).

Likewise, Freud also saw aim-inhibited drives as an onset form of the process of sublimation. Freud introduced his concept of sublimation in order to try to explain certain human activities that, at first sight, may seem not to bear any relation with sexual issues but that actually have their energetic source in the strength of the sexual drive; i.e. an interest in artistic and intellectual activities initially spring from sexual desire which is then repressed and redirected towards more socially accepted motives. Freud thus observed that:

> The social instincts belong to a class of instinctual impulses that need not be described as sublimated, though they are closely related to these. They have not abandoned their directly sexual aims, but they are held back by internal resistances from attaining them; they rest content with certain approximations to satisfactions and for that very reason lead to specially firm and permanent attachments between human beings. To this class in particular belong the particular affectionate relations between parents and children, which were originally fully sexual, feelings of friendship, and the emotional ties in marriage which had their origin in sexual attraction (in: The Libido Theory (1923/1961 pp.256).

By claiming that such aim-inhibited drives operate when it is not yet "necessary to sublimate" its "direct sexual aim", Freud posited that the deployment of internal resistances allow some degree of psychological satisfaction, and this satisfaction in turn reinforces the tenderness bond that commonly takes place in friendship relationships.

Freud's friendship developmental line is already framed within the heterosexually oriented Oedipus complex, i.e. initially friendly feelings arising from early pleasurable feelings during the first year of life [pre-oedipal phase], these feelings being less constant,

but becoming more constant and friendship-like during the post-oedipal phase – once heterosexual sexuality is psychologically established - and also during the so called "latency period".

This is a latter psychological period, not a phase, that Freud thought originated as a result of the decline of the Oedipus complex [five or sixth year of age]. It is characterized by an intensification of repression – a decrease in sexual impulses, de-sexualised object relations and feelings, i.e. tenderness predominating over sexual desire - that provokes a form of sensual amnesia comprising the earlier years of life and that lasts up to the onset of puberty.

This sort of amnesia thus leads to a change in the quality of object-relations [a desexualised one] for in this period there is a discord between the psychic Oedipal structure and the biological sexual immaturity; i.e. a persistent absence of the awaited (sexual) satisfaction leads to perpetual feelings of frustration that push boys in love with other boys to renounce a hopeless feeling.

As a result of these, the child is supposed to reinforce the experience and quality of feelings of tenderness over sexual ones and as such, developmentally, aim-inhibited love and sexuality are also types of precursors for the capacity to sublimate.

Thus, according to Freud, between the suppression of sexual desire and the capacity to sublimate it, the emergence of aim-inhibited drives coincides with an almost biological urge to repress the initial sexual impulses in the child, as a way to accommodate the development of tenderness feelings, and therefore different forms of relationships and feelings, with people around him/her.

But what is the gender of the child Freud is thinking of and what kind of relationships with others is he talking about? This is not quite clear in Freud's work, in part because his framing of friendship within

his notion of aim-inhibited drives has reduced its full scope by portraying it as mere sublimation of libido. This raises a number of questions, i.e. why children's alleged original sexual desire has to be suppressed and/or sublimated in order to accommodate tenderness feelings. Why are these tender feelings not seen as accompanying rather than substituting for that desire? Why in our relationships with others do we have to suppress desire as a way to properly handle our relationships?

In his article *"On Friendship"*(1963) - perhaps the first paper specifically devoted to addressing this subject after Freud - Leo Rangell comments on Freud's unspecified gender dimension for the capacity to experience friendship, by keenly observing how:

> Freud actually most often disregards which gender and sexuality is involved, it is impressive and significant how frequent and almost automatically one assumes and adds homosexuality"... "friendliness and friendship are referred to as if they were dilute editions of love and the word aim-inhibited comes up in friendship as if the latter were a sublimation of either heterosexual or homosexual libido (Rangell [1963] op. cit. pp. 5).

While Rangell acknowledges the importance of gender within the study of friendship, he does not address any of the above mentioned questions, nor does he explain why male to male libido and feelings of tenderness have to be suppressed or inhibited, but rather he develops the vicissitudes of friendships from intra-familial love, to male to male and male to female heterosexual friendships again, via an aim-inhibited, desexualised, neutralised libido. He also contrasts these friendships with homosexual friendships by portraying them also as aim-inhibited. In this way, Rangell continues to place friendship both within Freud's libido theory and with his notion of the universal bisexuality of human development when he states that:

There are people who love and work successfully and in whom there is still a void. For life's bright and dark periods are determined in the long run, not from the heights of the intense love peaks but from the level of the base line, the likes rather than the loves. Among these, friendships are a major indicator. While love fulfils the heterosexual and work in general the pregenital, friendships complete the picture by defining the fate of the homosexual instinctual stream. Only all taken together are a composite indicator of the mode of functioning of both halves of the bisexual predisposition of man (Rangell, L. [1963] pp.50-51).

Thus within both Freud and Rangell's formulations, friendship seems to be understood as some sort of derivative or secondary form of love comprising the flux of unconscious homosexual libido. This form of understanding friendship has influenced not only popular thinking but also academic accounts on the subject.

Bonding, Attachment and Friendship

Another psychoanalytic way of seeing friendship draws on Object relations theory (i.e. WRD Fairbairn, Donald Winnicot, Michael Balint) combined with elements of Attachment theory (John Bowlby). Briefly, "object relations" and more recently "self-object functions" are terms that have emerged within this psychoanalytic school in an attempt to further understand the dynamics between our individual self-motivations and the so-called object environment in the infant.

Similarly, the term "object" was proposed by Freud (1915) and designates the target of an instinctual drive whose function is to allow the discharge of tension.

But as James Grotstein (1989:7-29) – an object relations therapist - in his article "Of Human Bonding and of Human Bondage: The Role of Friendship in Intimacy" has noted: "The object has never seemed to free itself from its drive signifier to capture the uniqueness

of human interrelatedness"... and thus "The very term "object" betrays its mechanistic and certainly, non relational function". In his attempt to reassess the importance of friendship, Grotstein claims that, within Freudian theory, friendship has long been obscured by passionate attachment theory (libido and aggression) and has long lurked in the penumbra of metapsychology after having been relegated to a sublimation of libido. Instead, he sees friendship as the fundamental component of human relatedness, by claiming that:

1) Friendship represents the quintessence of shared experience and, as such, signifies the importance for experience to be shared.

2) Friendship is more profound and overlapping than our language and understanding has hitherto allowed, and that it embraces a concept that is even deeper than love: *companionship.*

3) Friendship is a fundamental function of self-regulation and for interactional regulation (family systems, culture).

4) Friendship serves as the generator of and context of meaning and meaningfulness, and it is also a regulator of aloneness and loneliness.

Grotstein also frames friendship as an object relationship by aligning its functions as precisely those of a self-object function:

> The functions of friendship may be listed as follows: a) sharing, mutuality, reciprocity; b) soothing; c) affirmation of meaningfulness and significance; d) protection, backing; e) "sparring partnerships" to hone one's abilities; and f) support for one's values, goals and ambitions" (Op. cit. pp. 6).

Finally, he contends that by transcending love and hate, friendship is itself an "archetype", "in the sense that it comprises an inherent preconception, perhaps encoded as the anticipation of the inescapable need for a partnership for survival" (Op.cit pp.7).

Grotstein's object relations notions on friendships mark a clear effort to move away from a paradigm of separateness to one that predicates intersubjectivity, reciprocity and caring. However, his overall approach does not seem to me to be quite relational, in a self-reflexive way, for he still retains Freud's biological, instinctual-mechanistic notion of "drive" as comprising a basic principle in which all psychological phenomena must have their roots. Thus, in Grotstein's approach, the concept drive in relation to friendship gets apparently "broadened" by inverting its emphasis away from the sexual and more toward neediness. However he frames friendship needs as universal self-object needs, and by doing this there is no sense of its gendered and cultural dimensions.

Similarly, the way he uses the term "bond" to understand friendships not only does not distinguish its gendered dimension but also has a rather diagnostic quality; i.e. he speaks about bonding as reflecting a clinically healthy friendship, and "bondage" to refer to its pathological deviation, i.e. when there's abuse between two friends.

Furthermore, he does not distinguish clearly how "bonding" might not correlate to the level and quality of emotional intimacy between male friends. For example, although bonding can signal the beginning of intimacy, it is not synonymous with it at all, particularly in the friendships of men where their "bonding" very often lives without intimacy.

In so-called bonding-mediated male friendships there is, above all, a sense of sharing the experience of being a heterosexual male between two men, through an intuitive understanding of each other that needs no words, conveying a sense of primary male brotherhood, i.e. the "buddies" in US male culture.

Similarly, Grotstein does not quite distinguish between bonding and attachment. This is important, for within psychoanalysis "attachment" usually denotes a relationship where the level of security of one person depends on the predictable availability of the other, as in the mother-infant relationship. However bonding, in the actual friendship experience of heterosexual men, rather conveys an emotional connection that is unrelated to the internal security and intimate emotional needs of the individuals involved, and does not require the immediate presence of the other. Not surprisingly, within this conceptual framework there is not much space for reflecting on the quality and vicissitudes of gay male friendship.

In the end, his whole characterisation of friendship retains a universalised "archetype-like" and/or a "regulator-entity" quality which favours mechanistic, pre-social assumptions on intersubjective motivation dynamics and identity development, (i.e. friendship becomes a rather instinctual self-regulated mechanism that mediates our experience) rather than the expression of shared reflexive gendered relationality.

Love and Friendship as Developmental Lines

On the other hand, within an Interpersonal psychoanalytic perspective (Harry Stack Sullivan, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, Clara Thompson), with its shift of emphasis from infantile sexuality and the alleged universality of the Oedipus complex to that of infantile dependence on adult irrational authority, and from sexual love and hateful rivalry to the importance of seeing psychological development primarily by the quality of interpersonal relatedness and emotional neediness, friendship gets framed rather in a context of cultural

socialisation, and as a socio-psychological developmental phenomenon necessary for individuation and self-definition.

For example, as part of my psychoanalytic training in Erich Fromm's humanistic theory, I learned that the deepest need of "Man" is his need to overcome his separateness, and that this need is actually an existential one, for it is the result of our "throwness" – the precarious, contingent character of our existence in the world.

> What is essential in the existence of man is the fact that he has emerged from the animal kingdom, from instinctive adaptation, that he has transcended nature – although he never leaves it; he is a part of it - and yet once torn away from nature, he cannot return to it; once thrown out of paradise – a state of original oneness with nature - cherubim with flaming sword block his way, if he should try to return. Man can only go forward by developing his reason, by finding a new harmony, a human one, instead of the pre-human harmony which is irretrievably lost (Fromm, E. [1956] The Art of Loving, pp.14).

Fromm saw human beings as being thrown into this world without our will and then taken away again against our will, at an accidental time and place. Thus, we transcend nature by our lack of instinctual equipment, but at the same time, we are part of nature and we have awareness of and have to make sense of our past and present. In this broad framing of man's existential needs, Fromm is more concerned about "mankind", and so there is little mention of issues related to the gendered dimension, emotional expression and fulfilment of these needs.

Likewise, Fromm believed that man of all ages has always been confronted with the solution of one and the same question: how to overcome separateness, how to achieve union, how to transcend our individual lives and find at-onement.

In *The Art of Loving* (1956) Fromm contends that, after considering the diversity of these answers, as revealed in the history

of religion, philosophy and the evolution of different cultures, these answers are actually not innumerable, for all of them are centrally concerned with the problem of the separateness of human existence.

The experience of separateness arouses anxiety; it is, indeed, the source of all anxiety. Being separate means being cut off, without any capacity to use my human powers. Hence, to be separate means to be helpless, unable to grasp the world – things and people - actively; it means that the world can invade me without my ability to react.... The awareness of human separation, without reunion by love – is the source of shame. It is at the same time the source of guilt and anxiety (Op cit. pp.15).

Accordingly, he grouped these answers to overcoming the separateness of human existence either as productive ones, i.e. aimed at developing our human potentialities for reason and love to achieve individual fellowship and communion, or as regressive ones, which inhibit the development of these human potentialities:

This desire for interpersonal fusion is the most powerful striving in man. It is the most fundamental passion, it is the force that keeps the human race together, the clan, the family, society. The failure to achieve it means insanity or destruction – self-destruction or destruction of others. Without love, humanity could not exist for a day. Yet if we call the achievement of interpersonal union "love", we find ourselves in a serious difficulty (Fromm, E. [1956] op. cit. pp.22).

Fromm noted that different forms of fusion, i.e. symbiotic, sadistic, domineering, submissive and other forms of union, do not allow us to develop fully our human potentialities for love and reason, but instead these forms of fusion actually preclude our possibility for mature reason and love:

In contrast to symbiotic union, mature love is union under the condition of preserving one's integrity, one's individuality (Op. cit. pp.24).

Again, in his broad perspective on relatedness and existential needs, although there is a clear acknowledgement of the importance of love as part of our development as humans, there is no mention of the developmental importance of friendship to achieve these goals. Closely related to this perspective is also Fromm's belief that self-love and love of others are complementary and not antithetical, as Freud thought. In this sense Fromm contended that relationships based on reciprocal validation and individuated fellowship are not only possible, but in fact a pre-requisite to the emergence of authentic selfhood.

Fromm actually proposed that love is the mature answer to the problem of existence. But what did he mean by "love" and what relevance does it have, in relation to gay men's emotional friendship experiences? How does self love and love for others correlate to gay male selfhood in friendship relationships? Initially Fromm spoke about the experience of love as overcoming human separateness and as the fulfilment of the longing for union:

> Love is an active power in man; a power which breaks through the walls which separate man from his fellowmen, which unites him with others; love makes him overcome the sense of isolation and separateness, yet it permits him to be himself, to retain his integrity. In love the paradox occurs that two beings become one and yet remain two... Love is an activity, not a passive affect; it is "standing in", not a "falling for". In the most general way, the active character of love can be described by stating that love is primarily *giving,* not receiving...... The most important sphere of giving, however, is not that of material things, but lies in the specifically human realm. What does one person give to another person? He gives of himself, of the most precious he has, he gives of his life. This does not necessarily mean that he sacrifices his life for the other – but that he gives him of that which is alive in him; he gives him of his joy, of his interest, of his understanding, of his knowledge, of his humour, of his sadness – of all expressions and manifestations of that which is alive in him. In thus giving of his life, he enriches the other person, he enhances the other's sense of aliveness by enhancing his own sense of aliveness. He does not give in order to receive; giving is itself exquisite joy..... In the act of giving, something is born, and both persons involved are grateful for the life that is born for both of them.

Specifically, with regard to love this means: love is a power that produces love; impotence is the inability to produce love (op. cit, pp.24-27).

At this level, in Fromm's view, the ability to love as an act of giving depends on the character development of the person. This character development presupposes the attainment of a "productive orientation":

> It is hardly necessary to stress the fact that the ability to love as an act of giving depends on the character structure of the person. It presupposes the attainment of a predominantly productive orientation; in this orientation, the person has overcome dependency, narcissistic omnipotence, the wish to exploit others, or to hoard, and has acquired faith in his human powers, courage to rely on his powers in the attainment of his goals. To the degree that these qualities are lacking, he is afraid of giving himself – hence of loving (op. cit. pp.28).

Similarly, he noted that there are certain basic elements common to all forms of love: care, responsibility, respect and knowledge.

Up to this point, it seemed clear to me that Fromm was speaking of love as a universal, existential need for union. However, during my training as a psychoanalyst it was not yet quite clear for me whether gay men fitted in his proposal, and what forms of love he saw as conducive to his view of the productive man. When I looked closer at his theory of love, I found that Fromm also spoke about love as comprising a basic biological need for union, i.e. the desire for union between the masculine and feminine "poles":

> The polarity between the male and the female principles exists also within each man and each woman. Just as physiologically man and woman each have hormones of the opposite sex, they are bisexual also in the psychological sense. They carry in themselves the principle of receiving and of penetrating, of matter and of spirit (Op.cit, pp.33-34).

Was Fromm in these lines agreeing with Freud's idea of the basic psychic bisexuality of men and women? Not quite, for he then referred to the male–female polarity as "the" basis for "all" creativity:

The male-female polarity is also the basis for interpersonal creativity. This is obvious biologically in the fact that the union of sperm and ovum is the basis for the birth of a child. But in the purely psychic realm it is not different; in the love between man and woman, each of them is reborn. (The homosexual deviation is a failure to attain this polarised union, and thus the homosexual suffers from the pain of never resolved separateness, a failure, however, which he shares with the average heterosexual who cannot love) (Op. cit. pp.34).

Fromm's equating heterosexual psychosexual reproductive union with creativity and considering gay men as failure and deviation seemed to have helped him further question Freud's notions on love and sex:

I have spoken before of Freud's error in seeing love exclusively, as the expression - or a sublimation - of the sexual instinct, rather than recognising that the sexual desire is one manifestation of the need for love and union... What Freud paradoxically enough ignores, is the psychobiological aspect of sexuality, the masculine-feminine polarity, and the desire to bridge this polarity by union. In fact, erotic attraction is by no means only expressed in sexual attraction. This curious error was probably facilitated by Freud's extreme patriarchalism, which led him to the assumption that sexuality per se is masculine, and thus made him ignore the specific female sexuality. There is masculinity and femininity in character as well as in sexual function.... It must always be kept in mind that in each individual both characteristics are blended, but with the preponderance to those appertaining to his or her sex... But, what was true around 1900 is not true any more fifty years later. The sexual mores have changed so much that Freud's theories are not any longer shocking to the Western middle classes, and it is a quixotic kind of radicalism when orthodox analysts today still think they are courageous and radical in defending Freud's sexual theory...In fact, my criticism of Freud's theory is not that he overemphasized sex, but his failure to understand sex deeply enough. He took the first step in discovering the significance of interpersonal passions; in accordance with his philosophic premises, he explained them physiologically. In the further development of psychoanalysis it is necessary to correct and deepen Freud's concept by translating Freud's insight from the

physiological into the biological and the existential dimension (op. cit. pp36-37).

While I agree with Fromm's view that love is not just sublimation of the sexual desire but an expression of the need for love and union, he nevertheless retains a normative, exclusive view of love as only achievable by heterosexual procreating people, and by doing this he does not see how his own heterosexist approach to love excludes gay people. This was all the more contradictory for me, for I was also taught that Fromm was fond of quoting Terence (also Marx's favourite maxim) "I am a man; nothing human is alien to me". For example, as part of his reflections of what is consciousness and the unconscious, in relation to his view of the humanistic conscience he wrote:

> To experience my unconscious means that I know myself as a human being, that I know that I carry within myself all that is human, that nothing human is alien to me, that I know and love the stranger, because I have ceased to be a stranger to myself. The experience of my unconscious is the experience of my humanity, which makes it possible for me to say to every human being "I am thou." I can understand you in all your basic qualities, in your goodness and in your evilness, and even in your craziness, precisely because all this is me too" (in: Fromm, E. [1963] "Humanism and Psychoanalysis –Lecture given by Fromm at the inauguration of the Mexican Institute of Psychoanalysis, pp.75-78).

Fromm used this maxim to illustrate the need, in clinical practice, not to distance ourselves from the experiences of others, and to highlight the manifold obstacles to interpersonal understanding in the analytic setting.

In this sense, I kept wondering how Fromm could simultaneously sustain an idea of the analytic encounter as "core to core" relatedness, while at the same time proposing an idea of love that seemed to refer to all but that actually does not really include a

gendered perspective that allows the differentiation between various types of desire and forms of love. For example, in his essay "Sex and Character" (1948) which Fromm wrote in response to the Kinsey report (1948) on sexual behaviour, he frames his notion of "core to core relatedness" in the context of connecting sexual behaviour and feeling toward our fellow men as an important subject matter of ethical judgement. Taking as an example the incest taboo, as symbolising in our culture the inability to "love the stranger", that is, a person with whom we are not "familiar" and not related by ties of blood and early intimacy, Fromm observed that:

> Only if one can love "the stranger", only if one can recognise and relate oneself to the human core of another person can one experience oneself as a human being, and only if one can experience oneself as a human individuality can one love "the stranger". We have overcome incest in the narrow sense of the word, as sexual relations between members of the same family, but we still practice incest not in a sexual but in a characterological sense, in as much as we are not capable of loving "the stranger". Race and nationalistic prejudices are symptoms of incestuous elements in our contemporary culture (Fromm, E.[1956] pp.142).

Later on, when Fromm actually addressed the issue of the kind object that is loved (brotherly, motherly, erotic, self-love, love of God), he remained unconcerned with gay people by privileging again a universal, heterosexual approach. For example in his portrayal of "brotherly" love he contended that :

> The most fundamental kind of love, which implies all types of love, is brotherly love. By this I mean the sense of responsibility, care, respect, knowledge of any other human being, the wish to further his life... Brotherly love is love for all human beings; it is characterised by its very lack of exclusiveness... Brotherly love is based on the experience that we all are one. The differences in talent, intelligence, and knowledge are negligible in comparison with the identity of the human core common to all men. In order to experience this identity, it is necessary to penetrate from the periphery to the core. If I perceive in another person mainly

the surface, I perceive mainly the differences, that which separates us. If I penetrate to the core, I perceive our identity, the fact of our brotherhood. This relatedness from centre to centre − instead of that from periphery to periphery − is "central relatedness" (Fromm, E. [1956] Op cit pp 44).

According to this description, how are gay people supposed to be the objects of brotherly love, or of any kind of love, if they are considered by Fromm as the embodiment of deviation and the failure to love? In his description of brotherly love, male-to-male desire is not mentioned as constituting a common basic emotional need and form of loving identification and union with other men. So who is that "other" in Fromm's view, and how we can love and relate to it?

In his discussion of erotic love, Fromm (1956) noted that:

sexual desire aims at fusion and is by no means only a physical appetite, the relief of a painful tension. But sexual desire can be stimulated by the anxiety of aloneness, by the wish to conquer or be conquered, by vanity, by the wish to hurt and even to destroy, as much as it can be stimulated by love. It seems that sexual desire can easily blend in and be stimulated by any strong emotion, of which love is only one... Love can inspire the wish for sexual union; in this case the physical relationship is lacking in greediness, in a wish to conquer or to be conquered, but is blended with "tenderness". If the desire for physical union is not stimulated by love, if erotic love is not also brotherly love, it never leads to union in more than an orgiastic, transitory sense.... Tenderness is by no means, as Freud believed, a sublimation of the sexual instinct, it is the direct outcome of brotherly love, and exists in physical as well as in non-physical forms of love... In erotic love, there is an exclusiveness, which is lacking in brotherly and motherly love. Frequently the exclusiveness of erotic love is misinterpreted as meaning possessive attachment... Erotic love is exclusive but it loves in the other person all of mankind, all that is alive... Erotic love excludes the love for others only in the sense of erotic fusion, full commitment in all aspects of life − but not in the sense of deep brotherly love... Erotic love, if it is love, has one premise. That I love from the essence of my being − and experience the other person in the essence of his or her being. In essence, all human beings are identical. We are all part of One; we are One. This being so, it should not make any difference whom we love... Taking these views into

account one may arrive at the position that love is exclusively an act of will and commitment, and that therefore fundamentally it does not matter who the two persons are (in: The Art of Loving, [1956] pp.50-51).

As can be seen in this brief passage, according to Fromm there is no such thing as "the other" for we all are One, and so the idea of constructing the Other is seen by Fromm as directly linked with "cultural incest" and xenophobic attitudes, which are associated with hatred rather than love for oneself and for others. Consequently, Fromm speaks not about the "Other" as a sociological category of difference, but about "the stranger" as an incestuous element in contemporary culture which needs serious ethical reconsideration - for it reflects our inability to think, feel and accept the stranger (a person with a different social background, and by extension, anyone who is stigmatised and marginalized as not being part of the group "us") as our brother.

Although Fromm did not refer specifically to friendship as such, as an important relational capacity, it is significant how he does emphasize tenderness as a fundamental element of love and relatedness. His rejection of Freud's idea that both friendship and tenderness are mere sublimations of the sexual instinct by stating that they are a direct outcome of "brotherly love" also illustrates his rejection of Freud's libido theory and his reductionist view of love and sex.

Again, while I agree with Fromm that tenderness and friendship are no mere aim-inhibited libido, his framing of tenderness as merely conveying universal brotherly love does not provide a clear path or way of connecting Fromm's ideas in relation to the specific emotional relational quality of gay men's friendships in a developmental perspective.

The implications of Fromm's universal yet exclusive notions on love and relatedness in the context of doing clinical work with gay male patients thus remain a much neglected and problematic part of his theoretical and clinical work.

So, while Fromm neglected issues of gendered identification and desire as basic elements in his notion of relatedness, he was nevertheless more concerned with addressing issues of "alienation" as a consequence of the social split between human affect and intellect and its effect on personality development. These are central to his psychoanalytic notions of the vicissitudes of "pseudo-relatedness", and its connection to market economy as well as its general effect on patriarchal society. For example, in *"The Pathology of Normalcy"* (1991) Fromm says:

> Instead of being related, being in touch with love, with hate, with fear, with doubt, with all the basic experiences of man, we are all rather detached. We are related to an abstraction, that is to say, we are not related at all. We live in a vacuum and fill the vacuum, fill the gap with words, with abstract signs of values, with routine, which helps us out of the embarrassment... In this situation, there is one other thing we do: we are sentimental. Sentimentality is feeling under the condition of complete detachment... It is like the person crying at the movies when the heroine loses a chance to make 100,000 dollars and people cry and the same people in real life can witness a great tragedy around themselves and around their own lives, and they do not cry, and do not feel anything, because they are really unrelated. They are not concerned. They live in a vacuum of abstraction, of alienation from the reality of feelings. Yet they have feelings, so there are some catchwords, some stimuli, some situations provoking this feeling, but not in the sense that I cry because I am really related to unhappiness, but am quite detached. I live in a vacuum but the feeling that lives in me needs some outlet, and so I cry where there is some occasion, without really being related to anything. I think that is the essence of sentimentality that can be observed so frequently in modern culture, when you see people who give the impression of being rather detached, rather remote, of not being related to anything particularly, and then you find these outbursts of feeling (Fromm, 1991, pp.73-74).

Although in these observations, Fromm raises many additional questions related to the contemporary quality of men's emotional relatedness, including friendships, he is, nevertheless, again speaking in terms of a global human condition of alienation where both men and women are equally involved in diverse, unfortunate ways.

Again, in his framing of human alienation there is little sense of gender specificity and issues of male desire. Care and intimacy are difficult to locate and reassess in their specific impact when considering the relevance of his notions to a further understanding of the place of friendship within the developmental emotional experiences of gay men - e.g. what happens to love in this situation of self alienation and unrelatedness, as in the case of two men needing each other emotionally yet being unable to connect and support each other because of their being socialised in a patriarchal homophobic culture.

Unlike Fromm, Harry Stack Sullivan (himself a homosexual analyst) does acknowledge, in his developmental theory, that there is a homosexual expression of emotional needs, which becomes more acute once the children's needs are no longer met entirely by their biological families, and/or by a rather unspecific "human core" that, allegedly, makes us all connect and identify .

In *The Interpersonal Theory of Psychiatry* Sullivan (1953) contended that particularly around the pre-adolescent years (8-10 years of age), children show a need for socialising with playmates "rather than oneself". Sullivan referred to this type of friendship relationship as a "chumship" and also regarded it as a manifestation of interpersonal intimacy:

> I want particularly to touch on the intensity of the relationship, because it is easy to think that if the preadolescent chumship is very intense, it

may tend to fixate the chums in the preadolescence phase, or it may culminate in some such peculiarity of personality as is ordinarily meant by homosexuality - although, incidentally, it is often difficult to say what is meant by this term. Actual facts that have come to my attention lend no support whatever to either of these surmises. In fact, as a psychiatrist, I would hope that preadolescent relationships were intense enough for each of the two chums literally to get to know practically everything about the other one that could possibly be exposed in an intimate relationship, because that remedies a good deal of the often illusory, usually morbid, feeling of being different, which is such a striking part of rationalisations of insecurity in later life (quoted in Drescher, J [1998] Psychoanalytic Therapy and the Gay Man, pp.55).

In his discussion of Sullivan's chumship developmental stage, Jack Drescher (1998) also observes that although a chumship relationship may involve playful genital contact, homosexual behaviour is not necessarily implied, nor was it seen by Sullivan as particularly problematic at this developmental stage. Similarly, Drescher observes that Sullivan's developmental theory reflects many of his life experiences, and that this is probably how he understood the origins of his own homosexuality. Drescher also notes that in Sullivan's theory of immaturity, homosexuality in adulthood is seen as the result of a boy lagging behind others of his own age:

One of the lamentable things which can happen to a personality in the preadolescent society is that a particular person may not become preadolescent at all promptly – in other words, he literally does not have the need for intimacy when most of the people about the same age have it, and therefore he does not have an opportunity of being part of the parade as it goes by. But then this person, when preadolescence is passing for most of his contemporaries, develops a need for intimacy with someone of his own sex and may be driven to establishing relationships with a chronologically younger person. This is not necessarily a great disaster. What is more of a disaster is that he may form a preadolescent relationship with an actually adolescent person, which is perhaps more frequently the case in this situation. This does entail some very serious risk to personality and can, I think, in quite a number of instances, be suspected of having considerable to do with the establishment of a homosexual way of life, or at least a "bisexual" way (Quoted in Drescher, [1998] p.56).

Drescher notes how Sullivan saw homosexuality as the result of an immature person's vulnerability to seduction by an older one. Sullivan's idea of homosexuality as resulting from seduction by an older one, is also a cultural one that, I found, still resonates, although in a slightly different fashion in one of my interviewees. Sergio tells a difficult experience he had in this sense, with a close female friend and her family:

My friend Nuria was very worried thinking that she may be a lesbian. As we got closer, she would share with me her doubts, fears and worries about herself . But then she became increasingly more vulnerable and started putting some distance between us. Eventually, she stopped seeing me and I could not understand why. Later on, I heard that she had attempted suicide. When her family discovered her reasons behind her suicide attempt, they became furious with me! and decided to blame me by saying that I may have induced her into lesbianism!

The cultural beliefs underlying both Nuria's parents, and Sullivan's notion of homosexuality as the result of the seduction by an older one, is also another example of how lay people and their therapists can actually share and reinforce these and other cultural stereotypes around homosexuality, i.e. the idea that male friendship implies some form of homosexuality, which in turn may also shape the emotionally ambivalent or distant attitude of the analyst towards gay male patients.

Abstinence, Empathy and Friendship in the Analytic Session

The way in which the analytic setting is structured usually gives issues of friendship and friendliness a somehow frustrated character. There are two individuals, the patient and the unknown "other"; the latter has to forego self-revelation, and exclusively focus on the patient's intimate experiences.

In this setting, a partnership of two develops where the common focus of each is the "other", the phantom construct of the patient undergoing therapeutic exploration and, eventually, some understanding and healthy progression.

From the standpoint of friendship, the analytic partnership is usually seen as an asymmetrical, frustrated friendship, given that the therapist role is not aimed at becoming a "friend" of the patient. The "proper" analytic attitude is aimed primarily at eliciting, in a "friendly" manner, the accessing of profound emotional experiences, thoughts and other repressed memories in the patient, which later will also become manifest in transferential reactions. However, this seemingly friendly attitude on behalf of the analyst also retains a rationalised authority-like fashion, which is usually not part of an ordinary friendship between two equals.

But useful as this analytic setting and attitude may have been considered at Freud's time, it also usually elicited a number of resistance reactions on the patient, especially when the analyst adopted the "rule of abstinence" proposed by Freud, as the preferred attitude to treat patients. This is characterised by an austere, rationalistic, and somewhat authoritarian quality, for the analyst was supposed to act as a physician, enacting a strong father figure, who possessed the necessary diagnostic and therapeutic skills to effect a

cure. Likewise, the analysand was seen as a patient suffering from an illness, inferior to the analyst and put in a subordinate position; and although he could be treated with compassion and kindness was not an equal partner, as is the case of friendship.

It is not surprising then that this type of analytic setting often produced an intimidating, tense and compliant environment, whereby the passive patient at best ended up ascribing a considerable healing power to the physician/analyst in response to his dispensing his treatments in the form of intellectually oriented interpretations regarding the unconscious strivings of the patient.

In this type of analytic setting, the focus was put on bringing into conscious awareness the unconscious determinants in the analysand's motives, as a way of affording him insights into the neurotic quality of his symptoms/behaviour. Thus, issues of how the analysand received these notions and attitudes, as conveying a unilateral, authoritarian, unequal relationship: the analyst's attitude to these: and the interactive emotional component of this interaction, were not yet significant aspects of the analytic session.

It was Sandor Ferenczi (1924), who first realized that these factors were crucial elements of the analytic session, when he proposed that a process of "mutuality" was needed in order to create an atmosphere and a language of "empathy", thereby transforming the analytic session into a more democratic, humanistic one.

Ferenczi was also the first analyst to report that there were many patients whose symptoms could not be explained in terms of the vicissitudes of the heterosexually framed Oedipus complex, nor could they respond to intellectual interpretations. According to Ferenczi, patients developed their problems not because of alleged over-stimulation and premature sexual excitement, but, crucially,

because they were emotionally neglected and misunderstood, and, as a result of this they ended up struggling with an inability to deal appropriately with their emotional needs.

In Ferenczi's new reframing of the analytic session as a mutuality experience, the analyst has to become responsive, giving, warm and an empathic partner in the analytic process, which also conveys a sense of friendship. Thus, in this new model there is a recognition that the patient also analyses the analyst's reactions, which in turn also affect the analyst's own countertransference reactions - which must not be avoided but incorporated into the session - thereby encouraging both the patient's expressing his/her differences and negative affect combined with a more self-disclosing attitude on behalf of the analyst.

In Freud's time, the analyst's main focus was on the transference portion of the transference/countertransference dialectic paradigm. As such the emotional focus was put on the patient. However, since Ferenczi's introduction of the "empathic method", an attitude of mutuality was introduced, whereby analysands were free to openly disagree and criticize the analyst. The analyst, in this new model, is not expected to react with defensiveness or retaliation or by distancing himself/herself from the patient, but to become a human, responsive, empathic partner who is not afraid of criticism.

Because Ferenczi felt that the discouragement of the infallible authoritarian position of the analyst was very important in order to allow the analytic session to transform the analytic session into a more genuine emotional experience, he is recognized now as the first analyst to call his fellow colleagues to practise "emotional courage". Through his "rule of empathy", as Rachman (1988) has observed, Ferenczi has provided psychoanalysis with a mutually influencing

interpersonal experience, thereby improving the quality of the relatedness between analyst and analysand:

> One must never be ashamed unreservedly to confess one's own mistakes. It must never be forgotten that analysis is no suggestive process, primarily dependent on the physician's reputation and infallibility. All that it calls for is confidence in the physician's frankness and honesty, which does not suffer from the frank confession of mistakes (Ferenczi, S.(1928) "The Elasticity of Psychoanalytic Technique" pp.95).

According to this new empathically-oriented framing of the analytic session, the distinction between the expectations of analysis and of friendship also points our attention to who that "other" is, that is going to be the object of both relationships, and how empathy could aid both in blurring unnecessary authoritarian hierarchies between the analyst and the patient by reducing the boundaries while expanding the emotional responsibilities between the two. For instance, in working with gay patients, once both the analyst and the patient acknowledge that male heterosexuality is no longer "the" "normal" reference point to frame issues of male affection and male emotional development, the need to reframe and renegotiate the terms upon which both participants are going to share these issues becomes open; and friendliness and empathy would hopefully be better ways of communicating male affection and care in the analytic setting.

Within Erich Fromm's work, the issue of friendship as such is not mentioned as comprising an essential element of the analytic setting, but rather, the friendly attitude of the analyst toward the patient is framed in terms of the quality of the relatedness that is established between the analyst and the patient, where issues of empathy are central.

