

**GENDER OUTSIDE
OF
HETEROSEXUALITY**

**SIMONE
JAGGERS-RADOLF**

Gender and Peace Building

Independent Research Project

Simone Jagers-Radolf

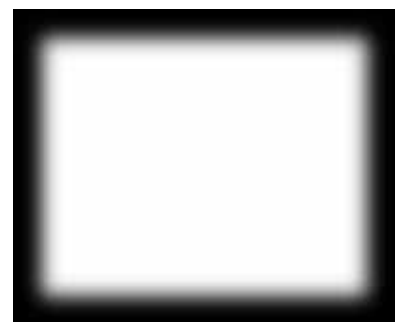
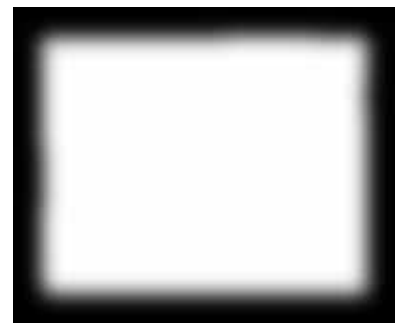
Gender Outside of Heterosexuality

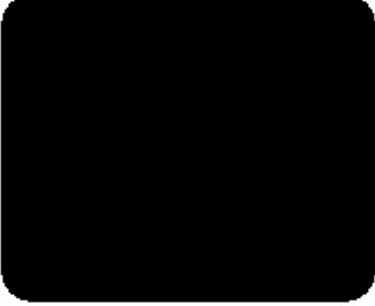
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Anna Arroba

What is heterosexuality and what does it mean to be a female or male outside the institution of heterosexuality? Current ideas on gender identity, femininity and masculinity are heavily aligned to straight sexuality; this is seen through media, education, religion, history. How is ones gender identity formed for individuals who do not identify with heterosexuality? What is the impact of heterosexuality and gender roles? These are the questions I explore in this independent research project.

This Research Project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in, Gender and Peacebuilding





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1

Chapter 1: What is Heterosexuality?

Heterosexuality is the dominant sexual discourse of our society. Since it is the dominant discourse, it tends not to be looked at or examined. Instead it is taken as a constant in our society, a fact. Men and women are presumed heterosexual until they state otherwise. So let's explore heterosexuality. We will do this first by looking at the current definitions for heterosexuality. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary the definition of heterosexuality is broken down as follows: Main Entry: **het·ero·sex·u·al**

Pronunciation: \,he-tə-rō-'sek-sh(ə-)wəl, -'sek-shəl\

Function: adjective

Etymology: International Scientific Vocabulary

Date: 1892

1 a : of, relating to, or characterized by a tendency to direct sexual desire toward the opposite sex **b** : of, relating to, or involving sexual intercourse between individuals of opposite sex **2** : of or relating to different sexes

From this definition we learn two things: one that the origin of the word is scientific dating back to 1892, and second that to be heterosexual one has to be attracted and/or sexually active with someone of the opposite sex. But what makes up one's sex? What defines an opposite sex?

According to Encyclopedia Britannica :

Science terminology: Sex

In both plants and animals, sex is determined by the reproductive cells (gametes) produced by the organism. The male produces [sperm](#) cells, and the female produces [egg](#) cells. Males and females may or may not have apparent structural differences, but they always have functional, hormonal, and chromosomal differences. Patterns of behavior, sometimes elaborate, may also distinguish the sexes in some species

Through this we have a clear understanding of what the definition of heterosexuality is, which is the attraction and or sexually activity between females and males. For the use of this paper we will limit this to human females and males.

Heterosexuality, however, goes beyond just this technical definition. It is not just another key word or phrase that is applied to sexual behavior in humans. It is an institution that is reinforced throughout society. The reason I say institution is because heterosexuality is all around us. It determines the normative in our society. It is the standard by which most people live. To continue in this understanding

lets look at the Merriam-Webster dictionary, definition of Institution: 2

Main Entry: **in·sti·tu·tion**

Pronunciation: \,in(t)-stə-'tü-shən, -'tyü-\

Function: *noun*

Date: 14th century

1 : an act of [instituting](#) : [ESTABLISHMENT](#)

2 a : a significant practice, relationship, or organization in a society or culture <the institution of marriage>; *also* : something or someone firmly associated with a place or thing <she has become an institution in the theater> **b** : an established organization or corporation (as a bank or university) especially of a public character.

To apply heterosexuality to an institution may seem extreme at first, but by looking at the definition of institution it is clear that it does apply. The first part of the definition is “an act of instituting: Establishment.” Heterosexuality has been instituted and established in society as the social norm, the dominant sexual discourse, which most people in society live and identify with. The second part of the definition states “A significant practice, relationship or organization in a society or culture...” This applies to heterosexuality as well; it is a practice, a practice of being attracted and or sexual active (one could argue exclusively) to the opposite sex. It is a relationship, between two people and it is organized within our society and culture. The term was originally a scientific term, organizing people into a social constraint, heterosexuality.

To understand the definition and application of the Institution which is heterosexuality, is one thing, to understand where the terminology came from is another.

Where did the Term Heterosexuality come from?

The term heterosexuality has not always been around. As we saw in our definition it was developed in the late nineteenth century. The term itself has only been around for a little over a hundred years.

Where did the term come from and how did it become the dominant sexual discourse and institution it is today? According to Jonathan Ned Katz in his book *the Invention of Heterosexuality*, before the discourse of heterosexuality, there was the discourse in Europe and North America of true and false love:

True love was a hierarchical system, topped by an intense spiritual feeling powerful enough to justify marriage, reproduction, and an otherwise unhallowed sensuality. The reigning sexual standard distinguished, not between different-and same-sex eroticism, but between true love and false love-a 3

feeling not sufficiently deep, permanent, and serious enough to justify the usual sensual courtship practices, or the usual well-nigh immutable marriage (Katz, 1995, p.44).

With the discourse of true love also came the discourse of true men and true women. Katz explains this:

The early nineteenth century prescribed particular ideals of manhood and womanhood, founding a cult of the true man and the true women... the special purity claimed for this era's true women referred not to asexuality but to middle-class women's better control than men over their carnal impulses, often conceived of as weaker than men's. True men, thought to live closer to carnality and in less control of it, ideally aspired to the same rational regulation of concupiscence as did respectable true women (Katz, 1995, p.43-44).

What Katz is explaining is that within this true love discourse there were roles for women and men, based on restraint, not on sexual orientation. He also points out the class divide in this discourse:

“Holding strictly to true love was an important way in which the middle class distinguished itself from the allegedly promiscuous upper class and animalistic lower class”(Katz, 1995, p.44) In the Victorian Age, before the term heterosexuality was coined, the social ideals of one's sexuality had to do with true compared to false love. True love, only being between a woman and a man, with social ideals of what true women and true men were, differentiating between the classes, having the strongest hold on the middle class. So how did this change?

According to Katz, in the 1860's a German writer, Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, started to reclassify and organize sexual terms, in defense of same sex love:

In a letter to Ulrichs on May 6, 1868, another early sex law reformer, the writer Karl Maria Kertbeny, is first known to have privately used four new terms he coined... 'Momosexual' refers to masturbation, practiced by both sexes. 'Heterogenit' refers to erotic acts of human beings with animals. "homosexual" refers to erotic acts performed by men with men and women with women.