Fromm's early accounts on theory and technique, in which he compares his position on these issues to Freud's and Ferenczi's, are contained in his article "Die gesellschaftliche Bedingtheit der psychoanalytischen Therapie (1935). This paper was published in German but has not been translated into English, let alone Spanish.

However, Marco Bacciagalupi, in his article "Fromm's views on psychoanalytic technique" (1989), comments on the issues raised by Fromm in this same article:

> In this essay Fromm discusses the attitude of tolerance towards the patient recommended by Freud. Fromm maintains that, in contrast to this conscious attitude, Freud and his followers had judgemental attitudes at an unconscious level which confirmed the social taboos in bourgeois society... Fromm points out that although Freud did see the analytic situation as characterised by truthfulness, he also considered it as "a medical therapeutic procedure, as it had actually developed out of hypnosis"... Through detailed references to Freud's papers on technique, Fromm stresses that Freud recommended that the analyst should maintain an attitude of "coldness" and "indifference", using the surgeon as a model. Tolerance is "actually the only positive recommendation Freud gives for the analyst's attitude"... Fromm also criticised the aim of the analysis, as defined by Freud, of winning back a part of the patient's capacity for work and enjoyment. Fromm points out that Freud presents this capacity as a biological entity, although it is actually a social requirement. "The analyst in this sense represents a model"... What Freud is really doing according to Fromm, is to present the capitalistic character as a norm and to define as neurotic anything which deviates from this. Towards the end of his discussion, Fromm views Freud's disapproval of deviant followers as indirect evidence of his basic identification with social norms. Fromm also discusses at length Ferenczi's half-hearted opposition to Freud. He quotes approvingly Ferenczi's recommendations to show the patient "unshakable goodwill", to acknowledge the analyst's mistakes and to avoid replacing one super-ego with another. He point out that Ferenczi substituted the "principle of indulgence" in place of the "principle of frustration" (Bacciagalupi [1989] pp.228-229).

In fact, as Bacciagalupi comments, in Fromm's first published paper in English in 1939 he contended that the detached attitude, in his opinion, was the most serious defect in Freud's technique. For

Freud's model of the surgeon and his coldness in feeling confirmed that he not only recommended analysts not to express emotions, but also not to feel them. Fromm in contrast wrote:

> The basic rule for practising this art is the complete concentration of the listener... He must be endowed with a capacity for empathy... The condition for such empathy is the capacity for love... Understanding and loving are inseparable (quoted in: Bacciagalupi [1989] pp 232).

In his later work, Fromm also based this capacity for empathy on his favourite Terence humanistic premise: "There is nothing human which is alien to me". Fromm applied this premise as particularly applicable to the analytic setting by stating that:

> The analyst understands the patient only inasmuch as he experiences in himself all that the patient experiences (in: Suzuki, D.T. & Fromm, E. [1960] Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis, pp.332-333).

Fromm also wrote on the "productive relatedness between analyst and patient", of being "fully engaged with the patient, fully open and responsive to him/her" and of "centre to centre relatedness". Thus, while Fromm agreed with Freud that the aim of psychoanalysis is that of making the unconscious conscious, he also widened the aim of psychoanalysis. Fromm actually differentiated between the medical or therapeutic goal of psychoanalysis and the goal of "well being", and later he stated that the aim of psychoanalysis is "to know oneself". According to Fromm, this involves seeing psychoanalysis not as a therapy but as an instrument for self-understanding, that is to say, an instrument for self liberation, an instrument in the art of living.

These Frommian notions, in terms of the relational qualities of the analyst and the role of the patient, also included a more direct

and active approach for both partners of the analytic relationship. Thus when Fromm spoke about the complete concentration of the listener which requires his capacity for empathy, he suggested that the analyst should not merely adopt and conform to Freud's rationalistic attitude of "evenly hovering attention" whereby the analyst "must bend his own unconscious like a receptive organ towards the emerging unconscious of the patient"

In this Freudian setting, the analyst's unconscious becomes, according to Fromm, a mere rational instrument, which responds primarily in terms of ideas, not in terms of feelings. Fromm in contrast suggested that the analyst should respond with his/her whole self. He contended that Freud's concept of the detached observer was fortunately modified by Ferenczi, who postulated that it was not enough for the analyst to observe and to interpret, and that he also had to be able to love the patient with the very love which the patient had needed as a child.

Fromm also acknowledged the contribution of Sullivan's concept of the analyst as doing "participant observation", but he was dissatisfied with this notion and suggested the term "observant participant", which he then amplified and which culminated in his late notion of the empathic analyst who "understands the patient only inasmuch as he experiences in himself all that the patient experiences" (Op cit. 1963:76).

This notion, which draws initially on Ferenczi's empathic notion, was framed by Fromm as a non-erotic loving attitude, that is the result of brotherly love and which is the most appropriate attitude for the analyst.

Fromm considered that the analytic relationship takes place on two separate levels; the analyst not only must offer him/herself as an

object for transference and analysis, but he must also offer him/herself as a real person, for the analyst is not only the detached observer of transferential and countertransferential distortions, but also participates in the relationship as a real person. The emphasis on the real relationship, together with the discouragement of dependency, further supports Fromm's preference for the real relationship with the patient rather than one mostly mediated by transference.

Similarly, Fromm considered that, among the basic elements in the personality of the analyst, should be the necessity of being a good companion to the patient, in the sense that he/she has to be able to do what a good mountain guide does, who does not carry the patient up the mountain but sometimes tells him/her "this is a better road" and sometimes uses his hand to give him a little push, but "that is all he can do".

In his article "Causes for the Patient's Change in Analytic Treatment" (first published posthumously in 1991), Fromm observed:

> Regarding the personality of the analyst I just want to make a few points. I think Freud already made one very important point, namely the absence of sham and deception. There should be something in the analytic attitude and in the analytic atmosphere by which from the very first moment the patient experience that this is a world which is different from the one he usually experiences: it is a world of reality, and that means a world of truth, truthfulness without sham –that's all that reality is. Secondly, he (the patient) should experience that he is not supposed to talk about banalities, and the analyst will call his attention to it, and that the analyst does not talk banalities either. In order to do this, of course, the analyst must know the difference between banality and non-banality, and that is rather difficult, especially in the world in which we live…. I think another very important condition for the analyst is the absence of sentimentality: one does not cure a sick person by being kind either in medicine or in psychotherapy. Now that may sound harsh to some of you, and I am sure I will be quoted for ruthlessness towards the patient, for lack of compassion and authoritarianism and what not. Well, that may be so. It's not my own experience of what I am doing or my own experience with a patient,

because there is something quite different from sentimentality, and that is one of the essential conditions to analyse: to experience in oneself what the patient is talking about. If I cannot experience in myself what it means to be schizophrenic, or depressed or sadistic or narcissistic or frightened to death, even though I can experience that in smaller doses than the patient, then I just don't know what the patient is talking about. And if I don't make that attempt, then I think I'm not in touch with the patient.... I think the result of this attitude is that indeed one is not sentimental with a patient but one is not lacking in compassion, because one has a deep feeling that nothing that happens to the patient is not also happening in oneself. There is no capacity to be judgemental or to be moralistic or to be indignant about the patient once one experiences what is happening to the patient as one's own. And if one doesn't experience this as one's own, then I don't think one understands it. In the natural sciences you can put the material on the table and there it is and you can see it and you can measure it. In the analytic situation it is not enough that the patient puts it on the table, because for me it's not a fact as long as I cannot see it in myself as something which is real (Fromm, E. [1991] pp.599-600).

But these seemingly useful notions of empathy and friendliness as part of a more comprehensive analytic setting do not quite fit in Fromm's own work with gay patients, especially in relation to voicing the specific emotional needs and the importance of friendship for gay men in a non-pathologizing analytic framework.

In Fromm's own published work there are very few references to issues of friendship and its relevance in working with gay male emotional experiences and so during my training it was unclear to me what was Fromm's actual emotional attitude in dealing with gay male patients. However, Rainer Funk - Erich Fromm's literary executor - kindly provided me with a letter that Fromm wrote in 1970 to a US gay male scientist who was seeking his advice in relation to his dealing with his being gay, which shows at least part of Fromm's attitude towards these issues:

Dear Mr. X,

Thank you for your letter, which clarifies your previous communication considerably. I think that one must distinguish between two or three problems, one of your tendency to relapse into conformity, one of the obsession to think "what if ..." and thirdly, your being homosexual.

Let me begin with the last point. Whether one can call homosexuality a sickness is questionable. This form of sexual behaviour is so stigmatised by society, or at least has been until recently, that many people suffer from this stigmatisation rather than from the fact of being homosexual.

One has to consider also whether you feel unhappy with your homosexuality and want very much to change it (and not for the reason of public opinion) or whether you feel more or less well with it.

So many different factors can cause homosexuality that it takes many pages to enumerate them. Sometimes it cures itself in the growth of a personality and sometimes it is almost impossible to change. In between there are many gradations but all I can recommend at this point is to get over your apparent shame or embarrassment about this and to ask yourself and to analyse how you really feel about it and to get rid of the fear of what other people feel or might think.

Even provided homosexuality is to be considered neurotic, it is certainly not a malignant symptom. There are many heterosexual people who are more unloving and remote than many homosexuals are. Don't misunderstand me please, in the sense that I am praising homosexuality. I happen to think that it is somewhat of a handicap in living, all I am suggesting is that you analyse your own horror of it and with it your own feelings of guilt, of dependency, or lack of standing on your own feet not only physically but psychologically and morally....

As to your obsessional symptom, you can look at it in two ways: (a) what is the reason that you torture yourself by turning on these obsessional doubts. Is it escape, a kind of masochistic performance, self-hate or what else, and (b) how does this obsessional mechanism comes into existence? That is something one could analyse and a skilled analyst might possibly deal with that in a few weeks. But one cannot do it by letter.

As to the problem of your danger of conforming, what can I say? To swim against the stream is exceedingly difficult and if you do suffer, as most people do today, from a lack of experience of yourself as your own centre, then the course of the temptation is very great. If you have the possibility of seeing an analyst in the X area then I would suggest Dr. X

Now about reading, I recommend to get a book which I edited together with a philosopher, The Nature of Man, published in a paperback by the Macmillan Co. I suggest you read it as a whole and then you see what kind of philosopher interests you, and perhaps after you have read it you write me something about your response,

With best wishes,

Sincerely Yours,

Erich Fromm

One of the things that struck me while reading this letter is how Fromm acknowledges that, in his experience, there are many heterosexuals who are more remote and unloving than many homosexuals are. Yet as has been previously mentioned, in *The Art of Loving* (1956) Fromm contended that "the homosexual deviation is a failure to attain a polarised union, [by which he meant the biological union between the sperm and the ovum as being the basis for interpersonal creativity] ... and "thus the homosexual suffers from the pain of never resolved separateness, a failure, however, which he shares with the average heterosexual who cannot love" (Op. cit. pp34).

Thus it is unclear to me why Fromm is actually suggesting that only the biological union between sperm and ovum is the only valid basis for interpersonal creativity, and how a pregnancy involving a man and a woman does in itself guarantee a creative relationship also in the psychological sense. Similarly, it is also unclear to me how the love between two men either straight or gay is transformed by Fromm as conveying merely a failure of heterosexuality as well as their "pain of never resolved separateness". Why is a heterosexual man who cannot or does not want to get involved in a pregnancy with a female

partner considered by Fromm as a failure, and as suffering in the same way as gay men also from never resolved separateness? Why is the emotional and sexual union between two men depicted by Fromm as only conveying a failed reproductive heterosexual union and not as one capable of being a creative relationship in a psychic sense? What is the handicap in living that he sees in being a homosexual man?

On the one hand, in this letter, Fromm contends that the idea of homosexuality as a sickness is questionable, but at the same time, by telling this gay man that, in his perspective, homosexuality is a handicap in living, I wondered: what part of Fromm's "whole self" (to use Fromm's own terminology) is actually responding to this gay man in the way he does? This, for me, seems to be inconsistent with his principle that "nothing human is alien to me" and that we all, as human beings in Western society, have not overcome our xenophobic and incestuous prejudices, for we have not learned to accept the other and the different in us as ours.

Unfortunately, my questions are not addressed in Fromm's written work and since there are not, for the moment, published papers detailing Fromm's own work with gay men, and given also that there is not a reply by the gay man of the letter in reply to Fromm's own views on the "handicap in life quality" that he sees in being a homosexual man, these issues remained as unclear as during my training as a psychoanalyst. Consequently I felt a mix of ambiguity and sense of oddness in trying to understand why, how to position myself in relation to Fromm's views on this matter, and what to do in my analytic practice with gay men.

These issues remain as important challenges to be addressed for all analysts, and not just gay analysts, in the process of redefining more inclusive and less heterosexist ways of assimilating and relating

to mainstream psychoanalytic understandings and therapeutic approaches to homosexuality.

Many therapists, especially male ones, still fear adopting a friendly open attitude with a gay patient, because doing that could directly point to and question taken for granted assumptions about masculinity, emotional intimacy and homophobia; and so analysts tend to refrain from becoming more relaxed and friendly. They can also be very self-conscious and repress their own countertransferential homophobic and/or heterosexist reactions towards issues dealing with male desire and intimacy. Adopting a genuinely open and friendly stance could be experienced by some almost as a compromise formation, i.e. a compromise between voice and silence that is often enacted through the deployment of merely "tolerant" or "politically correct" attitudes in order to appear as an "open" analyst, which really only highlights the obscurity with which these crucial issues are still dealt in the analytic setting.

These anxieties and ambivalence during my psychoanalytic training remained as almost ignored and avoided topics for reflection in clinical and supervision sessions, which further contributed to the perpetuation of contradictory and "pseudo- empathic" "analytic" attitudes, that often ensued when analysts expressed either Fromm's or other similar heterosexist notions – mainly through biased countertransference reactions - while working with gay patients; although obviously these aspects of our clinical practice are not ordinarily researched and published.

Some studies, however, have started to document empirically psychoanalysts' attitudes towards and clinical assessment of gay patients, i.e. by assessing the differences in ratings made by

psychoanalysts working with clinical vignettes that were identical except for the patient sexual orientation.

These studies have consistently shown how analysts maintain a subtle but significant negative bias towards homosexual patients, by assigning higher scores on psychopathology to those vignettes where the patient's sexual orientation was labelled as homosexual (MacIntosh, 1994; Lilling & Friedman 1995; Friedman, 1995; Friedman & Lilling, 1996).

Challenging Heterosexist Biases in Working with Gay Men

Because psychoanalysis historically has adopted a pathologising view of homosexuality, very little attention has been given to the issue of helping gay patients achieve a positive sense of self that helps them enhance their capacity for love and intimacy in their relationships. Moreover, the appreciation of this as a clinically relevant issue has been noticeably absent from the analytic literature and from discussions of homosexual patients in general. The conviction that homosexuality was pathological resulted in therapeutic techniques that attempted to change, with little success, the sexual orientation of homosexual patients.

Most psychoanalysts still approach homosexual material produced by their patients assuming a heterosexual view of development and relationships which in practice is supposed to be assumed as an apparently "neutral stance". Others, however, may even presume the inevitable pathology of homosexuality. In both cases, the therapist's attitude towards gay patients usually carries a heterosexist and/or a homophobic bias by valuing heterosexuality as superior to and/or more natural than homosexuality. These biases, in turn lead to a tendency to block a full articulation and working

through of transference, as well as masking various countertransferential issues.

However, some enlightened analysts have challenged this therapeutic goal, by questioning the pathological model it emanates from and the debatable heterosexual conversions of gay men (Lewes, 1988). More recent analytic work has approached homosexuality by advocating a "neutral" stance, that is, the exploration of the patient's homosexuality within what has been thought to be an analytically neutral technique that uses inquiry as a major tool. For example, the work developed by Stephen Mitchell (1981) has criticised those analytical positions that presume the inevitable pathology of homosexuality by adopting a "directive-suggestive" treatment approach, which advises the analyst to depart from the analytic position of neutrality by actively discouraging homosexual behaviour and encouraging heterosexual behaviour. Instead, he proposes that homosexuality should be approached by adopting a so-called "neutral" stance whereby homosexuality is approached as one deals with any other analytic material - in the spirit of open inquiry - which should allow the exploration of multiple homosexual fantasies and behaviours, permitting the patient to make his own choices, free from influence, overt or covert.

While this approach could be seen as an improvement over the more blatantly harsh, judgemental, directive-suggestive approach, it still has clear limitations. One may think that a non-pathologic view of homosexuality would naturally result in a neutral stance, but, as Martin S. Frommer (1994) has noted, it is a mistake to assume that the analyst operates from a position of neutrality regarding the patient's homosexuality, merely because he or she adopts a technically neutral stance toward it.

Research in inter-subjectivity that has reshaped traditional thinking about transference and countertransference suggests that whether or not the analyst operates as if he/she were neutral, the patient is nonetheless influenced by the inter-subjectivity of the analyst's feelings, whether or not they enter the treatment through overt verbal communication.

This important shift in psychoanalytic thinking has been characterised by the growing acceptance of countertransference experience and reactions as both inevitable and potentially useful aspects of the personal involvement between the analyst and the patient. But the analyst can recognise his/her subjective countertransference toward homosexuality and its impact on the patient only if they really manage to understand the patient's homosexuality as a desirable, non-pathological normal development.

The effects of ignoring these issues by using inadequate and distorted approaches may be more obvious when the patient is a male homosexual and the analyst is male and heterosexual, for, as analytic content goes, there is nothing particularly "neutral" about homosexuality for either patient or analyst.

When faced with the eroticised transferences, the male analyst should learn to feel comfortable with his own feelings of sexual arousal, and/or with feelings of identification with the patient's wishes. Freud (1937), like Ferenczi (1914), Hocquenghem (1978), Isay (1989) and Frommer (1994) among many other analysts, has reflected on the issue of universal passive homosexual feelings, and the barriers to a complete analysis when they are left unanalysed.

Their observations highlight the need to address the significance of the presence of such unconscious experience in heterosexual men, the resistance toward conscious awareness of these feelings, and the

potential for strong countertransferential avoidant/defensive reactions, which may not be understood as such.

When an analyst expresses a preference toward heterosexuality and denigrates the patient's homosexual desire by explaining it in terms of pathology, the analyst is also blocking the full articulation of the patient's transference by operating from a countertransferential contaminated position. Their own homophobic feelings, which often lie tucked away beneath the bed sheets of neutrality, gets mobilized in the form of interpretations offered by the analyst to explain the pathological "meaning" of the patient's homosexual desire and feelings. A common explanation by the analyst of the patient's passive longings or desire may be that it really represents a defence against assuming the aggressive male role.

Given the training of analysts and the disease-model taught to them, there are ready-made formulations for thinking about the patient's homosexuality that one can fall back on when feeling anxious. For example, an implicit assumption generally held throughout is that heterosexual behaviour is invariably motivated by a genuine erotic responsiveness, arising spontaneously and not influenced by other motivational processes, in contrast to homosexual behaviour which is assumed to be motivated either by non erotic, pre-genital motivations, or else by a defensive retreat from a more basic heterosexual eroticism.

Therefore, those supposed interpretations of meaning, which are actually values of the therapist, are used to define what the patient is up to, and help distance the analyst from his own anxiety. By doing this, the analyst also ends up distancing or withdrawing himself from the patient and restages the initial trauma with the father, which then gets repeated in the transference. On the other

hand, countertransference in reaction to homosexual patients need not necessarily emerge from feelings within the analyst that are homoerotic per se.

Sometimes these countertransferential problems may be triggered by the identification of feminine or female-related attributes in the context of maleness, in the form of fear and hatred of what is perceived as feminine in other men and in oneself; i.e. homosexuals are usually perceived as feminine because they have sex with other men - a behaviour that is oddly seen from a male heterosexual perspective as only identified with women's sexual behaviour. Thus, male analysts are not immune to anxiety and shame about the passive, feminine aspects of their character, which are a necessary ingredient of the analytic work.

Therefore, it seems crucial that the analyst is able to relate comfortably and empathically to the patient's transference, so that he and his patient can arrive at an analysis of the shame and fear of rejection felt by the patient by linking these feelings to the erotic elements that produced them. When this connection is denied or obscured, it has a detrimental effect on the patient, in that he will probably miss the awareness of a primary source of conflict and inhibition, by indirectly assuming that there may be something "wrong" with these feelings, and therefore deciding instead to suppress them within himself and in relation to others.

The ability to negotiate the transference in a helpful empathic way is tied to the analyst's ability to recognise and deal with his countertransference so that a holding, relational environment is created that is ultimately affirming to the patient and his homosexual desire and feelings.

Actually, although the emphasis put here has been within a male to male context, the full issue of transference and countertransference in working with homosexual patients needs to include an in-depth discussion regarding not only the gender of the analyst but also his or her sexual orientation and whether or not this is known to the patient. Many gay patients are most comfortable in working with analysts who are themselves gay; the reason for this is obvious given the homophobia of the culture at large.

The sexual orientation of the analyst plays an important part in the nature of the inter-subjective experience that is created between the patient and the analyst. The analyst who knows something about the patient experience, firsthand, is bound to convey his or her understanding of that experience in a way that is different from the analyst who does not, and the patient will feel that difference. This may actually be a positive advantage for the patient whose developmental experience is so often characterised by an aloneness in dealing with his homosexual identity. There can also be advantages in having the chance to identify with a positive male model within one's homosexuality, since for most gay men there have been very few available for them. In this sense, the homosexual analyst who has grappled with these developmental issues is perhaps better equipped to negotiate issues of homosexual desire in the transference and countertransference.

When a gay analyst, for whatever reason, refrains from revealing his or her sexual orientation in the treatment, this decision will influence the transference and countertransference. The gay patient then may experience, inter-subjectively, the analyst's homosexual self and be faced once again with the sense of a secret about sexual identity that is present, yet hidden. The analyst may

countertransferentially relate in a more distant way to the patient's material in order not to reveal his or her sexual orientation but the result of this distant attitude may be countertransferential guilt in withholding affective communications or actual information that might be helpful.

Thus the issue of disclosure, when it is only seen as a violation of the analytic neutral stance, obscures the fact that the analyst's sexual orientation, in most treatments, is not something neutral, for most of the time analysts are assumed to be heterosexual (Blechner, 1996).

There are also other aspects of the transference-countertransference dynamics that are particular to gay patients in treatment with gay analysts. For instance, transference issues may involve a projected sense of defectiveness onto the analyst for being homosexual, and it is crucial that the analyst be able to identify and comprehend such projections by talking about them with the patient, until he is able to recognise, own and reassess his projections. Likewise, in dealing with those projections, countetransference issues may sometimes involve superego-oriented interventions, especially when the analyst has not dealt empathically enough with his own internalised homophobia. Thus, only when the analyst is able to live comfortably with the conviction that homosexuality is a natural developmental end point for some, will he or she be able to conduct an analysis that is probing, while at the same time, affirming of the homosexual man's capacity to love and to be loved within his homosexuality.

IV.   Sensing One's Difference

In this chapter, a relational reflection on some of entendidos' emotional-moral experiences of growing up different in Barcelona is presented. Questions such as: who are you? When and how did you first realise that you were interested in boys? In what way(s)? Did that realisation made you feel different? Why? What does this difference mean to you? Do you see yourself as gay? Does your family and friends know that you understand? How and when did they know about this and how did they react? How and when did you tell them about your difference? How has your life changed since your family, friends and peers knew about you being different? Whom do you speak to when you want to talk about your homosexual desire, feelings and experiences? Do you have gay friends? Are you familiar with your local "ambiente?" (= the local gay scene), How do you like it and why?, etcetera, are explored, both within a voice-relational framework and in relation to current psychoanalytic and sociological accounts on homosexual desire development, as a way to connect and maintain open questions of different and resisting, cultural changing notions of self, identity, love, affection, intimacy, and relationships.

The cultural emotional context in which Mexican and Barcelonian entendidos experience our sense of difference is also presented in order to highlight its similarities and dissimilarities with current theoretical accounts on gay male identity formation and how the core identity of entendidos as males may or may not be re-elaborated in terms of acquiring a gay identity and behaviour.

Similarly a brief discussion of relevant research and discussion on the notion and the study of difference is presented in order to

highlight its usefulness and how it also informs part of my discussion of the particular experiences of difference among my interviewees. Finally a reflection on the emotional vocabulary of difference among my interviewees is also presented.

Experiencing Difference in Barcelona

As I discussed in chapter one, in Barcelona practically all entendidos assume a heterosexual persona at some point in their lives. For some, the acknowledgement that they are different comes early; for most, it comes somewhere in their early adult years; for a few, it comes much later. Between believing that one is straight and discovering that one is an entendido and/or a gay man there is a gap, an ambiguous period of doubts, usually quite painful, which finally results in a confrontation with one's homosexuality in different ways.

This is the experience of coming out. But for entendidos, the processs of coming out is not a straightforward linear one. Before one can proclaim to our peers that we understand and/or are gay, we must acknowledge this to ourselves. This is a long process that has not been fully explored, and certainly not from a relational perspective aimed at showing its emotional-moral dimension, with its ambivalent and contrasting dimensions, i.e. sensual yet painful, devitalising yet stimulating, combined with a temporary gradual experience of losing voice and connection to one's homosexual feelings that often leads to a dismissal of one's own experience, and a modulation or a silencing of voice and homosexual desire.

At adolescence, pre-entendido boys' ordinary courage and seemingly effortless ability to speak their minds by opening up their hearts increasingly becomes restrained. For pre-entendido boys to say

what they are feeling and thinking often means to risk, in the words of many straight boys, losing their relationships, becoming stigmatised, bullied and rejected by almost everybody, finding themselves thus powerless and alone.

Over the years, as pre-entendido boys become more sophisticated cognitively and emotionally, then from their former courage and outspokenness they become increasingly reluctant, not only not to say what they are thinking or feeling, but also not to think what they are feeling, all of which leads to a gradual dismissal of their own vital experience. Thus, honesty in relationships may begin to seem "stupid" or "rude" or "mean". Consequently, a healthy resistance to losing voice and relatedness, which may seem ordinary in childhood years, tends to give way to various forms of psychological resistance, as not speaking may turn into not knowing and this process of dissociation may itself be forgotten.

When the burden of secrecy becomes intolerable, the sense of isolation and hypocrisy too oppressive, some can be compelled to act socially by finding a girlfriend to try to convince themselves that they can still be straight, while some other may decide to start exploring their local gay world and get some idea of what other gay men are like, what they want and how they feel, and then perhaps some will decide to confront themselves and their world by coming out, reckoning at the same time that the experience will very probably be traumatic and that they may risk losing family and friends.

Most of us come out for a complex of reasons, but the sense of personal rage and the hope of private support from other gays are part of the experience for most men. Not everyone, however, comes out, nor is the time between self-discovery and public acknowledgement easy to generalise. For example, some entendidos

never come out to their families and socially, either because they may feel that their having socio-sexual relations with other men do not imply that they are "less" masculine and so they do not see the need to identify themselves as gay, with the usual stigmatising consequences that this implies in a macho world, opting then for living lives "above suspicion" either by living in careful secrecy or by getting married with a woman, while other entendidos may prefer to see themselves as single bisexuals. For these entendidos, the fear of losing the privileges they have been enjoying by passing as straights may be another important consideration.

However, nowadays most entendidos – including all my interviewees - have opted for developing different, local forms of gay identities, and so becoming gay in their local gay environment has become a much clearer and more effective way of assuming and making visible their homosexuality, to the point that the terms gay and entender are nowadays used indistinctively and almost synonymously.

Some Comments on the Notion of and the Study of Difference

To use the notion of difference as a kind of organizing principle, in order to reflect on my and my interviewees experiences of growing up and learning to acknowledge and make sense of our sensual desire for other boys and men, has been for me, to say the least, quite a challenge. When Professor Victor Seidler, (my supervisor) suggested that I write this chapter using as an axis the notion of difference, I remember that one of my first reactions was a combination of surprise and curiosity; for when I thought about it, I also began wondering to what extent and in what ways I may appear to Victor as

someone somehow unintelligible for him, and why, and "how other" I may be for him, and why?

I guess that, for me, it is obvious that we both are foreign to each other, but in my case I although I may see him as a foreigner I certainly do not see him as someone different or as "other". Thus, I realised that, up to that moment, the idea of difference for me merely conveyed a sense of otherness, associated perhaps with not only the idea of feminine sexuality, as being different from men's, but also closely linked to notions of xenophobic, hierarchical, ambiguously tolerant yet contemptuous accounts of "other" "beings" and/or or cultures: i.e. basically everyone and everything who is not Anglo-Saxon. The awareness of this view of "difference" has only really expanded since coming to and living in England.

In Britain, it seems that the accepted sense of identity contains a much narrower range of viable positions – not only a xenophobic position but certainly a homophobic and even a misogynistic one. In discussing these ideas with my English partner, various suggestions emerged: insularity (in its true and extended senses), a quasi-defensive national identity and an almost instinctive suspicion of anything unfamiliar, foreign or "other" than that which is contained within the core experience of Anglo-Saxon heterosexual males. This identity of almost paranoid exclusion was initially puzzling and a bit scary for me as a newcomer to this country, and it took some time for me to appreciate what connotations this would have for my life in a relationship with an English man, my own emotional existence, and the ways I now have to make sense of my experiences here, bearing in mind the cultural background and intellectual and emotional expectations of my putative English readership.

In a way, I think that my not associating male homosexual desire within the scope of the notion of difference - and therefore not seeing clearly its possible connection and relevance to my gay experience – may also stem from my childhood, teenage and adult experiences of mutual curiosity and sensual interest in and with other boys and men, either straight or gay, in Mexico and also in Spain. I guess that, in my experience, there is the almost self-evident acknowledgement that practically every man I have met, either straight or gay, has always seemed to me to be perfectly capable of being at some point at least sensitive, if not also receptive, to a sensual interest in other men. I suppose what I am trying to say is that, in my experience of growing up gay in Mexico City, the notion of difference could hardly be used, in lay parlance - and, perhaps to some extent, also in academic language - to refer to the experiences of sensual/homoerotic interest in other men, for, in our sensual culture, it may seem rather obvious to everyone that any man is perfectly capable of experiencing desire for other men, even if he does not act on that desire and lives a straight life.

Usually, the growing awareness of our sensual interest in other boys would lead us to an exciting, playful curiosity, a need to explore our bodies and to touch each other, and sometimes to masturbate each other, occasionally also among our brothers and sisters. In this context, there was little awareness of notions of gay or straight, as conveying right or wrong, or even stigmatised/stigmatising. Then again, when I shared these childhood experiences with my English partner, I was also surprised to learn that, for him, although the experience of sensual interest in other boys was clearly present from an early age, its possible physical experiencing was already pre-

demarcated in a context of wrong-doing, even perversion, and subject to intense homophobic bullying.

Thus, in Mexico, and also in Spain, sensual/homoerotic experiences among young men are quite common, and do not necessarily convey the sense that the men involved in them are fundamentally "different" from each other, just because they are able to explore their sensuality together. Quite often these mutual sensual experiences are basically shared, without using a specific terminology to refer to or classify them.

Later on, as Mexican teenagers become adults, then they may start using terms such as "internacional", "universal" and "jalador" (easy going) to mean that they can experience sensual interest both in girls and boys. Usually, when it comes to connecting these experiences with a notion of a sexual identity and to put a name to them, many Mexican men would choose to refer to themselves as bisexuals. Likewise, the notion of "entender" (= in the know, to understand) which is very common both in Mexico and Spain for example, simply means that a man is capable of having socio-sexual relations with other men, and that because of this, they do not necessarily have to redefine their whole male identities in terms of gay, which conveys the notion of a much more self reflective and politicised identity.

Recently, for example, my partner and I saw a Spanish film in Barcelona called "Krampack" (a word which does not ordinarily mean anything in particular in Spanish language). The film tells the story of two male teenagers who start learning about their sensuality, relationships and each other through their shared experiences of mutual masturbation. Thus, the term "krampack" in the film comes to

denote this particular experience of coming closer emotionally through masturbating each other, i.e. "let's have a krampack".

Thus, the attempt at reflecting on and writing of mine as well as my interviewees' sensual/homoerotic growing up experiences have meant for me, on the one hand, to re-read these experiences in terms of seeing them as conveying a sense of being different/other within and for myself, and also to frame my interviewees' experiences as conveying some sense of different/otherness in order to have some sense of common understanding with my putative English readership . But these emotional cultural experiences among Mexican and Barcelonian entendidos are rarely incorporated into current theoretical accounts on gay male experience. Although within queer studies, and in social research on homosexuality, there is a clear recognition that many of the problems that gay people face are not caused by homosexuality, but by the way homosexuality is defined and the resulting societal reaction that occurs when it is identified, the study of difference among gay men has tended to focus on issues of power and/or deviation (i.e. when a majority group assumes the power of instituting norms from which minority groups are seen to deviate), how these differences between these groups become institutionalised, and how difference is then perceived as a deficit, or as a failure to meet the standards of the majority, by creating stereotypes which reduce the full humanity of the individual to a few selected deviant traits.

Within lesbian feminism, for example, the work of Monique Wittig (1992), seems to me to be particularly illustrative of this line of thought, for she goes further than protesting the traditional equation, within feminism, of gender with the phenomenology of difference itself, according to which "patriarchy" had been seen by feminism

basically as an ideological system, based on the domination of the class of men over the class of women, but where the categories themselves of man and women had not been directly addressed.

In *The Straight Mind*, (1978/1992), Wittig questions the very category of heterosexual masculinity, not only as sexuality but as a political regime that keeps on evolving and reproducing itself in many ways and through different cultural devices: i.e. more particularly, how the use of language as power is directly involved in this reproduction in a very structural way, and how language has recently come to dominate modern theoretical systems and the social sciences:

> The discourses which particularly oppress all of us, lesbians, women and homosexual men, are those which take for granted that what founds society, any society, is heterosexuality. These discourses speak about us and claim to say the truth in an apolitical field, as if anything of that which signifies could escape the political in this moment of history, and as if, what concern us, politically insignificant signs could exist. These discourses of heterosexuality oppress us in the sense that they prevent us from speaking unless we speak in their terms (Wittig, 1992; p. 25).

Within this expanded power/political framework, Wittig's idea of difference also allows a further re-examination, for she emphasizes that the straight mind valorises difference in very particular ways:

> Straight society is based on the necessity of the different/other at every level. It cannot work economically, symbolically, linguistically, or politically without this concept. This necessity of the different is an ontological one for the whole conglomerate of sciences and disciplines that I call the straight mind. But what is the different/other if not the dominated? For heterosexual society is the society which not only oppresses lesbians and gay men, it oppresses many different/others, it oppresses all women and many categories of men, all those who are in the position of the dominated. To constitute a difference and to control it is an act of power, since it is essentially a normative act. Everybody tries to show the other as different. But not everybody succeeds in doing so. One has to be socially dominant to succeed in it. For example, the concept of difference between the sexes ontologically constitutes women into different/others. Men are not different, whites are not different, nor are the masters... But the concept of difference has nothing ontological

about it. It is only the way that the masters interpret a historical situation of domination. The function of difference is to mask at every level the conflicts of interest, including ideological ones (Wittig, 1992; p. 29).

Although Wittig's analysis of difference opens up interesting, useful questions on the hierarchical and antagonistic relationship between heterosexuality and homosexuality, it tends to overlook other intersections among them that do not necessarily imply simply overt domination, but more complex levels and types of relationality among men. For example, the mutual emotional-sensual masturbatory experiences common among boys and teenagers in Mexican and Spanish contexts that I have referred to above, clearly intersect issues of desire, intimacy, love, vulnerability and resilience in gay and straight emotional development, that have been largely neglected.

In this sense, I think that Leo Bersani's (1995) reading of Wittig's analysis of difference is also useful, for he notes that she does not quite distinguish between heterosexual and homosexual; there is always a heterosexist position involved, for in Wittig's argument, the need to be identified as heterosexual is already a heterosexist position. In this way, Bersani, drawing on the Freudian psychoanalytical perspective of Kenneth Lewes, who sustains that a primary heterosexual orientation of desire is, for the little boy, the result of a flight to the father following a horrified retreat from women, observes that:

> Male heterosexuality would be a traumatic privileging of difference. Moreover, to the extent that the perception of difference is, for all human subjects, traumatising, it is perhaps necessarily accompanied by a defensively hierarchical attribution of value. The cultural consolidation of heterosexuality is grounded in its more fundamental, nonreflective construction as the compulsive repetition of a traumatic response to difference. The straight mind might be thought of as a sublimation of this privileging of difference. If it is difficult within this system, to think

of differences non-antagonistically, it is because, as I suggested, antagonism is bound up in the very origins of differential perception. Dialectical thinking and dialogue seek to effect reconciliation between opposed terms, but these reconciliation may require the transcendence or even the annihilation of the differential terms (Bersani, L. Homos, 1995; p.40).

In this way, Bersani seems to be concerned with exploring more complex ways of thinking difference, instead of merely reproducing old antagonistic notions, like the idea of two sexes described as opposites, or alternatives or complements, that has locked the theoretical scope into a limiting logic of binary pairs within normative psychoanalytic language: for example, the use of terms like inside/outside, primary process/secondary process, sadism/masochism, which reduce, distort and limit the appreciation and understanding of the richness and complexity of male gender identities and desires. In this sense, Bersani is also concerned with rethinking the very notions of relationality in relation to identity:

Is there another way of thinking? Could we authenticate the idea of the straight mind by demonstrating the possibility of thinking outside it? To a certain extent, those designated as homosexuals have acquiesced in the identity thrust upon them. But even that passivity creates a certain divorce from the straight mind that has invented them, clears a space, first of all, for reflection on the heterosexual identity from which they are excluded. More interestingly, the possibility arises of enacting an alternative to the straight mind. For we (gays) are in effect being summoned – unintentionally to be sure, and the cue provided is still merely etymological - to rethink economies of human relations on the basis of homo-ness, of sameness. Is there a specificity in homoness, or in other terms, how is sameness different? (Bersani, L. Homos, 1995; p.41).

In this way, Bersani seems to be replacing the privileged position of difference as the superior term in the homo-hetero opposition, and relocating it within a different structure of

relationality. By doing this, he is trying to address gay identity in terms of sameness:

> My argument is that by not accepting and radically reworking the different identity of sameness – by rejecting the whole concept of identity - we risk participating in the homophobic project that wants to annihilate us. Only an emphasis on the specifics of sameness can help us to avoid collaborating in the disciplinary tactics that would make us invisible. In other words, there is a "we". But in our anxiety to convince straight society that we are only some malevolent invention, and that we can be, like you, good soldiers, good parents, and good citizens, we seem bent on suicide. By erasing our identity, we do little more than reconfirm its inferior position within a homophobic system of differences. (Bersani, L. Homos, 1995; p.42).

But the acknowledgement of same sex desire as part of everyone's development is nothing new, at least within psychoanalysis. Despite Freud's initial theoretical commitment to bisexuality, by describing a perverse core to the personality for both sexes as the essence of an infantile sexuality which was by inclination keenly seductive, it was soon framed as inappropriate, malign, dirty seduction because it was related to seduction with the parents, and so it was not clear what the relatively non-incestuous varieties might be, which inevitably led to the more traditional idea of a true (heterosexual) path (Phillips, 1994).

Psychoanalysis and Difference

In his essay on *Perversion*, Adam Philips (1994:101) also notes that "since seduction is associated with leading away and since the idea of perversion implicitly presupposes deviation from a norm, a crucial irony in Freud's account on infantile sexuality is that perversion is the norm, which leaves open the question of how perverse "perverse infantile sexuality" actually is". On the other hand, Freud's claims that the unconscious speaks more than one dialect - a logic

that dispels the illusion of minimal alternatives – have made it even more obvious that desire is much more than just enacting reproductive biology.

Unfortunately, all these crucial insights have been misleadingly reduced and distorted by many of his successors - who have followed a normative interpretation - by assuming the alleged universality of an Oedipus complex whose only healthy developmental outcome is heterosexual.

Thus, in normalising psychoanalytic theory, love for the parent of the opposite sex is referred to as the positive Oedipus complex, whereas love for the parent of the same sex is called the negative Oedipus complex. This language of boundaries within normative psychoanalysis, has set the terms for promoting a specific set of exclusionary assumptions about what male identity and desire are and can be.

But even if it has seemed very difficult for many psychoanalysts, to reflect on homosexual experience in a way that no longer needs the idea of an Oedipal scenario, it also seems quite obvious to me, after listening to my interviewees, that they rightly want to know whether there is a position for them beyond exclusion, or difference, or separateness or even identity, a world in which leaving and being left out disappears.

Similarly, Phillips (1995) has also noted how difference or defensiveness has always been a dilemma that psychoanalysis has been unable to deal with. Is a gay patient different from the analyst's description of him, or is he merely resisting his normalising, heterosexist interpretations? And who is in a position to decide? What can it be so distasteful about one's own sex that one has so exclusively to desire only the so called opposite one?

Between the awareness of emotional resistance and the obtuseness of the analyst much of the analytic talking about these perplexing issues has been, albeit guardedly, to theorize about homosexuality from a heterosexual perspective; this has been done in such a way that the aim of a normative analytic encounter seems to be to create an outside where you can put things you don't want. By using a kind of proscribed vocabulary normative desire or tolerated differences are sustained so long as they reinforce the idea that normal desiring is only to do with desiring the other, different, opposite sex, while desire for one's own sex has become directly linked with self hatred and paranoia.

It seems as if there is something so unbearable about love for one's own sex that it has turned itself into hatred, and the hatred is then projected into other people and comes back from outside as persecution. In this context, it seems as if the analytic relationship can actually serve as a refuge from emotional intimacy, especially among men; and so issues about male intimacy and male emotional needs and love can be studied, but no real intimacy can be reached and be sustained and encouraged as positive desire and love between men and as a positive male identity. As Phillips observes:

> It seems to be extremely difficult, in describing gender – or any of the so-called identities - to find a picture or a story that no longer needs the idea of exclusion. There seems to be something bewitching, certainly in psychoanalytic theory, about the idea - and the experience - of evacuation; and of the kinds of definition that the ideas of inside and outside can give us. Why is it so difficult to imagine a life in which there is nothing to get rid of? In which men, for example, did not feel the need to dispose of their female selves? The self as expulsive is the self as exclusive. We are what we excrete. The vocabulary of difference – the means of establishing those intra and inter-psychic boundaries and limits that psychoanalytic developmental theory promotes – is, by definition, far more extensive than the language of sameness (the same, of course, is not only the identical). We can talk about difference – in a sense, that's what talk is about, that's what language seems to be

– but sameness appears to make us mute, dull or repetitive. To talk of homosexuality exclusively in terms that disparage sameness is to compound the muddle. Sameness, like difference, is a (motivated) fantasy not a natural fact – a construction, and, like all constructions, of its time, provisional. One of the reasons that we are currently addicted to difference is that difference makes competition possible; and competition is a cure for shame. (Phillips, A. [1995] Terrors and Experts, p. 86).

Phillips' reflections on difference highlight many issues concerning the ways in which psychoanalysis with its language of boundaries - i.e. diagnostic categories - operates to promote and sustain a vision of homosexual desire as enclosed within the Oedipal prohibition, as something intrinsically conflictual, painful, joyless, conveying scarcity: i.e. as in the rather gloomy Kleinian language of lack and absence, with her insistence on the truth of the depressive position, and also in Lacan's alleged "need" for firm boundaries, with self sufficient, autonomous egos and very demarcated gender identities implicit in his self-renouncing and self-frustrating "law" of "the" Father.

In this context, it is not surprising to acknowledge how, in the analytic setting, sex becomes almost synonymous with unhappiness and misery, so there is very little room for notions of love and male desire among men in a more open, positive, celebratory language, conveying joy, pleasure, intimacy, emotional closeness and satisfaction, since the analytic setting promotes the notion that thinking for men is better than stroking, and rational knowledge is the means of achieving self knowledge and emotional maturity rather than passionate, caring, affectionate sex and love among men.

Coping with Difference

The study of and clinical management of difference among gay people has been a concern of Carmen de Monteflores (1986) a Chicana, lesbian, psychotherapist working in California with Chicana lesbians and gay men since the seventies.

Drawing on Heinz Kohut's self psychology (1971, 1977, 1984) as an explanatory framework that has influenced current psychoanalytic understandings of identity formation and development, she tries to describe the social-psychological strategies used by individuals within groups to manage difference in the development of individual gay identities. She focuses on the impact of institutionalisation of difference on the intra-psychic functioning of individuals, the relevance that the exploration of differences between psychotherapist and client has in the attempt to enhance the development of gay self-esteem and how this approach may challenge power assumptions inherent in the structure of therapy.

Kohut made self-esteem a centrepiece of his theory of the development of identity. He recognized that the maintenance of a cohesive, integrated identity is predicated on the capacity to maintain functional levels of self-esteem in the face of narcissistic injury.

For Kohut, identity is dependent on the ability of a person to soothe himself in the face of disappointment. If one cannot maintain a sufficient level of self-esteem in the face of a disappointing or otherwise painful situation, one is prone to fragmentation experiences.

Such experiences are moments of identity disruption. They are characteristically subjectively perceived as moments of being overwhelmed, depersonalised, and experiencing a lack of contact with

what is truly felt or thought. Self-esteem also plays an obvious role in asserting oneself.

So self-psychology has been very helpful in understanding the experiences of many gay men who seek psychotherapy. Because of difficulties in maintaining self-esteem, they are prone to severe fragmentation in the face of slights or other narcissistic injuries.

For instance, among some of my interviewees a common experience was the difficulty they had to set limits or maintain boundaries with others who treat them abusively. Because identity boundaries are not solid, they have difficulty in merging with idealized others to provide a sense of strength and protection while simultaneously maintaining a separate identity. As de Monteflores notes, for gay men self-objects are often faulty. Not only does a gay man face the inevitable traumata that are part of growing up with fallible caregivers, he faces narcissistic injuries specific to being homosexual in a heterosexual culture.

In this context, De Monteflores, in her attempt to redefine the therapeutic goal of working with gay men as a process of creating an environment that facilitates the exploration of gay male development as he searches out for his sense of self, has identified several coping strategies that they use in coping with their sense of difference, some of which I also find useful, in reflecting on entendidos experiences. They give a sense not only of the oppression, invalidation, resistance and fear of hope but also the resilience that they develop as part of their struggling to survive and make sense of their lives as gay men in a heterosexist, macho culture. As De Monteflores observes:

> A recognition of how difference functions in the society is another aspect of the process of articulation and integration of difference as part of identity. What role does a particular minority group play in the societal family? Is this the group who feels? The group who is sexual? The group

who nurtures? The group who is victimised? The group who creates change? Minorities may function to remind the dominant class of their limits, their frailties, and their fears. Minorities may be, in the Jungian sense, the "shadow" of a society in whom the disowned traits of a culture are reflected. For example, in recent years, the larger society disowned both homosexuality and death by labelling AIDS as a "gay illness". When confronted with the fact of her or his institutionalised difference within a dominant culture, the gay individual, if not too damaged in the process, develops a variety of coping strategies. These strategies can be broadly categorised within a continuum of acceptance or rejection, merging or differentiating from the mainstream culture. (De Monteflores, C. [1986] Notes on the Management of Difference, p. 75).

These strategies may include assimilation of the language and values of the dominant group, passing, merging, confrontation, differentiation, ghettoization and/or even specialisation. I will address only those strategies that I think have more relevance to the emotional experience of entendidos.

Assimilation: the core issue of this strategy is survival. The process of assimilation involves a need to learn the language of the dominant heterosexual group, that is, the current modes of communicating and managing their needs in order to survive. Assimilation promotes a strengthening of external skills: the dress, organizational procedures and the manners of the dominant group are adopted. But in this process there can also be a profound sense of self-betrayal, as well as an inner unease and a disconnection with a part of oneself. The experiences of Xavier, can be particularly illustrative of this type of situation, for they convey a sense of conflict, ambivalence and choice, both in relation to the relative value of sustaining a "manly" attitude and identity but also to his need to re-connect it with male affection and desire in a more inclusive way:

Right now I am gay, but I must also say that I am not quite clear what does it mean to be gay for me, apart from other aspects of my personality... I guess for me it is much more important to feel closer to a guy and to be able to share affection together... The other stuff, I mean

the sex thing, I see it as pretty much like a vice... a vice that I happen to enjoy a lot, I must admit, but I think right now I am more interested in getting closer to a guy emotionally, and to be able to identify with men through their weakest side, although that has posed a number of doubts for me, because I don't know if I really love men, or if it's simply that I would like to come closer to them, so that I can feel more manly

The struggle with boundaries is the basic drama of assimilation. Xavier seems to be caught in a difficult, interesting situation, for he is trying to fulfil a basic need: emotional closeness with men but he also needs to be sure that by doing this he still can see himself as "manly". In situation like these, entendidos may also use a primary technique used in assimilation: passing. The process of assimilation always requires some degree of passing.

Passing is ordinarily defined as appearing to be like the dominant group when one is not really a member of that group and as adopting the outer appearance of the dominant group in order to avoid direct rejection by it. But De Monteflores notes that, dynamically, the process of passing is more complex and fluid, and so she has broadened the connotation of passing by defining it in a more positive, functional way, as a process of managing the boundary between two groups and literally passing, or traversing, from one group to another. This dynamic of passing is also implicit in Xavier's reflections, for he clearly sees the usefulness for him of moving bi-directionally, not just merely passing uni-directionally, as a straight guy, but more crucially, from fulfilling affection and sex with men, combined with a sense of reinforcing a positive, inclusive sense of manliness.

In this redefined way, boundary management is a central aspect of passing. Passing then, may become dysfunctional only when the

outer appearance and the inner feelings or beliefs become disconnected; that is, when the mask acquires a life of its own. Additionally, to deny a basic sense of who we are by manipulating our appearance often leads to a splitting within ourselves which in turn may leave us empty and ungrounded.

However, passing may not be consciously intentional, which might make it difficult to recognise it as representing difference. Another aspect of passing is qualifying difference, by establishing a hierarchy of "deficits"; a negativisation of the trait, which determines difference, gets implied.

Thus, among entendidos, there can be different ways of passing, requiring dissociation from oneself and an implied assumption of the superiority of those who do not posses the apparent deficit (i.e. an effeminate persona). The inferiority of some entendidos, based on their effeminate appearance, is thereby reinforced.

Confrontation: this is another strategy to cope with difference, which occurs literally when we face up to and look at our difference. It requires an acknowledgement to ourselves of who we are. In this acknowledgement there is a profound self-affirmation, for we become visible to ourselves first and then to others.

Coming out as gay is the primary technique of confrontation used by homosexual men and nowadays by many entendidos. The process of coming out involves a transformation: the transformation of an apparent deficit into a strength. This can be a means of healing by groups or individuals. It can also be a central issue in psychotherapy and a basis for the healing of a group at a social level.

Several elements may mediate this transformation, i.e. the recognition that one is not alone with a difference provides support by

stopping the feeling of isolation, and may lead to a sense of community. Other elements may also include sadness and anger at the previous rejection by ourselves and others, of significant parts of ourselves which are now valued: a recasting of the past, a reowning of origins and history, and also some kind of public acknowledgement of a new awareness of a group identity.

Thus, coming out is also a process of development of identity, although, for entendidos, it does not follow a simple, linear progression. Coming out can also be affected by many other factors, including survival needs, employment, and the strength of cultural affiliations to support networks, such as family, ethnic groups and class. So to see others like ourselves can be the first acknowledgement that our differences can be valuable. We begin to see what has been there all along but has remained hidden. The image we see of ourselves through identification with others may be uncomfortable at first, because the ideal image, what we are supposed to look like or be like, is not there. In the process of coming out, there is a need to unlearn the traits that made assimilation possible. Additionally, considerable anger may be experienced at having had to deny important aspects of ourselves, which defined difference.

Listening to Entendidos' Voices of Difference

The experiences and the conversations I have shared with my entendido friends has allowed us to understand further how we have constructed our own sense of difference and its moral conflicting dimension, how we have defined and interpreted our personal experiences and what we have focussed on as relevant to our present

situation - and how these situations are related to different actions that they have described to me and the thoughts and feelings that follow from or accompany their descriptions. In any given situation, e.g. coming out to parents and friends, they differ in what they consider to be the central moral conflict and what they consider to be the best or better way to respond to that situation.

The way in which their conflicts are constructed, however, also depends on the context, e.g., who is involved, the relationships between the persons involved – their relative power vis-a-vis each other as well as the strength of the connection between them - where the situation takes place, what part the narrator plays in this conflict and their personal and cultural history.

Thus, to appreciate these changes, they must have some awareness of their difference, for in order to become the subject of their own past, entendidos should get rid of the generic and universalistic armour that has been imposed on them to allow themselves to comprehend, name, and reaffirm the specificity of their difference, and, from this difference, to be able to relate emotionally to themselves and their environment. In this way, the assimilation of difference acquires different possibilities that may lead to different cultural options concerning their place in society.

As a result of the complex interaction of these elements, different aspects or qualities of the relationships involved are defined and presented as salient in similar conflicts, i.e., the mutual self silencing in the parents-son relationship around issues of sexuality and their own desire for men.

But then again, what is seen as the central moral issue in a given situation may also shift in time and different actions may be

experienced simultaneously as conflicting, yet leading to different forms of vulnerability and/or resilience.

The interview abstracts I present in this chapter, are person-centred and are aimed at showing the cultural context of both equality and attachment, as important dimensions of entendidos' emotional and moral development and experience of difference in relationships, and how the feeling voices of the "I" "you" "me" can be identified in the strategies that entendidos use in order to sustain their difference.

The moral voices of what constitutes for them attachment and equality as dimensions of their relationships illustrates also the unique capabilities they have had to develop in order to maintain a sense of worth and connectedness in relationship, and to be able to make choices while not overlooking the power of their self silencing.

This is a complex process which includes the attuning of their emotional responsivity in a flexible, resilient way, which enables them to cope dynamically with the ongoing and prevailing challenges that their hegemonic heterosexual relational context poses for them (i.e. the using of coping strategies like passing as straights, merging, confronting, ghettoizing or even specialising) in order to resist and counterbalance the damaging effects of dealing on an almost daily basis with old and new forms of prejudiced and homophobic attitudes. Thus, attuning ourselves to the "I" feeling voices of my interviewees also draws our attention to the narrator perspective (both expressed and preferred) in its particular emotional-moral conflicting dimension.

It is important to emphasise that this relational approach does not conceive of the moral voices of justice [as conveying a moral image of an independent, autonomous self] and care [as conveying a moral image of self in relationships] as either dichotomous or mutually exclusive. Rather, justice and care are considered as visions

of relationships that reflect the vulnerabilities of entendidos in relationships – their liability to oppression and to abandonment, indifference and neglect.

These two perspectives on moral conflict and choice - care and justice - are dynamic and shift over time and therefore the conception of what is relevant in the moral domain also changes.

The abstracts presented here pick up on that shift and are designed for use in understanding and interpreting entendidos experiences of difference as comprising issues of moral conflict and choice. Thus, this way of approaching entendidos experiences of difference takes as a starting point the premise that, as part of their coping with their sense of difference, they had already experienced relationships both in terms of attachment and in terms of equality.

These two moral injunctions, not to treat the others unfairly and not to turn away from someone in need, capture these different concerns and how they shape in time their distinctive sense of difference. The following extracts illustrates some of these issues.

Paco: Building up a Wall with a Small Window

Paco: 28, is a graduate student, living at present with his parents. He recalls some of his early feelings around his sense of difference and its evolution throughout his life...

Me: When and how did you first realise that you were different from your peers?

P: "Realising and acknowledging my difference has never been a problem for me... It's not that I have always known this, but I remembered that since I was three years old I already felt attracted to other boys, that's for sure! But it was not until I became much older that I began to acknowledge this as something that was part of me... but

even if I recognised its existence I would not give it too much importance... I sensed it rather like something "added"... The truth is that I simply did not make myself to reflect upon it and I did not feel bad about it either... I felt different, but I felt ok with myself,.. It was like something additional that I had with regards to the others...

By the time I reached fifteen I knew more clearly that I liked boys but I would not do anything about it, and I did not feel bad either... Sometimes, while I was walking down the streets I would look at some boys and think that I liked them better than girls but I thought or simply believed that "relationships" were something that only happened with girls... I knew about my feelings for boys but they did not affect or disturb me,.. So I handled them easily...

It was not until I fully and clearly found myself with my inability to relate emotionally and sexually with a girlfriend that I used to have, and seeing how I was putting myself to pointless effort and how she was suffering that I told myself "I'm going to try now with the other sex" and I did not feel uncomfortable with this decision and I did not suffer either...

Me: Were you supposed to have suffered it?

P: "Well, since homophobia is something that exists more or less and is expressed in language, I would feel ashamed...I did not want to talk about my feelings with the others because I feared their rejection and their mocking jokes.. So I assumed my difference as something that was "there" and if I did not think about it then it would not make me suffer... I know that sometimes some gays talk about not accepting their own homosexuality, but I would say this is not so in my case...It is not that I did not accept that part of myself, it's rather that I did not see the need to explore and develop that part of me... So I don't think I did not accept myself because I have always been very happy with myself... Maybe, I just let myself get carried away in a rather comfortable way by what the others (straight peers) said and did, and I felt fine, and I did not suffer at all!

But like I told you, once I fully realised my feelings for boys and made the decision to explore them, I just went for it... That was a very decisive moment in my life...It was like starting a research project, to open up myself to a world I did not know about, and I felt alone... It was like getting in touch with a clandestine world, and living a double life,... and I had no clarity... I did not know how far I wanted to explore,... I did not even know if there were other people like me,... I had never met anybody gay neither in my family nor among my friends

While I was listening to Paco, I felt a mixture of emotions and thoughts. His eyes and his expression seemed to me a bit restrained, a bit sad, and certainly not as confident and cheerful as his declaration about his feeling very happy and confident with his life pretended to convey.

I felt a mixture of tenderness, curiosity and concern as I kept wondering why his first words around his first noticing of his sense of difference on the one hand seemed to be focused on reassuring me that his sense of difference had "never been a problem for him" and that he had rather experienced it like something "added" that the others did not share with him? Was this last conclusion coming from the voice of the three-year-old boy deciding for himself that he had only something added with regards to the others? Or to what extent his conclusion that he had had no problems at all already represented the sum total of a complex series of emotional-moral adjustments in order to assimilate the rethinking of his experience with his self image in a rather coherent, slightly over-simplified, tension-free fashion?

On the one hand, I could hear the voice of the adult Paco, trying to tell me how he had managed to deal with his sense of difference in a rather disembodied, rational way, but at the same

time, as we kept on reflecting on the evolution of his feelings of difference along his life, he could also recall other times when he did not quite know what to do and how he felt all alone reckoning he could not count on his friends and family.

I also kept wondering how and when he first learned to disconnect himself so effectively from his feelings for other boys in order to avoid their rejection and jokes. Although he clearly expressed his acknowledgement of the "homophobia that exists and expresses itself in language" I was moved when I noticed the changes in his voice which seemed to oscillate from a sense of seemingly effortless reassurance when he spoke of his childhood to a somewhat shy, quieter and less confident tone when he recalled himself taking the "decisive further step" at the age of 17 in order to explore his feelings for boys, and his sense of feeling alone and about to enter an unknown and "clandestine world".

His memories around this moment in his life also reminded me of a whole myriad of feelings and strategies that I had to develop during my childhood in an attempt to pass as straight and the silencing of some disturbing, contradictory feelings of inadequacy in order to cope with my peers... At this point I had lots of questions and thoughts I wanted to share with Paco; one of them was:

Me: So, what did you do to explore your feelings for boys?

P: That was not simple, it was a subject I had never opened up with anybody... so I decided to go to some gay associations... and that was not easy either... I remember all that being a bit sad and tough... Somehow it was like entering into a new country, and you do not know anybody, so getting to know gay people was a bit difficult because I am a bit shy, and shyness can limit you whether you are gay or straight,... the tough bit was rather going that step further... Somehow now I

*cherish that moment of my life, because it was strong and stimulating...
Once I managed to meet some gay guys and to get new friends I felt
more secure...*

*It was not until I felt secure that I decided to tell my straight
friends and my family... I guess I did not want to feel alone and
different, like a fish out of water, and to avoid being treated with
compassion... I did not want anybody's compassion... I am now proud
and happy to be gay... If I could choose again I think I would definitely
choose to be gay rather than straight... I think that being gay has more
positive than negative sides... I feel fine being gay,... I feel normal, I do
not feel that I am different from anybody just because I'm gay, I'm
proud of myself.*

*So in the beginning I did not want to share this with my
straight friends and my family because I feared their rejection and later
I did not want to share this with them because I did not want nor need
their compassion...*

Me*: So when did you feel sure enough to tell this to your family
and friends?*

P*: Well, when I felt that I already belonged to the gay world,
because that helped me to feel supported by another environment and
knowing that helped me to feel less worried about being possibly
rejected by the straight world,... So that's when I decided I was ready
to tell it to my friends and family,... and I did that in a "super quick"
way... and then I felt very happy, confident and proud...*

*Once I told this to my friends and family I did not suffer any
rejection from them ... I would even say that all the people I spoke with
responded to me in a very positive way...*

Me*: And how do you feel nowadays?*

P*: I feel that I am able to feel something else, something that the
others do not feel,... because you can see the world in a way that others
have not... In a predominantly heterosexual society you have
assimilated their values and perspectives and you have incorporated*

them into your self,... but because of your own biology or for whatever other reasons you have had to take a step further and that allows you to position yourself in such a way that you can now say "ok with you guys, but beware that there are other ways, different ways of living and feeling" without having to renounce to all your friends...

Listening to Paco's experience when he decided to explore his feelings for men highlighted to me the extent to which his immediate relational milieu was completely heterosexual; for Paco's first approach to his homosexual desire somehow took on a rather masculinist fashion when he embraced, it like a sort of challenge that he had to face and overcome on his own.

He knew not only that he could not count on his friends and family to support him through his journey into his desires but also that he did not want to be rejected nor treated with compassion. Likewise, his describing of his emotional reaction to the gay world as being in a clandestine underworld, for he felt there like a fish out of water, added to the tension and difficulty he had to overcome in order to be able to get to know gay men and feel accepted and even desired.

The magnitude of his relational impasse is also highlighted in his pain and isolation, which he tends to forget while he tries to show me how he succeeded in getting to know gay men and date them, and how he also not only avoided the compassion of his straight peers but managed to conclude that he is no different from his straight peers but rather happens to have an additional quality that allows him to live and feel in a way his straight peers have not yet experienced.

Was this latter statement basically a strategy to survive, by assimilating his experience according to his local modes of

communicating in order to pass as a member of his group in order to avoid direct rejection by it?

Was this passing strategy consciously intentional, and at the same time functional, in the sense that his outer appearance and speech and his inner feelings remained connected?

To what extent has he had the opportunity to put his difference into perspective, rather than simply assuming that his difference meant only an added bonus?

To what extent do his reflections denote that he has reached a sense of maturity, for he would seem to have managed to articulate his sameness as well as his difference, allowing himself and his peers a certain flexibility in boundaries which would also reflect an inner sense of security about his identity?

I think that implicit here are several elements which mediate these transformations, e.g., a recognition that one is not alone with a difference, which may lead to bridging his isolation in order to gain some sense of community and support...

But sometimes this may not necessarily be the case, and other strategies may ensue...

Sebastian, for instance, reflects on his way of coping with his difference...

Sebastian: Straight to Death

Sebastian, 23, a student in the area of the arts, living at present with his parents and his straight sister and brother, and he has not had yet a gay relationship...

> *Me: Who are you?*
>
> *S: A student, erm,...I have never asked myself this... do you mean.. How is my personality like?... Let's say that I'm an open person*

who likes to know things... although at the same time, I'm not that open, like you'll see it for yourself... I like a lot to play the "loco"* and people usually build an image of myself based on that, which is not that true... People may get to know me as much as I want to let them know about myself... I'm fun, and that's it... but not everybody knows about my life... I feel a bit insecure and I like to consult myself quite often... I have very good friends and I love them dearly... I'm not very constant... I'm frequently worried about things... I consider myself a good friend, and I like to help others, but I recognise that I do not know myself enough...

Me: *When did you first notice that you were not exactly like your straight peers?*

S: *The values of masculinity do not work for me... I have always been very effeminate, always playing with girls, always singing, usually with my mother... My father has always shown a preference for my older brother whom he sees as the prototype of the ideal son... I have always considered myself to be not rejected but a bit separated and as a result of this I have turned myself towards my mother...*

I have a cousin who lives upstairs from us,... she's my age, and we have always played with dolls together... When I first went to school, I always felt closer to girls than to boys... I started getting a reputation as a sissy since I was very little and I bore this as much as I could,... until one day,... I fell in love with a girl... This was odd, for somehow I had made up my mind that the boys were for me, although I was not completely clear about this because I was very little... Sometime later, when I was fourteen, I started dating a girl of fifteen and I fell totally in love with her, but somehow the relationship did not seem to work and we split up several times, but then we got together again and continued our relationship for three and a half years, ... but then it all ended badly... But while we were together, the fears I used to have around my feelings for boys vanished a little bit, but then you grow

up and you realise that those feelings are still there,... so I decided to tell her about my feelings for boys and this led to our splitting up later...

Before starting this relationship, I had always been very controlled by my parents so I did not used to go out... I always stayed at home with my cousin... the thing is once I broke with my girlfriend, I started meeting gay people little by little...

I met Miguel at school and we started going out to gay venues as friends... I'm very effeminate, I like to play the sissy a lot, especially in gay venues, where you can be yourself without worrying about being bullied...The truth is I have not been in a relationship with a man yet... It's not long ago that I started going out to gay venues with Miguel and his boyfriend Xavi... So once I hit the dance floor of a gay venue I would start playing the "loco" but no one would come to me, and that has not been a problem for me.. yet...

In a matter of a few years I have changed my life drastically from a more or less conventional one, with everything apparently in its place, to my present life where I do not see clearly how I am going to end up... I would really like to be an independent person, and to be able to live on my own, not with my parents... My parents are not that young, and they come from a very traditional, small, rural village... They have started wondering what has happened to me since I broke up with my ex girlfriend...

***Me**: Do your parents know about your feelings for men?*

***S**: I think my parents and all my family felt a bit scared when they noticed that their son was not normal, they sensed that I was not like my older brother... They have also noticed that not only did I not like sports but also that I could start dancing "sardanas"(a local folk dance) without any warning... I have always sensed that my father was more inclined towards my older brother, and I'm not sure if I have felt a bit jealous of him...*

I guess my parents may have thought, phew, our kid is safe at last! when they knew that I had a girlfriend,.. but I'm sure that they

have always had their suspicions... But, at the same time, they know nothing about my life... They only know that I have been recently going out a lot with Miguel and Xavi, although they do not know that they are a gay couple... And that's all,... I simply do not speak with them about my life...

Me: Why?

S: Because I do not want to... Because I want to live my life apart and I would not want my parents to interfere with it... Besides, I do not have the balls to tell my father that I usually go out to gay pubs... My parents are very traditional, and I know that if I told them they would never accept me... Besides, the rest of my family is also very traditional... I have a cousin who can be really nasty towards gay people and I won't give him a chance to bully me...

When my parent knew about my breaking up with my ex girlfriend they asked me why and I told them that that was none of their business... I'm sure that if they had found out about my gayness they would have felt totally embarrassed and they would have decided to keep it secret...

Me: Have they ever told you that they are worried about you in this sense?

S: I know they may ask themselves different questions about myself but they have not asked me anything in particular... It is not that they do not care about me... My mother knows me and when she senses something she always asks, is there something wrong?... and I always reply, no, everything is fine... With my mother I feel more confident but I have never and very probably will never speak with her about my interest in men...

It is quite clear to me that all my family have wondered if I'm gay, because it's inevitable, I'm too effeminate and obvious to pass as straight...

When I put myself in my parent's place I reckon that maybe they think that I might just be very sensitive... but straight, straight to death... I know that there are even some very effeminate hairdressers who have their wife and kids...

Like Paco who, besides being aware of his own attraction for boys at an early age, ended up engaging first in a failed relationship with a girl before assuming his emotional and sexual interest in men, Sebastian also seemed to have experienced his ex girlfriend's emotional and sexual dissonance as a way to re-sensitise his initial desire for men.

However, unlike Paco, who claimed to have successfully passed as straight before coming out to his family and friends, Sebastian, somehow inadvertently developed an effeminate behaviour which precluded him from passing as straight, while at the same time dissociating his homosexual feelings from his sexual identity which has had the unintended and ironic effect of signifying and highlighting his homosexual desire.

This complex succession of events has also been coloured by the added difficulty of trying to present a heterosexual persona in front of his parents and the rest of his family. Like some other boys when they first notice their attraction for boys, Sebastian had to learn not only to hide his feelings and partition them from his family and friends, but also to deal with his father's ambivalent detachment, his "friends" continually bullying him and still struggling to find some form of emotional-moral coherence to keep him emotionally functional so that he could engage in the no less tough process of growing up like a "normal" heterosexual norm, according to which he will have to "prove" constantly that he is man enough, probably for the rest of his life, in order to gain some form of respect and credibility .

While he clearly recalls having kept to himself his conflicting emotions and situations related to his effeminate behaviour in a homophobic environment as best as he could, nonetheless he has always had a suspicion that his parents may reckon that he is gay without telling him...

Thus, Sebastian and his parents have opted to follow some of the rules of polite Catalonian behaviour, whereby even if his parents have had a deep suspicion that Sebastian is not precisely straight, both parts will pretend that that is not the case. This type of mutual pretence is similar to what Ponse (1976) has called "counterfeit secrecy".

This also reminded me of family, my Mexican polite society, and myself, for we also seem to opt for self-silencing when it comes to sexuality in a familiar day to day interaction. For us, this turning a blind eye is also associated with the idea that sexuality is a very personal issue that demands to be dealt with appropriate discretion, where respect for the person's privacy is seen as a sign of respect and tolerance. Although this silence around sexuality also highlights the tension, lack of understanding and the hypocrisy around it, for although people may be more relaxed about homosexuality in informal situations, the only proper stance to take in Mexican "polite" society is to assume that no one present is homosexual, and that all nice people are heterosexual. This is an attitude that Ponse has named "the heterosexual assumption".

Basically, in public interaction there is a social collusion in which Mexican entendidos engage in various strategies to conceal their orientation and in which everyone is expected to ignore any homosexual clues.... so at this point I asked Sebastian,

Me: Do you think that your parents may have not yet asked you about their concern for your effeminate behaviour because they reckon

it does not interfere with your interest in women or because they may find it difficult to understand and accept that you may be gay?

S: I am quite sure that they have their strong suspicions but I also reckon that if they knew it for sure, they would definitely prefer to live in denial about my gayness... But this is fine for me too,... ok I know this all sounds too cowardly, sad and pathetic but I would definitely be more tranquil if they never get to know,... I do prefer to live in deceit...

At this point I felt Sebastian had reached a moment when he was no longer aware of his own silencing and denial in a conscious way, and that this could reinforce his sense of unease and uncertainty about himself and his future for he seemed to have become increasingly reluctant to say not only what he feels and thinks but even not thinking what he feels, all of which could lead to a gradual dismissal of his own relational experience.

In this sense **Miguel's** experiences may illustrate further this complex processes.

Miguel: Searching for an Online Brother

Miguel, 22, student in the area of the sciences. He is the only son of a mother-son family. Recently, he has moved to a flat owned by his re-married mother in order to start living on his own.

Me: Who are you?