And 'heterosexual' refers to erotic acts of men and women, as did another of his new terms,

'normalsexualitat' normal sexuality (Katz, 1995, p.52)

Karl Maria Kertbeny was Austrian and against the anti-sodomy laws, having had a friend who killed himself after being blackmailed due to his same sex practices. He started writing anonymous pamphlets against the anti-sodomy laws using his new terms (mcm.edu). In essence, the term heterosexuality and homosexuality came out of the defense of same sex love. It was not the terms heterosexual and homosexual that created the divide. It had long been there, the divide being that, opposite sex love/heterosexuality, was and is seen as legitimate while same sex love/homosexuality was seen as evil and now as illegitimate. The reinforcement of opposite sex love as the only rightful love in society had been instituted through different means than the current day one of heterosexuality. Heterosexuality as a lifestyle and the normative ideal took a while to develop.

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According to Katz, Sigmund Freud had a big role in the dichotomy and governance of heterosexual/homosexual identity:

The initial appearance of 'heterosexual' in a discussion of homosexuality is a typical practice of Freud's that later becomes typical of others. Heterosexuals, it turns out, most often owe the explicit, public mention of their existence to talk of homosexuals. Though the heterosexual category came to signify the dominant standard, it remained oddly dependent on the subordinate homosexual category.

Heterosexual and homosexual appeared in public as Siamese twins, the first good, the second bad, bound together for life in unalterable, antagonistic symbiosis (Katz, 1995,p.65).

Through Sigmund Freud, a leading psychologist of his day, whose findings still hold relevance in the psychiatric sphere and beyond, the ideals of heterosexuality and homosexuality emerge; heterosexuality being the norm and homosexuality being the other: “In Freud’s modern usage, hetero *feelings* defines hetero *being*, whether or not one acts heterosexually” (Katz, 1995, p.66). By this, Freud explains that feelings, attraction to the opposite sex means more than the actual acts. So to be heterosexual, one has to feel like a heterosexual, attracted to the opposite sex, the significance being, that for someone who feels attraction to the same sex, even the acts of heterosexuality does not make him or her a heterosexual.

In the book *Masculinities* by R.W. Connell, he explains the impact of the instituting of Heterosexuality:

As gay historians have shown, the late nineteenth century was the time when ‘the homosexual’ as a social type became clearly defined. This involved both a medical and a legal discrimination. At earlier periods of history, sodomy had been officially seen as an act which might be undertaken by any man who gave way to evil. Homosexual desire was now viewed as defining a particular type of man, the ‘invert’ in the most common medical view. New laws criminalized homosexual contact as such (called ‘gross indecency’ in the 1885 Labouchere Amendment in England), and routine police surveillance of ‘perverts’ followed (Connell, 1995, p.196).

As Connell further explains the conceptualization of homosexuality started to become a characteristic of someone, instead of an act. Yes, sodomy was outlawed; those who regularly practiced it were in danger of punishment and or blackmail (mcm.edu), but now under the new heterosexual/homosexual discourse the person took on the identity of the act. Heterosexuality and homosexuality are feelings, therefore possessing the person who has them. No longer was someone just succumbing to socially deemed inappropriate acts. They were considered an invert and perverted; it was aligned to the person, who they were, no longer what they did. The opposite- sex love structure has a long history of control and supremacy over all other types; one could argue 5

dating back to the emergence of patriarchy. For the means of this paper, I will focus on the current state of heterosexuality, understanding that it is the present underpinning of opposite- sex love being the overriding societal normative sexual discourse and impacting and determining the views on other sexual discourses; such as homosexuality.

Current State of Heterosexuality

Heterosexuality is now the modern societal norm of sexuality. But it does not stop at that. The institution and emphasis of the modern interpretation is all around. In our current society there is a dichotomy between heterosexuality and homosexuality, in other words two categories that society pressures people to align too. In modern slang, straight meaning heterosexual and gay meaning homosexual, the question is: Are you straight or gay? This idea of either/or is rigid, leaving little room for people who do not identify with either category. What about people who do not identify with either category, due to their attraction to both sexes, such as bisexuals. Bisexual is another category, but one that does not hold as much legitimacy as heterosexual or homosexual. A lot of the time in today’s

society, by both straight and gay people, bisexuality is looked at as a phase of straight people or a transition of gay people: “For example, the category of bisexual challenges the binary discourse of the dominant sex/gender system that requires subjects to locate themselves as either gay or straight (Ault, 1996)” (Blume and Blume, p.788, 2003). The questioning of bisexuality highlights the need of society to have men and women align to a category.

When one looks at the current political policies in the United States, the right to gay marriage is still a hot button issue, which people are either for or against. The right for gay’s to serve in the military, repealing the “don’t ask don’t tell” policy, is another heated discussion. The argument over gay rights in numerous countries is still going on. When we look to our media we see heterosexuality and social conditioning on a regular basis. This is done through what is mirrored in TV and movies, which is a straight world. There is representation of homosexuals in movies and TV, but they tend to be side characters, supporters of the main straight character, and their sexuality is a defining trait. In the book *The Male Body*, by Susan Bordo, she comments on the depiction of straight and gay men in the movies:

Straight masculinity could only bend so far. In every film in which the hero treads just a little too close to what straight audiences might identify as the gay man’s world- *American Gigolo*, for example (1980), in which Richard Gere plays a narcissistic male prostitute-extra insurance is required to make sure that audiences don’t get confused. That might mean making the character ostentatiously heterosexual... In these films, and many others, the homosexual is invisible yet powerfully *present*- as the shadow of the straight man’s sexuality, a constant unseen specter, alluded to through jokes and imitations, the figure against which the heroes must establish their difference. When the homosexual

character did appear as a full, flesh-and-blood screen presence, it was as what philosopher Simone de Beauvoir has called “the other.” Unlike straight characters, who get to have exciting adventures in which their sexual orientation is irrelevant, the homosexual character has been continually marked by his or her sexuality (Bordo, 1999, p.157)

Even more than what is depicted in mass media, what is happening socially needs to be examined.

When a boy is not acting enough like a straight boy should act, he is called a name, such as a homo, pussy, fag or a girl. When a girl is not acting enough like a straight girl, she is called a dyke, butch or manly. All of these words are used to reinforce the notion that men and women are straight, therefore boys and girls are straight. If you do not follow a certain role, then your sexual identity will be questioned, you will be questioned through these social reinforcements. The categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality for men/boys and women/girls have defined traits, attributes and roles that go with each. Gender roles, roles that are aligned to people based on one’s sex, reestablishing heterosexuality on a continual basis, is the current state of heterosexuality. In the books *Masculinities* by R.W. Connell, he writes about how the term heterosexuality changed the image of masculinity:

From the point of view of hegemonic masculinity, the potential for homoerotic pleasure was expelled from the masculine and located in a deviant group, symbolically assimilated to women or to beasts.

There was no mirror-type of ‘the heterosexual’. Rather, heterosexuality became a required part of manliness (Connell, 1995, p.196).

The same could be said for the requirements of women and femininity. Women who are aligned to other women, not men, are seen as less of a woman. Unable to “get a man”, deemed an old maid, someone

people should feel sorry for, unfeminine. Heterosexuality is a rigid system that has been institutionalized all around us, using gender roles as expectations for behavior. Reinforced throughout society by religion, education, history, television, movies, books, music, laws, just to name a few. Think about ways in which heterosexuality is reinforced as the dominant social norm on a daily basis. To understand the hold of heterosexuality we must look at what continues the need for heterosexuality. Gender roles play a huge part in the furthering of heterosexuality.

Gender Roles and Heterosexuality

Gender roles in the simplest explanation are the roles aligned to men and women based on masculinities (male traits) and femininities (female traits): “Masculinity and femininity are socially desirable attributes that are stereotypically considered to differentiate males and females (Spence and Helmreich, 1978)”(Galambos, Almeida, Petersen,1990, p.1906). To understand gender roles, one first must understand the dichotomy of masculinity/femininity. If to be masculine one has to be aggressive, strong, dominant, then to be feminine one has to be timid, soft, and supportive. They are 7

closely linked; one defines the other. Masculinity and femininity are not the biological differences between men and women, they are what help define one’s gender and gender identity. Gender is constructed and is changeable throughout society. What is considered masculine today may not be so 50 years from now. What is considered feminine may not be so 50 years from now, “...the term sex is used to refer to physical differentiation (i.e., male-female) whereas the term gender is used to refer to a social construction (i.e., masculine-feminine)” (Blume and Blume,2003, p.785). The trouble is that ones sex aligns them to ones gender identity. When someone is biologically female or biologically male, the female is expected by society to be feminine, and the male is expected to be masculine. I am a female because I have long hair, I wear a skirt, wear make up, paint my nails. I am a male because I have short hair, wear pants, I am rugged and I do not wear make up or paint my nails. Except none of those aesthetics have anything to do with biology. They are all socially constructed gender requirements. For a biological man to walk around in a dress and makeup (which happens in society) he is openly challenging the gender status quo. As a result, he may be in danger of being ridiculed by strangers as well as by friends and family questioning his choice. For a woman to walk around in pants, without make up with short hair (which happens in society) she too is openly challenging the status quo of gender. However in many societies, such as the one in the United States, a women dressing “like a man” is more socially acceptable than that of a man dressing

“like a woman”. One could argue this is because masculinity is more valued then femininity, which if this is the case, then it makes sense for a women to want to be a man. It does not make sense for a man to want to be a woman: “Widely held gender beliefs are in effect cultural rules or instructions for enacting the social structure of difference and inequality that we understand to be gender”(Ridgeway&Correll,2004, p.511). Gender parallels biology. This is seen every time a biological woman identifies her gender identity as female, therefore feminine, and a biological man identifies his gender identity as male, therefore masculine.

In the book *The Sexual Construction of Latino Youth*, by Jacobo Schifter and Johnny Madrigal, the authors explore sexual and gender identity in two communities in Costa Rica. In two sections labeled

“Sex Roles are Grounded in Biology and Role Determines Function”, they write:

...it is not particularly surprising that most of the research participants (whether male or female)

believed that men, by virtue of their sex, were naturally strong, aggressive, assertive, and hardworking, whereas women were submissive, passive, vain, and delicate. In Katia's words, 'it's simply natural that this is the case.' ... Along similar lines, many of the young people involved in the study indicated that women's natural environment is the home, while that of men is the (wage-paying) workplace and the street (Schifter&Madrigal, 2000, p.69-70).

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In these sections Schifter and Madrigal show how linked one's sex is to masculine and feminine traits, leading to expected gender roles of men and women. Women are seen as passive and delicate, their "natural" role being in the house, whereas men are seen as aggressive and assertive there for their "natural" role is being in the work force and street.

Gender is with us from the moment we are born:

From the moment babies are born, they are defined and categorized according to their sex. Indeed, as Kaschak (1993) argues, perceptions of babies' size, intelligence, and level of activity have all been shown to vary widely depending upon the sex of which they are thought to belong"(Schifter&Madrigal, 2000, p.46).

This is how the gender system works. A baby's sex is important; to know the sex is to be able to apply gender. This is seen when expecting parents find out the sex of their baby and begin getting ready for that baby by buying gender associated clothes, colors and toys. The gender script is continued for that baby when the parents start to think about their baby boy playing sports in the future, how smart and strong he is going to be. Or thinking about their baby girl being a ballet dancer, how beautiful and elegant she will be. These examples show how parents enact and write the gender script for their child:

For example, Eccles (1993) found that parents' gender stereotypes, in interactions with a child's sex, mediated how parents thought about their child's performance of sex-typed activities. Parents formed an impression of their child's abilities and interests that depended on the child's biological sex to a greater extent than was justified by their actual performance, and this impression subsequently influenced the types of experiences that parents provided (Eccles). Thus, the differential experiences provided to boys and girls resulted in a pattern of sex differences in actual skills that was consistent with gender stereotypes (Eccles and Bryant, 1994),(Blume&Blume, p.788, 2003).

What this quote is highlighting is how parents influence their children's gender identities and roles.

Parents gender their children when they determine their child's interest and abilities on their own views of what a boy should be interested in and good at and what a girl should be interested in and good at. This is one element why boys may be more assertive, because when a boy is assertive he will commonly receive praise. When a girl is assertive she may commonly receive criticism. This type of socialization that builds individuals gender identities and roles comes from more than just parents: From a very early age, boys and girls are taught how to act, think, and speak in ways that are

'appropriate' to their gender. Their teachers are many, ranging from parents, siblings, and peers to television, popular music, and magazines. Not only are these messages ubiquitous and multivariate, but they are constantly reinforced through the threat of ridicule, humiliation, and physical violence should an individual fail to abide by them(Schifter&Madrigal, 2000, p.95).

Because we are continually gendered from society from both interpersonal interactions and outside societal influences, it is hard for people to understand what part of their gender identity is theirs, due to their own feelings, likes and dislikes, and what is due to the socialization of the interpersonal interactions and societal cues.

In the article “Unpacking the Gender System: A theoretical Perspective on Gender Beliefs and Social Relations,” the authors, Ridgeway and Correll, discuss how gender becomes a background identity, stating that everything someone does is influenced on some level with the identity of their gender. It is always in the background of their actions:

Since gender usually functions as a background identity, the effects of Cultural beliefs about gender in a social relational context are most often to moderate or exaggerate (i.e., to bias in gendered directions) behaviors and evaluations that are largely determined by more context-relevant identities and roles. This, in most contexts, gender becomes a bias in the way one enacts the role of manager, clerk, flight attendant, or student rather than a coherent and independent set of behaviors in itself. This is another way of understanding the insight that gender is something one “does” rather than “is” (Ridgeway&Correll, 2004, p.516).

Blume and Blume in their article “Toward a Dialectical Model of Family Gender Discourse: Body, Identity, and sexuality” highlight the postmodern feminist view that gender is a performance, something that one does rather than something one is: “...postmodern feminists suggest that gender is performative, that gender reality is created through sustained social performances and repeated cultural discourse.”(Blume&Blume,2003,p.788). If gender is something one does, rather than something one is, what is wrong with that? If gender is a performance, something people consciously and unconsciously perform, then it is something you do and not something you are, and the performance can change. The problem is that within gender there are power structures that go along a multilayered system that continually impacts and reestablishes the gender system and the inequalities within it,

...the evidence so far indicates that the most obdurate features of our current gender system, such as the household division of labor, the sex segregation of jobs, or gender differences in status and authority are over determined in the gender system (Reskin, Branch McBrier, and Kmec 1999; Ridgeway and Smith-Lovin 1999; Risman 1998). That is, they are created and maintained by multiple, complementary processes acting simultaneously, often at different levels of analysis, such that the elimination of any single process will not be sufficient to eliminate the phenomenon.(Ridgeway&Correll, 2004, p.512).