M: I am a sensitive guy, and I don't know what else to say... I would not know how to define myself...Sometimes you define yourself in a certain way and then you realise that you are exactly the opposite of that... So I rather prefer to go on searching without defining a priori who I am... I see myself as a very unfinished person, who is searching in a rather passive way and without a clear idea of what I am looking

for... I cannot even name something with which I can clearly identify with... Maybe I am a bit afraid of getting involved with things and people ... In fact, I have never had the feeling of having got a clear benefit out of being involved with someone or anything... I guess this is connected to my childhood and my family for I have always had the sensation of not being able to get involved with things because they seemed so temporal...In the end I usually end up feeling alone with my hopes and fantasies ... It is as if I had put a barrier between me and the rest of the world, but at the same time I have been changing a lot, and I feel I'm becoming more tolerant and sensitive because I am not trying now to get answers from other people but instead I am trying to look upon myself without attempting to be either this or that way but rather to learn to accept myself...

Me: *Are these changes connected in some way to your sense of being different?*

M: *Actually, I used to like girls when I was a boy, but suddenly, one day when I was nearly fifteen I was queuing to see a film and there it was this super cute boy also queuing next to me ... and I simply could not take my eyes off him... I got totally excited about him and started fantasising about having wild sex with him right there... Later that day, when I was back at home I just kept masturbating about that boy all that week... So now I do not know if before seeing this cute boy for the first time I had had desire for other boys or if I simply did not want to assume that... The only thing I can remember in connection with that first noticing of my attraction for boys was a dream I had two weeks before seeing that boy at the cinema... In my dream... I am with a man, he is naked on all fours and asking me to penetrate him...I cannot see the face of the man, the only thing I can see is his ass, his legs and his back, and I was standing behind him, as if I was going to penetrate him, but it does not feel nice, I don't know if that's because he is a man, or because you know you are going to do it, but you are not sure if you will like it,.. I do not remember what I thought at the moment of that*

dream.. The only thing I remember is that when I saw the cute boy for the first time at some point I remembered this dream and I thought it was significant for it was related to my attraction for that boy. After that I decided to centre my attention on girls and I did for a short time, and the feeling was nice,.. But then I just started thinking again on the boys and I simply could not help thinking about them anymore,... and so my interest in girls just vanished...

After that week I spotted another cute boy but I did not speak to him and I was worried and I told myself "Miguel, you are supposed to think only about girls... otherwise you are going to end up being gay"...But that was rather useless for I just could not stop looking at boys, and eventually I came to realise that I was gay...At that time, I did not have any contact with gay people...

Once, I discovered by chance a kind of gay chat line while I was surfing online... When I looked at it closer, I realised it was a chat line for gay adult males... I also noticed that people usually used a false identity... I was only fifteen, so I decided that I was going to tell them that I was eighteen because I feared I could get in trouble if I revealed my real age... In the beginning, I only used this chat line to masturbate myself... but little by little, as I gained some confidence and skill, I started contacting and dating guys...the first guy I met, happened to live near my house. He was six years older than me, and we had sex during the first week of our meeting... This was not that good, but at least I gained some experience...

I kept using the chat line for months, and for some unexplained reason we had not received the phone bill during some months, but eventually the bill came and it was incredibly huge! And my mother wanted to know what the hell I had been doing all those months on my pc, but I simply was not prepared to tell her that I was gay, so I just told her that I had just been looking up to lots of web pages, she did not seem that convinced with that reply, but she did not push me either to tell her the truth. Eventually I had to get a job to help my mom to pay

for the phone bill...I had been planning to tell my mom about my interest in boys by the time I reached eighteen...

But my mom did surprised me some years later by telling me that some of her gay male friends had seen me once with another boy in a gay pub! When I heard this I thought, shit! Those bastards! Why didn't they come to me and say hello in the first place! So I ended up telling mom that in fact I was gay, I was 17 then... She did not tell me she believed there was something wrong with being gay, she just asked to be careful, for she knew from her gay friends that the gay scene could be dangerous, she also asked me not to tell this to my stepfather, She has not asked me about my gay life, we do not have that kind of communication... Then I discovered that she had lied to me when she told me that her friends had seen me. What really happened is that she looked in my trousers' pockets and found a love letter a guy had sent me some days before...

Me: Did you have difficulties at school because of your interest in boys?

M: Not really. You see, I've grown up a bit on my own. I've lived with my mom most of the time, and since I do not have a father and she had to work full time to afford my education we kind of got distanced...During all my childhood I did not have that many friends, but I did not have enough time to spend with them,. For once I would leave school I would go back to a friend of my mom's place. This woman had two kids and I would play with them, so eventually they became like my second family...Later at night, my mom would come to pick me up and take me home with her... by that time I would usually be asleep, so we would not talk that much, and this routine went on and on for years...So I grew up a bit on my own...I guess during those years I was in some way trying to have brothers, It's ironic that those of us at school who were single children ended up getting together...So the fact that I did not have brothers made me want even more to have a family...The thing is I have not had much of a family life, for by the time I reached fifteen,

my stepfather moved in with us.. That's when I saw it more clearly that I really did not have a family and that I needed to look outside to find something for me...Then, I also realised that since my scarce straight friends from school reacted with prejudice when they learned that I was gay, I just decided that I have had enough, and that it was time for me to get a life on my own...

While I was listening to Miguel's memories of his growing up different, I started thinking on my own experience, for, like Miguel, when I was a kid I was so absorbed and overwhelmed by the tension that the lack of communication between my parents had created for all of us, that in the end, I simply would not pay any attention to my own growing up and my sense of difference. So I felt I could connect emotionally with Miguel's feelings of isolation and uneasiness. Then I also felt touched by the vivid emotions Miguel felt when he first felt a strong attraction for a boy... In my case, when I was fourteen I would fantasise a lot of moving to New York to be able to live more freely as gay...

Miguel's experiences of his growing up in relation to his sense of difference seemed to me remarkable, for they seem to point basically to a strong feeling of isolation and an urgent need to finding "brothers" to play with. So in trying to understand if there was a clear sense of moral conflict developing between his need to find brothers, a family and his later sensual interest in boys, I felt that a more complex, rich, muted and undifferentiated sense of self and worth was predominant and where the need to relate and connect to others found an outlet in his long hours of internet "surfing" that eventually led him to meet his first gay contacts... At this point I also felt I could empathise with Miguel's isolation and his contrasting ability to find ways to meet gay peers at an early age, and without feeling the

parental pressure to conform to a straight pattern (as in the case of Pico and Sebastian) where one can clearly see the family's influence upon the moral development towards his sense of self and difference.

In this sense, this lack of continual parental pressure to conform to a heterosexual norm, in part because there was no father figure, and in part because Miguel did not spend that much time with his mother during his childhood, could be seen in some way as a relative advantage for Miguel, since he did not have to contend all the time, as in other traditional families, with the pressures and expectations to perform a heterosexual persona, which in some sense left him with some space on his own to find ways of exploring his feelings for boys.

Miguel's moral language seems rather to revolve around voicing issues of care, belonging and feeling loved by others, to the point that when he clearly acknowledged his attraction for boys and decided to meet them, his main concern was not so much the usual feeling of doing a wrong thing but rather the urgent need to gain the gay men's affection either through sex and/or affection.

So after having been isolated and uninterested in himself, and coping with homophobia as best as he could, Miguel's discovery of his interest in gay boys seemed rather as a very stimulating, vital experience that helped him find ways of learning to live and feel love in relationships...

Although Miguel's identification with the male figure has been mainly mediated through his mother's perspective, with a functional result, sometimes the very presence of a father in a given family may not necessarily guarantee this identification but may in fact be a precarious, troubling one.

The experiences of **Xavier** allowed me to reflect further on this and its consequences for the coping with his difference...

Xavier: Becoming a Real Man

Xavier, 22, a student living with his parents and at present in a gay relationship, sees himself as still trying to become a man... He reflects on who he is while he senses his difference as becoming gay:

X: *"Right now I am gay, but I must also say that I am not quite clear what does it mean to be gay for me, apart from other aspects of my personality... I guess for me it is much more important to feel closer to a guy and to be able to share affection together... The other stuff, I mean the sex thing I see it as pretty much like a vice... A vice that I happen to enjoy a lot, I must admit, but I think right now I am more interested in getting closer to a guy emotionally, and to be able to identify with men through their weakest side, although that has posed a number of doubts for me, because I do not know if I really love men, or if it's simply that I would like to come closer to them, so that I can feel more manly...*

I reckon that at the end of the day, when you are in a relationship with a man, you always develop some form of dependency on that person, and that's a bit tricky, for I guess what attracts me in a man is that he is independent, while at the same time being able to show weakness and sensitivity and being able of being alone on their own...

Since I was a kid, I have always been surrounded by women, my sisters and my mother, and that made me cultivate my most feminine side, and that also led me to be very dependent on the persons around me, and this dependence meant later, that whenever I met a new boy, I would just go head over heels for them, while they only wanted to have sex with me.. But recently, I have tried to become more comprehensive, and I have been able to acknowledge that in any relationship, there are always feelings involved... so now I am in the process of telling myself and others "ok, I'm here, this is me, and you are there, and that's who

you are" and I reckon, in the end I will be able to feel more identified with men and also feeling myself more manly...

At home, while being most of the time surrounded by women, I did not learn how to defend myself and feel confident... My dad did not show me how to do this... As a result of this, I have had to invent all sorts of tricks in order to avoid a direct physical confrontation with other guys from school and from work...

My mom has taught me how to be rational, but my dad did not show me how to be a man... My parents are about to divorce...For years my mom has managed to put us against my dad, and nowadays my dad is all alone, rejected by all of us... I don't like to see my weaknesses reflected in my own dad's weaknesses with men and women... I feel shame and pity for my dad...

Being surrounded by woman, I have learned to use some feminine "weapons", like behaving affectionate while at the same time being manipulative and nasty through affection, this strategy sometimes works because there are still a lot of nasty people out there, you know?

Listening to Xavier, it seems quite clear that he not only has sensed himself as different, with a difficult and conflicting clash of values between the so called feminine and masculine principles and what they imply for his manhood as gay when he has experienced a familial dynamics where his father has been disqualified and rejected by his mother. Thus, he seems quite sensible to balance the advantages and disadvantages that his female identification has had for his sense of self and worth.

For Xavier, then, the notions of dependence/independence, weakness and sensitivity seem to be at odds with a male world of competition and individualistic approach to relationships... so unlike some gay men who sense their difference from a position of a closer familiarity with the male heterosexual norm which stands in

contradiction with their incipient sensitive/"feminine" side, Xavier has grown up in a familial dynamics whereby the paternal figure had not only been contested but also diminished and rejected, leaving him in a position of vulnerability that hardly helps him to reconnect with himself in a less conflicting and more affirming stance...

As a result of this it would seem as if Xavier feels ambivalent about how to balance both the female and male principles and now is looking for another, more creative way of articulating both in order to develop a sense of self that allows him to accept and love himself and others.

In a way, could it be that Xavier's situation could also be a reflection of deeper social changes in the structure of traditional familial relationships and values in contemporary Spanish society, where slowly but clearly, a growing number of women are beginning to contest the male dominant position?

Traditionally, sexism in the education of Spanish childhood divides the world into two separate types of persons: women and men, with different and specific functions and characteristics. Usually, in Spanish society there is no better praise than to refer to someone as a "public man", and, consequently, there can be no worst insult for woman to refer to her as a "public one".

The behaviour that in Xavier's context has been considered like properly masculine seems to be constructed through a series of defensive manoeuvres, e.g., fear of women, fear of any sign of "femininity", including those which may be hidden under the form of tenderness, passivity, the care for others, and, of course, the fear of being desired by another man. However, in patriarchal societies, like Spain, which has the dubious honour of having given the world the embodied term 'macho', the seemingly "normal" contempt for women

also highlights the power of the mother as a fearsome and terrifying presence, that can also symbolise death itself, or "regression" and even a fearsome sensation of being suctioned through an eager womb.

These popular beliefs may foster the notion of a natural exclusive relationship between the mother and the son, for it is assumed that the mother is "naturally" predisposed to nurture, thereby legitimating the exclusion of the father by assuming that there is a single category of beings, that is, men, and especially fathers, that are not capable of experiencing and providing love and care for their sons.

Among some orthodox psychoanalysts there may still prevail the idea that the father cannot and ought not to substitute the mother, not even with regard to the care and feeding of their offspring, for the father must remain as the receptor of the hate of the child, albeit embodying the "reality principle", while the mother is responsible for embodying the "pleasure principle"... I will discuss further some of the implications of these assumptions for the emotional development of gay men and its relevance in the structure of therapy at the end of this chapter.

The concerns of Xavier, regarding his lack of masculinity, may seem to be in accordance to an ideology of activity-power whereby homosexuality may be considered a means to reaffirm the potency of a man, while, from an ideology of passivity, the homosexual man could be identified with decadence.

In this respect, the experiences of **Salvador,** also helped me understand further the ways in which these notions are directly linked with some fears, including homophobia, with its secret fear of homoerotic desire which also reinforces their fragile heterosexuality

and how it functions as an obstacle for friendship and affectionate communication between men.

Salvador: Fighting for the Right Cause

Salvador, 28, a graduate student, lives on his own in Barcelona. He grew up in a small village outside Barcelona with his father, his sister and his brother... He reflects on his growing up in a small village and its effect on his evolution as a gay man.

S: I think that having lived half of my life in a small village has affected my personality...

I am an open, sensitive, Catalan gay man... My mom died while I was a child... When I look back at my past I realise that my closest friend have been women, not men... When I was a boy, I used to get along both with girls and boys, although boys were consistently bullying me... but since I managed to get along quite well with girls, I just ended up not caring too much if boys rejected me, although now I can see more clearly how their bullying accounted for my being different, because for me, being different has basically meant just that, different, not better or worse, simply different...

With my dad, the relationship was like cats and dogs... I could not understand his reactions, nor the reactions of my straight peers at school...maybe their rejection at some point had to do with the hormones... 'Cause, when you start getting aroused, it shows somehow... At twelve, I was called sissy for the first time in my life, and only then did I understand that the bullying had to do with my attraction for boys, although at that time, I would not associate my attraction for boys with an erotic interest.. I would not recognise myself as gay. When I moved to Barcelona, I was put into a school run by nuns. The kids

there did not like me and did not want to play football with me either. As a result of this I became more withdrawn but got closer to the girls as my friends... The girls at school provided me with their friendship and support so to that extent I did not see the need to gain the boys respect and friendship... I simply maintained my relationships with girls...

At home I lived with my Dad and my older brother and sister (they are both straight)... My Dad always gave us the freedom to do whatever we wanted, with the only condition that we had to maintain high marks at school... My Dad was very tough and quite homophobic too... He tried to be both a mother and a father for us, but his toughness always permeated everything... for instance, if we were watching the TV and suddenly there appeared anything regarding gay people, he would change to another channel straight away, and show his dislike of gay people...

Unlike with other boys, we did not have to ask for his permission to go out, and I did not have to give him explanations for what I did or whom did I go out with, so I got used to be open in this respect...but later, when I grew older and noticed my interest in boys more clearly, a part of me wanted to share this with my Dad, but somehow I could not... So in a sense I would not lie to my Dad about my friends, for he knew some of my friends and knew that I liked to go to parties with them, but he did not know that I also felt attracted to them...

I never thought that being gay was something wrong or anything, but somehow I began to doubt about this, for when I was twelve, I once accidentally found my Dad having sex with the dog of my sister, you see, after my Mom's death my dad did not meet other women, but when I saw him fucking the dog I was quite shocked, I could not believe my eyes, and somehow from that moment I could not help thinking that maybe my interest in boys was not normal, because maybe it was provoked by my Dad's sexual habits... I did not tell this to anybody, except my sister ... My Dad did not notice that time that I saw him, so he would just continue to have sex with the dog, and it was very difficult

for me to witness this without saying anything, and pretending that everything was fine...Eventually one day my sister found him and she was so shocked that she decided to leave home and moved to my uncle's house... My uncle and my aunt decided that the best solution was to get rid of the dog, and to remain in complete silence about it, for it was something that would certainly not be well received by people... At that age, we thought that maybe that was a good solution, but somehow I just felt confused and I needed to talk to someone and to realise that my desire for boys was not wrong or a direct consequence of my father's involvement with the dog...

Years later I felt totally in love with my first boyfriend, and he helped me understand that homosexuality was not abnormal and had nothing to do with my Dad's sexual practices... So, later I decided to come out and I did it first to my brother and my sister and they were comprehensive... Then my boyfriend and I thought of a plan to prepare my coming out to my Dad... We joined a gay association and asked them to help me how to come out to my Dad... At this association they told us that often parents do not know enough about gay issues and are usually ashamed of asking for information and guidance... so I also bought a guide book for parents of gay sons as part of my coming out to my Dad...When I finally told my Dad that I was gay and that my boyfriend was Daniel, whom he had met before as my friend, and with whom he got along quite well, he would just remained in complete silence, but then he told me that it would be good for me to see a psychologist and get some help, he also asked me not to tell this to anybody,... so in reply to this I told my Dad that perhaps the one who needed most the psychological assistance was himself and also that I would decide who to tell that I was gay, and then I gave him the guide book, and told him about the group of parents of gay youngsters at the association, but he rejected the book, implying that he knew all about it and he did not need my help... But somehow later, on the insistence of my sister, my Dad accepted joining the association of parents of gay people and from

that moment he changed, from being a homophobe to becoming very interested in gay rights... This changed our relationship a bit, although in the beginning, he learned that the first thing gay people need to do is to accept themselves, so my Dad became paternalistic and wanted to help me solve my problem by helping me to accept myself... At least now I feel pleased that my Dad got to know me better...

Salvador's experiences of growing up in a homophobic milieu, allowed us to understand further the importance of confrontation as a means to cope with difference... This happened when he looked at his difference, at a moment when his homosexual desire and his "male" values came into dramatic tension and he needed to acknowledge for himself who he was, which led him to foster his self affirmation by becoming visible for himself and then to his family and friends.

By coming out, Salvador not only confronted his peers and his father's homophobic attitudes, but also transformed his difference into a strength, out of which both he and his father eventually changed... His transformation involved the reworking of several elements, with a sense of direction, like reassuring himself with his boyfriend that his feelings for men were not pathological, and that he was not alone with his difference which helped him overcome his previous feelings of isolation, by supporting each other in a process involving resilience – i.e. the anger and the frustration when he had to reject and deny important aspects of himself in front of others, which then became re-valued, for he had to recast and re-own his silenced desire into a new awareness of his identity and the possibilities that this represents, i.e., the importance of being honest with himself and his father, by feeling real and truthful to his feelings and needs.

The articulation between his voice, his desire, his feelings and his values includes a recognition of sameness as well as difference

which require a certain flexibility in boundaries that may come out of an inner growing sense of security and worth about his identity.

Reflecting on Entendidos' Vocabulary of Difference

The traits on which my entendido-friends develop their sense of difference could be seen as both circumstantial and imposed, and also personal and chosen. The tension between the internalising (ascribing choice) and externalising (implicating circumstance) seems to be a key element in the dynamic of their conflictual identification processes. This is also a delicate issue in the psychoanalytic approach to homosexual emotional experience and identity formation, where issues of internalised responsibility emphasize the empowering effects of self-recognition.

To the stigma of being the bearer of rejected traits, is added the secondary stigma of being seen as someone who does not choose to make himself feel better. Within a framework of opportunity, not to strive and make use of that opportunity is indeed a cause for shame. Likewise, within a framework of emotional constraint and limited affective resources, the option for assuming one's desire and feelings is not assumed, but is rather the basis of limits that define individual possibility.

For entendidos, as a rejected group, the option of change may not be an internal psychological reality, but rather an external fact, often at odds with their desire and emotional needs. This form of classism, the imposition of the views and values of the dominant heterosexual group onto entendidos, then becomes the model for dealing with difference. It would seem as if all differences in their context, including innate or circumstantial, are seen to some extent

as chosen and therefore interchangeable. But to externalise all circumstance, on the other hand, and assuming a lack of choice, may render them even more powerless, unless their assumed deficits are seen as potential sources of strength.

This transformation of motive can be brought about by embracing and making a chronicle of one's difference. In this sense, the confessional aspect of their coming out stories speaks to their need to retrace their history, to revisit their feelings, desires, needs, moral values, and make visible, through anecdote and tale, the workings of their emotional culture while highlighting discontinuities which hopefully could produce creative tension in their society. Thus, the valuing of one's difference, as a member of a rejected minority can lead to valuing difference itself, which is perhaps the most important contribution entendidos can make for themselves and for their larger society.

However, at present, homosexuality in the context of my interviewees is obviously mirrored neither by their heterosexual parents nor by the larger society. The early development of entendidos cannot easily be ascertained within current conceptualisations of homosexuality. It would be necessary to posit that a potential toward the development of adult homosexuality derives from aspects of the self, which are either supported or inhibited by their parents and their environment.

Usually, as we have seen in relation to their familial dynamics, these potentials would not be supported, for it is assumed that doing so would be traumatic to the developing self. For instance, it is ironic yet very revealing of their familiar dynamics how among those who have managed to came out to their families: Paco, Miguel, Xavier, Salvador and Manuel, they all expressed their disappointment and

frustration with their parents' lack of genuine interest in knowing about their lives as gay men.

Another difficulty in exploring the early homosexual desire and emotional development of entendidos results form the fact that as children, they are not thought of as being sexual, therefore, same-sex attachments among pre-pubertal children are tolerated and generally are not appreciated for their role in early development towards adult homosexuality. There is no true homosexual identity in childhood just as there is no heterosexual identity, but there are emotional and behavioural precursors of adult homosexual or heterosexual identity.

However, since an eventual adult homosexual identity is not assumed in the child in the way that heterosexuality is, the behavioural precursors of entendidos homosexuality are not seen as such, and remain invisible to others and to the individual himself.

This is why coming out, as part of the development of an adult homosexual identity, often involves a rediscovering and a re-owning of early homosexual behaviour which had remained hidden.

The result of these assumptions, which are still invested with the weight of majority opinion and moral judgement, is that homosexuality is largely seen either as a late, environmentally influenced event, or as a deviation from normative development rather than as a central aspect of the early development of identity.

The denial of sexuality in children and the denial of homosexuality as well, make homosexuality virtually invisible in childhood. In this sense, the consequences for entendidos' emotional development are different. Therefore, entendidos may have a susceptibility to invalidation different from that of ethnic minorities, i.e. because of their pervasive invisibility.

In this sense, the next chapter deals in part with the long term effects and the consequences of self silencing their emotional needs since their childhood on the current romantic relationships among my interviewees. These will be discussed alongside other aspects of their relationships, including their vital resilience and determined efforts to accommodate, sustain and validate their desire and affectionate needs as best as they can.

V. Intimacy, Love and Sex in Romantic Relationships

In this chapter several aspects of entendidos' romantic relationships are explored: what do they want in close relationships, do they like long-term relationships with a single partner or, do they prefer sexual variety and non-exclusivity? How romantic or how cynical is their view of love? Do entendidos have specific values about their relationships or do they seek values that are also shared by their heterosexual peers? How important is sexual interaction as a means of sharing affection and love? How important are emotional intimacy and equality as a means of sharing affection and love? How important is sexual satisfaction as a way to maintain emotional intimacy?

At present, there is no available data on these aspects of entendidos' relationships experiences; nevertheless, within our conversations, it emerged that a fundamental issue in entendidos' close relationships is the balancing between intimacy and independence, as reflected in the value and meaning they give to the proper negotiation between dyadic attachment and personal autonomy in their relationships.

Consequently, an attempt is made here to present a different approach to understanding this dimension of entendidos' relationships, one which emphasises their experiences of attachment and autonomy while acknowledging their individual differences in how they conceive, articulate and express these values in relation to their ideas and expectations concerning male love, in order to further understand the variations and possibilities in their intimate relationships.

Initially, a discussion of some Frommian notions as well as other current sociological approaches to issues of intimacy and its transformations in contemporary relationships will highlight how although there is a diversity of assumed meanings, values and

functions for it, especially in its intersection with love and sex in heterosexual relationships and how these are then assumed to equally apply to gay male intimate experiences although some of them actually obscure and distort the differences and specificity of gay male intimacy. Then, a brief discussion of research on gay intimate relationships will also highlight its relative tendency to reproduce heterosexist values on relationships, i,e, autonomy and independence as more significant than attachment and commitment and how the balance among these two is also a common moral concern among my interviewees.

Finally, a reflection on the experience of unfulfilled love among my interviewees' current romantic relationships and how its connection with issues of difficult childhood experiences of difference poses them with unique challenges to reassess their values on relationships and to find ways of attaining confidence in their own emotional abilities to establish meaningful loving relationships.

The Study of Intimacy and the Intimate Relationships of Entendidos

Most of the available research data on the nature of emotional intimacy and the basic characteristics of intimate relationships has been derived from the disciplines of clinical and social psychology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis, and to some extent sociology.

The diversity of conceptual perspectives and methodological approaches utilised by researchers to study intimacy has been a mixed blessing. On the one hand, this diversity has provided expanded opportunities for increased knowledge about intimate relationships due to increased attention focused on a wider variety of facets of this multifaceted

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phenomena, which has increased the availability of varied sources and types of data; on the other hand, however, this conceptual and methodological diversity has been a major source of contradictions and confusion in the data.

Within interpersonal psychoanalysis research, there are some interesting concepts and ideas about of love, sex and intimate relationships, particularly the perspectives of Sullivan (1953); and Fromm (1956) that may help in understanding issues of intimacy and the experiences of love and sex among entendidos.

However, this literature still amply reveals that "intimacy" is used to refer to either an individual, psychological construct (e.g. Sullivan's need for intimacy) or, more usually, a descriptive quality of a close interpersonal relationship or interaction between people. Likewise, "intimate relationships" is also used to refer to "the relationship" between the people, which is characterised by "intimacy". Few specific definitions of intimacy are offered; usually intimate relationships are described in lieu of defining intimacy. Those definitions that are offered generally focus on different aspects of the concept.

A wide variety of individual experiences have been used to define intimacy, including behaviour, attitudes, emotions, needs and cognitions. Likewise, a wide variety of interpersonal experiences have been described as intimate, including various forms of love, liking, caring, attachment, infatuation, parenting and sexual interaction. Finally, a wide variety of close interpersonal relationships have been characterised as intimate, including kinship, parent-child relationships, romantic/lover relationships, and companionate or marital relationships.

On the other hand, another source of potential confusion in the data on intimate relationships arises in the interplay between intimacy, love and sex. The interface between intimacy and love

remains rather vague, largely due to lack of clarity in terms and definitions.

Like intimacy, love has been defined by a wide variety of individual psychological experiences and has been used to characterise a wide variety of close interpersonal relationships. Often, intimacy and love have been used interchangeably to refer to the same individual and/or interpersonal experience or relationship, for example, Sullivan's (1953) definition of intimacy is very similar to May's (1969), Maslow's (1959) and Fromm's (1956) conception of love.

Nevertheless, some of these literature also reveals that "love" is most often used to refer to a particularly meaningful individual and/or interpersonal psychological experience that occurs within the context of a close interpersonal relationship, which is assumed to be intimate. The term "love" is most frequently used when discussing "romantic love", which occurs in the context of the intimate relationship most frequently described as a "love relationship" – the lover, romantic relationship.

In this sense, Erich Fromm's work has reflected upon this issues by highlighting the importance and significance of love both as a way of communicating and as an ethics of living, for it attempts to articulate these theoretical and experiential dimensions in his overall view of man in society:

> Love expresses hundreds, thousands of different things. Now I am not saying at all that a feeling cannot be summed up in a word, but that each person's love for another person is a different love; that goes without saying. Yet the problem is that we have only *one* word for this entire area of feeling called "love," which extends from affection to the deepest active relationship that, on the other hand, is sometimes considered as a secondary product of a sexual relationship. Today, people have largely forgotten the illusion that sexuality as such has something to do with love, and – especially among men - it certainly has more to do with narcissism than with love. But there is no differentiation whatsoever within this concept for us today. At least there is quite an elementary differentiation in other

languages, namely the differentiation between maternal and erotic love. We do not differentiate; we always use one and the same word (Fromm, E.: [1978] "The Unthinkable," pp.20-22).

Love relationships are commonly assumed to be intimate, and lover relationships are generally assumed to be potentially the most intimate of all relationships, but it should also be noted that the specific nature of this individual and/or interpersonal experience that is "love" is uniquely and differentially defined by each participant and/or observer.

In the interplay between intimacy, love and sex, the confusion is also compounded by the observer's assumptions and values. These are often treated as moral or social givens, rather than as choices among equally valid, alternative perspectives. They are seen as unquestionable, and thus, often remain unarticulated, i.e. while the phenomenological meaning and implications of these assumptions are different for each observer, universality of meaning is often assumed and the observer's specific assumptions usually remain vague or unarticulated. Likewise, the observer's assumptions and values are often reflective of traditional cultural ideals and not of current social reality; they act as blinders for the observer, and thus help obscure the meaning of differences.

Fromm addressed many of these issues, by examining what happens to "love" in contemporary society, whereby affective life and reason have become split, resulting in both men and women, but more particularly men, talking about things they do not feel and being rather cerebrally related to the world and to other people, mainly manipulating thought rather than experiencing a creative fusion between thought and feeling. Thus, Fromm reckoned,

> Instead of being related, being in touch with love, with hate, with fear, with doubt, with all of the basic experiences of human relatedness, we are all rather detached. We live in a vacuum and fill

the vacuum with words, with abstract signs of values, with routine, which helps us out of the embarrassment (Fromm, [1991] The Pathology of Normalcy, pp. 73-74).

In this situation, Fromm added, there is one other thing we do: we are sentimental. He described this *sentimentality* as a form of feeling under the condition of complete detachment, i.e. whereby feelings do not refer, concretely, to something that is actually happening within ourselves and with others. That is, we merely become sentimental and so feelings overflow and reappear in other ways, i.e. like in our use of catch words, "honesty" "patriotism" and the like that are abstract concepts, which at the moment have no concrete meaning:

> They are stimulation words, which make you weep, which make you howl, which make you do anything and yet, it is a performance in which the feeling is not really related to something with which you are concerned, but which is an empty thing. (Fromm, [1991] The Pathology of Normalcy, pp.73-74).

Thus, Fromm reckoned, in a context of self alienation and unrelatedness, love can also be re-channelled by equating it with sex, a kind of commodity, that one can learn about in books about sexual techniques, to enhance "love" in marriage; but sometimes, love may also become a rather sexless un-erotic thing, in which two people get along well each other, and, if they happen to be a man and a woman, they may get married and call that love - while in practice this arrangement may, at best, be nice companionship, without much spark nor deep emotional and erotic involvement.

In his attempt to reassess the importance of love as a process of creative relatedness, commitment and communication within oneself and with others, whereby eroticism becomes the cultivation of feeling connected to corporeal and affective sensation expressed in a communicative environment, the art of giving and taking pleasure, disengaged from power aspirations in order to

revitalise its affective, passionate qualities, Fromm tried to reconnect reason with emotion by providing an ethical framework to his notion of love as a way to enhance the development of non-destructive emotions, and by describing four basic elements that are common to all forms of love: care, responsibility, respect and knowledge. More recently, Jeffrey Weeks, in *Invented Moralities* (1995) has reflected on the validity of Fromm's account on love as well as its basic principles and has re-read and re-contextualised them in order to address the recent changes in intimacy values and behaviours for both heterosexual and homosexual people:

Erich Fromm, in *The Art of Loving*, described these basic elements, which were common to all forms of love. Rereading it after many years, I am struck now by how much a product of its time and its dominant assumptions the book is. "Mature" heterosexual love is seen as the finest human achievement, while homosexual relations are denigrated, in the liberal language of the time, as a sad and unfortunate deviation. But, while challenging that, I am still impressed by the ways in which the elements he defined are central to any revaluation of loving relation in this era of uncertainty – precisely because they ask us to reflect on the possibilities of seeing certain common features across different forms of relationships - It is not the terms themselves which are problematic, but the limited meanings they have been given" (Weeks, 1995: p.177).

In the interface between intimacy, love and sex, the basic underlying pervasive value system is that romantic love and sex are assumed to be valid options only for opposite-sex couples. This value system is also pervasive within Spanish culture, derived from a Judaeo-Christian heritage, i.e. a couple-front, heterosexual imagery and ideology – the expectation and assumption that, in our society, people will interact as couples and present themselves as a dyadic "unit" to the world - together with a traditionalist perspective from which the couple is viewed, and most significantly, a heterosexual stance, with its rigid distinction between friends and lovers.

Likewise, in Spanish culture, single people, in this sense also including gay men, have been regarded as somewhat lower in status than the "coupled" individual – the laws and customs have been geared to the heterosexual couple - resulting in discrimination against single people and gay men.

In this sense, the traditional perspective from which the couple has been viewed is also akin to Rausch's (1977) notion of the societal orientation to intimate relationships. It refers to the pervasive cultural ideals and expectations against which actual intimate relationships are viewed and judged. This perspective is relative, as it changes over time, and is somewhat different among cultural subgroups. The basic outlines of the traditionalist view of intimate relationships revolved around two notions, i.e., that romantic love and sex were the exclusive domain of the heterosexual dyad, and/or the creation of a nuclear family through marriage and parenthood, which were viewed as moral imperatives for the individual.

The current societal orientation to intimate relationships however, is marked by uncertainty and some confusion. The values and ideals of the traditionalist perspective are being questioned and its relevance to current individual needs is being re-evaluated.

For example, Anthony Giddens (1991,1992) has suggested that a particular form of intimacy, which he calls the "pure relationship" - which basically is a dyadic view of relationships that involves an opening up to each other through "confluent love", which allows the enjoyment of each other's unique qualities and a shared view and interest in mutual trust and which gets reaffirmed through mutual disclosure - is increasingly sought in personal life. Giddens has also claimed that this form of relationship is reflective of the late twentieth century processes of social change, which involve a transformation of the nature of self identity and intimacy with radical consequences for the gender order:

A pure relationship is one in which external criteria have become dissolved: the relationship exists solely for whatever rewards that relationship can deliver. In the context of the pure relationship, trust can be mobilised only by a process of mutual disclosure (Giddens, 1991:6)

Additionally, Giddens also claims that the trend towards the pure relationship coexists with the emergence of a more responsive way of assuming and experiencing sexuality, which he calls "plastic sexuality":

Sexuality has then become, as Luhmann might put it, a "communicative code" rather than a phenomenon integrated with the wider exigencies of human existence. In sexual behaviour, a distinction has always been drawn between pleasure and procreation. When the new connections between sexuality and intimacy were formed, however, sexuality became much more completely separated from procreation than before. Sexuality became doubly constituted as a medium of self-realisation and as a prime means, as well as an expression of intimacy (Giddens, 1991:164)

In this sense, Giddens thinks that the changes that have led to this new plasticity in relation to sexuality are basically related, on the one hand with radical changes in female sexuality, whereby women have become more preoccupied with the body and exploring sexual pleasure in ways which are not dictated by men, and on the other hand by the "flourishing" of homosexuality. Likewise, Giddens considers that, underlying these changes - which have facilitated the emergence of the pure relationship and plastic sexuality - are deep rooted changes characteristic of the development of "high" modernity, i.e., globalisation, disembeddedness, enhanced sense of risk, dominance of experts and abstract systems and reflexivity; and that the pace of these changes is such that traditional values are rapidly being swept away in a fashion that has not been seen in the past. According to these views, these changes in turn have left us in a situation

whereby our lives are no longer set by pre-existing patterns and habits, and so we are continually forced to negotiate our lifestyle options in such a concise way that the choices we make are not just marginal ones but are in fact constitutive of what we are - that is to say, they constitute our reflexive selves.

Implicit in Giddens view is the idea that the way we are constructing ourselves nowadays is an ongoing, reflexive process, strongly mediated through narrative strategies, that have become the key site where we all, men and women, eventually "find" forms of self-exploration and moral adequacy. Thus, in theory at least, a successful pure relationship facilitates the achievement of psychological stability by allowing the development of our relationships as a democratic space where we can deploy our mutual trust and find security: which, in turn, relies on having previously achieved a stable, nurturing, successful childhood, that evolved fluidly when we managed to trust our caretakers.