Even though the roles of men and women may change, and identities may change, the gender system is so ingrained in our society that it will take more than changing roles and identities to affect the power structure that has been established:

What is interesting about the age old gender system in Western society is not that it never changes but that it sustains itself by continually redefining who men and women are and what they do while preserving the fundamental assumption that whatever the differences are, on balance, they imply that men are rightly more powerful. The essential form of gender hierarchy-that is, the cultural assumption that men have more status and authority than do women-has persisted during major socioeconomic

transformations such as industrialization, the movement of women into the paid labor force, and more recently, the movement of women into male dominated occupations such as law or medicine (Ridgeway 1997). While a complex of social and historical processes has been responsible, we suggest that the interplay of gender belief and social relational has played an important part in this persistence (Ridgeway&Correll, 2004, p.522-523).

In the book *The Sexual Construction of Latino Youth*, Schifter and Madrigal also highlight that even though gender roles have changed, comparing the two communities in which they have researched, the power of those roles have not:

As our research in Villa del Sol has shown, the existing gender system can undergo change without threatening the fundamental power imbalance between men and women. Thus, regardless of the fact that the women of this community are now able to go to university and pursue a career, they are still the ones who do most of the work in the home, as well as providing emotional support to their partners (Schifter&Madrigal, 2000, p.47).

The power hierarchy of the gender system has been established. It is everywhere, not just at work or home or in social settings, but in every interaction that takes place: between men and men, men and women, women and women. Gender is reinforced constantly, and along with these gender roles, the power structure that goes along with gender is reinforced too. One of the strongest controllers of the gender system is hegemonic gender beliefs.

Main Entry: **he·ge·mo·ny** (merriam-webster dictionary) Pronunciation: \hi-'je-mə-nē, -'ge-; 'he-jə-,mō-nē\

Function: *noun*

Etymology: Greek *hēgemonia*, from *hēgemōn* leader, from *hēgeisthai* to lead — more at [SEEK](#)

Date: 1567

1 : preponderant influence or authority over others : [DOMINATION](#) <battled for hegemony in Asia> **2** : the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group <extend their own hegemony over American culture as a whole — Mary K. Cayton>

— **heg·e·mon·ic** \,he-jə-'mä-nik, ,he-gə-\ *adjective* 11

Hegemonic masculinity and femininity are the dominant gender schemas, the standards for men and women to follow. Every time you turn on the TV you see hegemonic masculinity and femininity.

Hegemonic masculinity and femininity are not just traits, but roles as well. In the United States, think about the all-American man, he could be sporty, works with his hand or he could be a business man wearing a power suit. What attributes and personalities go along with these pictures of manhood?

Think about the all-American woman: Is she a business women and mother, a housewife, a teacher, a nurse. What attributes and personalities go along with these pictures of womanhood? When you think about what men and women should be, look like, act, these are all hegemonic ideals, built in us from the time we are babies from both interpersonal and outer experiences: Hegemonic cultural beliefs about

gender act as the rules of the gender system, and these beliefs have self-fulfilling effects on perceptions and behaviors that give them a remarkable ability to persist in the face of social change that might undermine them. The core aspects of gender beliefs consist of both a hierarchical dimension that associates men with greater status and instrumental competence and a horizontal dimension of fundamental difference that associates each sex with what the other is not. Consistent with our analysis of the resilience of gender beliefs, current and longitudinal studies of gender stereotypes show that the core structure of these beliefs about the attributes of the “typical” man or woman are still largely shared and largely unchanged since the 1970s (Fiske et al. 2002; Lueptow, Garovich-Szabo, and Lueptow 2001; Spence and Buckner 2000), (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004, p.527).

One of the biggest beliefs of hegemonic masculinity and femininity is that to be truly masculine and therefore a man, and to be truly feminine and therefore a woman, one also has to be heterosexual.

Throughout all of the different types of gender socialization, what is current is that heterosexuality is dominant and enforced. When one is thought to be a boy or a girl, the underlying message is heterosexuality. Masculinity and femininity define each other; they need each other to exist. When society says, men are masculine and women are feminine, the underlying message is heterosexuality: Thus, despite the fact that traditional gender discourses may upon occasion undermine the existing social order, or the most part they sustain it, with two of the most significant means in this regard being sexual orientation and sexual role enforcement. As one might imagine, the former seeks to ensure that women and men “complement” one another positing heterosexuality as the only legitimate expression of sexuality, while the latter provides individuals with norms for how they should act, feel, and express themselves. Needless to say, men as a group derive significant benefit from this gender system; they also help to sustain it, through their monopolization of the country’s political, social, and economic resources (Shifter & Madrigal, 2000, p.47).

The power dynamic that controls gender, needs to be reinforced through heterosexuality.

Heterosexuality requires gender roles to make sure that the power dynamic is that of men having more and women having less. Masculinity valued over femininity; the coupling of men and women

together. Men cannot be women and feminine and women can not be men and masculine, how do we know this, through heterosexuality validating the need for one and the other: Cathrine Mackinnon...in numerous sources (Mackinnon, 1979, 1982, 1983, 1987, 1989) has consistently posited that one must look at heterosexuality in total to understand its true meaning; a socially constructed form of power... At the interpersonal level ‘sexuality does not have gender; it creates gender’ (Stoltenberg, 1990; 33); and the gender scripts found in heterosexuality prescribe male dominance and female subordination. In turn, heterosexuality provides the underpinnings of a system where women are controlled in all settings (Schacht & Atchison, 1993, p.121).

Power is a complex thing. What I am trying to emphasize is the fact that gender roles and heterosexuality reinforce, on multiple levels, the idea that men are more powerful than women. This does not mean that every couple has this dynamic, or that every man wants to dominate a woman.

What I am saying is that through the societal reinforces of gender and heterosexuality this is the discourse being taught. One could argue that men are more controlled through masculinity, than women are through femininity. A woman can challenge her gender role more freely in our societies than men. A woman, a powerful woman, a woman with “masculine” traits, as long as she is aligned to a man, is

fulfilling her role. If she has a baby she is “complete”. But a man cannot give up his masculinity the way a woman can give up her femininity. In a sense it is society saying, how dare you give up your masculinity. In the Book *Masculinity and Power*, by Arthur Brittan, the author explores the impact of the AIDS epidemic of the 80’s on sexuality and societal use of it to reinforce heterosexuality and masculine dominance:

What happened to the gay community, therefore, is seen as a terrible warning, a kind of portent of the end of male domination and legitimacy. And this is what is at issue. If men depart from heterosexuality scripts, if they flee from family responsibilities, if they hand over power to women, then the whole moral basis of our society is at risk (Brittan, 1989, p.64).

Brittan, goes on to explore the impact of the denial of male femininity on male behavior: These psychological implications, namely the peculiar divorce of reason and emotion in male conduct, are echoed in the split between masculinity and femininity. To say that men are split between or alienated from themselves is not to say anything that has not been said before, In objectifying nature and women, men cut themselves off from a part of themselves, they deny their femininity. There is obviously a problem here. The belief that men have lost the capacity for emotional experience appears to be contradicted by the fact that frequently their passions break through the barriers imposed by the rational ego. This contradiction between their violent aggressiveness in particular contexts, and their supposed inability to express tenderness and intimate feeling needs some kind of explanation (Brittan, 1989, p.68-69).

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In order for men to control women, they too need to be controlled. Their dominance takes a toll on the male psyche as well. To be a man one must disconnect with anything deemed feminine, leaving them with limited emotional outlets, especially around other men. Men are expected to be powerful, emotionally controlled. If they don’t fulfill these roles there are supposed consequences, such as the moral unraveling of our societies. To be a true man one must take part in certain actions, weakness not being one of them. There are not just threats towards men and their sexuality, but also threats of not being dominant enough in straight relationships, a threat of being considered a weak man, even if fulfilling the heterosexual role:

If there is any widely shared image of a non-masculine man functioning in an actively heterosexual situation-a ‘sissy archetype’ – then it’s Caspar Milquetoast, a mild-mannered ineffectual married man dominated by his wife. He does what she wants him to do... If the conventional male’s sexual interests are constructed first around the fear of being gay and the need to prove otherwise, they are further shaped by a desire to avoid the fate of Caspar Milquetoast, who probably married her because that was the only way he was ever going to have any access to heterosexual erotic experiences. The applicable epithet is ‘pussy-whipped’ (Hunter, 1993, p.160-161).

This highlights two issues: one the idea that a man even in a heterosexual relationship can still be viewed as weak and ineffective if he has not asserted his dominance over his wife. Second that, a dominant woman is to be avoided, unless that is the only means into heterosexuality.

If both men and women are being controlled through the power dynamic imposed by gender roles and heterosexuality, why then does it continue?

Patriarchy

Main Entry: **pa·tri·ar·chy** (marriam-webster dictionary) Pronunciation: \-,är-kē\

Function: *noun*

Inflected Form(s): *plural* **pa·tri·ar·chies**

Date: 1632

1 : social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line; *broadly* : control by men of a disproportionately large share of power **2** : a society or institution organized according to the principles or practices of patriarchy

Patriarchy is a system based on the lineage of the father, the male. We can see this in Western cultures by looking at surnames. It is still customary for the wife to take the husband's last name, and the children to take the father's last name. This simple act that families do, is a patriarchal practice, stating that the wife and children belong to the father's clan, family and history: "Patriarchal kinship is the core of patriarchy. Paternity is the central social relationship...In a patriarchal kinship system, 14

children are reckoned as being born to men, out of women."(Rothman, P89-90, 1989) The key here is that women produce the offspring of men. Women's reproduction is seen as being for men; to continue their lineage and pass on their wealth. Therefore, a woman's sexuality must be aligned to a man, just one man, to insure paternity. In today's modern world, we have paternity tests to prove who the father is, but this is a recent practice. Thousands of years ago, there where no such tests, so then how did people know who the father was? One always knows who the mother is; the baby come out of her, but what about the father? This had to be proven by virtue. The woman's sexuality must be confined in order to insure male paternity as absolute. How our system got this way is something historians, anthropologist, sociologist, writers, theorist and others have all wondered about,

...Engels' (1970) *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. Although it was first published more than a century ago, its line of reasoning is plausible, and has provided the basis for much subsequent writing on this topic. Engels argues that prehistoric societies were characterized by systems of governance that were once matriarchal and communist and, despite the existence of a sexual division of labor, women's status was in no way inferior to that of their male counterparts. However, all this changed as agriculture replaced gathering and hunting as the principal means of subsistence, with men taking it upon themselves to keep any surplus generated, and ultimately, to pass it along to their descendants...Engels' thesis was greatly developed by feminist scholars in the 1970s and 1980s...Many of these writers posited a biological basis for patriarchy. Scherfey (1970), for example, sought to explain the domination of women by men in terms of the women's capacity to experience multiple orgasms and her capacity to perform with more partners (no need of keeping an erection).

Within this frame of reference, women were subordinated in order to circumscribe and control their procreative potential (Schifter&Madrigal, 2000, p.93-94).

If Engel's and other's theories are correct, then in order to insure the new order and new opportunity for wealth, the man must guarantee his lineage with control over his family: "The principles of a patriarchal

kinship system denigrate all nurturance, that of women and that of men, in favor of genetic ties”(Rothman, 1989, p.92). Think about the concept of genetic ties over nurturance, how this notion is continually reinforced, in literature, movies and television. The long lost relative, who no one has ever met, but leaves his fortune purely based on the genetic tie. The long lost, (wealthy), father coming back for the abandoned son, (who has been adopted by a poor family), to bring his son to his rightful place in the world. These are two of many circumstances that spotlight in our society this idea that genetic ties override nurturance, especially in cases of wealth. People may think that wealth equals nurturance. It does not although monetary wealth provide things, which can aid in nurturance. True nurturance is emotional, mental, physical support. Patriarchal lineage runs on the idea that genetics, who the father is, is more important, than who is taking care of the child emotionally, mentally and physically. The financial burden, of taking care of the mother and children 15

rely on the father. With such an obligation to be powerful, successful, able to provide money and therefore security, the father does not want to be financially responsible for children that are not his.

He has to protect his wealth and power.

In today’s world, due to science, women’s and men’s paternity are looked at as equal in western countries (Rothman, 1989, p.91). A child is seen genetically as having come from both the man and the woman. There are cases where the children are given both the mother’s and father’s surnames.

But patriarchy is well established and able to bend and transform: “Since men’s control over women and the children of women is no longer based simply in their (no longer) unique seed, their economic superiority and to her privileges of male-dominated social system become increasingly important”(Rothman, 1989, p.92). In Teresa L. Ebert’s article “The Romance of Patriarchy: Ideology, Subjectivity, and Postmodern Feminist Cultural Theory”, Ebert writes about patriarchy under capitalism, a system that relies on multiple forms of labor and work forces from both men and women:

Women are periodically required as a cheap and available source of wage-labor at various levels of the economy, from manual to professional, while some men in turn engage in aspects of non-wage domestic labor. In order to perform the work required of them as they enter the (wage) labor force, women find it necessary to acquire cultural attributes previously reserved for men (such as assertiveness, analytical thinking, ambition, and leadership) and to occupy positions and perform functions previously defines as masculine, while the men who become involved in the domestic economy assume traits usually assigned to females (such as nurturance, emotionality, and tenderness).

The differentiations between masculine and feminine increasingly collapse under the pressure of capitalism, yet patriarchy finds new ways to perpetuate male privilege, making sure the wages property ownership, control over production, and political power remain largely gender differentiated (Ebert, 1988, p.20-21).