Additionally, the knowledge that our relationships are now apparently clearly negotiated, in a voluntary open way, allows us to deal successfully with the potential tension inherent in the continual efforts we have to make in order to sustain our mutual trust and commitment, up to a point that it is good enough for both partners, "until further notice".

Thus, as Giddens has noted, pure relationships built on a sense of equal vulnerability and mutual care demand an inherently democratic approach in its dynamics, and, I think that, in the context of Spanish entendidos, these notions still remain more of a goal rather than a social reality for many; for the beliefs, values and ideals presented here as the traditionalist perspective still seem to be have in considerable part (within an underlying pervasive value system) derived from a Judaeo-Christian heritage, which is still operative on the Spanish cultural-ideal level, even

though nowadays it may not be completely reflective of current social Spanish reality, which is much more diverse.

On the other hand, the acceptance of the validity and values of choosing and/or creating alternative lifestyles to meet unique individual needs is, however, slow. As Lyn Jamieson (1999) - who has critically reviewed Giddens' account of intimacy - has noted:

> In claiming openness as a constructive process, Giddens interleaves his analysis of late modernity with a rather unpacked psychological theory. It is the ontological security of childhood that provides the self-resources for a subsequent creative process of self-disclosure. The starting premise is that a wide range of social circumstances in childhood, anything more caring than suffering violent, sexually abusive or highly neglectful parents, will create the necessary psychological conditions for "generalised trust" in others and ontological security. This leaves an under-explained biographical contrast between an easily acquired secure sense of self in childhood and an adult who only just escapes doubts about self authenticity by working hard on a narrative of the self and fragile personal relationships. Given the emphasis Giddens places on the fragility of personal life in a highly self-reflective late modernity, the exempting of the parent-child relationship from fragility involves resort to a psychology divorced from its own sociological analysis (Jamieson, 1999:481).

Thus, in trying to consider the relevance of Giddens' account on intimacy for the experiences of my interviewees, it would perhaps be more useful to look for signs of common concern as well as to expand the scope of personal interactions that gay men experience, including friendships - the least structured of intimate relationships - in order to appreciate how in my interviewees' relationships gender confusion, class end ethnic divisions still tend to be continually reinforced although there are also clear democratising values and behaviours within their relationships.

Furthermore, Giddens acknowledges that gay relationships clearly preceded the new heterosexual form of intimacy called "pure" relationships – i.e. how for years, this very form of relationship has been described as being the common denominator

among gay men relationships, in the sense that its particular nature has allowed them to negotiate and explore more easily at least their sexual needs. However, it also has to be noted that among Barcelona gay male relationships still clearly reproduce old heterosexist values and assumptions, that limit considerably their ability to explore and share their emotional needs.

In terms of entendidos' sexual relationships, for example, democratic values are not always necessarily assumed to judge the acts gay men share with each other; instead, some degree of coercion may still determine the degree and the meaning of pleasure and need they can satisfy. This highlights the need, in democratically-oriented relationships, for issues of care, responsibility, knowledge and authority to be based on commitments.

But then again, heterosexual marriage remains the key signifier of commitment, usually by some sort of "self-assumed obligation" (Pateman, 1988), which may not help gay men redefine the balance they need between sexual intimacy and friendship as part of their intimate relationships.

In lesbian and gay communities, for example, friendships have taken on many of the roles of families. As Peter Nardi, (1992) has observed,

> For gay men and lesbians, social approval of intimate relations has been typically absent or limited by legal, religious and cultural norms. For some, their families of origin (parents, siblings and other close relatives) may not acknowledge or validate gay people's friendships and relationships. In the context of these social constraints, and the need to sustain a sense of self, friendships takes on the role provided by heterosexual families (Nardi, 1992: 109-110).

In this sense, although sexual involvement and emotional support tend to be experienced as semi-compartmentalised emotional spaces among gay men, the significance of friends,

especially for gay people, have assumed an essential emotional support in intimate life, providing opportunities for expressions of intimacy and identity, as well as various kinds of social and material support, and may also provide a network of people with whom they can share celebrations and other cultural needs. Such developments offer the possibility of exploring new patterns of intimacy, which may be, but are not necessarily, sexualised. Commitments among gay men, therefore, may take many diverse forms and are also widespread, although this is seldom reflected in research reports. These issues will be further discussed in chapter seven.

Studies of Gay Male Intimate Relationships

As has been mentioned, the study of intimate relationships between gay men has been framed, to a considerable extent, within the more general context of the nature of intimacy and the characteristics of heterosexual marriage with all its complex, multifaceted, multi-determined nature which is marked by relativity, confusion and contradictions. However, very little has been published about the quality of intimacy between gay men.

Therefore, the focus has been on describing the characteristics of the dyadic "lover" relationship, as representative of the whole spectrum of intimate gay relationships.

Accordingly, a number of studies – dealing mostly with United States' gay experience - have documented how many gay men, at some point in their life, have had a relationship with another gay man that they considered to be a "lover" relationship (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Peplau, 1981; Saghir & Robins, 1973; Tripp, 1975; Weinberg & Williams, 1974) with percentages generally above forty per cent of the corresponding samples studied.

The importance to gay men of a lover relationship with another gay man has also been suggested in the literature. Weinberg & Williams (1974) have noted that for many homosexuals the ideal arrangement is to live with a homosexual partner, especially one who is loved and with whom one's life is shared, and how this type of relationship helps to solve a number of homosexuals' problems that ultimately increase their overall happiness.

Nevertheless, an immediate complication with these reports concerns the definition of "lover" or "affair". Often, these definitions have more to do with the investigators' assumptions and conceptions of what "lover" relationships are, than with the very experiences of the gay men involved in these intimate relationships.

However, some researchers have asked their respondents for their own individual definitions of "lover". For example, Phillips, (1978) found that 52.6% of his respondents described their relationships as "lover", while 47.4% described their relationships as an affair. Likewise, Spada (1979) has noted that these variations in the individual definitions of a lover may refer either to the frequency with which some gay men spend more or less time with one or other gay men, or simply to the fact that some gay men may have several lovers at any given time. Additionally, Jay & Young (1979) reported that they had received an incredible variety of responses when they asked their respondents about their lover relationships.

Among entendidos, the importance of sharing their emotional and sexual needs with another gay man is quite clear. However, coming out and becoming more visible within their mainstream society is not the only valid option available for them to assume their homosexual experiences and their relationships. The incorporating and assuming their homosexual experiences as

another important element within their manly lives allows them to maintain their outer personality and virility in daily life, while remaining more discreet regarding their sexual intimacy within their personal space.

The keeping their homosexual experiences in as a valued personal space may thus become a way of being and of living that does affect the ways in which they name, assume and relate to each other in their relationships. For instance, it is common to hear how they refer to their relationships in public, by using "neutral" terms such as "partner," and so leaving it up to the intuition of the person listening to guess the gender of the partners they are referring to. By contrast, when entendidos are among gay friends, or in a gay venue, then they may use terms as "boyfriend" or "husband" to refer to their partners.

This neutral stance when referring to their relationships in public is, in this sense, a means of coping with their predominantly heterosexual society which, through a series of strategies and devices, that may range from overt rejection and condemnation, as well as different forms of irony, offensive jokes, bullying, mocking, the use of scientific, religious, and/or ethical disqualifying terms to refer to homosexuality - that can be found practically in every space of social life - manages to isolate and exclude their presence, by using some or diverse combinations of these terms, in conjunction with a view of homosexuality as conveying merely sex, and, as such, assuming that homosexuality "belongs" to the sphere of the private. In this context, a kiss, a caress or the holding of hands may still be seen as socially unacceptable manly behaviour for some entendidos.

These findings highlight how each partner has his own phenomenological definition of "lover" relationships not only in general, but also in relation to their current or past "lover" relationships. This issue is also significant when attempting to

understand the difficulties that arise between "lovers" when they find that they may not be operating with the same definition of their relationship and also in the context of clients undergoing individual, group and/or especially couples therapy.

It is clear from the literature that there is a wide range of intimate relationships between gay men covered by the terms "lover" relationship and/or "affair". As with the previously mentioned data on intimacy, the data on intimate relationships between gay men is also compounded and confused by the observer's and the participant's assumptions, biases and values.

Perhaps the most significant bias evident in the work of observers of gay men's intimate relationships is the belief that sexual needs define homosexuality. Many observers have defined homosexuality as a sexual orientation, preference or variation. Sexual needs are regarded as the primary, indeed defining, motivation of homosexual contact. Important emotional and affectionate needs are seen as extensions of these sexual needs, and secondary to them. Often, these emotional and affectionate needs are considered relevant only in reference to ongoing, stable, committed couple relationships. This view of relationships between gay men as primarily sexual relationships is reflected in the literature. For example, Spada (1979) discusses emotional relationships as an aspect of gay male sexuality. Bell & Weinberg (1978) discuss affairs and coupled relationships in their chapter on sexual partnership, where they attempt to establish a typology of homosexual experience on the basis of "measures" of sexual experience.

Another common bias (as has been mentioned above) is the framing of the gay male relationship as a dyadic unit, and as representative of the traditional heterosexual couple-front orientation, instead of examining gay experience in terms of its own diversity of expression. In addition, most observers seem to

accept the traditional, rigid distinction between romantic/sexual relationships and friendships. Gay male friendships are then assumed to be non-romantic and generally non-sexual. Many observers seem to accept the socially encouraged focus on the romantic dyad to fulfil most intimate – although not all sexual – needs for the individual.

Other observers assume the relevance of the traditional perspective to intimate gay male relationships, but rather as an attempt to refute the old stereotype of gay men's inability to have satisfying intimate relationships with other gay men, by demonstrating that gay men too can have long term, stable, committed relationships. Thus, if their data indicates that gay male relationships are not "permanent", these researchers then start attempting to find reasons, within the homophobic society, or within the gay satellite culture, as to "why" gay male relationships are "unstable". These observers often focus on similarities and differences with heterosexual romantic relationships and marriages, rather than exploring the variety of gay male relationships that do exist.

It seems as if some researchers often look to see if gay male relationships measure up to heterosexual standards and ideals; and, if not, why not? This attitude is clear in Spada's (1979: 167) assertion that it is clear from his data that "gay relationships are just as loving and meaningful as their straight counterparts" and also in Bell & Weinberg's (1978:102) observations on sexual partnerships, when they state that "our data tend to belie the notion that homosexual affairs are apt to be inferior imitations of heterosexual's premarital or marital involvements". This concern with the relevance of the traditional perspective to gay male intimate relationships is also expressed in the foci of some empirical research reports, i.e. the issue of stability/permanence in the gay male relationship, (Saghir & Robins, 1973; Bell &

Weinberg, 1978; Tuller, 1978) or the issue of living arrangements – lovers that are also roommates - (Weinberg & Williams, 1974) or notions of sex-"role" behaviour – "role playing" - of the lover relationship, (Tripp, 1975) and also the issue of monogamy or sex outside of the lover relationship (Spada, 1979; Peplau, 1981, Silverstein, 1981).

Consequently, from the data just discussed, a rather conflicted and confused "model" of gay male relationships has slowly emerged since the Seventies. Therefore, the study of gay male relationships has retained the basic dyadic model of heterosexual romantic/sexual relationships, even though it is clear that, through time, there have been changes in the societal perspective that has traditionally been used to define the parameters of heterosexual romantic/sexual dyadic interaction. Nevertheless, there have also been other attempts at addressing the current needs of gay male intimate relationships that recognise the presence of serial relationships of varied duration, which may or may not include living together, as well as the acknowledgement of sexually open relationships usually characterised by their inter-changeability, equality and flexibility in role playing behaviour, with the division of labour more equitably shared between partners and seemingly based on ability and interest (Ramey, 1976; Kleinberg, 1980; Peplau, 1981; Plummer, 1981, 1992; Weeks, 1995; Phelan, 1997; Sinfield, 1998).

Thus, although these attempts address other diverse current gay male intimate needs, they also acknowledge that gay men have retained the basic couple-front orientation of the dominant heterosexual culture to define their romantic relationships, to the point that - even within the gay male community - it is also generally expected that gay men will interact intimately as couples, and that lovers will present themselves as a dyadic unit; and so, even when the lover relationship is highly desired, sought after and

valued as in heterosexual culture by gay men, single people are also seemingly not regarded as lower in status (as is usual in heterosexual experience). This seems particularly relevant for single individuals who are also members of friendship groups. These issues will be further discussed in chapter six on gay and straight friendships. However, in order to appreciate further the nature of entendidos' emotional experiences and their problems, I will cover some brief considerations on how local stereotypes about entendidos further support the assumption that gender roles shape the experience of entendidos' relationships.

Common Stereotypes of Entendidos

In Barcelona, a common name for entendidos is "maricon" = a queer, and "marica" = a sissy. These terms highlight how confusion about gender roles is greater in response to their homosexuality. Stereotypes often depict entendidos as individuals who are uncomfortable with their gender identity and who want to change their gender.

Cultural images of the effeminate maricon are common. In relationships, entendidos are thought to mimic heterosexual patterns, with one partner acting as the "wife" and the other part playing the "husband". But the experiences of relationships presented here shows that these stereotypes are inaccurate and misleading. Although these stereotypes may characterize a small minority of entendidos, they fail to fit the lifestyles of most entendidos (Aliaga, 1997; Llamas, 1999).

These stereotypes may in turn stem from other faulty assumptions of "human" sexuality, i.e. the idea that sexual attraction always occurs in the direction of one gender only being attracted to the "opposite" gender. This is further reinforced by the idea of gender identity, i.e. we are either male or female, and also

by the idea of gender "role" behaviour, i.e. one has to act in modes of traditionally masculine or feminine behaviour. So the popular idea is that if a person differs from the norm in any of these elements, then that person must differ in the others as well.

This assumption is wrong; for it assumes that entendidos are confused about their gender identity when in fact entendidos are not different from their heterosexual peers in their sureness in being males.

In terms of behaviour, most entendidos are not effeminate in dress or behaviour. Likewise in entendidos' relationships, role flexibility and turn-taking are the common patterns; therefore, if entendidos' partnerships are not based on a model of traditional heterosexual marriage, what pattern do they follow? It has been suggested that many entendido partnerships are increasingly becoming closer to a model of best friendship, with the added element of romantic attraction (Guasch, 1991). Second, if gender and traditional "sex roles" do not provide the basis for structuring homosexual relationships, what factors determine the balance of power or the division and articulation of activities in a couple? Harry (1978) has suggested that age may be a significant factor in the pattern of decision-making in gay male couples. On the other hand, why is it that only a minority of gay male couples engages in masculine-feminine role-playing?

Some studies have documented the diverse goals and desires that gay and lesbians bring to their primary relationships. Bell & Weinberg (1978), for example, indicated that most homosexuals do want to have a steady love relationship and find this preferable to having only casual liaisons.

Likewise, the significance of sexuality alongside other basic components of enduring relationships such as love, commitment and companionship, has begun to refute the myth that sex is the sole basis for gay and lesbian couples. Although in popular

thinking "infidelity" is often construed as a sign of serious problems in a relationship, the causes and consequences of sexual openness in homosexual couples may be more varied.

Peplau & Cochran, (1983) have also shown that lesbians and gay men look to their relationships primarily for affection and companionship. Beyond these areas of commonality, important individual differences have been found in the relationship values of gay men, particularly in the value placed on issues of intimacy, attachment, independence-separateness and personal autonomy (Silverstein, 1981, De Cecco, 1988).

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, practically all the entendidos who participated in this study emphasised how important it was for them to maintain a balance in their relationships between their need to share affection with their partners while, at the same time, being able to sustain a clear sense of mutual autonomy and independence, as will be illustrated in the abstracts from our conversations in this chapter.

Love and Commitment

A starting point for discussion in this sense is the question of how many entendidos are actually involved in steady relationships. In the present study, fifty percent of the participants were involved in such relationships; the other fifty percent had been involved at least once in a stable relationship. However, all of them emphasised that these relationships had been emotionally rewarding for them.

Similarly, the findings of Bell & Weinberg and those of Laner have also suggested that a high proportion of gay relationships are highly satisfying. In the present study, I found similar responses, although I also found that for entendidos, satisfaction does not automatically convey "true" love. This, in turn, affects the level of

commitment for it is also a sad truth that love *per se* is no certain guarantee that any relationship will endure.

Miguel's reflections (one of my participants) are quite eloquent in this sense:

I have never experienced security and stability in my relationships... At present, I have never experienced a really good loving, long lasting feeling in my relationships... In a way, I am learning to be prepared to face this fact as part of my relationships.

In gay relationships as in heterosexual ones, relationships begun hopefully and lovingly can and do fall apart. How long do gay relationships last? There is no easy answer to this question. It has been suggested that a person's age determines, to some extent, the length of time that it is possible or likely for a relationship to endure. Bell & Weinberg (1978), inquiring about the length of people's first homosexual relationships, found that on average, gay men were 23 years old when they had their first steady relationship; the majority stated that they had been in love with their first male partners, and their typical relationships lasted a median of one to three years. In the present study, the average length of steady relationships is around two years.

As for commitment, one of the factors that influence the permanence in a gay relationship is the strength of the positive attraction that makes a particular partner and relationship appealing. In this sense it seems as if gays do not differ from heterosexuals (Levinger, 1979). Thus, while the initial attraction wanes and people tend to fall out of love, the decrease in attraction can lead to the ending of a relationship.

Other factors affecting permanence in gay relationships can be the psychological and material barriers around sustaining and balancing emotional closeness, and the costs of sharing a common household and the structural support systems to solve them, that are available for heterosexuals but not for them. Although gay men

usually do not feel obliged to stay together if they do not want to, this common assumption also helps them avoid feeling hopelessly trapped in an unhappy relationship.

Sexual Behaviour in Gay Relationships

Research on sexuality in gay men's relationships presents a fairly similar picture. In general, gay men report a high level of satisfaction with sex in their relationships. Lewis, 1980, found that gay men have sex with their steady partners as often or more often than do heterosexual couples. Among the gay men studied by Jay & Young (1977), 11 percent reported having sex with their partners daily, 38 percent had sex three or four times per week, 40 percent once or twice a week, and 11 percent less than once a week. It has also been suggested that in long-term gay male relationships sexual activity and interest decline over time (Saghir & Robbins, 1973).

Regarding sexual exclusivity, gay couples do question whether it is better for their relationships to be sexually monogamous or sexually open. However, in actual practice, the relationships of gay men are less likely to be sexually exclusive than those of lesbians or heterosexual couples. Some studies have suggested that most gay men who are in a steady relationship also have sex with men other than their primary partner (Bell & Weinberg, 1978, Peplau, 1981). In these studies, all the men whose relationships had continued for several years reported having had sex outside their primary relationships. In this sense, some factors of gay sexual development and socialisation may be similar, to some extent, to those of straight men. For instance, in Barcelona, men, regardless of their sexual orientation, are taught to be more interested in sex and sexual variety than women. Thus, although many gay men recognise that emotional involvement is

always present and important in their sexual practices, their male developmental patterns often tend to separate love from sex; and this means that they can enjoy casual sex for its own sake. Schaffer (1977) found that gay men were more likely than lesbians to say that many of their sexual partners were people they had never met before and were partners with whom they had sex only once. Similarly, he found that gay men were less likely than lesbians to say they were in love with most of their sex partners.

Similarly, Hunt (1974) found that just as gay men are more likely than lesbians to have sexually open relationships, so too are heterosexual husbands more likely than wives to have extramarital affairs. Thus basic differences in men's and women's attitudes toward sex and love may be more important here than sexual orientation.

Additionally, for many gay men, their gay communities may also encourage sexual openness rather than exclusivity, especially in urban centres where there are more opportunities for casual sex. However, one basic point to consider here is that for many gay men, as for many heterosexual men, casual sexual affairs have been described as a "complement" to a steady relationship, not a substitute for it.

In growing up, men continue to receive greater social support for sexual experimentation, and therefore decisions about sexual exclusivity can have varied consequences for a love relationship. For some gay men, sexual exclusivity is a sign of love and commitment to their partners. For these gay men, sexual exploration with other partners may only occur if there are problems in their primary relationship. For others, however, secure and rewarding primary relationships are enhanced by the excitement and novelty of outside liaisons. Indeed, some gay men have been reported as viewing fidelity as excessively restrictive and unnecessary (Harry, 1978; Jay & Young, 1979).

Thus, the meanings of sexual openness and its implications for the continuation of a relationship can be quite diverse, as diverse as gay relationships themselves.

It appears then that, at some level, there may be some similarities between the relationships values of gay men and heterosexual men, for gay men may also bring to their love relationships some of the same expectations, values and interests of heterosexual men's relationships.

Experiencing Attachment and Autonomy in Entendidos' Intimate Relationship

In this section, a selection of transcripts from our conversations, dealing with their experiences of relationships, including the significance of the balancing between attachment and autonomy is presented, in order to illustrate further how they have experienced intimacy, love and sex in their relationships to provide an emotional space where they could emotionally connect and recover different repressed silent or semi-acknowledged aspects of their emotional voices and how these are shared with their partners.

Paco: Autonomy is First

Paco, 27: "I get carried away by life, but not by my emotions, I am a bit reserved in that department... I fear rejection... For instance, If I spot someone on the street that may appear appealing, I may not do anything, because I fear that maybe an encounter would not work. So the fact that I usually have no plans helps me control frustration, in that sense then, everything that may come will have a positive side, I do not have goals nor any preconceived ideas on how life or relationships should be... I feel more satisfied with me in this

way, I usually rationalise a bit, I assess things, and then I just take the best part of things...

But sometimes I also feel a bit of frustration, for not being able to explore more actively what would happen if I let myself get carried away emotionally...There are times when I doubt this, but usually I handle my life quite well... I am a very proud person, in my relationships I normally assume the role of a confessor... there is a theory that says that in relationships there are victims and tyrants, so I usually play the role of a confessor... I also realise how in my relationships, I have certain superiority with my partners...

Me: *How do you notice this superiority?*

P: *I have a feeling as if they needed me more than I need them... It is as if I was more important to them than they to me... this does not mean that I feel superior as a person, it is rather that I have more authority and more decision power, more power in my relationships and the power to decide the path of my relationships... But when you are with a partner, this becomes a bit more complex, because if you happen to feel in love with him, then you do not ask yourself so much about who has the power, you do not rationalise that much, and you let yourself get carried away... I think I have a greater capacity for euphoria and for emotional communication than I usually allow myself to experience... But this is not easy either, because I am also very attractive, and people notice this, and that boosts my ego, but it also gives me problems in my relationships, because I do not like to frustrate the others' expectations towards me, for I do no like to feel tied in my relationships...*

But I have also met guys with whom I have not cared too much about all this, and the only thing that mattered has been this strong need to be close to them, and the wish that the relationship last forever... in those circumstances, I want to know everything about him, and share everything with him, and to experience all the good and bad of our relationship...

But some other times I would not want this to happen in a compulsory way but rather to let things happen and let oneself get carried away... I like a lot the sensation of not knowing what is going

to happen... I like variety and change... But I like also to reserve myself a bit in my relationships, for eventually, something or someone better could always come, and knowing that gives me the freedom and the power to change everything at any moment, and to keep myself always at a certain distance...

But sometimes I would also like to be very in love with someone, and to share my life with that someone, because I would not like to be all alone... Sometimes, as relationships evolve, the communication may become routine, and at that point I feel that I want to change and not to make bonds... Sometimes I have felt, after being in the beginning of a relationship, that I just want to end it, for I would like to feel again something similar to what you have already lived with the person I am, but this time with a new person ...For instance, I have met this cute guy two weeks ago, and I love him to bits, but... I don't know, I also feel the need to change, I feel bored, I want to change, for I have started to feel that things were becoming routine...And I also felt again that I had the power in our relationship, and frankly, deep down inside of me I don't like this at all, but I simply can't avoid it and I tend to put myself in a position of control...

I also think that deep down inside of me, what I would really like, is that my partners would take the lead, and me being taken, for I don't like to end up doing only what I want in my relationships...

Me: So what would you do in a situation like this?

P: I would like to live... to accelerate a bit my little heart... for instance, this morning I have been at the beach, and I met this guy, and I felt things I don't usually feel, and I have let myself get carried away... this guy is quite ok, and I have felt very euphoric, and I felt the need to provoke emotions, and we have talked a lot, and I think he sounds interesting and maybe I would be interested in him... and I like him, but I am also afraid, he is younger, and is HIV positive, and I would not have problems with that, but I reckon he may experience this differently.... And I would not like to feel that because he is HIV positive, I would have to be obliged to love him...and I feel a bit insecure...

Me: So what would you like to tell him?

P: Well, we'll see, I would prefer not to think too much, not to speculate, and to let things happen, and let ourselves feel each other...

Me: How do you show your affection in your relationships?

P: I like caresses a lot, I like to nickname them nicely, to tickle them, to make them laugh, to have details with them, to be sweet, romantic, poetic, to paraphrase things they have just said, to guess what they may like and to give them a little surprise, and to find those little hooks that provoke a smile in them... I have the sensation that I am learning to let myself get carried away and not to worry too much about the future, and not to think too much... I like affection, but when things get deeper I get scared, because at some point you could get vicious, this may become habit... and this has happened to me before...In my relationships I have never been dumped, maybe because I avoid it, although I am not quite clear on this... I am afraid of suffering, and when I foresee danger I just escape, and sometimes I am just lucky...

On the other hand, many times I feel pretty much indifferent towards everything... and I feel that I can do without anything...but at the same time, I also want to be a better person and to be able to feel emotions and satisfaction...

I also like to end things, and to feel confident... I have also had relationships with guys older than me, and the experience has been as if there was a power battle, and I always win, and then I leave... I confront my opponent, win the battle and I leave... maybe there's something similar to this in my past with my Dad, but I don't know for sure...

But I would also like to give up unconditionally, and I guess I would also like to be challenged, although I like to maintain my independence and to respect my points of view... I don't like people who do what they don't want to do... I run away from dependency... I would feel exhausted if someone depended on me, and certainly I would not like to depend on anybody... if you think about it carefully, the wish to want to share everything with someone is unrealistic, because in practice it becomes impossible...

Sometimes I have also felt very constrained in a relationship with a guy, because I may feel ok with him, but not necessarily in love with him, like thinking that this is "the" relationship for me, and I cannot let myself get carried away, instead I start feeling worried, thinking that things could progress, and I would not like to get involved too much, and certainly I would not like to hurt the other's feelings, so I prefer not to have too much expectations... this all may sound all too cowardly, I know, but I don't like to lose, (he laughs)... but maybe that's when you lose, because you lose the more, the more you are afraid of losing,...

I have more or less a clear idea of how I would like things to work for me, but I just don't manage to put it into practice in an easy way... I think I would have to be more spontaneous, and I'm trying ... I mean to live more and to feel more, because those who feel, live and those who think they only exist, or something like that ... I am a coward, I know, but I am afraid and also a bit paranoid, but sometimes I also feel that I simply do not want to communicate with anybody... When I was a kid I used to get annoyed, and I did not want to reconsider either, this was very childish, but I think that as an adult you also have the right to be a bit childish sometimes...

Me*: Is there something that you would like to experience but you have not yet allowed yourself to do so?*

P*: I find it very difficult to get deeper in my relationships with people... even flirting has been difficult for me... of course if you have drank a bit of alcohol that may make it easier, but if I am at the beach and I spot someone who may seem interesting I find it difficult to come closer and say hello!... I think it is very good to be open with people, but in practice it is not that simple for me, I am afraid of people, I am very insecure, so in some respects I may seem very confident but in other areas I am super insecure... I don't like to show weakness in my relationships, I avoid it, but, at the same time, I prefer to relate to sensitive guys rather than tough guys, although in my relationships I usually behave as if I were insensitive and cold, but I behave like this to avoid being hurt by others... I guess people may see me as a coward, weak and distrustful, but I can't avoid*

being this way, even though I recognise I don't have real motives to be distrustful, because people has always treated me well, and I have not had problems with people... Maybe this is because I am too ambitious... you see, I usually have the feeling of taking full advantage of everything and of doing only that which pleases me... for instance, when I am with my partners I frequently cannot concentrate on what I am having with them because instead, all the time I am also thinking of what I may be losing if, that is, if I happened to be with someone else, like someone more interesting than the person I am with at the moment...

So I guess I would like to find someone just like me, who can feel the way I feel, with whom I can feel close, but at the same time being independent, keeping distances, avoiding dependency on others and being in control of the situation, and, at the same time having affection and care... but I simply cannot find this kind of equilibrium, but I reckon at the same time I depend on the affection of people, for I need to feel appreciated and loved by others... so until now, I think I have lived doing whatever I thought was good for me but I have not yet necessarily lived to be who I am...for the moment I feel more like enjoying the good side of life and to be very free, for I believe that bad things can always happen at any time, and you don't really need to look for them to come across your way..

Paco's experiences of his relationships helped us reflect on the implications of what seemed to me as a semi-unacknowledged emotional disconnection, in relation to his need to live *"more spontaneously"* and let himself *"get carried away by his emotions"* which also seems to correspond with his unease and frustration for not being able to feel closeness, intimacy and commitment in his relationships; and I wondered how he had ended up feeling that way, for, at some level, the reflections he makes about himself in his relationships seems to convey a fairly clear recognition of his preferences, needs and expectations, while, at the same time, he identifies issues of fear of being rejected, detachment as a way to

cope with dissatisfaction, power imbalance and concern for his lack of self confidence; yet, at another level, it was also quite revealing to see how his values around intimacy and independence seemed to get enmeshed with his need for affection and in this way, his sense of boundaries tends to follow in a fairly narcissistic, defensive, masculinist way.

I could also appreciate part of this kind of clash of aims and values when he stated that he had *"no preconceived ideas about how his relationships should be"*, for, *"he has no goals or expectations"* although at the same time he also clearly showed ambivalence and dissatisfaction when he realised how in his relationships his partners seem to need him more than he seems to need them; and he attributes this not only to his moral-psychological superiority but also to his physical attractiveness. Thus, this asymmetrical positioning in his relationships seems to foster his narcissistic sense of superiority, which in turn also gives him the power and control over the course of his relationships:

"I have a feeling as if they needed me more than I need them...
It is as if I was more important to them than they to me"

It was also remarkable for me to realise how issues of attachment and a sense of togetherness as well as a sense of permanence in his relationships is almost absent in his reflections, for he seems to place greater emphasis on not making bonds, by assuming a detached, cold attitude with his partners, which he rationalises as necessary; for it gives him a sense of *"freedom"* while keeping open the possibility of withdrawing himself from his partners at any time, since he has to be constantly alert to all those potentially better "opportunities" that may come across his way.

Likewise, his need to keep himself emotionally distant also gives him the feeling he is in control, which he seems to have reinforced, particularly with those partners older than him, as he

literally states that he has experienced these relationships as *"power battles"* which he has *"won"*. This framing of his relationships also highlights a kind of "gay macho" attitude, whereby a power-pleasure game of supermasculine dominance ensues between the partner who "needs very little" the affection and sexual gratification and the "weak" partner, who shows his "greater" need, either by placing greater emphasis in affection and intimacy and/or by acknowledging their pleasure in a sexual way.

In this context, the experience of love is necessarily an unequal relationship between unequals, for love between physiological equals, who both posses the instrument of "power" (a penis and a detached emotional attitude) and the instrument of "submission" (an anus and an explicit need for affection) becomes not only emotionally and sexually inarticulate but also leaves the "winner" with a reassuring feeling that he has reconfirmed his superiority:

> *I met this cute guy two weeks ago, and I love him to bits, but,…*
> *I don't know, I also feel the need to change, I feel bored, I want to*
> *change, for I have started to feel that things were becoming routine,*
> *and I also felt again that I had the power in our relationship, and*
> *frankly, deep down inside of me, I don't like this at all, but I simply*
> *can't avoid it and I tend to put myself in a position of control*

However, in Paco's experience, there also seems to be some awareness of the oppressive and limiting effect of this macho sexual caste system, founded on a stereotypical masculine and feminine roles, related to the possession or lack of power, when he states that he is aware of the hurt he can inflict on his partners; and so he tries to avoid being hurtful by not giving them *"false expectations"* and, at the same time, he admits that this way of rationalising his behaviour may seem *"all too cowardly"*, adding that in fact, he behaves this way in order to avoid being rejected, for he sees himself as shy, insecure and even afraid of people. So

to this extent, it seemed sad to me to reckon that although he admits he would like to get closer to himself and his partners, he still can't help experiencing this closeness as a loss of his power and superiority, although he is *"well aware that he will lose lots more, the more he is afraid of losing"*.

In some ways, Paco's experiences reminded me of a similar pattern of relationships among gay men in Mexico, especially when the age difference between the partners accentuate issues of power and sexual role stereotyping.

It has also been quite revealing for me to see how in Barcelona as well as in the rest of Spain and in Mexico, there is still a consistent derogation of male affection as conveying lack of control and power in relationships and then this need for male affection can be equated with unwanted feminine attitudes among entendidos. In this context of prejudice and cultural confusion some entendidos end up embracing traditional masculine values, which further inhibit their relational abilities for male affectionate intimacy. To the extent that this confusion is internalised, the individual's emotional and sexual responsiveness may be "confused" and his intimate relationships inhibited. This highlights the dramatic tension of those contradictions from without, that is, all the unpleasant qualities that one may acquire as a result of the pretension of maintaining a straight, domineering attitude in his love relationships: i.e. how Paco tends to assume his relationships as power battles that he has to win, all of which, in turn, reveal all those contradictions from within, for this pretence and resistance to open up emotionally lead to pain, difficulty, alienation and confusion while reinforcing the denial of one's affectionate needs, and undermine others' needs as weakness, unwanted dependency and inferiority.

But these contradictions can also take on different forms, especially when the immediacy of desire may lead to experience

love and sex in a less polarised way, by assuming a more "androgynous" emotional and behavioural stance to relate and negotiate emotional and sexual needs. In this sense Sergio's experiences become particularly relevant.

Sergio: Sharing Part-Time Love

Sergio, 24, "I've had several relationships, but they had not been very long... until I met Max, 36, from Germany, I was 21 when we met... By that time, I had just dumped an ex-someone I was dating, and so I needed to feel better... Max told me that he had a partner and that he wanted to have sex with me, and I accepted, but I told him that I was only interested in being his friend... but then I just felt in love with him... and this has been the longest relationship I've had, [one and a half years], and during that time we split up three times, but then continued seeing each other for three more years, mostly to have sex... During the time we had our relationship, Max kept on seeing his partner, and although I would ask him to stop seeing him, he just would not... Unfortunately, I have to admit that Max has been the most important relationship I've had so far, although I was just a lover for him... with Max I learned about love, and about sex with a man...

Me: What did you talk about when you were with Max?

S: A bit of everything...he was sometimes a bit too childish, sometimes sweet, and sometimes a bit tough and detached, but usually he was rather sweet with me, although he could also be very stupid sometimes... so, sometimes, when I could not cope with his reactions, I would try to dominate him and take the lead... I certainly dominated him not only sexually but also in other ways as well, like when we had our conversations, for I knew how to hurt him with words... but I would only do this in response to a previous hurtful behaviour that he had had with me... Sometimes when we spoke about our feelings, I would lie to him, by telling him that I loved him, when actually I hated him, but then I would also reproach him, by

telling him that he was in no condition of speaking about true feelings for me, for he still kept on seeing his partner, and this would make me feel quite bad... for he only wanted to have sex with me, and was not interested in knowing me as a person... so I would say that sometimes I felt affection for him, but other times maybe I was basically forcing myself to feel some love for him... but how could I love him and, at the same time, keep a blind eye on the fact that he was hurting me by being at the same time with his partner? ... So we just broke, but then, a year ago, Max ended up his relationship with his partner and he phoned me afterwards to tell this to me and also to let me know that he was free... then he invited me to have dinner and I accepted, for I was secretly planning to give him a little lesson, and once we met, I told him that I would be interested in having an open relationship, and so as usual, we ended up having sex again, and I gave myself totally and gave him so much pleasure, but actually I was the one having the most pleasure for I was savouring my revenge... so after we finished having sex, I told him that I did not want to see him again for he did not deserve me, and I was not going to be his sex-toy anymore...