The power differential can be seen in The United States, by looking at the ratio of men to women in the Congress. In the House of Representative there are 76 female’s to 362 males (congress.org). In the U.S. Senate, there are 17 females to 83 men (congress.org) Those numbers show that women hold 17% of the congressional and senate seats in the United States, men holding 83%. It has also been shown that even though women are in the work force in large numbers, they are not receiving equal wages for equal work. According to The National Network for Women’s Employment, a grassroots organization fighting for women’s rights within the economic (public) sphere: In 2006, the average full-time working

woman was paid only 77 cents for every dollar that a man earned. This gap remains even after differences in age, education, geography, hours worked, and other factors have been taken into account. One year after college graduation, women are paid only 80 percent of what their male counterparts earn. Ten years after graduation, women fall further behind, earning only 69 percent of what men are paid. As women get older, the wage gap widens. The 16

wage gap is larger for *women of color*. African-American women are paid only 66 cents on the dollar compared to white men, while Hispanic women are paid just 54 cents for every dollar white men are paid (now.org).

In the United States, power and wealth are still mainly in men's hands. But even this is not enough to truly continue patriarchy. I believe men keeping power and wealth is a result of the gender roles between men and women continuing these inequalities. This is done through heterosexuality and the romantic script:

In the face of these changing social and economic roles and attributes for women and men, how does patriarchy successfully maintain and reproduce the domination of one gender over the other?

...Patriarchy acts on individuals to reproduce gendered subjectivities through the consumption of commodities, notably texts. Especially effective in this process are what are called popular texts: mass-produced novels, films, television, comic books, and so on. The most powerful texts for reproducing gender distinctions are romance narratives, which are crucial sites for the operation of patriarchal ideology (Ebert, 1998, p.21).

These romantic scripts are instilled in boys and girls from very young ages. The little girl who wants to be a princess, the boy who wants to be a prince, action hero, soldier, the brave hero who saves the princess and or society:

Virtually all the archetypal fairy tales about boys involve the enactment of agency (e.g., solving a problem, finding a lost object, slaying the dragon), whereas traditional stories about girls almost always involve the renunciation of agency (e.g., being saved by the prince, being denied passage to adulthood, submitting to marriage) (Ortner.), (Blume&Blume, 2003, p.788-789).

From early ages, these romantic scripts, that are almost always heterosexual scripts, are told to boys and girls. These romantic scripts continue with us as we age. One of the biggest new fairy tales for teenagers, *The Twilight Saga*, is based on the idea that the male (an indestructible vampire) falls in love with the female (a venerable human) who he continually needs to save and protect. These romantic stories keep the power differences and gender roles of men and women alive through the ideology of heterosexual romance, desire and love. Not only do they establish the gendered power dynamics, they also reinforce hegemonic gender beliefs, steaming into sexuality. These romantic stories are based in heterosexualism, which is also monogamy, one man for every woman. The princess is waiting, virtuously, for her more powerful prince charming. Ebert argues all this is done through ideology creating requirements for desire:

Individuals are not coerced but willingly ('freely') enter the site of male or female in the already existing patriarchal system of difference, privilege, power, and exclusion signified by gender because ideology, particularly through the harnessing of desire, makes gendered subject positions seem not only desirable and pleasurable but also the way things are: the obvious that goes without saying (Ebert, 1998,

Romantic scripts continue into Adult hood. Let's think about movies. For both female-geared films and male-geared films, there are romantic scripts that go along with the hegemonic gender ideals being shown. Think about the comedy romance: guy gets girl, loses girl, gets girl back, or the action hero flick: guy saves world and love interest. Our hegemonic gender ideals are heavily associated with the heterosexual romantic script. It is not just a heterosexual script, but the attachment of desire, longing, fulfillment through heterosexuality. Women are not just taught to be a certain way, but to also like a certain type of man. Same for men, they are not just being shown and taught what type of man to be, but also what type of women to like. Ebert in her article "The Romance of Patriarchy" explains patriarchal hold on heterosexual romance, through analyzing the romantic script's found in romance novels. She connects them to the romantic ideals that are being institutionalized throughout society of heterosexual romance, occurrences that can be found in books, movies, television, music, art, etc. Ebert first shows how heterosexuality is constructed on the basis of men representing the phallus and women representing the other. Each time a women aligns with a man, it states to society that she is the other and he is the phallus:

To analyze the production of gendered subjectivity in patriarchy, we need first to identify the fundamental injunction organizing it. It is the law-of-the-father-described in psychoanalytic terms as the Oedipal and castration complexes-which in its broadest sense is the mandate enjoining the subject to line up on one or the other side of the opposition seeming to have or seeming not to have the phallus constituting gender difference. The phallus is the privileged signifier around which nearly all signifying practices in patriarchy circulate...The prescribed gender position in patriarchy is, of course, male: male, man, and masculine are all naturalized signifiers for seeming to have the phallus...But women, unlike man, is negatively constructed; she is relationally defined in the patriarchal symbolic order as not man, as the other, as the one lacking the phallus-penis and consequently the one excluded from power and subjected to the rule of patriarchy and the domination of the privileged male gender (Ebert,1988, p.31, 34, 35).

Elbert goes on to explain the impact of romance as the controlled sexual desire of women through these heterosexual romantic scripts:

Desire is not the automatic natural sexual response that romance narratives present. Rather, desire, as conceptualized in Lacanian psychoanalysis, is the effect of the patriarchal symbolic order...It is the unrealizable longing for wholeness of self and unity of oneness with another...In romances, the hero is represented as the sexual complement who completes the heroine's lack, making her whole in the orgasmic unity and oneness of genital sexual relations, whether theses are actualized in the narrative or metonymically displaced onto a kiss... the hero as representative of the phallus and patriarchal power, instigates and controls the heroine's desire (Elbert,1988, p.40).

In the end, Elbert explains, that no matter how gender challenging women are, meaning women whom she calls bi-gendered due to their careers, and personal access to power, through aligning to a man, subscribe to the patriarchal order:

The heroine objects not to male power but to male promiscuity...She thus insists that the hero permanently take up the place of her sexual partner in order to guarantee that relation. Such a demand is represented in the narrative as female power over the male, when in fact it reproduces female subjugation to the patriarchal order. By representing female resistance, power, and desire in terms of the demand for male commitment as a reliable sexual mate, patriarchal ideology locks women-and their precarious female subjectivity-into permanent monogamous sexual relations, thereby securing them in the position of not-male for life...(Elbert,1988, p.44).

Elbert, through her analysis of the heterosexual romantic script, via romantic novels, shows that patriarchy is perpetuated through the act of heterosexual monogamous relationships. Marriage between a man and a woman reinforces the patriarchal hold on society. This can be seen through the pre-fixes of names. A man no matter what is always a Mr. But a woman is a Ms. until married, then she is a Mrs. Aligned to the masculine. Marriage between a man and a woman reinstalls the patriarchal structure of the male kin-lineage, that patriarchy is built around. Keeping the power aligned to the man.

Gender outside of Heterosexuality- The Question

If gender roles reinforce heterosexuality which reinforces patriarchy, then what happens when men and women do not identify with their supposed gender script? What happens to their gender identities and gender roles, power dynamics in relationships? Is the main catalyst for denying lesbians' and gays to marry in the United States and other countries to not undermine patriarchy? If men could be men while dating other men, and women can fulfill all the power requirements and success of a man while being a woman and dating a woman, would this start to unlock genders hold on society, therefore unlocking patriarchy? I will in the next chapter analyze 8 interviews with 4 men and 4 women who identify with being lesbian, gay, bisexual and not straight, to see what gender is like outside of heterosexuality.