Me: So how has this relationship affected you?

S: Nowadays, at a certain distance I can say that I still don't know what does it really feel to be loved by a gay man... you know, like when you wake up in the morning with your partner, and you can look at him in the eyes, and you can also argue with him, and you know that he loves you a lot, and that you can hurt him, but you also know that without him, you could not even breath, and that you could give your own life for him at any moment, and that your mutual love transcends sex, for I have had lots of sex, and yes it's good, but after so much fucking, you don't feel that much pleasure anymore, but, on the contrary, one single caress can make you feel so much love...but I still have not found that kind of love, who knows, maybe some day...but in the meantime, what should I do? Put an add saying "I'm seeking for someone who can understand me?"... That's not so simple, I wish it were. I feel that everyone feels always

a bit alone, but I think this is not bad per se...although I recognise I need a partner...

Sergio's experiences of his relationships helped us reflect further on the different significance that love and sex can have for the integration of emotional intimacy. On some level, it would seem as if he and Max could easily separate sexual intercourse from love and emotional intimacy, by appealing to autonomy values that reinforce the idea that they should maintain an independent life and an identity apart from their sexual experiences. However, this kind of arrangement seems to be somehow sustainable, provided they both experience sex as a form of casual recreation, whereby their respective level of attachment has to remain rather low while their autonomy has to remain highly valued... but this apparently ordinary "gay arrangement" may well be an over simplification for it does not seem to convey how sexual intercourse usually can mean, at the same time, a most meaningful way of giving and receiving love for most men, either straight or gay. So if it is true that sexual intimacy is the "only" masculine way of expressing love that is culturally recognised in Barcelonian society, then its effect in providing and sustaining a sense of emotional closeness and attachment should also be considered... As Sergio puts it:

Max told me that he had a partner, and that he wanted to have sex with me, and I accepted, but then I just felt in love with him...and this has been the longest relationship I've had and... unfortunately, I have to admit that up to now, Max has been the most important relationship in my life, even though I was just a lover for him... with Max I learned about love and about sex with a man"

So I kept wondering what this statement meant for him and then for us in our attempt to reflect further on how love and sex correlate in entendidos' relationships.

Again, Sergio seems to have already reflected on this aspect of his relationship with Max, when he added that at present *"he still did not know what does it feel to be loved by a gay man"*... At some point, it would seem as if Sergio took on a rather "androgynous" stance of negotiating his emotional needs, by focusing on being helpful to his partner and sharing activities and sex with him while at the same time becoming more emotionally expressive, vulnerable and openly dependent and even manipulative on his needs in a double effort to resist but also to learn to accept the fact that he only occupied one part in Max's affections while at the same time not being able to hide his hostility and dissatisfaction by pretending that he still was very much in love with Max:

Sometimes when we spoke about our feelings, I would lie to him, by telling him that I loved him, when actually I hated him, but then I would also reproach him, by telling him that he was in no condition to speak about true feelings for me, for he still kept on seeing his partner, and this would make me feel quite bad, for he only wanted to have sex with me, and was not interested in knowing me as a person... so I would say that sometimes I felt affection for him, but other times maybe I was basically forcing myself to feel some love for him,... but how could I love him and, at the same time, keep a blind eye on the fact that he was hurting me by being at the same time with his partner?

This may have intensified his differences with Max, for it may have over-emphasised a false sense of opposition between sex as simply recreational fun, separated from its loving aspect and legitimising an impersonal, exploitative relationship with Max by

subsuming his attachment as a subservient form of his autonomous self and in this way reinforcing an unequal relationship.

Thus, the difficulties in trying to find a balance between love, sex and intimacy may lead to a series of possibilities and explorations that could help reconsider what they actually mean, and how they can become more compatible to each others' needs and expectations. In this sense Miguel's experiences have also been very significant.

Miguel: Looking After my Flower Garden

Miguel, 22, "I have come to realise that I walk through life with an attitude of coldness, maybe this is something I learned from my mother...At school, people have also told me that I look cold, but that I am also a nice guy... There are many things that can affect me, like being unnoticeable to others and their indifference... I've always tried to please others and when I realised that others would not reply to me, I simply could not understand how others could react with indifference to my efforts to be kind to them, but now I think that you don't necessarily have to be liked by everyone, I have become more tolerant...

When I was younger, each time I met a new guy I almost fell automatically in love with them... I had my first affair with a gay guy when I was seventeen, he was more or less my age, and I thought he was not particularly special, but I was a bit desperate, I was introduced to this guy by another entendido, so once I met this guy I was trying to seduce him, and I took him to a place I liked, and next day we agreed to meet to go to the cinema, and then we went to the beach, and after the beach he told me, how about coming to my place, my parents won't be there, and so on our way to his place, and I took him by the hand to show him my interest (he laughs) and then he told me gee! What would my mother say if she saw this?

(meaning us holding hands), and I told him but you said your mother would not be there, and we laughed and once we got to his place, everything looked as if we had to end up having something, then he told me that he liked a lot that I had taken him by the hand and that when he felt my hand he could not avoid having a hard on, and so I thought, whoops! This sounds promising!... so after that we just ended up in bed for four hours and after that this guy tells me "I love you", and I thought, what! What are you saying? And I thought to myself well I cannot show less interest in him and so I replied to him "I love you too", but what happened then is that I really started feeling in love with him, and we kept on seeing each other the next week, and then he suddenly became coldish and distant and he would not touch me, and so I asked him, are you feeling uncomfortable because there's people around? And he said, no it's not that, it's just that I don't love you anymore! (He laughs) but then I felt totally awful during the following week ... and I never knew why he changed, for I never saw him again, so instead I kept wondering myself and thinking that maybe he got scared because I was going too fast , but I just never knew why...

So then I met another guy, 25, with whom I shared my disappointment with the guy I just never saw again, and so this guy listened to my story and then told me about a series of theories he had about love, like love is like a rash or a flu and what you have to do is to get rid of it, and I thought I did not agree with that theory, but I also think now, that after one week with someone you cannot really think that you really love him, and then this new guy told me that our feelings are like a garden, and so you have to look after your garden and not to open the door of your garden to everyone, because if you do, someone may just step on your flowers and destroy them, and so I thought right! I think I know now everything about love, for I have already had an affair, I have had sex, and I had also suffered a disappointment, and so I concluded I already knew everything there was to be known about love... and so I started going out with this guy, thinking that with my experience I would not make the same mistakes again, and certainly I would not give myself

to others so easily, but then I just fell in love again, and gave myself completely, and then I was disappointed again and I suffered again, but he told me that he was not feeling in love with me but that did not mean he did not care for me , and he also said that I was a bit too young and that maybe I needed some time for myself and to devote more time to my studies, and that our relationship had no viability as partners, and I think now that he was right...In some ways he behaved like a father with me...

So after I had had sex, a relationship and a disappointment at 17 in a way I became "me", for I realised I had what I had and that was enough, and I did not need to use a false identity anymore...

Sometime later, I met this other guy who lived nearby, and he showed interest in me, and asked if I wanted to go to bed with him, and we had sex, but I did not feel in love with him, and then we split up and I felt a bit confused, for at that time, he was my only connection to the gay world, but eventually I met another guy and we also had sex and went out but after some time I decided to put some distance between us, because he was older and had more experience and ours was not an equal relationship, and I did not quite understand in what ways he could be interested in me, and he was also a bit of a show off, and then we continued having sex for some time, although I did not like him physically, and for me, having sex with him was a way of showing him gratitude for the support he had given me...

I have also tried having sex with other guys while being in a relationship with my boyfriend, and that has allowed us to explore different things, but it has also brought some conflicts with it... for instance, some of my closest friends have ended up having sex with my boyfriend without both telling me, and this has affected the trust we had in each other... in the end they both had to admit in front of each other that they had both lied to me, and this left them feeling more embarrassed with themselves than I with them...

But then we all agreed that we all had to be honest to each other, and, after saying all that... we continued having sex with each other!... My boyfriend then told me that when he had sex with our

mutual close friend they decided not to tell me because they thought it would be difficult for both of us, considering that my close friend was involved...In fact, since my boyfriend and I started our relationship, we agreed that we would allow each other to have sex with other guys... so having sex with others while being in a relationship is one thing, but then again it is not that easy to talk about it with your partner... The fact of accepting other persons in our relationship has brought us difficulties that we still have not overcome...

At some point, I used to think that having a little affair apart from your relationship was not that bad, so long as it only meant fulfilling a temptation, but then again there can be no satiety for temptations, and then things start to look differently...

In fact, I was the first to have sex with other guys while being with my boyfriend ... but then I came to recognise that it was difficult, because I felt jealous when I saw him with other guys, and at that point I realised I was not prepared for this kind of relationship, for the presence in our relationships of these third persons destabilised our relationship and eventually we ended up splitting...

To some extent, I used to think that if my boyfriend saw another guy, that would not be so bad per se, so long as we had it clear that our relationship still was strong and we had a future together... in some way, I would rationalise the fact of my boyfriend being with others as something that could possibly help make changes that were important for him within himself, but then things got kind of messy, for even I ended up kind of arranging a date for him with another guy... (He laughs nervously)... I did not know exactly what I was doing, but I felt so desperate that I thought I needed to do something to improve our relationship... until eventually I came to realise that, actually, there was nothing left to be done with our relationship...

But in some way, at least I could satisfy many of my curiosities in how relationships can evolve, for we both tried a bit of this and

that, until I just got tired of looking around without a sense of direction...

However, during this whole process I learned lots of things as well, for I cried a lot, I felt jealous, an in some ways I almost felt loved by my partner...and that very feeling of mutual care, was, in the end, what kept our relationship afloat for some time, and that gave us the opportunity to get to know each other better, and I could understand in the end, how different our sensibilities were...

My partner is the type of guy that when he had a problem, he would try to solve it on his own, by withdrawing himself, and I tend to react in quite the opposite way, for when I have a problem, I try to share, usually with my friends, for after some time I learned that I could not share them with my partner, and this had a debilitating effect in our relationship, and that was not easy for me... although in some ways, to some extent, both of us would try to talk and to be patient with each other, within our own limits...

So infidelity has been present in all my significant relationships, and I've always thought that straight people were more conventional in this respect, but now I see it quite differently for I have also seen how unfaithful straight people also are, and now I try to be more cautious in this respect, for I reckon not everyone is prepared for this... Actually, I have never really believed in the idea of fidelity per se, I think it's rather got to do with the persons involved and how they feel about it and how they want to handle their situations...because jealousy can always come up ... I have felt jealous myself, and so I think I would like to find someone who could accept his own jealousy towards me and how I would have to be sensitive to this acceptance, although I'm not quite sure how sensitive I have been in this respect...

Me: *What does it mean - loving someone - for you?*

M: *I guess it basically means sharing, like to have a constant reminder of the significance of that person in your life, and to be able to count on him, and to think of him, and to share with him all what you think and feel... even if this only happens once a year, and even if that person is already dead...At a deeper level, it is also something*

very personal, e.g. like loving someone who is already dead... for instance, I love Tony, a friend who is many miles away from me now... and I also love my dead grandma, whenever I cook some dish she taught me,... and I also love the person I see every day, for I value his/her company and his/her friendship and I can also count on them...

But then again, this may not be that clear, because my mom, for instance, is very important to me and she means a lot to me, and I think of her all the time, although I do not share my homosexual life with her, and so this makes me think that maybe sharing in itself may not be the only thing that defines love, for love is also a feeling of wanting to share everything with your partner, and to feel something positive with that person, for when you love it is always a "we" and maybe loving and hating are part of that same feeling, for they are both very intense, strong feelings that you usually experience in relationships... but I don't know for sure, and this is getting a bit abstract, and you have to think about all this in real life...

For instance, I have never experienced security and stability in my relationships, and something I am convinced of now is that there is no such thing as stability in relationships, and in a way, I am learning to be prepared to face this fact, as part of my relationships and also to be able to accept that no love is going to last forever... my longest relationship has lasted two years, and that was not precisely love, it was rather a process of learning to know each other... At present, I have never experienced having had a really good, loving, long-lasting feeling for someone... So I would like to be prepared to feel this way and to get to feel some degree of security and stability... that nice feeling of knowing that you can always count on your partner... and yes I know that this idea of stability may sound a bit simplistic, for you can never have a fixed image of anyone, and then pretend that your partner won't change, we all change, so you cannot expect to be always the same yourself... but somehow, deep down inside of me, I would really like to experience some degree of stability... Sometimes I have also asked myself to what extent my

belief that there can be no stability in relationships is not helping me to experience that stability... On the other hand, I would like to believe that my wanting to be in a long-lasting relationships is merely a weakness, for it would only help me feel less lonely and avoiding being alone, but then again when I have felt alone, I just cannot feel complete, and I don't know if this is a need or just the wish to be in a relationship... I mean if a partner represents an unsatisfied wish, what happens when you don't have a partner? What need does that lack represent? ... It is as if I would not like to be alone... and I don't know if being on your own means aspiring to independence, or rather merely avoiding feeling so vulnerable...

Miguel's experiences helped us reflect further on how values around the balance between intimacy and independence affect the ways one can experience dyadic attachment and personal autonomy in close relationships. Whereas some gay men may consider it essential that a relationship be sexually monogamous, others may prefer sexually open relationships.

Miguel's experiences in this respect seem to me particularly illustrative, for they show how his values, feelings and expectations changed throughout time during his first relationship when his need to feel close and loved, combined with his inexperience, led him to confront his initial ideas about love, which basically centred on a sense of shared feeling; for he soon learned that opening up his heart and giving himself completely to his partners would not necessarily imply that his partner would reciprocate. His puzzlement and disappointment then led him to seek support and further understanding with an older gay man who, through sex and some advice showed him the importance of keeping the "door of his garden" semi-closed if he did wanted to avoid being disappointed again.

Although the emotional-sexual supportive experience with this older gay man helped him appreciate further the importance

of not opening up his heart indiscriminately, Miguel's emotional puzzlement seems to have affected significantly his affectionate responsivity with the rest of his partners, for he still seemed to be amazed, disappointed and distrustful, since he still did not quite comprehend how his partners were insensitive to him and did not reciprocate his attempts to come closer to them by opening up his feelings and his need to love them and be loved by them; but, instead, he had to face a whole range of responses, from withdrawal, rejection, misunderstanding, cheating, exploitation and indifference, to the point that he got to consider that maybe he should basically learn to be prepared to live without affection and accepting with resignation the uncertainty, variability and instability of gay male affection:

I used to think that if my boyfriend saw another guy, that would not be so bad per se, so long as we had it clear that our relationship was still strong and we had a future together... In some way, I would rationalise the fact of my boyfriend being with others as something that could possibly help make changes that were important for him within himself, but then things got kind of messy, for even I ended up arranging a date for him with another guy... I did not know exactly what I was doing, but I felt so desperate that I thought I needed to do something to improve our relationship...Until eventually I came to realise that, actually, there was nothing left to be done in our relationship...

I have never experienced security and stability in my relationships... At present, I have never experienced having had a really good loving long lasting feeling for someone...In a way, I am learning to be prepared to face this fact as part of my relationships"

So gradually, and, sometimes contrastingly, Miguel's emotional responsivity changed in such a way that he also became, to some extent, a bit uncaring and insensitive with his partner. However, in this complex process of change, he also acknowledged how his relationship experiences had showed him the importance of

looking beyond specific values, such as sexual exclusivity, in order to identify and appreciate what exactly love and sex had meant in his life, and how it had not been easy for him and his partners to talk openly about it - but rather leaving him and his partners with mixed feelings and mistrust, and how he had ended up concluding that up to the present moment, he had never experienced a *"really good loving, long lasting feeling for someone"*... and how he would like to achieve some sense of security and stability in his relationships.

Furthermore, in his reflections about security and stability and their meaning in his relationships, he had also considered to what extent his own lack of self confidence fostered a masculinist idea that stability basically conveys avoiding one's weakness and vulnerability and how believing this limited his capacity to love and support himself and others by assuming that the need for stability and security basically threatened his independence: meaning aspiring to independence, or rather merely avoiding feeling so vulnerable:

I would like to believe that my wanting to be in a long lasting relationship is merely a weakness, for it would only help me feel less lonely and avoiding being alone, but then again, when I have felt alone, I just cannot feel complete, and I don't know if this is a need or just the wish to be in a relationship... I mean, if a partner represents an unsatisfied wish, what happens when you don't have a partner? What need does that lack represent? It is as if I would not like to be alone, and I don't know if being on your own means aspiring to independence, or rather merely avoiding feeling so vulnerable.

This preoccupation with achieving a sense of self, love and worth, while being able to balance intimacy and independence, also seems to be an important issue in Xavier's experiences.

Xavier: Learning to Love as a Man

Xavier, 21, … What attracts me about being with a woman, is to feel that I will be able to give them security, although deep down inside of me I am more sexually attracted to men, and what I like the most about them is the security they can give me … I definitely think that I am more inclined to men, and being a man myself helps me understand men better… At the end of the day I think there are more advantages when you are in a relationship with a man, despite the promiscuity, and all those things that are supposed to be part of the gay world…

In my relationships with men I am not interested in promiscuity nor in so called open relationships… I am sorry, but I am a very jealous guy, and now I try to move away from affairs… but sometimes when you tell some gay men that you are still interested in women, some of them may feel betrayed, and this annoys me, because sex, there is only one, but apart from that, we are all persons…

Nowadays I am fine with my boyfriend, and we give each other lots of affection, although I don't know how long our relationship is going to last… what I like in my relationships is to become friends before starting having sex, because being with someone on a sexual basis only can be fun, but limited, and I think the greater fun comes when you get to know your partner as a person, and learn what he likes and dislikes… when I am with a man, I like when he makes me feel secure, because that shows he is secure about himself… On the other hand, I guess my interest in giving women security comes in part from films, where you can see a girl in love with her man, and he is an interesting person, and he gives her security… so at the same time I think this is precisely what attracts me in a man, for I would like to be like those interesting, self assured men…

Xavier's reflections of his relationships allowed us reconsider the interplay of different gendered perspectives and styles of love as a way of redefining himself and his values and preferences in order to develop his emotional skills, and made them more compatible with his ideal self.

Thus, while he states that he would like to assume a masculine-power perspective towards woman, by giving them a security that he apparently owns and controls, and that woman are supposed to believe they need, he seems to be fulfilling an idealised image of himself, whereby he becomes an interesting, self assured, controlled yet caring man. Implicit in this idealisation is also a recognition that since he has not managed to incorporate a typical masculine sense of self-assuredness, he has, at least, found some inspiration from certain films, where traditional depictions of men indirectly highlight and intensify the power differential implicit in women's traditional feminine gender roles as overtly and sometimes exaggeratedly dependent on "their" men:

> *What attracts me about being with a woman, is to feel that I will be able to give them security, although deep down inside of me, I am more sexually attracted to men, and what I like the most about them is the security they can give...When I am with a man, I like when he makes me feel secure, because that shows that he is secure about himself*

To some extent, his idealisations also seem to be attuned with those notions of "human" development that simultaneously devalue woman and love, by proposing that the healthy person develops from a dependent child, to an autonomous, middle class male adult. Thus, self development is equated with masculine independence, rationality and dominance, while woman, with their

emphasis on attachment, are judged to be developmentally retarded.

So I kept wondering if the internalisation of these notions could have also reinforced Xavier's ideal sense of self, since his culture also tends to accentuate achievement, while emotional expression is disparaged as sentimental, foolish and unrelated to the serious business of the real world, leading "real" men to see love as "sissy" or humiliating behaviour that threatens their macho status.

In a way, perhaps this kind of imagining his emotional positioning towards women also seems to be aimed at finding some inner balance between his insecurity and lack of self acceptance as an entendido man and his need to be loved and recognised by men, and, specifically, other entendidos , since he has come to recognise that he is definitely more interested in men as partners.

To what extent would Xavier's aspiration to see himself as a confident man seem to be aimed at reaching a certain way of positioning and negotiating his desire for men, whereby love and sex are both simultaneously feminised and masculinised in a rather dichotomised and polarised, active-passive fashion, whereby both partners can avoid the fear of being denigrated each other, by denigrating the object of their homosexual desire, by reinforcing a rather fixed masculinist male identity?

This kind of distinction displaces the delimitation of his homosexual desire by presenting it in terms of concrete acts and not in terms of desire. As a result of this, the value of his homosexual desire becomes even more restricted by framing it externally, that is, in accordance with macho assumptions about homosexual desire. In this sense, on a psychological level, Xavier could feel that he has maintained his masculinity while at the same time he gives himself some space to accommodate his homosexual desire, without feeling that he has lost his manliness.

At this point, I also kept wondering to what extent Xavier's inner arrangements also mirrored his local entendido ways of channelling his homosexual desire without feeling that he is risking his manliness by strengthening the power of the masculine over the feminine.

Reflecting on Entendidos Relationships and the Experience of Unfulfilled Love

Our reflections on entendidos' intimate relationships highlight several important issues. First, they all referred to their current and past relationships as being very intense, significant and personally rewarding, while, at the same time, they all remarked that, at present, they still had not fully experienced a clear, strong loving feeling towards their partners, nor they had felt really loved by their partners. Moreover, they all showed a clear, romantic attitude towards their partners, and they all emphasised that love and commitment were their highest priorities in their relationships.

These findings raise further questions, for although they are all different, there was also considerable commonality in their internal emotional dynamics, as reflected in the ways they experienced and valued affection and attachment; i.e. they all seemed to have experienced emotional closeness and sexual satisfaction, and yet, it seems as if they had not quite experienced these as sufficiently fulfilling and enjoyable... and I wondered to what extent this kind of emotional dissonance is related in part, with their childhood years experiences of difference, including their parents emotionally distancing from them, especially their fathers, because of their difference.

To what extent did their former emotional interaction with their fathers, with its emphasis on individuation and separation had a weakening effect on their ability to know connection, on a

psychological level as something real or even possible, which made them less trusting about experiencing relationships as a kind of psychological breathing, or ongoing process of mutual affectionate exchange? i.e. to become a real boy or man in their emotional context with their fathers and also at school often meant to be able to hurt without feeling hurt, to separate without feeling sadness or loss and then to inflict hurt and separation on others. So I also wondered to what extent their internalised conception of manhood gets re-enacted in their current romantic relationships with other gay men in a way that puts them psychologically and physically at risk, because it impedes their capacity to feel their own and other people's hurt and to know their own and others' sadness?

To what extent have my interviewees experiencing their partners' affection as being satisfactory and rewarding yet at the same time not really conveying a meaningful loving relationship for them could also reflect how highly they value an unacknowledged heterosexual ideal of love that indirectly makes it more difficult for them to experience more fulfilling relationships?

How is it that their romantic relationships with gay men has not been "relational enough" so as to help them mend and rebuild their trust in their own capacity to love, and to allow themselves to be loved by their partners without feeling jeopardised or confused?

To what extent has the rather usual experience of having sex with other gay men outside their primary relationship also contributed to reinforce the idea that their relationships are detached, uncommitted and short lasting?

Another significant aspect of their romantic relationships is the overall rather limited material conditions in which most young entendidos grow up which also limits their possibilities to meet regularly. For instance, at the time of our interviews five of my

eight interviewees, were still living with their parents. Often it is not until their mid or late twenties, that they can afford to live on their own and be able to fully develop their gay identity and live openly as gay men. For my interviewees this also means that while they remain living with their parents, although three of those five living with their parents have actually came out to their families they still were expected to keep their gay life somewhat "discreet" if not separate from their familial dynamics and to behave as straight as possible with their parents, for fear that their family's "reputation" could be "affected". These familial restrictive circumstances thus serve to prolong and limit their opportunities to start self validating and reaffirming their homosexuality.

On the other hand, a second related reflection regarding entendidos' values around their relationships is that their unacknowledged tendency to frame, to some extent, their experiences of romantic love in a masculinist way further limits their ability to experience resonant attachment for often it is experienced as compromising their autonomy.

Indeed, although separate value dimensions of attachment and autonomy were commonplace in their reflections on their relationships, only the attachment dimension seems to be more consistently related to the characteristics of their relationships. Thus, although the occasional sexual experiences with other gay men outside their primary relationship did have an initial de-emphasising attachment effect on their trust, their ability to talk and renegotiate the basis of their relationships also strengthened their emotional communication and resituated the importance of attachment, which in turn resulted in greater emotional and sexual satisfaction and a reinforced sense of closeness and confidence that their relationships could continue in the future.

By contrast, the insistence on autonomy values and the avoidance and rejection of anything resembling unwanted

dependency does not seem to have enhanced their intimate emotional communication in relationships.

This was also evident in the shorter duration of their relationships (average two years) especially those of Paco and Sergio, although this did not seem to have affected the frequency of their encounters, their future expectations, their sexual behaviour and their reactions to break ups.

Again, the emphasis on autonomy, as part of their initial socialisation as straight men, does affect their current abilities for intimacy in their relationships. In Catalan culture, for example, men have traditionally been taught to divide their energies and commitment between a primary relationship (the family) and a career. Thus, three of my interviewees tended to keep their love relationships somehow separate from the rest of their lives spent at work and with their friends and family. Also, among my interviewees, part of their socialising experiences within their gay community included learning to separate their sexual behaviour from love and emotional intimacy, a tendency that is still reinforced by norms within US gay communities. (Altman, 1982).

Indeed, all of my interviewees, regardless of their individual differences in autonomy values, expressed the notion that they should maintain an independent life and identity apart from a primary intimate relationship without feeling that their moral positioning limits or reduces their ability to establish meaningful affectionate attachment in their relationships. In this sense, if entendidos implicitly assume that a high degree of personal autonomy is to be expected in intimate relationships, then minor variations in autonomy values may have little impact, although this possibility would require further clarification.

Although most of my interviewees tend to assume that their relationships are somehow well balanced and that this had to do in part with their Catalan moral upbringing, -which they see as better

than the rest of Spain – I think that while their particular emotional-moral and material circumstances has enabled them to enhance to some extent their self esteem as gay men, their overall emotional situation with their partners is far from ideal and presents them with unique opportunities and challenges to question and re-evaluate traditional, restrictive and biased conceptions of intimacy between men i.e. to free themselves from the oppressive internalised homophobia; to develop a positive gay identity through their intimate relationships with other gay men and a supportive gay male community; to re-evaluate traditional conceptions and boundaries between romantic relationships, sexual relationships and friendships and to actively work to meet their individual needs for intimate relationships with other gay men in unique, creative ways. In a way, the very marginality of their position within mainstream heterosexual society also puts them in a particular situation; for it potentially allows them to reconsider the implications and consequences of these prevailing oppositional values for their own experience - i.e. how developing oneself consists mainly in expressing one's needs and feelings, in such a way that can easily lead to a "me first" or "I do my thing you do yours" orientation, in contrast to a more interdependent image of relationships; here, self development and committed love occur together, and mutual support is emphasised, raising issues of co-operation and sharing as basic elements to achieve a more gratifying emotional, affectionate and sexual intimacy. In the next chapter their friendship experiences with gay and straight men highlights how entendidos' values and expectations regarding friendship opens up their relational abilities to overcome their tendency to focus on personal autonomy and security and to reconsider how closeness and vulnerability can also equally provide them with fulfilling and committed affectionate experiences.

VI. ENTENDIDOS' GAY AND STRAIGHT FRIENDSHIPS

In chapters four and five I discussed how the experiences of being different in a predominantly heterosexual Catalan culture have shaped, to a considerable extent, the ways in which my interviewees nowadays relate emotionally to each other in a way that both reproduces and challenges their male heterosexual upbringing. Similarly, I have discussed how their emotional voices within their romantic relationships seem to be in a kind of constant edit mode, for they still find it difficult to maintain a balance between their social behaviour as Barcelonian gay men whereby they still have to conform, to some extent, to heterosexual assumptions and expectations, in order not to find themselves even more marginalized from their social environment and, at the same time, being able to fulfil their need to assimilate their affectionate and romantic gay experiences as encompassing love and care in a more resonant and meaningful way for them.

However, their need to find more validating and emotionally resonant relational experiences with other men in a way that facilitates their identity as gay man usually only finds full emotional expression and meaning through their friendship relationships with other gay and also with straight men and women.

In this chapter, drawing in part on the issues discussed in chapter two about the importance of friendship, both as a crucial emotionally relational experience for gay men, as well as its significance in the context of how it greatly helped and shaped our experiencing and understanding our mutual experiences as gay men are commented.

Initially, a brief review of sociological approaches on friendship and its relevance for entendidos own friendship experiences is also presented. Afterwards, their current friendship

experiences with other gay men are presented, focusing on four key areas: (a) Spending time together, (b) Expressing emotions and emotional dynamics, (c) Emotional support, and (d) Eroticism and Sex.

Then, a brief review of relevant research on gay and straight male friendships is also commented upon and, finally, the friendship experiences of my interviewees with straight men and women are discussed, and contrasted in particular with Jamie Price's (1999) research on US gay and straight male friendships, which is based on the use of differences as a relational framework to approach these particular friendships.

Hearing our Feeling Voices Resonate Through Friendships

The emotional dynamics and the vicissitudes of gay friendship and gay-straight friendship relationships is another whole, rich and crucial experiential area in the lives of entendidos that is necessarily closely linked to the development of their identity by allowing their feeling voices to connect, resonate and strengthen their sense of self.

Having frequently experienced different forms of homophobic rejection and exclusion from their families, as well as from heterosexual society since their early years, as a result of their being seen as different, friendship becomes all the more important for entendidos and gay men. It is usually the only emotional, micro-social space that they can look for in order to develop their identities, and experience a clearer sense of community and belonging, self worth, security and trust - both in themselves and with others - that is quite unique, for it can also provide them with a sense and a form of family.

Given the significance of friendships for gay men, they make friendships differently, as contrasted with straight men,

constructing a different style of masculinity. For, instance, not only are desire, romance, nurturing vulnerability, emotional intimacy, and sex often a vital part of the experience, but the combined effect of these experiences, and the marginality of its circumstance, also shape their personal and social attitudes with a political dimension, whereby its members can eventually create different communities.

In this sense, I would like to re-emphasize that the main idea in this chapter is that the friendships of entendidos is quite often the only developmental space they have to consolidate a sense of self identity and community in a process of emotional sharing and moral support, that further shapes their emotional relational abilities with other gay men.

In the context of our conversations, one very important way of allowing our own experiences and emotional voices as gay men to be mutually acknowledged and validated was that we all recognised each other as gay men; and this very mutual recognition helped us a lot in our attempt at sharing many experiences and associated feelings concerning our emotional friendship experiences as gay men.

Actually, on a personal level, I must say that the experiences I shared with my interviewees have been very significant and rewarding for me, for they have given me the opportunity to rethink not only my own experiences of friendship as a gay man, but also to reassess the insufficient and inadequate ways in which both sociological research and psychoanalytic theory and practice have dealt with the issue of gay male friendships.

Furthermore, these shared friendship experiences with my interviewees have also allowed me to rethink how issues around researching and/or working therapeutically with gay men could be addressed more empathetically and effectively, in a way that facilitates a clearer understanding of its socio-psychological

dynamics, while allowing ourselves to expand the possibilities of our collaboration from mere formal participation into fruitful committed new friendship-like collaboration: i.e. as when my role as gay interviewer began to blend in with the role of a new gay friend in the group.

Clearly, these rich emotional mutually rewarding experiences, would not have been possible for us had I remained emotionally within the conventions of my professions both as a psychoanalyst and as a sociologist, that is, maintaining a typical position of authoritarian control and/or rationalised professional distance; for I would have very probably lost both emotional resonance and connection and emotional understanding both with them and with myself.

Within our conversations, questions were discussed such as who are and/or have been your friends? , Who is (are) the closest friend(s) and why? How did you meet? What kind of things do you share with these friends? Who do you contact when you need help or when you need to speak to someone in relation to your gay life? How close and how much emotional reciprocity do you feel in the company of your friends and why? - among many others.

Likewise, by approaching this student gay-friendship group, I could also obtain, to some extent, both sides of a particular friendship dyad rather than relying on unilateral accounts. This "small group" approach also allowed me to see different friends in relation to each other, which in turn enabled me to focus further on particular aspects of a given relationship instead of taking them for granted, and instead of just relying on a single interview account.

This small friendship group approach also allowed me to situate the emotional and social significance of their friendship in their context, instead of relying on abstract questions posed in abstract emotional language. This was also aided because the focus of all our conversations was not friendship in itself as an isolated

topic, but rather on their emotional needs in their development as gay men and, within this, the significance of friends as a way of fulfilling those needs while constructing their identities.

Given that the issues raised in our discussion of the friendship relationships of my interviewees deal crucially with the voices of the "we" "us" and "them" connecting different aspects of their identities and their emotional development i.e. relatedness and self definition, trust, care, desire, sexuality, intimacy and love, the abstracts from our conversations in this chapter will be introduced not as "person-centred," as in chapters three and four on difference and love and sex in romantic relationships, but will be more "thematic-oriented abstracts" as a way to highlight the cultural emotional context where their feeling voices can be heard.

Sociology and Gay Men's Friendships

Issues surrounding the significance of friendship as part of gay men's emotional development and its connection to notions of self within sociological and psychoanalytic accounts on male emotional development are rather scarce, and certainly deal very marginally with issues surrounding its cultural specificity and diversity.

Within sociology, for example, the whole issue of friendship and its place in contemporary Western social life of men, women and children, has been described as a neglected relationship by Lilian Rubin, in *"Just Friends"* (1985), when she observes that:

> Friendship in our society is strictly a private affair. There are no social rituals, no public ceremonies to honour or celebrate friendships of any kind, from the closest to the most distant, not even a linguistic form that distinguishes the formal, impersonal relationship from the informal and personal one...Friendship is a *non-event,* a relationship that just *becomes,* that grows, develops, waxes, wanes and, too

often, perhaps, ends, all without ceremony or ritual to give evidence of its existence (Rubin, (1985) Just Friends, pp.4-5).

Rubin acknowledges how in Western contemporary society friendship is clearly a marginal issue, for "important" social relationships are submitted to different forms of official recognition around institutionalised notions on becoming real subjects which evolve, and around kinship notions within the family that give coherence and meaning to our relations with others.

Rubin also notes how this can also be seen in our own language to describe our relations with others and how friendship gets marginalised:

> Our language offers few possibilities for distinguishing among friendships, the word "friend" being used to refer to a wide range of relationships with varying degrees of closeness and distance. Compare this with kinship and the rich set of descriptive terms the language makes available. The words "mother", "father", "aunt", "uncle", "cousin", all tell us something specific about a person's place in the kin circle. Whether related by blood or by marriage, each relationship has its own designation... We all know what to expect in those relationships, because the rules and boundaries are more clearly understood and accepted with kin than they are with friends (Rubin, ibid. pp. 5).

By connecting social relatedness through language with a particular view of social life, Rubin also raises interesting questions around the ambiguity that surrounds friendship in Western society, and how this ambiguity is connected with prevailing notions of male moral and emotional development. But how these two dimensions of male moral and emotional development actually interact to sustain this ambiguity around the significance of friendship among gay and straight men needs further reflection.

Peter Nardi (1992, 1999), commenting on the uniqueness of friendship experiences for gay men, observes that society does not approve of gay and lesbian interpersonal relationships. A first important element that Nardi observes as characterising gay

friendship is that, given that still many families do not acknowledge and legitimise gay people's friendship and relationships, and considering gay men's vital need to sustain a sense of self, friendship often takes on the roles typically provided by heterosexual families.

I have also found this family-like dimension within my interviewees' own reflections on their friendship relationships. Furthermore, their anticipating that they will not find the acknowledgement and validation of their gay friendships within their families leads them to focus more on the emotional-moral support provided by their friends, to the point that, eventually, friends end up becoming more important than their family in their daily lives.

Paco's experiences of estrangement within his family, illustrate a common context for these remarkable attitudinal changes to happen:

When I am with friends at home, and my dad's around, he becomes serious and distant. Then, without saying anything, he just goes back to his studio. By doing this, it is as if he's trying to tell me, "look, I'm cool with you, but I don't want to know about your gay friends". I know he loves me, but he simply does not want to know about my gay life. As with my mother, sometimes I tell her about what I've been through with my gay friends and she does not say anything in reply. Sometimes she's even suggested that, maybe my gayness is just a phase and that perhaps eventually I will go back to "normal" life. For her it is as if my gay life is just not real and important, so I reckon, she may be wishing that, eventually, I will overcome that "phase" and then I will become straight! I love my parents and I respect them, but somehow I've been feeling as if they are not part of me anymore. My friends are actually the closest ones to me. With them I can share my feelings, my needs, and I enjoy a lot their company and support. With my gay friends, my favourite

topic is my own feelings, and I feel very comforted when I realise that I don't need to pretend anything with them. They just get instantly what I'm going through, because they've also had similar experiences.

The impact of these estrangement experiences with his family for the development of Paco's self esteem and his ability to establish affectionate and intimate relations with other gay men either as friends or partners man is considerable, and it further illustrates how the Spanish family remains as a very central issue in the lives of my interviewees.

Such estrangement experiences reinforces an "expectation of rejection attitude" among my interviewees which often puts them in a difficult position whereby they have to rethink and reconcile, within themselves, how it is possible for their parents to tell their gay sons that they love them, yet, at the same time showing clearly that they do not want to know about their gay life and friends.

Paco has come to an internal emotional arrangement whereby he has rationalised his parent's contradictory attitudes by telling himself that his parents are basically conventional and reserved, and so that explains their disinterest in his gay life.

However not all my interviewees have been able to articulate their parent's contradictory attitudes in relation to their gay life and friends, by using such rationalisations. In fact of my eight interviewees only five had come out to their parents and of these only three (Manuel, Xavier and Salvador) had positive and congruent parental attitudes regarding their gay life and gay friends.

As with the remaining three (Jose Maria, Sergio and Sebastian) they have come to a different emotional arrangement

within themselves: they have come out to their friends but have decided that they prefer to remain closeted to their parents, as a way to avoid their incomprehension and possible rejection.

Sebastian, for example, has lived all his life hiding his homosexual feelings from his parents. Instead he has put special effort to appear heterosexual with them by having a girlfriend who, eventually, also rejected him when he came out to her.

This experience was particularly painful for him and he felt he needed some psychological help. He asked his mother to send him to a psychotherapist but instead of telling her the reasons why he broke with his girlfriend, he told his mother that he was feeling very stressed because of too much work and exams at school.

When Sebastian met his male therapist, he decided that he was not going to tell him about his fear of being gay and instead he only spoke about his stressful experiences with exams at school. At present, Sebastian seems very clear and determined in his decision of not coming out to his parents, and he explains his motives:

My parents have always noticed that I am a bit effeminate in my behaviour, but they have never asked me directly if I am gay, and I don't think they will ever dare to ask me such a question. Funny enough, they actually know two of my gay friends: Manuel and Xavier but they think they are straight! My parents are bit old and very traditional and rigid in this sense, and I simply do not have the guts to tell them that, in fact, Manuel and Xavier are gay and that we often go together to gay bars. So for my parents, Manuel and Xavier are two straight blokes from school with whom I have become good friends... I have made up my mind that, if I start dating men in the near future, I will never introduce them to my parents and I will never tell them that I am gay. This would be totally catastrophic for me and for them, and I reckon, that if they ever had their suspicions about me being gay, they might have decided to put a blind eye. Actually, I think that it is better for me to keep this pretence with

them, i.e. they don't want to know that I might be gay and I don't want to come out to them! Instead, I will keep on working hard to eventually be able to move from home and buy my own flat, and I will always be completely discreet with my gay life

A second important element that Nardi identifies as characterising gay friendship is that it also has a political dimension, which often operates as a political statement:

> What unites us, all of us, surely is brotherhood, a sense that our friends are historic, designed to hold Stonewall together... It is friendship that sustained us, supported our survival (quoted in: Nardi, [1992]: Men's Friendships pp.108)

Nardi also observes that this political dimension of gay friendship becomes more salient if we consider that the basic element in concept of friendship implies the idea of "being oneself" in a cultural context that does not approve of that self. In this sense, the need for gay men to belong with others out of the mainstream can be central to the maintenance of their self and identity.

This connection between friendship and identity has also been emphasised by Little (1989) when he observes that:

> Friendship is an escape from the rules and pieties of social life. It's about identity: who one is, rather than one's roles and statuses. The idealism of friendship lies in its detachment from these, its creative and spiritual transcendence and its fundamental scepticism all act as a platform from which to survey the givens of society and culture. (quoted in Nardi, [1992] pp.116).

Similarly, Nardi comments that, for many gay people, the "friends as family model" goes beyond the mere need to develop a surrogate family in times of need and social support, for it is also a way of refocusing the economic and political agenda to include non

traditional family structures composed of both romantic and non-romantic non-kin relationships.

Furthermore, by calling attention to the impact of homophobia on heterosexual men's lives, gay men's friendships also illustrate the potentiality for expressive intimacy among all men.

Through gay friendships then, not only are the constructions of gender further questioned but the way in which gay men structure their emotional lives and friendships can also affect the social and emotional lives of all men and women.

Thus, when gay men's friendships are formed and organized around their stigmatised status to confront the dominant culture in solidarity, its political dimension can barely be underestimated.

Additionally, Nardi, reflecting on these two elements, i.e. the familial and the political, remarks that there is also a third important element/dimension among gay male friendships, one involving desire and sexuality:

> Unlike most heterosexual friendships, gay friendships have a sexual dimension that calls into question not just the meanings of sexuality in society but also the construction of gender in a culture. Nardi, (1992:108)

The role of sexuality and sexual attraction in gay men's friendships has been consistently acknowledged in various studies. For example, Sonenschein (1968) found that both the best and really close friends as well as those considered good but not permanent friends, did not share sex as part of their friendship.

He also found that gay men tend to have sexual affairs in an unstable fashion, and with no social and emotional support, while permanent partners (lovers) are typically committed and stable relations. Sonenschein thus concluded that the gay men he studied

tended to keep separate those who served their social needs from those who served their sexual needs.

Likewise, he suggested that the category of "friend" among gay men could actually function as a residual one, that serves to distinguish those individuals who did not work out as sexual partners. Sonenschein observed that, usually, gay men have differential needs and expectations when they meet other gay men and so they initially screen their acquaintances in order to decide whether they are going to evolve into a "friend" or "partner" relationship.

In Nardi's studies of gay men's friendships (1992, 1999), sexual attraction, sexual involvement and being in love all played almost complementary roles at different stages of their friendships. Nardi also found that, given that the best friend of a gay man is very often another gay or bisexual man, the experience of having been at least minimally in love and/or sexually attracted in the past with his best friend was very common. Similarly, the experience of having had sex with a best friend at least once in the past was fairly common in Nardi's studies.

Thus, a common finding in these studies is that sexual attraction and sex itself have an important role in the structuring of gay men's friendships. Sex seems to be a common way of achieving casual and close friends. However, once the friendship is established, the sexual no longer remains the central emotional element among best friends. As for sexual attraction, it seems to play a greater role, for, even if it does not leads to sex, it usually accompanies the initiation and development of gay men's friendships.

On a larger scale, the sexual dimension of gay male friendship also poses a constant calling into question of the meanings of sexuality, particularly how heterosexual male identities are constructed, and how within this construction male

desire, sexuality and affection are often selectively estranged, inhibited and avoided.

In heterosexual male-male friendship accounts, the sexual and the emotional are often neglected in their specificity, subsuming them instead within straight male notions and ideals around proper manly, friendly, social behaviour, which tends to focus on social bonding rather than on intimate emotional sharing.(Komarowsky, 1974; Michaels, 1982; Pleck, 1975).

This male heterosexual emotional-sexual inhibition and avoidance, that functions as a kind of ethos among male heterosexual friendship, may seem odd for gay men, especially during their adolescent years - a time when they, because of their youth and relative inexperience, still remain rather unaware of the pervasiveness and intensity of such homophobic heterosexual inhibitions.

Thus their being relatively unaware of homophobia, combined with their youthful vitality and remarkable resilience, allows them to be willing and open, in principle, to try to share their emotional needs and desires as part of their ordinary experiences with friends.

However, the particular effects of these heterosexual, selectively inhibited-avoidant attitudes towards gay male affection and desire imply, for young gay men, a further gradual estrangement and self silencing of their own emotional needs which I also observed in practically all my interviewees.

The gradually cumulative effect of these homophobic experiences also contributes to isolate them further and indirectly inhibits their own ability and interest in making friends, especially with straight men, whom they learn gradually to distrust.

Entendidos' Early Friendship Experiences

One of the striking experiences we had, while talking about their friendship relationships, was the realisation that their seemingly ordinary capacity for empathically initiating and sustaining friendship relationships when they were children was often externally limited and sanctioned for them as a result of their trying to cope daily with the homophobic constraints to their growing up different, in a predominantly heterosexual environment.

The heterosexual fear and contempt for male affection, - which is often considered a sort of sign of latent homosexuality - provided a tense emotional atmosphere for my interviewees where they ended up being constantly isolated and alienated not only from other boys and girls at school or in their neighbourhoods, but also sometimes by their own family since their childhood years. As Sergio once recalled during our conversations:

> *When we were kids, my sister felt ashamed of me because of my difference. She would usually avoid being with me and refused to play with me. If I wanted to play with her friends, she would also refuse, and ask me to leave them alone. I would feel very hurt and lonely, and then I would just go back to my room, without saying a word. At school, I did not have friends, because of the same, but sometimes I would manage to play with some boys. I was aware of my interest in some of them and I would think a lot about it but would not say a word about this to anyone... My older sister was more caring with me, but we were not that close either, so usually I would end up being alone and playing with myself.*

For some of them, this emotionally poor, abusive and exclusive childhood environment meant their having to learn to

silence their needs and feelings which also meant further losing voice and gradual withdrawing in adolescence.

Similarly, the impact on their self-esteem also meant gradually losing their emotional ability and willingness for experiencing male affection within their friendship relationships, both with other gay men and with their straight peers.

The losing of confidence, and the gradual learning to self silence their need for empathetic friendships, further fosters self-isolation and confusion, and eventually an overvaluation of heterosexual assumptions about male affection - and, sometimes, by denigrating their own desire, emotional needs and affectionate feelings.

Therefore, my interviewees eventually began to experience emotional inhibition in their friendship and affectionate relationships, but of a different kind. Unlike the homophobic-like quality of straight men's inhibition, my interviewees commonly expressed a sense of vague fear, isolation, mistrust and puzzlement.

These emotions were experienced with most intensity during their adolescent years, when they were surrounded by their straight male homophobic and bullying attitudes. Eventually, they began to inhibit their feelings and emotional needs with their friends and peers, by developing a type of "expectation of rejection" attitude.

This defensive attitude further prevented them from attempting to make new friends, because, inadvertently, they were already anticipating being rejected as potential friends not only by their straight peers but also by a heterosexually oriented society, which led them to further emotional withdrawal and self silencing of their needs.

The long-term effect of these traumatic experiences is usually ignored in many current accounts on the friendship

experiences of gay men. At best, the framing of some of these traumatic experiences get subsumed instead, according to straight-like accounts on the patterns of straight male emotional detachment (Harry, 1982; Levine, 1988), which seem to presume a curious symmetrical opposition between homosexuality and heterosexuality; and so there is no sense of a psychological continuum in the form of a male homosocial relatedness, but rather, detached and dichotomous patterns of male "bonding" where fear and hatred tend to predominate rather than a friendly inclusive attitude.

By assuming that an emotional discontinuity is actually a natural structural pattern of all male emotional development, such accounts fail to encompass the specific feelings and attitudes towards friendship that gay men experience, i.e. how their simultaneous reserved and cautious attitude - as a result of having often been rejected by family and society, and eventually, even by themselves - can coexist with a remarkable, concomitant resilient willingness to keep faith in themselves and a belief in the possibility of sustaining their emotional needs and desire.

Entendidos' Adult Friendship Experiences

The range of friendship emotional experiences gathered in this study suggest that, at least within this particular gay friendship group, despite their being constantly rejected by their straight peers since their childhood, they seem to hold on to an idealised idea of friendship that emphasizes the positive, fulfilling qualities of friendship.

It seems as if by holding on at this idealised level, which involves some relativising of previous negative experiences, they manage to sustain a positive resilient attitude. This positive attitude further allows them to sustain faith in the possibility of

initiating and sustaining significant friendship relationships, despite their previous experiences of rejection and bullying by their heterosexual peers and even without developing a heterophobic attitude.

Spending Time Together

Given that all my interviewees are a group of friends and that some of them have been partners in the past, they see each other regularly. Some of them see or phone each other weekly.

With the exception of Sebastian who has not come out to his family, they all meet in each other's homes for eating, talking in Catalan about their lives, their romantic relationships, gay rights and Catalan identity.

They support each other with money, domestic and school activities and when ill. They all go out together to gay bars and discotheques, shop, travel, go to the beach, parties, and birthdays, buy each other gifts, borrow each other's clothes, fix each other up on dates.

They feel comfortable asking each other for any type of help. They also acknowledge how important it is for them to be friends with each other, by showing affection, comfort, respect and attraction, sometimes they also show sexual attraction to each other, compliment each other, and joke about each other using camp gay language. During and after our interviews we went out to eat, dance, to the beach, shopping, and to the cinema.

Expressing Emotions and Emotional Dynamics

I found that all my interviewees like to share feelings and thoughts about practically all aspects of their lives. Crucially they share their coming out to family and friends, their frustrations

dealing with social stigma, as well as what has meant for them to become gay.

They also talked a lot about their love lives and sexual experiences, along with many other aspects of their lives, i.e. feelings about life happenings, personal joys, dreams, goals, regrets, doubts, fears, failures, and losses.

Paco tells me about how he shows his emotions with his gay friends:

When I talk with my gay friends my favourite topic is my own feelings and I feel very comfortable acknowledging that they have also pretty much experienced the same feelings.

This sense of belonging and comfort that Paco enjoys, while sharing his feelings with his gay friends, not only depends on a mutual recognition of each other as gay men, but I found that it is also crucially connected to another basic element: trust, which, for Manuel is a key issue when deciding which friends in particular, he feels he can trust and share his more intimate feelings with:

I distinguish two types of friends with whom I can feel trustful: there are some guys with whom I don't share my intimate feelings because I find them a bit superficial, regardless of how often or how much time we have actually spent together, and, on the other hand, there are other friends with whom I feel more trustful, and with them I feel as if I almost don't need to put a limit to the things I share with them... Usually, I open up emotionally with a friend in order to show him that I am interested in his friendship, and I usually only mention this when I reckon that he may also feel equally interested in being friends with me"

For Manuel, the need to feel trustful with a friend also seems to be a way of fulfilling a developmental need to be accepted for who he is as a gay man:

Since I was a kid, I've always looked unconsciously for a brother with my friends. I used to open up emotionally quite easily with my friends and I would also expect them to reciprocate my need for affection. But after some frustrated attempts, I learned that people only give as much of themselves as they can and want, and nothing else... It was not until I fully understood this that I stopped expecting others to reciprocate my affectionate needs... Nowadays, I put a limit to my emotional communication with my friends, especially when I reckon that I can become too vulnerable, because sharing too much intimate stuff with your friends can be like getting naked and so, if you're naked in the bathtub, there's always the possibility that someone may appear with a knife and you won't be able to defend yourself... I now control the type of intimacy I want to share with my friends, and I intuitively open up with those whom I reckon, I will feel safe, for I prefer to be in a situation of equilibrium and control

Thus, previous friendship experiences have shaped Manuel his current emotional needs and the way the way he feels he should express them. Clearly, a sense of mutual care and emotional responsiveness seems to be very important not only for Manuel but for all my interviewees. Jose Maria tells how important this has been for him:

With my friend Pep, I now can talk about everything, and I know that I can count on him and I never feel obliged to either tell or not tell him whatever intimate feelings I may be experiencing at a given moment

Furthermore, I also found that the intensity and range of emotions to be shared with friends is also mediated through a vast array of circumstances, but particularly past and present friendship experiences, combined with a strong need to be accepted and to self-acceptance, while preserving a sense of self control. Paco reflects on this:

> *Normally, I don't like to show weakness with friends, so I end up adopting a rather detached, almost cold attitude, as this helps me to avoid being hurt... But, at the same time, ironically, I do prefer to get along with those friends who like to share their weaknesses and vulnerability with me, because I think that being sensitive to their vulnerability enhances our friendship. I know that this may portray me as a coward, distrustful guy, but I can't help behaving this way, and I am also aware of how contradictory I may sound, because, in true fact, I've never had serious problems with my friends*

When I asked Paco, What do you think about your need to be emotionally in control with your friends? He replied:

> *I am very attractive, and my friends quite often tend to feel attracted to me, so I have to put limits to our emotional intimacy... I like to be attractive to others, but it also bothers me, because, if I only want their friendship, and I am not interested in them as potential lovers, then I have to put some distance and this makes me feel uncomfortable... What I really would like to find is a friend very similar to me and with whom I can feel close, while at the same time, keeping a certain distance, avoiding dependence and having control over situations, and also being cared for and being able to show affection, but I can't simply find this type of equilibrium.*

So it seems as if the need to express and share affectionate, nurturing, compassionate and admiration emotions with friends, is both openly enjoyed and highly valued.

However the showing and sharing of affectionate and tender emotions clearly seems to require a sense of mutual acceptance, combined with a trustful attitude as a basic element that helps them become gradually more open and emotionally expressive. I was also struck at seeing how common issues of avoiding vulnerability and controlling their affectionate needs seem to be regarded as a useful, preferred and safe way of keeping controlled the expression of difficult or contradictory emotions, while at the same time trying to avoid hurting each other.

Whenever there are tense moments or frustration with each other, they tend to show their disappointment, anger, frustration and annoyance covertly, by not talking to each other for some time or by putting physical distance for a short period of time, and then, when they resume communication they may not necessarily talk about their conflict. In this sense, I also think that their emotional expressiveness resembles, to some extent, similar attitudes of control common in male heterosexual friendships.

Emotional Support

They provide each other with emotional support on a regular basis by being readily available to listen, give advice, offer compassion, and challenge and reorient their feelings and thoughts. They all seem to be well aware of the importance of supporting each other as a way of strengthening their identities as gay men and their valued friendship. Salvador remembers how the support of his then friend Manuel was crucial in planning how best to come out to his family:

Manuel and I used to talk a lot about my wanting to come out to my family. He told me about his own coming out to his family and also asked me if I was completely sure that I wanted to come out. He also suggested that we should go to our local association of parents of gay people to get some information and advice. He then accompanied me to visit the association. Once there, they told us that sometimes parents can react very inadequately and that many of them usually have very little understanding of these issues and so they often do not know how to deal with it, nor do they know who to ask for information and advice. They also gave us some information and advice on how to come out to our parents. Their advice helped me a lot in coming out to my family, and my dad later became an active member of this association

Listening to experiences like these further shows how my interviewees are well aware of their parents' unfamiliarity and uneasiness with issues related to same sex desire, which also reflects how, in their Catalan emotional environment, these issues are usually kept silenced.

It also shows that they have clearly learned that, instead of merely relying on their parents for acceptance and support, they have also grasped how their own parents actually need understanding and effective support in becoming familiar and dealing with their sons' gay lives.

But most of all, it shows how they care and support each other emotionally, and how by doing this they also strengthen their communication skills, self-esteem and their friendship.

Eroticism and Sex

As has been mentioned, desire and its sexual expression were always present as a possibility or as a consummated experience, in all my interviewees' friendship relationships. This is

an important difference with the way in which heterosexual men view and experience their friendships with other men.

For my interviewees, the ways in which they handle their attraction, passion and their emotional intimacy clearly influence the way in which their initial acquaintance is going to evolve into a friendship, or into a love relationship.

For some, sex and friendship may not mix easily, and may even threaten the friendship. When I asked Paco about his experiences in this sense he says:

I have had sex with some of my friends several times, and it's been a very good experience. However, I have also felt sometimes a bit confused after having sex, especially when I fear that my friend will start having romantic expectations with me that I may not feel able to fulfil. When a friend of mine mistakes a sexual experience as the start of a romantic relationship I start worrying and then I have to end up putting physical distance between us, which I don't like... Usually I don't ask myself if I want to have sex with my friends, but I think that if sex happens between friends, that's fine, but sometimes it may also mean the end of the friendship and that's not what I am looking for. I usually chose my friends on the basis of their potential interest for me as a person and what I can learn from them, rather than choosing a friend solely for the purpose of having fun

Paco seems to feel comfortable mixing sex with friendship, for, in principle, he sees no difficulty or contradiction in mixing them, providing the relationship remains a friendship. However, in practice, Paco's sexual experiences with friends have created an emotional imbalance. He has experienced this imbalance whenever one or more of his friends start to feel more passionate and demand of him a romantic reciprocity and exclusivity, which is typical of a lover relationship as opposed to a friendship one.

Likewise, Paco's experiences of mixing sex with friendship seem also to contradict the popular belief that, sex among gay friends tends to be avoided, due to a kind of "incest taboo". I also found that, among my other interviewees, this incest idea is not precisely what they have in mind when they decide to have sex with a friend.

Manuel tells me how having sex with a friend is a legitimate and desirable way for him of getting to know better, and feeling closer with, his friends:

I have had sex with most of my friends, and most of the times, I have not had problems or moral concerns about that. I think that I can very easily go to bed with a friend. To me it's like an added bonus, and a way of getting closer and showing each other affection. However, I tend to avoid having sex with close friends and with those that I have known for longer time, because with them things can become a bit more complex, i.e. they may start feeling in love and this may disturb our friendship and provoke jealousy with your partner.

Manuel's sexual experiences with friends thus seem to fulfil a need to feel emotionally closer to a friend, and also to avoid pretending that sexual desire is not frequently present among gay friends, or that it should be avoided, just because friendship for others may exclude this possibility.

However, while for most of my interviewees their friendships does not often begin sexually, an initial attraction and sexual fling is a fairly common situation, and so desire and sex are always an element that is not usually denied or avoided.

On the contrary, I would say that, for some of them, an ongoing sexual relationship is quite often experienced as adding

strength, closeness and a romantic flavour to their friendship relationship.

Thus, although my interviewees are inevitably subject to the cultural pressures that prescribe that a romantic and a friendship relationship are incompatible, they nevertheless tend to fashion their romantic relationships according to a model that resembles a long term friendship rather than a heterosexual desexualised friendship bond between two males. Manuel reflects on how his friendships have evolved:

> *Sometimes after having arranged to meet with friends, once we get together I then realise that, actually, either I have had sex previously with one, some or with all of those friends! and it feels good and you feel comfortable among them, because we all have talked about it and have agreed that the most important thing for us is to accept ourselves and remain as good friends*

In doing so, they allow those in committed relationships to have sexual experiences which remain as non-romantic friendly experiences. In this way, both their romantic and friendship relationships become more compatible and inclusive.

On the other hand, I did not find, among my interviewees' friendship experiences, the seemingly common experience among gay men from the United States of having sex with other gay men with whom they have neither a romantic nor a friendly or a friendship bond and yet regarding them as sexual friends, i.e. what Nardi (1999) describes as "fuck buddies". Perhaps this could be in part associated with the different significance that friendship and relatedness and self-definition has in both Spanish and US cultures; i.e. in the US friendship may not be long lasting, some people often are apt to take up friends quickly and drop them just as quickly, and friends are often a means of getting ahead or at

least getting the job done. In Spain, while friendships are not formed as quickly or as easily as in the US, they often go much deeper and last longer, involving many obligations and representing a kind of social insurance that is seldom seen in US culture.

However, sometimes friendship and sex among my interviewees have not mixed well, especially if the sexual experience(s) occurred among close friends or when it involves the partner of a close friend. When the partner of a friend is involved sexually with a close friend, then it can be experienced as a betrayal of trust among particular very close friends, and this feeling of having broken each other's confidence and then not having been open about it, may indeed signal the end of their friendship. Manuel tells me about such an experience:

> When Paco and I were partners, we used to go out with Alex, a close friend of ours. Later on, without me knowing, Paco and Alex started having sex, and they decided not to tell me. Although I had my suspicions about them, I did not tell them anything. But then I changed my mind, and decided to ask Paco directly about this. He told me that they had actually had sex several times and that Alex asked him not to tell me anything... I felt furious with both of them. At that time, my relationship with Paco had deteriorated and we have thought of splitting up... I felt betrayed by both, and then I gathered with both of them to ask them why they had kept it secret from me. After lots of discussion and recriminations we all decided that, from then on, we were going to be honest to each other. Unfortunately, soon afterwards Paco and I decided to end up our relationship and I did not want to see him again. As for Alex, he gradually became more distant with me, and I could avoid feeling hurt and resentful with him. Eventually, Paco and I also ended our friendship. I have not spoken again to Alex since then.

Research on Friendships Among Gay and Straight Men

Although I did not interview the heterosexual male friends of my interviewees, I did ask my interviewees to reflect with me around their friendship experiences with heterosexual men and how these experiences have affected them. Thus, in order to give some preliminary context to further appreciate my interviewee's own reflections, I will initially comment on some relevant research done basically in the U.S. as there is almost no research done on these friendships involving Spanish men.

Given their different life approaches and interests, it is not surprising to find in research reports that it is difficult for heterosexual and gay men to be friends. For example, some studies have showed not only that straight-gay male friendship is rare (Nardi, 1992 a,b), but also why. For example, some studies have well established how straight men's attitudes towards gay men are much more negative than women's attitudes (Black, 1984; Ficarroto, 1990), while others have shown how straight men often desire more social distance from gay men (Simon, 1991; Sigelman, 1991). There has also been further evidenced in the increasing number of violence and hate crimes committed by straight men towards gay men (Fish, 1991; Comstock, 1991).

Since homophobia and heterosexism are inherent in the social construction of most versions of masculinity (Herek, 1987), particularly hegemonic heterosexual masculinity, homophobia still plays a significant role in the friendship relations among straight and gay men.

In this context, it is not surprising either to find evidence in straight-gay friendship studies that most gay men do not trust straight men as a whole group/category (Simon, B. et al, 1991; Price, 1999). Similarly, other studies have shown how the sharing of a considerable level of trust, intimacy, comfort and respect is

rarely found in the scarce number of close straight-gay male friendships (Kurdeck, 1987; Berger, 1993).

Most gay and straight men who happen to be friends are casual friends who spend limited time together, with very restrained emotional intimacy and usually isolating their friendship from the rest of their lives (particularly from the gay community) as a way to avoid putting their straight identities and self-esteem at risk in heterosexual society (Nardi, 1994; Greene, 1997). Price (1999) also gives a common example where these issues can be seen:

> Two friends, Mitch and Mark, who lived together, ran into many problems keeping Mark's parents and siblings from finding out about Mitch's sexuality. Mitch did not want Mark to have his son at the house because he did not want to influence the son in any way and he did not want anyone saying he did so later. Mark would not let any of his family members come to the house because he was afraid that they would think he was a bad person for associating with a gay man. Worse, if word got out it might travel to Mark's ex- brother-in-law, who would use the information to prevent him from seeing his child (Price [1999] Navigating Differences, pp.61)

These types of friendships therefore do not seem to be significant in the lives of either the gay or the straight men involved. As some studies have shown, most gay men's close friends happen to be other gay men (Nardi, 1992, 1994, 1999) while straight men's closest friends also happen to be other straight men and women (Weiss, 1990; Nardi, 1992a).

Thus, while the expression of feelings of affection, care and vulnerability seem to be outside the conventions of most straight men's friendships, this does not mean that straight men do not share intimacy and affection with other men at all.

Some studies have shown how straight men do actually exceptionally share some forms of affection and intimacy, but they do this in a "covert" way (Swain, 1989). By doing activities together in gender validating contexts, i.e. playing sports, at work,

drinking, straight men express affection and intimacy by discussing "masculine" topics, i.e., politics, sports, the military, work, and occasionally by exchanging handshakes, bear hugging, and slaps on the back. Likewise, by joking about sexuality they also express comfort, respect and affection for each other (Weiss, 1990; Messner, 1992).

However, this covert intimacy usually does not include the expression of emotional conflict, desire and vulnerability; and although some emotional support can occasionally be provided among men, straight men usually tend to lean more on women to provide them with emotional support, and with some space to express vulnerable feelings about themselves with female friends (Williams, 1993; Snell, 1989; Seidler, 1992). The choosing of women as emotional supporters seems to have to do with straight men's belief that women's evaluations of men do not influence and threaten their social status as much as other men can do.

Thus, despite receiving support from women, most straight men do not normally provide their female friends with equal emotional support (Buhrke, 1987), and most women in these friendships believe their male friends do actually devalue the emotional support they are given (Hochschild, 1983, 1989).

Furthermore, becoming, appearing and being accepted as men by other straight men seems to depend, among other factors, on showing "appropriate" manly emotions (Lewis, 1978), i.e. by presenting an image of rational, emotionally inexpressive self-control and by showing competitiveness with other men, which allows them to maintain their status with other men (Seidler, 1989).

In this sense, a useful approach on how dominant masculinities are clearly involved in the shaping of prevailing straight notions on friendship, identities and experience and the role of neglected and devalued emotions is provided by Victor

Seidler (1992), in his essay "Rejection, Vulnerability and Friendship", when he observes that:

> Our friendships are formed partly in the context of competitive relationships. This is what makes us wary in our relationships with men, because everything we do seems to reflect back upon our sense of adequacy and self worth. Maintaining some distance in our relationships feels safer. This seems to be a way of preventing us from the judgements that can too easily flow from the achievements of our friends. It also reflects upon the ways in which our identities as men are fixed through our work within the public realm, so that we can maintain a distance from our friendships, which are seen as part of the private realm and therefore not bearing directly upon our sense of identity and self worth. It is partly because of this that we can do without our friendships. They are seen as additional embellishments to our lives, which can make our lives fuller than they would otherwise be. This can also help explain how is it that friendships seem to remain more marginal or secondary, particularly within middle class men's lives. We live in contradiction between verbally acknowledging the importance of our friendships, which, within a culture of modernity, are marginalized into the private realm, and our experience of the public realm with which our identities as men are firmly fixed (Seidler, 1992: pp.19).

In this context, the expression of vulnerability, concern, affection and love is interpreted by men as losing control and as evidencing dangerous weakness or even homosexuality, which indirectly could provide opportunities to secure advantage or to plan attack strategy by others.

In this sense Miller (1983) has reflected how the lack of intimacy typically found in straight men's friendships is also connected with many straight men's sense of threatened masculine self, in relation to seeing the showing emotions among men as a possible sign of homosexuality:

> Both in America and Europe I encountered the notion that the fear of being taken for a homosexual, or, "worse", becoming one, is a main factor keeping adult men from close friendship. Literally everyone I talked to mentioned it. The universality of this view was astonishing... While the fear is indeed rampant in our society, and while it exercises a restraining effect on certain of the more tender possibilities for adult male friendships it is not the decisive factor in inhibiting friendship per se. Many economic and social factors are much more important...The fact that there has never been in my experience any

evidence that the fear of homosexuality is very important in preventing friendship will be treated by some as evidence in itself that it is important. Similar confusion obtains, in a more general way, with nearly everything concerning the topic of homosexuality. Talk about it and your motives are suspect. Don't talk about it and your motives are suspect... Try to think about homosexuality in itself and you don't know what to think. One "must" fall back on whatever "common sense" can be mustered...let us state the obvious: physical affection among men is not a sign of homosexuality. This will reassure the male reader who hesitates to reach out, literally, toward a man friend... As subjects of routine and general preoccupation, the fear of homosexuality and its purportedly dulling effect on friendship are rather new in Western history. Until recently, even in the northern cultures, men could express tender closeness without the bizarre fear of being thought lovers... My impression from interviewing older men and women is that this widespread fear of homosexuality is no more than fifty or sixty years old ... the progress of such ideas began with the Victorians. For reasons having to do with the sort of discipline necessary to building and holding a commercial empire, they repressed and denied sexuality to a degree and with a universality unknown in any earlier time. Naturally, everyone became obsessed with what was forbidden. Freud exposed and exploded the repression and the obsession. Afterward, however, society continued the reaction and overemphasized the importance of sex as a human motivator. In some pseudo-sophisticated way, we are still repetitively living out a blind rebellion against the Victorians – with a vengeance that frequently traps us -... In fact and in practice, there seems to be a separation between male friendship and homosexuality. The most striking examples are among homosexuals themselves... Numerous homosexual men have informed me that friendship is, indeed, absolutely critical to their lives. The same homosexual men are absolutely excoriating about straight men's fear of homosexuality (Miller, [1983] Men & Friendship, pp.129-136).

Consequently, it seems as if for many straight men, the best, safest strategy is to withhold information about oneself and to avoid showing tender, intimate or conflictive emotions with men, especially if they are gay.

Additionally, in order to appropriately express manly emotions, men can also engage in a sort of emotion management called "emotion work" (Hochschild, 1979). Basically, emotion work can be used as a means of either evoking or suppressing certain specific emotions that should be experienced and/or expressed. Thus the ways of doing emotion work include both verbal and/or physical expression, in order to allow or withhold material and

moral support, assistance and nurturance while interacting with others. By doing emotion work, men allow themselves to present a specific form of self that will not only be positively viewed by others, but will also made them feel proud, while avoiding shame, "saving face" and maintaining status in any given situation. Emotion work can also be used to manage other men's emotions, thereby marking, maintaining, and gaining power and position over them (Kemper, 1990). In a similar fashion, by withholding positive emotions, i.e. appreciation and concern, men can covertly deny the importance of another man, by making them feel insecure, less valuable, incompetent and subordinate (Seidler, 1992). Similarly, allowing the controlled expression of positive emotions can also promote self-assertiveness by other men's approval. Therefore, the management of one's and other men's emotions chiefly conveys the signifying of being masculine and the asserting of oneself with other men.

However, in all these studies the focus is more on the idea that men somehow are sufficiently attuned to their own emotional and affectionate needs as to be able to "manage" at will their emotions in manly ways, which are then depicted as being concerned with and encompassing mostly power and control. In this way, issues about straight men's own lack of connection to their own feelings, doubts and silencing their need for affection and care from other men get subsumed in similarly controlling frameworks and concepts, i.e. "covert affection", or doing emotional "work" in order to manipulate and control others; and so their needs get reduced and distorted, and there is no space for the exploration of a more detailed emotional dynamics of men's intimate emotional needs and communicative styles.

Experiencing Gay and Straight Male Friendships

In *Navigating Differences,* Jammie Price (1999) explores the vicissitudes of contemporary gay and straight male friendships in the US. She has usefully analysed these friendships according to how these men see and handle their respective differences, as part of their friendship. Accordingly, she distinguishes three categories of gay-straight friendships: a) those who ignore their differences, b) those who struggle with their differences and, c) those who acknowledge and embrace their differences.

I found Price's work particularly useful, for she focuses on the dynamics of dealing, struggling and ignoring both straight and gay men's mutual differences as a key element in the understanding of these type of male friendships. Furthermore, given that in this study I did not interview the straight friends of my gay interviewees, I will both summarise Price's friendship categories as well as its basic emotional dynamics, and then discuss them in relation to my interviewees' own accounts of their friendship experiences with straight men.

1) Ignoring Differences:

This first type of friendships among gay and straight men is portrayed by Price as accepting but not respecting their sexual differences. Therefore, they are not mutually intimate as those who embrace their differences. On the one hand, the gay men's emotional intimacy in these friendships falls below that reported in studies of friendship between gay men. On the other hand, the straight man's emotional intimacy exceeds that reported in studies about heterosexual men's friendships. His comfort parallels the way most straight men find emotional intimacy with women easier than with straight male friends.