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Methodology of Interviews

Over the course of three weeks, I interviewed 8 people; four women and four men. They will be referred to as F1, F2, F3, F4 and M1, M2, M3, M4. The interviews took place in a casual setting. The interviewees knew who I was and what I was writing on, Gender Outside of Heterosexuality. The interviewees could ask me questions at any point during the interview and I would ask them extra questions, exploring their answers. The interviews were done over the phone and in person. F1, F2, F3 and M2, were all interviewed over the phone. M1, M3, M4 and F4 were all interviewed in person.

F1 and F2 identified as Lesbian; F3 and F4 identified as bisexual/not straight. M1 and M3 both identified as Gay; M2 identified as Gay and Queer. M4 identified as being bisexual/not straight.

The interview consisted of questions divided into six parts: Family Background, Gender Identity Background, Impact of Heterosexuality, Relationship Dynamics: Gender Roles and Power Dynamics, Biological Influences on Gender, and "What have you learned living outside of Heterosexuality." The following is my analysis of their feedback.

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Chapter 2: The Women

Family Background

F1 was born in 1981, growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area of California. F2 was born in 1983, growing up in Gainesville Florida. F3 was born in 1982, growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area of California; F4 was born in 1977, growing up in Central, West Mexico. F1, F2 and F4 all grew up in two parent house holds. F2 and F4 both had fathers who were the primary financial providers and mothers who stayed at home. Both of F1's parents worked; mother was a nurse and father was a doctor. F3 was raised primarily by her mother, who was also the primary financial provider. All of the woman interviewees described themselves as not very religious. Both F1 and F3 described themselves as culturally Jewish. F2 was not raised with religion and F4 was brought up in a Catholic household, but more socially than religious.

Gender Identity background

F1 and F4, rejected femininity and their expected gender role of being "a girl" at young ages F1 "I hated that I was a girl, hated wearing dresses, doing anything with hair... I remember thinking I should have been born a boy, but wasn't... I thought girls where weak, not very confident... Later in school you notice that other girls are wearing their hair pulled back, interested in clothing, not picked for sports teams anymore, and having to find other things to do at recess. At 10 or 11 it became apparent to me that I would do things the other girls wouldn't do, sports, karate. When I was 7 and 8 a lot of girls were in karate with me, by 11 I was the only girl in karate."

F4 "Dresses were so uncomfortable, I was restless, I wanted to climb trees and buildings, because I was good at it, doing those things in a dress is uncomfortable... I told my mom I wanted to dress as a cowboy, not even as a cowgirl, because cow girls wore skirts. I wanted to dress as a cowboy, I wanted to wear jeans and boots

...I was not interested in becoming a girl, I hated dolls, I used to love play mobile and cars, I believed that boy's toys were more fun than girl's toys."

Both F2 and F3 describe growing up taking part in both girl and boy normative activities.

F2 "I was sort of a tomboy, but not in a major way, I was comfortable being a girl, but not into being a girl in a major way. I was split down the middle."

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F3 "I was allowed to choose whatever toys I wanted to have. So I wasn't just surrounded by pink and little dolls. It was much more diverse than that.... I had a lot of girl friends, but I also played T-ball and Soccer. I was often the only girl on a team with a bunch of boys.... My mom described herself as a tomboy when she was growing up, so the idea of being outside the American stereotypical norm was okay in the environment that I was raised in."

During their pre-teen years, both F2 and F4 explain that awkwardness and identity, in general, were the main case of their emotional and physical concerns.

F2 “I was a very awkward pre-teen kid. I was gay and didn’t know I was gay, so I wasn’t into boys. I remember crying when I got my period, I didn’t want to be an adult, I didn’t want to be a woman, I just wanted to stay a little girl.”

F4 “I was a rebel by that time; I couldn’t find my identity. I looked like a girl, not like a young-woman. I could not find my identity because I did not know what to identify with, a girl or a young woman. My mother would dress me in dresses and other young-woman clothing, I would feel ridiculous. So I chose to be a rebel, wearing tee-shirts and jeans.”

For F1 and F3 the pre-teen years were different. F1 was still struggling with her female identity.

F1 “I was upset with having to be pigeonholed with aspects of being a girl.” F3 described her pre-teen years as consisting of talking to her girlfriends and starting to like boys (F3

identities as bisexual)

F3 I remember getting my period and talking about it with my girl friends. I also started being attracted to boys at that time...The main thing I think about is being a hormonal adolescent.” In high school, both F1 and F2 talked about how during those years, they started to realize their attraction for females, as well they started to appreciate their femininity, in themselves and others.

F1 “I Started to change; I saw strength in womanhood, strength in the female aspect, strength in gender as well. Women have always had ways of using our disadvantage to our advantage... I think what happened was, when I was a little kid, I was attracted to women and wanted to be a boy, because I couldn’t figure out how as a girl I would get to be with women. I didn’t understand the lesbian thing, so it would make more sense, if I were male or more masculine, I would get to be with girls. In High School I realized that was not actually the truth, it all got a lot easier. I could enjoy being feminine and more girly.” **F2** “I started to figure out I was into women, I only told one friend... I became a lot more comfortable with being a woman, dressing more traditionally female, wearing make up. For the first time, when I was a junior in high school, I started to develop physically at that time, also the first time in my life started to become nice 22

looking, I was a little less awkward, more comfortable in my own skin, I was able to accept a little bit more, being a woman.”

F3 and F4 had very different experiences in High school. F3, started to question femininity, and what being feminine was for her.

F3 “The last time I shaved my legs was when I was 16...it wasn’t so much to make an impression on anyone else, it was because I didn’t want to. Why am I doing this to my body if I don’t want to? That’s an age in particular when a lot of teenage girls are shaving or wearing makeup or making themselves look feminine and girly and I wasn’t. My mom always encouraged me to make decisions and think for myself. Even as a child, she gave me the power of making my own choices - in all aspects of myself including how I acted as a woman.”

F4 on the other hand was dealing with social demands of her community, trying to avoid being stereotyped and judged.

F4 “I learned how to be a girl, mostly by looking at the other girls. By that moment I knew that I had to fit if I didn’t want to be stereotyped... if I didn’t act girly I would be stereotyped as a dyke or a tomboy, and the place that I come from tomboy and dyke are the same. So I dressed girly, but I really didn’t have the genes to know how to dress, so I would imitate my friends. It was very difficult for me because I never thought that I had to have an identity, I didn’t want to be taught by society how to behave, I wanted to be myself.”

Impact of Heterosexuality

Since heterosexuality is the norm in society, I asked, “At what point did you start questioning heterosexuality?” This is something, questioning heterosexuality, that as a straight person, you do not have to do, if you don’t want to. What is the process like, identifying yourself as in essence, the other, something different then what society expects of you? The answers I got were varying.

F1 “When I was 4, I remember being attracted to girl characters in picture and pop-up books and as a 4 year-old not knowing what to do with that feeling. So I hid it under the rug. When I was 13 or 14 I started thinking, you know...”

F2 “I was 16, I went away to a summer program at Duke and I had a relationship with a boy there and at the same time I also meet this girl, it was a friendship, but I was clearly in love with her. Afterwards I went home, we would write letters to each other constantly, and I would be so excited when I got the letters, my hands would be shaking. At some point it kind of dawned on me that this was not a friendship. I had feelings for her that were romantic. At that time I said I was bisexual but by the time I was 18 and went off to college I realized I wasn’t very interested in men.”