Regarding the expression of emotions among these type of friends, Price found that, in most cases, both the straight and the gay friend share their feelings and thoughts, but these mainly deal with the non-sexual aspects of their lives, such as other friends, family and financial concerns, career, school issues, and non-sexually related health concerns.

However, Price also notes that, according to both men, the straight man shares more. Although the straight man talks about more personal issues such as his love life, his hopes and anxieties for the future, and feelings of anger and remorse, only a few gay men will.

Among my interviewees, I found similar situations, and so they sometimes tend to control and almost "edit" what they think is safe to share with straight friends. Sebastian talks about his gatherings with his straight friends:

With my friends (straight ones) from school we used to hang out at their favourite bars and everything was ok, so long as I "behaved manly" with them. I am good at this, so that was no big effort for me... But after some time I got bored and so I also wanted sometimes to ask them to join come with me to mixed bars, and sometimes not so straight bars. The few times we managed to go together to a mix or a gay pub, my friends also became anxious, distant and bored and after some time they all left and leaving me in the bar on my own... Eventually, I came to realise how some of them had only accepted to join me in my favourite bars because they knew that once we had finished the night, I would give them a ride home, for they did not have a car. Nowadays, I don't have the patience to hang around with them and we only meet occasionally to drink coffee talking about their stuff and school

The experiences of Sebastian with his straight friends show how some of his straight friends found it difficult to sustain a lively,

reciprocal friendship with him, for, as Sebastian clearly acknowledges, they felt comfortable with him so long as Sebastian conformed to their expectations of manly behaviour, and thus were uninterested in sharing Sebastian own interests.

Sebastian's experiences also coincide with Price's observation that, so long as the gay man represses his needs, the straight man will actually feel more comfortable with his gay friend, for once this asymmetrical situation is unilaterally imposed by the straight friend, then he can feel tranquil in that he won't have to "put up" with his gay friend own emotional needs and desire.

Similarly, the straight friend in this type of friendship would not have to worry about being belittled or disregarded as with his other straight friends, and hence he can permit himself to be vulnerable with his gay friend, on his own terms. Price (1999) illustrates how in these situations the gay friend ends up rationalising that, although he is willing to support emotionally his straight friend, he won't be capable of returning him the same type of emotional support:

> Jim: Steve lacked a strong male influence in his life. So for us being friends he's got a male bond. And I can see that. 'Cause we've talked about that. 'Cause he did not have a very caring, nurturing father. he just wanted a man to hug him but not in a sexual way. Just to be hugged. A guy he can talk with and get some feedback. And it just turned out he can get that from a gay man and not a straight man because (of) those stereotypical behaviours – straight man can't hug, can't feel. But he could get it from a gay man as long as it was respected that this is not sexual. This is a hug, this is a friendship thing. And that was cool because that's all it was. But in turn, I realise I can't get that back. He can't, I don't think he knows it, but he is not giving it back. I can hug him, but he can't hug me. And it is obvious that I need a hug. He needs the feeling but he can't return the feeling. And it may be the fear of expressing something he is not ready to deal with yet (Price [1999] Navigating Differences, pp.67).

This type of dynamics leaves the gay man constantly avoiding topics that would acknowledge his sexual identity, thus precluding the possibility of eventually coming to acknowledge and

respect the gay man's own needs as part of his friendship with a straight man.

In this sense, Price also notes how the gay men in these friendships usually do not discuss their troubles with family members or co-workers not accepting their sexual identity: nor the frustrations they experience from daily reminders of their stigmatised and subordinated status: or how they feel and think about gay rights issues, or their thoughts and feelings about AIDS. When the gay man does talk about personal subjects it is usually in the context of an emotional crisis.

Thus, in these type of friendships, most straight friends feel relieved that the gay man does not share his thoughts and feelings about his personal issues, because listening to their inner selves would be close to talking about homosexuality which would make these straight men feel very uncomfortable.

Regarding issues of homophobia and heterosexism, Price found that these friends do not usually face this with other friends and family, simply because they do not spend time together with them, and since the gay friend acts straight, strangers usually do not suspect he is gay. Both avoid talking about important life issues, joking around with each other and sharing feelings for each other. Both are homophobic and heterosexist. The gay friend does not like public display of homosexual affection, refraining from doing it in front of his straight friends.

Sometimes, the gay men in these friendships are more aware of their disliking straight men because they are different from gays, and so the gay friend does not fully trust the straight friend, because he feels almost certain that they do not respect homosexual people.

Salvador tells me about his experiences with his straight friends from work:

I have come to realise how repressed I am with my friends and colleagues from work. Until recently, I was quite unaware of how homophobic they can be. It was not until I started talking about my gay life, that I started to notice how they really are. I feel now that I have almost nothing in common with them and this makes me feel very angry and uncomfortable. The worst thing is that I reckon they may think that I am also a homophobe and that I should be proud of that. This is also difficult for me because at work I have to act straight all the time and I find it unfair. I don't know how much longer I will e able to carry on like this

Salvador's difficult situation at work becomes even harder to handle because of his vulnerable position at work in this sense, and because he reckons he will not be able to reconcile his feelings of frustration with a friendly attitude towards his straight friends. This leaves him isolated and with increasing self-reinforced beliefs that he is too different from his straight friends to able to be compatible, let alone close to them.

As for the role of eroticism in this type of friendships, Price observes that this is a non-erotically dynamic friendship, because both think that they are not interesting for each other in that respect – besides, they do not share details about their respective sex lives. However, as Price has found, some straight men regard their gay friends as a kind of sex expert whom they can ask concerning all their doubts about homosexuality, that they were afraid to ask anyone else. Price gives another illustration of how the gay friend feels having to respond in factual fashion to his straight friend's way of showing curiosity in gay men's sexuality:

Jim: It is the timing they choose to talk about it. A kind of questions they choose to ask. It is like if they are very intuitive questions, well thought-out questions, it's not just on a whim they thought about it. And the moment they choose to ask can be when you are having a drink, when you are both alone, or at work. The other day Steve and I were alone in a room sitting and it was like his timing and he took a

lot of time to ask his questions. So it is like so what is he asking and why? And it was very inappropriate for the timing but we were alone and that was probably the only time that he knew we would be alone and nobody would come in [and] interrupt me answering or him being afraid to ask the question. And it was like he was just curious. He said, "What does it feel like? How do you know what to do?" One of those kinds of questions. And I was like okay, why is he asking? We've never had a very intimate kind of conversation before (Price [1999] Navigating Differences, pp. 74).

In brief, these two friends are not close, and feel discomfort with each other and choose to deal with it by ignoring their emotional-sexual differences, and saying that sexuality is not and should not be important to their friendship, because they see themselves as beyond having to talk about their having different sexual identities or having to show their sexual preferences with each other.

As Price notes, by doing this they indirectly make sexuality a very central issue in the friendship, albeit an obscure one, because usually these friends neutralise the gay man's sexual identity, denying the importance of sexuality in his life but not in the straight one. They deem only the latter as applicable to their friendship.

Given that they stifle the gay friend's sexuality, they cannot build a close and significant friendship. Their friendship is more important to the straight than the gay friend. For many straight men, this is the closest friend they have had. In contrast the gay friend is closer and more emotionally intimate to other gay friends. The gay friend likes his straight friends, but he does not trust him.

2) Struggling with Differences.

Price found that in this second type of gay-straight male friendships, both   friends do not accept and do not respect each

other's sexual identities. Likewise, the gay friend is not as comfortable as those gay men who embrace or ignore their differences in their friendships with straight men.

Like most gay men, they do not trust the straight men. Similarly, like most straight men, these friendships are typically more homophobic than those straight friends who embrace or ignore their differences. These friends rarely confront their differences because they do not spend much time together and they are not emotionally or personally intimate with each other. Usually these friends are just casual friends, and their mutual discomfort with their respective sexual differences keeps them from becoming close friends.

For both friends, their friendship is not that important. Price also found that approximately a third part of these friends used to be close ones, but the straight friend changed when the gay came out to him.

Among my interviewees, I found that this was actually a fairly common experience they all had had once they came out to their straight male friends.

Regarding their emotional communication, Prices notes that these friends are much less emotionally intimate than those who embrace or ignore their differences.

Both suppress their emotional needs and experiences with each other and do not provide much emotional support to one another. The gay friend does not trust the straight friend and fears that if he dares to share personal issues, the straight friend may feel even more uncomfortable, or misinterpret this as a sexual advance.

In relation to coming out among these friends, Price found that, usually, the gay friend is in the process of doing it and does not have the confidence of the openly gay man. But the fact that

he does not come out does not mean he wants to hide his sexuality.

Usually most of these gays enact a camp, effeminate behaviour, use gay language, and sometimes the gay friend can be ultra feminine, adopting a feminine voice and body movement. Similarly, some gay man in these friendships might say that while they do not hide their sexuality, unless someone asks them, they will not announce it. Many of these gay men have never came out verbally and they think it would be inappropriate to do this with straight people. Price gives an example of one of her gay interviewees' own views and strategy in this sense:

> Fabian: I am a firm believer in not broadcasting to the world. Now there are some who feel if they don't tell everybody and point their finger at them and say that "Hey this is the way it is with me and you have got to accept it" and most of the world doesn't accept it and they don't understand why they have created a problem. And I don't believe in that. I don't believe in hiding it. Say, if somebody asks you, it depends on why they ask you... I still think it is a question that does not have to be asked. People these days know enough about what is going on in the world that they can figure it out. They don't have to ask you point blank (Price [1999] op. cit. pp.84).

In this same respect, I found among my interviewees that the fear and resentment for not wanting and/or not being able to come out to their straight friends, as a way of being more relaxed and feel more comfortable with themselves, eventually leads them to harbour more and more conflicting feelings, which sometimes can become frankly heterophobic. Jose Maria reflects on his reasons for not wanting to come out yet claiming his right to be respected by his friends and heterosexual people in general:

> *I don't think that because I am gay I am essentially a different or a especial person in any particular sense... Normally, I don't even bother to tell people whether I am gay or not... I think it is unnecessary to do that, especially with friends, for, if someone claims*

to be your friend, then he/she should respect me, regardless of who I am or want to be... I don't regard any straight person as worthy of "accepting or not" my gayness. I don't need their acceptance therefore I don't see the need in coming out to them in order to obtain their approval. This is simply not the case for me, the way I see it... This however does not mean I am not aware of the rampant homophobia that surrounds us, but frankly I have no time to deal with that type of persons, let alone consider them as worthy of my friendship.

Jose Maria's own considerations as to why he does not see the need to come out to his straight friends seems to imply not only an internalised homophobic feeling but also a rather idealised, resisting-like position in relation to issues of identity and self definition and its direct relevance to friendship.

It seemed to me as if he would like to live in an environment where people, but especially his friends, are beyond the need to classify and/or stereotype others, for this would contradict his idea of what a friend should be. This also resonates, in part, with his Spanish ideology of what an entendido is, i.e. a man who is potentially capable of having socio-sexual relations with other men, and because of this potentiality there is usually no need to transform their whole male identity into a new gay one.

On the other hand, he is well aware that he is not yet living in such a respectful-tolerant environment - although ideally he would like to - for he acknowledges that homophobia surrounds him. Thus, he ends up rationalising that he does not have the time nor the patience to deal with homophobic people, who by implication are basically equated as heterosexual people, as this allows him to justify, within himself, his not needing to come out, nor wanting to be related to any heterosexual person who shows an interest in knowing about his gayness.

But this type of reasoning and behaving also raises other issues of heterosexism and homophobia among this type of friends, which according to Price are not uncommon. The straight men in these friendships are often proud of being homophobic; it is part of which they are - i.e. "homosexuality is disgusting" - or a psychological immoral problem.

As Price notes, they may refer to their gay friends as "them". They believe the stereotypes about gay men, i.e. that all gay men are perverts, whose only goal in life is sex, especially with straight men, and subsequently that they may get AIDS. When they hear others express homophobic comments they do not stop them. Like many straight men, they worry what other straight men may think of their friendship with gay men if they found out. Price provides a common example of how the straight friend shows his heterosexism, by using his gay friend as an example of wrong behaviour among his children:

> Talbert: I will let Bo come around the child. I am going to let my kid know about homosexuality. I am not going to let him find out from the streets. I am going to let him know. I am also going to let him know how I feel about it. In that respect, I wouldn't mind Bo coming over here. My kid is going to know he is gay. But I also don't want my kid to have a ... there is a fine line between drawing a prejudice against a gay person and accepting it as an acceptable lifestyle. And that is what I am going to have problems discussing with my kid. Because I want him to know that in my household it is not an acceptable lifestyle. But I don't want [him] to be prejudiced against those people either. It is going to be very difficult. But I think it can be done (Price [1999] op. cit. pp.87).

By rationalizing their heterosexism in this way, these straight men feel as if they are doing their bit to appear as politically correct with themselves and their children, which saves them the burden of questioning their own heterosexist masculinity, while making them feel that they are "cool" and tolerant, for they have managed to "include" a "gay person" among their friends.

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However, as Price notes, these straight men will not socialise with gay men in public, and never go to gay venues for fear a straight friend may see them and gossip about their sexuality. In brief, both men's homoerotic feelings and both men's homophobia provoke the greatest problems, keeping them from being close and comfortable.

They still want to be friends but they can get past their different sexual identities, and this overwhelms their friendship. Consequently they do little together and have problems talking about everything - not just sexuality. The gay friend fears or distrusts and the straight friend is still morally conflicted about homosexuality for fear of his own homoerotic feelings.

3) Embracing Differences

In this third type of gay-straight male friendships, both men actually respect and accept their sexual differences! Price discovered that this is quite a rare finding, for these friends have managed to find commonality and have become close and sometimes even best friends. Their sexual differences are no more nor less an important part in their friendship than they are in each one's lives. They affirm each other's sexuality. Like in gay male friendships, these friends confide in each other and express feelings of vulnerability and affection for each other.

According to Price, these friends resemble cross sex friendships in that the straight friend allows himself to do things with the gay friend that are usually off limits in straight friendship. However, unlike cross sex but similar to women's friendship and gay men's friendships, both share equal intimacy and emotional support, both feel satisfied with and value their friendship.

However, these types of friends also have their own unique issues and tensions. They must confront sources of possible tension

between them, such as coming out, sexual attraction, and their homophobia and heterosexism.

As Price notes, these types of friends regularly deal with homophobic and heterosexist attitudes from their friends and family, and from strangers and acquaintances. Although Price observes how most of these friends at present may remain amicable with each other's family and common friends, in the beginning of their friendship they may have had to address how to acknowledge the gay friend's sexuality and the nature of their friendship with their friends and family.

Their decision affects the frequency and quality of their interaction with these people.

The straight friend rarely talks about these issues with his straight friends and the gay friend deals with them differently with his gay friends.

Nevertheless, Price found that a common situation, regarding whether and when to tell the straight man's friends and family that his friend is gay, involves the taking into consideration of the gay man's need to control to whom and when to come out to others, by following a "when asked, [by others if I am gay] tell, and then tell me" strategy:

> Blake: When Henry told people [that I am gay] then told me. I mean, or actually I would ask, "Henry, did you tell?" I mean hopefully neither one of them think they have a license to out me around the world. It is really hard to make me mad, but if I were outed to somebody that somebody knew I didn't want to be out with, I would be pissed. My thing is if you tell somebody I want you to tell me. If you tell somebody that I know especially (Price, [1999] op. cit. pp. 38).

Likewise, regarding how the gay man comes out to his straight friend, Price found that, usually, the straight friend knew before or suspected about his friend being gay. For the gay friend, it was important to be open to his friend and usually coming out to

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him did not involve any particularly stressful effort. Others have waited to come out to his friend because they were still uncertain about his sexuality, worried and feared rejection. Usually the straight friend accepts immediately his gay friend.

Regarding the role of eroticism among these friends, Price found that some of these friends have actually had sex together, while some others have come close to it. Usually, the gay friend is the one who speaks about it, not the straight one. These sexual experiences have happened in two main scenarios: in the first situation, the "straight one" hits on the gay one at the beginning of the friendship, because the straight one wants to carry on an affair with his new "friend".

In a second situation, the gay friend, not yet out, starts a conversation with a guy he finds attractive and whom he senses may be gay. The two alleged straight ones become friends. One of them is sexually attracted but does not act on it. Then, one night, after some drinking, the "straighter" one initiates sexual contact, at the beginning of the friendship, commonly during late high school or college when they are still exploring their "sexual identity". After that sexual experience, one of them comes out to himself and his friend and the other remains as straight. Usually the sexual affair ends the friendship. These experiences have been quite frequent among my interviewees. Sergio reflects on this:

I have been good friends with Pablo for quite some time. Sometimes we would meet at his place and masturbate each other while watching some of his straight porno videos. Pablo is straight but we just enjoy masturbating each other, although sometimes I would get worried thinking that, while he got excited watching the women, I got excited watching the men in the video. Sometime later, he had to move away, for he had to do his military service and we stopped seeing each other for a while. But, as soon as he got some

time off, he came back to visit me regularly. We continued masturbating each other, and once, after having got a bit drunk, we started doing fellatio to each other. Since that time, we both felt confused and embarrassed, and so we decided to pretend that nothing had happened between us. After that, he did not come back to visit me anymore. I phoned him several times, but he did not reply, and I did not know what to think, but I felt sad and a bit frightened. That experience helped me further acknowledge my interest in men, although at that time, I still struggled with the idea of being gay myself. Then for some time after that, I decided that I was going to have only female friends.

As I mentioned, Sergio's experiences are similar to the rest of my interviewees, for I found that the practice of mutual masturbation is also quite common among male friends in Barcelona, regardless of whether the friends involved are gay or straight. It seems to be part of a process of exploring their sexuality. But sometimes, after these mutual masturbatory experiences, they remain friends and have to put their sexual attraction aside. The gay friend silences his feelings for the straight friend, by thinking of him as a brother. When the brother has a girlfriend then they both have to decide whether to tell their respective partners about their sexual affair or not, and deal (or not) with the jealousy of their partners.

The gay friend may try to avoid sexual innuendos and feel guilty with his straight friend, but eventually the gay friend stops misinterpreting the motives of his straight friend. Presently both tease each other about homosexual behaviour and desire. They also talk about their past sexual history and erotic activities, but even if there is some excitement there is no sexuality involved anymore.

They're just aware of their sexual attraction and joke about it and by doing that they express affection, acceptance, and this does

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not make the straight friend, gay or romantic; they just feel comfortable with their sexual identities.

In brief, Price observes that these types of friends have moved beyond the heterosexism and homophobia that prevents most gay and straight men from becoming friends. They respect and trust each other, feeling comfortable with and accepting and affirming their sexuality. They allow their sexuality to enrich the friendship. Most are best friends, sharing their thoughts, emotions and lives with one another. Their intimacy exceeds that found between most straight men and in other friendships between gay and straight men.

VII. CONCLUSIONS

Reframing Entendidos' Feeling Voices in the Analytic Setting and in Social Research

Our journey together to find ways of speaking and listening about our experience as gay men, in a manner that resounds its relational emotional and moral nature and carries the cultural specificity of entendidos own sense of self as well as their experience of relationships, has led us to shift the heterosexual universalising and clinical language that psychoanalysts have traditionally used. I have emphasized the need to move away from speaking about gay male desire, affection and emotional needs from a diagnostic, pathologising, hierarchic, homophobic, heterosexist and disengaged, morally superior attitude, with its oppressive Oedipalised stages and related patriarchal libidinal structures, to encourage a more associative inclusive homosocial, homoerotic and sensual feeling language and behaviour which better conveys the richness and complexity of my interviewees' feeling voices.

While speaking and relating emotionally in this associative and inclusive manner with my interviewees, we also have come to realise that our feeling voices - as reflected in our verbal language and emotional behaviour - convey a rich, polyphonic and complex texture which is distinctively non linear, rational and discursive. Likewise we have also realised that its emotional-moral dimension characteristically interweaves contradictory but complementary thoughts and feelings and desires, that cannot either be adequately encompassed by simply framing/reducing it according to sociologically rationalised, merely consciously constructionist

and/or reflexive verbal/textual strategies, which often use a structural, linear, atomistic, positional argumentative and morally disqualifying, discursive, selfless tone.

Similarly while listening to my interviewees' feeling voices, I could evoke a similar process within myself that made it easier for me to appreciate how, by living in a heterosexist society, both my interviewees and I had learned consciously and unconsciously to gradually silence, forget and disconnect ourselves from our feelings and emotional needs as gay men for years, as a survival strategy for spanning what seemed to us like two incommensurate realities. Thus we came to appreciate how sometimes we could end up enacting disconnection through various forms of dissociation, separating our psyches from our bodies, so as not to know what we were feeling, and how, at some other times, we could also dissociate our voice from our feelings and thoughts so others would not know what we were experiencing: or taking ourselves out of relationships with family and friends so that we could better approximate to what our families and others expected from us, in order to conform to a heterosexual image of what a "man" should be.

Furthermore, during this process of remembering and sharing together our struggles to recover the extent and clarity of our silenced voices, we also started to became more aware of the amount and extent of not only our emotional distance and disconnection, but also - crucially - our vital resilience in order to cope with the relational lies that are at the centre of our patriarchal culture, i.e. subtle untruths and various forms of invalidation, violation and violence that cover over and have led to our disappearance as gay men from both the public world of history and culture, and the private world of intimacy and love.

For instance, I noticed in my interviewees a clear determined attitude to voice their emotional needs not only among themselves

- as has been shown in our conversations - but also publicly, while rethinking their identities not only as shaped by commercial images of the US gay market but also as trying to gain distance from these and encompass a sense of their distinctive Catalan/Spanish ascendancy. My interviewees have also showed a strong tendency to adopt very reserved, critical, and anti-Catholic attitudes and reflections that further help them question their moral experiences in the context of their collective history, i.e. pre- and post-Franco democratic transition periods (Mirabent, 2000).

Similarly, the ways in which my interviewees see themselves in their Barcelonian society are not what they used to be in Franco's years but have been clearly ruptured. They have distanced themselves from the unified, medical, sinful, criminal and other pejorative and devalued categories of the past in order to embrace a whole diverse array of relational, affectionate, gendered, erotic, political, moral, social – including internet dating and chatting - and spiritual experiences criss-crossing their way through class, gender and ethnicity, all of which is giving rise to a stream of emotional reflexivity that allows them to rethink their identities beyond mere entendidos and/or gays, by accommodating new experiences and more inclusive ways of living with their gay and straight peers in their predominantly, yet clearly in crisis, heterosexual society.

Their own relationships experiences, combined with the incorporation of these new relational experiences, is also allowing them to articulate their emotional and sexual experiences as encompassing meaningful emotional and moral significance through and in the context of their romantic and friendship relationship experiences. This has been reflected very clearly in their way of speaking about their emotional experiences. Their talk is often intimate, personal and emotional, filled with desire, sensuality yet also full of evocative symbols connected to issues of embodied male love, social justice, trust, care, responsibility and

the need to confront and oppose homophobia, and other forms of resisting their oppression in society.

On the other hand, on a theoretical level, the evidence I have gathered has led me to consider my interviewees' adolescent experiences of growing up different as a comparable time in early male heterosexual childhood, a time when a relational impasse forces what in psychoanalytic theory has been described as a compromise formation, some compromise between voice and relationships.

Because this compromise removes or attenuates the tension between gay men's voices and the regeneration of patriarchal male heterosexual voiced culture, it tends to be emotionally experienced by some of them as necessary or inevitable. In fact, it may leave a psychological wound or scar, which is manifested in the heightened susceptibility to psychological and moral distress that some gay boys experience. Perhaps the timing of this loss of voice and the crisis of relationships can explain these asymmetries in straight and gay identity developmental processes. So, by contrast to the Oedipal murderous story whereby the death of Laius marks and seals Oedipus' own blindness and deafness, I think there is urgently needed a non-Oedipalised, non-heterosexist, non homophobic vision of straight and gay men and boys' emotional-moral development as moving instead in caring, affectionate, homosocial, homoerotic relation to each other, so that it becomes possible for both straight and gay children and men to stay in relationship, and to say and share what they feel and know.

On the other hand, in relation to the contributions that our combined voice relational/psychoanalytic method (VRPM) can offer to psychoanalytic and sociologic methods, these could be seen as discipline-specific issues, yet also as complementary within a more inclusive interdisciplinary approach.

In relation to the clinical psychoanalytic method, the VRPM lays out a way of working with gay experience in different yet confluent ways. First, by focusing the emotional attention of the analyst to locate the voice of the "I" in relationships (i.e. the gay person telling his/her story), it further puts the analysts in a different epistemic and emotional   disposition, whereby they gradually enter a process of reconsidering first their own ways of listening to the experiences of gay people, and to annotate and reflect in what ways they feel identified or not - and why - in relation to the account given by the gay patient.

In the usual clinical reports, analysts tell their own story of the patient and the therapeutic relationship using a clinical language that they control and that serves to frame and interpret unilaterally the gay person's experiences accordingly. Usually the actual voices of the patient are not included in the case story, but only the interpretation that the clinician has made of the whole interview process. This way of working with clinical cases obscures issues of misconception, misunderstanding and miscommunication with the actual experiences of the patients.

Similarly, by focusing on the polyphony and complexity of voices, the VRPM also allows analysts to focus on and examine their own perceptions, attitudes and unexamined and/or unresolved feelings towards actual homosexual people as well as towards popular conceptions and stereotypes of "gayness". So it is not as if the straight analyst "gives voice" in a condescending way, to the gay patient, but rather, the use of this method implies a redefinition of the epistemic, emotional and moral position of the analyst vis-à-vis the patient .

In this way, it allows the analyst to stop classifying in a rational manner the gay patient's voices, but instead to focus on connecting emotionally and intellectually to the patient and to hold on to what they are actually experiencing emotionally by recasting

the experiences of transference and countertransference as mutually constructed - although not in a linear way - and as indistinguishable from the whole relational experience. By doing this, different aspects of the countertransference of the analyst towards the patient become central to the understanding of the analytic experience. This redefined way of listening and connecting to issues of transference and countertransference as mutually informing the analytic relationship can thus enable the analyst to become more familiar with, and understand better, the daily realities of difference for entendidos and gay men. These experiences of difference have given gay men sharp eyes for shallowness, false commitments, false acceptance and/or "tolerance", "phoney" relationships and abuses of power as part of the painful reality of living in two worlds and being constantly forced to prove themselves according to heterosexual standards which gives their voices a stunning strength and clarity.

Additionally, a by-product of being attentive to the relational experiences of difference for gay people is that analysts can also start learning to question what they have been taught about gay people, and to wonder what is not written down (and why) in their psychoanalytic textbooks. For instance, there has been a paucity of mainstream psychoanalytic articles about homophobia in the analytic setting. Although the term homophobia was coined by Weinberg in 1972, it only appeared for the first time in the Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association in 1983, and then it was mentioned only as a passing comment (Drescher, 1998). Perhaps many analysts still neglect these issues and assume that homophobia is a socially accepted prejudice (Hoffman, 2000). Thus the questioning of these issues on behalf of analysts also allows them to reinforce a sense of confidence in their own abilities for critical relational knowledge and feeling, as opposed to mere

conforming to powerful psychoanalytic doctrinal, normalising and pathologising theories and methods.

Ideally then, a redefinition of the analytic setting in these relational terms would eventually allow analysts, as O'Connor (1993:16) eloquently put it: "to ask the gay patient what went right in being gay? as opposed to the usual question what went wrong?"

On the other hand, regarding sociological mainstream approaches to gay men's experiences such as discourse analysis and textual analysis, the VRPM offers a framework and a way to explore entendidos' and gay men's emotional lives based on connecting issues of intimacy, love, desire, affection and care as basic elements of lived emotional experience in relationships through voice.

In this way, issues of self relatedness and identity occupy a central role in understanding how entendidos' feeling voices interact in changing dynamic ways: interweaving moral reflection and experience with fact, fantasy and fiction both consciously and unconsciously in language and behaviour, in specific cultural ways that are usually ignored and/or misunderstood - especially when entendidos' ways of talking and feeling do not "match" with US and/or British gay men's rather linear assertive language and behaviour, which often is depicted as dealing primarily with issues of power and/or representational roles (Chesebro, 1981; Herdt, 1992; Plummer, 1995). Thus, where these forms of discursive behaviour prevail, the specific cultural subjectivity of entendidos may be seen as a problem for research by exaggerating its alleged lack of narrative structure and meaning. Thus, the VRPM problematises the common neglect and passivity which "to hear" usually conveys, especially if it deals with hearing the foreign voices of unintelligible "others" like entendidos, and highlights issues of interpretation.

In post-structuralist informed discourse analytic research, representations of interviewees' accounts are made without assuming any "real" and/or objectivist warrant and research, and its "findings" are seen primarily as representational practices. Accordingly, the participant's voices are seen as produced from what was culturally available to the interviewee rather than from a private reserve of meaning. This is all perfectly understandable so far as our VRPM method is concerned. However, within discourse analytic research there is still an overwhelming tendency to privilege language over lived emotional experience, as can be seen in Deborah Marks' (1996) observations:

> Social constructionist theory has warned that giving our "subject" a "voice" involves the fantasy that it is possible to have unmediated direct knowledge of experience. (James & Prout, 1990). Derrida has challenged the phonocentrism implicit in the notion of speech as a direct and immediate form of expression. Giving primacy to interviewees' talk about their emotional experiences and their experiences of exclusion suggests that their speech may refer to themselves as a unified authentic subject. This Cartesian subject, whose self consciousness acts as guarantor of meaning, is challenged by both versions of psychoanalysis (Althusser, 1971, Frosh, 1987) and discourse analysis (Parker, 1992) which see the subject as being fragmented and constituted within language (quoted in Ribbens & Edwards, (Eds). [1998:156]).

But we are not dealing here only with language fragmentations and/ or textual reconstructions based solely on discursive, ideological and cultural explanations but with the active, tangible emotional-moral experience of being in relationship. Moreover, our notion of voice is not mere phonocentric "speech". Thus by treating gay men's emotional experiences as encompassing a mere web of ideological networks without feeling subjects, issues of desire and affectionate connectedness remain void, given that within discourse and textual analysis concepts such as framing and social practice often take

precedence as an imposed, allegedly reflexive device on the data, in order to seek sociological rational credence.

However, the rejection of conventional notions on authorship and knowing through personal identities does not mean, according to us and our VRPM, that lived experience is not relevant. Similarly, being aware that objectivity is not the primary aim does not mean either that we have to undermine our capacity to speak in a language of emotional connectedness. In other words, while avoiding framing the experiences of gay men according to grand narratives which universalise and ahistoricise them, we still need to find a balance between our feeling voices and our rational conscious representational talking habits, (White, 1990; Plummer, 2001).

Feeling Voices and Academic Language

In the beginning, I was able to begin to write the experiences of my interviewees in relation to my own experiences . However, as my analysis developed, and my story of my interviewees became more articulated within different related theoretical issues, I found I was becoming less present in the text, despite my supervisor's suggestion that it would be useful to try to maintain, to some extent, a rather autobiographical approach - for it would enhance my emotional connection to my interviewees.

Although I acknowledged the usefulness of this suggestion, in practice, maintaining an autobiographical approach was not as simple and straightforward as it might seem; for whenever I attempted to use my own biography as a connecting axis for the thesis, I inevitably ended up enmeshed in a whole complex array of ideas, feelings and associations that did not necessarily link easily

within the context of the transcripts I was using to illustrate the relational context in which we had our conversations.

In order to place myself back into the story, I had to reread how I had produced the stories of my interviewees and in so doing, I also realised that I tended to intersperse first a whole range of related theoretical issues that seemed relevant in the context of the particular themes being explored in each chapter, and so after commenting on various relevant theoretical issues, the discussion itself led to very different new issues and in that context my own relational involvement in the context of such theoretical issues did not seem straightforwardly relevant enough to be included.

While doing this I could also recognise not only the effect on me of powerful theoretical sociologic and psychoanalytic discourses but also the conventions of postgraduate research in my writing and how the concepts I used to frame my interviewees' experiences also had to be clearly articulated throughout the whole writing of the research process. Since I was trying to present a serious, formal explanation to a sociological and psychoanalytic audience, it seemed logical to me that the discussion I presented ought to have some sort of shared understanding across disciplines, cultures and languages. In this way I was also becoming able to distance myself from the experiential, friendly, conversational context of my interviewees in order to develop an intellectual, systematic way of discussing the data.

For instance, I became able to take the theoretical words of others and place them into my own reflections, and so the thinking that I was doing this in order to produce an intelligible account further allowed me to transform the data from its original emotive conversational setting by telling myself that I was basically producing my story of how my interviewees had produced their stories.

I had to learn how to belong to, and operate within, three different contexts at the same time - i.e. sociologic, psychoanalytic and international gay male - retaining our concerns with personal and private ways of being while also making our voices heard within public ways of being. While this may bring some epistemic advantage, it can also be quite uncomfortable, leading to a sense of lacking some sort of distinguishable roots, or any space where one is at home in a relaxed manner.

This in turn led me to rethink what the writing of the thesis in an autobiographical voice actually involved, and why at some point it could become a rather different project. For instance, part of the difficulty of using systematically a biographical approach to connect myself with my interviewees had to do with the requirement set by my supervisor that, each time I introduced my own experiences, I also had to provide a cogent explanation of the cultural significance of my experiences in the context of the overall study, and then also to contrast and discuss these in relation to my interviewees' own experiences - as well as in the context of the relevant US and British bibliography. So, to do this concisely, systematically and using a highly skilful and persuasive use of the English language, simply became to me an enormous task that further prevented me from attempting to include a biographical approach to my interviewees.

So I came to think that an autobiographical approach wasn't necessarily the best approach for me to use, but instead we agreed that I would maintain my initial resolution to keep myself clearly visible and emotionally connected by including whatever relevant personal resonances I came across while reading the transcripts – which are nevertheless inevitably biographical, although the way I prefer to use them is not monologist and self referential but dialogical - that would better serve to illustrate both my shared experiences with my interviewees as well as certain cultural or

theoretical relevant aspects, as it is used originally in the voice relational method.

On the other hand, the more I progressed in the analysis and writing up of this thesis by adopting a less biographical yet personalised and reflexive style, the more I became aware of the emergence of my sociological identity, i.e. as the reflection of my awareness of the research process, and how it still seemed pretty much connected yet also somehow at odds with my psychoanalytic identity.

At some point later I also started seeing myself as the author, writing about my interviewees, psychoanalysis and sociology and choosing to make certain arguments and explanations about the relevance of the methods I used in grasping the experiences of my interviewees; this has taken a great deal of inner dialogue, self-examination and self-reflection to allow me to feel comfortable, confident and content with myself without feeling that I was putting myself outside the experience from which I started.

This process in turn involved my questioning what it implied for me to try to write simultaneously to a curious mixed audience composed of gay Mexican, Spanish, and English people, as well as an international sociological and psychoanalytic community who hopefully may be able to follow me in English.

Thus, in these brief notes I have tried to give a clearer sense of the range of issues I faced as well as the inner dialogue I had while questioning myself how and why I decided to write this thesis in a personalised but not entirely biographical way, which allowed me to include a considerable discussion of my feeling voices wherever relevant - although this aim seemed sometimes partially overruled by my need to make myself clear in an acceptable academic text for such a diverse audience.

Finally, there are a number of issues that are not explored in this study and that would certainly contribute to a better understanding of the processes of talking and listening to gay men's voices within the structure of the analytic setting and the practices of sociological research via the inclusion of relational voice. These include exploring different aspects of feeling voices and therefore different understandings of the emotional experiences of different social and age groups of entendidos and gay men both in Spain and in Mexico.

Similarly, the particular listening-relational experiences of heterosexual male and female psychoanalytic as well as lesbian clinicians and social researchers trying to use our method in working with/exploring gay patients/participants' emotional moral experiences need to be explored, in order to further assess the potential usefulness in clinical and social research.

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