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F3 “When I was 19, I was taking a class at UC Berkley, female sexuality. It was during that semester, when I was in that class, I started to realize that I was attracted to women. I realized that I had been exhibiting behaviors, kind of wanting to take care of my girlfriends, do nice things for them. I thought, “Oh that’s interesting,” wanting to kind of be their partner, be strong, stand up for them, if need be or be loving towards them. That could be friendship or that could be something more.” **F4** “I never questioned heterosexuality really; I think that I question homosexuality. I started to really question heterosexuality or the right to be different when I was about 27 years old. Since that moment I’ve always questioned homosexuality.”

In these answers we see the different ways in which the question of “who am I attracted to” came about. For F1, she new at a very young age, so young she didn’t understand and know what to do with the feelings. F2’s realization came out of a friendship with a female. F3 made the self-realization through a college course, helping her realize that a lot of her behavior towards female friends was treading a line that maybe she wanted to cross. F4 on the other hand, didn’t question heterosexuality as much as she questioned her homosexual feelings. And through that questioning of “a right to be different” started to question what it meant to be homosexual.

To understand the outer perception of heterosexuality, I asked the question, “what is heterosexuality for you?” Both F1 and F2, believed the concept of heterosexuality was, in reality more fluid, less fixed.

F1 “There are people in the world who are heterosexual completely, there are people in this world who

are homosexual completely, but most of us fall between these two categories, closer to one side or the other.” F2 “On the Kinsey scale, there is no ideal model of what heterosexuality or homosexuality is, what you are mainly attracted to, that is what you are.”

F3 and F4 both saw social constraints in the term heterosexuality.

F3 “It’s conventional, it’s accepted, what’s considered normal in society. I am Bisexual, so I feel like I can look at it both as an insider and an outsider. For me it’s nice in a way. Sometimes when I am with women I feel like I want to occupy the typically more masculine role, and sometimes I want to occupy the typically more feminine role. In a heterosexual situation I get to be the women, which is sometimes very nice and very sweet feeling.”

F4 [Heterosexuality is] “The way you should behave to be accepted in society. The normal, the guideline, which I think is very unfair for some people who cannot live by that guide.” 24

When asked about the term Institution of Heterosexuality, both F1 and F4 saw the institution of heterosexuality as a social demand; something that is placed upon society to follow.

F1 “Heterosexuality as a norm is incredibly pervasive, incredibly wide reaching, hard to approach and dismantle. The Institution really relates to what we think of as a healthy family. What a lot of people think about is mom, dad and kids as the healthiest version of a family. I have come to believe that families come in different unique ways. People have come to fear families that are different because of the institution of heterosexuality and its pervasiveness. If I had kids, I would want them to think they were loved and cared for, not that their family didn’t fit the societal norm.” **F4** “The church, the only argument that really gives heterosexuality a reason. Take out religion and then you don’t really have arguments against or in favor of heterosexuality... By saying it is the only way that you can go to god. It is better for you to stay un-married than to live with a partner from your own sex. If you do live with a partner and have sex with that partner, then you will go to hell. You won’t be allowed to go into heaven’s doors. It is difficult to fight against that, if they tell you that God said that, it is like that, how do you fight that?”

F2, however had a very different response, one that more explored the reasons behind the institution of heterosexuality on a personal level.

F2 “Ninety-five percent of people in the world are straight, then they are going to see the world from that perspective. People who are not into gay rights don’t know the history, not out of malice, it just never crossed their mind to care... It’s not a conscious attempt to make everybody straight; it’s more a consequence of privilege. If you’ve never had to think about it you’re not going to, to the extent that you’re white male and heterosexual you only have to be that for five minutes a day, the rest of us have to be what we are all the time, it’s not called to your attention if you’re the default.” When questioning heterosexuality, does this lead to questioning one’s gender identity? Or does questioning one’s gender identity lead to questioning heterosexuality? For F1 and F2, both felt that they questioned heterosexuality, not their gender identities.

F1 “I questioned heterosexuality because I felt attracted to women, not because I didn’t want to be a girl. I am happy with being a feminine, girly, strong woman. I am not into the extra’s, such as make up, shopping or handbags, but I like the energy of the female gender.”

F2 “I was questioning heterosexuality first, because by the time I reached adulthood I was fairly comfortable with my gender. Heterosexuality I had to deal with, whether I wanted to or not, on a personal level.” 25

Maybe both F1 and F2, felt comfortable in their gender while questioning heterosexuality due to the exploration of gender identity at younger ages. For F3 and F4, questioning heterosexuality, was also questioning what it meant to be a woman, for them as individuals.

F3 “I’ve never really questioned my gender identity. I’ve questioned what it means to me to be a woman or what I want it to be. It’s more about what other people think or what other people may want to think, it’s not about me so much, because to me I am just me. I am a woman that is strong and bold and assertive and am also someone who’s very tender and sensitive. I can’t always give support; sometimes I need to receive it. To me I view myself as a woman but more so I just view myself as a person.” **F4** “I questioned my gender identity when I was really young, maybe about 19-20, because by that moment I knew I liked girls, but I liked men also, so I didn’t know how to behave or how I was supposed to identify. If I liked girls that would mean that I was a lesbian, but by liking boys also, that means I was heterosexual. By that moment I didn’t know there was something in-between called bisexuality, so I didn’t know how to identify myself because I thought that I was supposed to dress as a lesbian, which is in a very masculine way, because I was supposed to be wanting to be a man. Which is a very childish way to think, but at that time where I was there was not too much information. As I started to grow up I started to find my own identity, I started to question heterosexuality, why should I apply to an identity that is already built, instead of my building my own identity? I questioned heterosexuality, and built my own identity which led me to question heterosexuality even more.”

What does it mean to follow a different discourse than the one of heterosexuality? I asked F1 and F2 what being a lesbian meant to them.

F1 “I would define it as a women being sexually and romantically attracted to another women. What it means to me is that we get to create our lives the way we want.” **F2** “There is an institution of lesbianism too, which is good and bad. On one hand, it can be a really positive unity to be a part of. It is a certain kind of understanding you have with a person, that you don’t have with somebody else or even a gay man...there is something lesbians have with relations to each other. It can also be negative. There are a lot of stereotypes even in the lesbian community about what you’re supposed to be. If you’re a lesbian, you’re supposed to present your gender in a certain way. If you’re too feminine, and I am fairly feminine, that’s looked down upon, or you’re not really gay or you should try harder to fit in with us, and that can be oppressive in it’s own way...It’s very hard for butch women too, there’s an expectation that you’ll be alternative in an confirmative way.”

I asked F3 and F4, what it meant to them to be bisexual

F3 “It means having a lot of freedom, and even if I don’t act on it or nothing ever occurs from it, but allow myself to acknowledge my attraction for people, whether they are gender A or gender B. It’s honestly what’s more authentic to me than choosing I am only attracted to women or I am only attracted to men, because that’s not the case for me... I think there’s pressure, even in the bay area and a really excepting family, for me to be straight, because it’s what’s considered ‘normal’. Not that anyone would really have a problem if I was 26

with a woman, just a little easier for people around me if I was with a man. It might feel more clear cut to them if I were to say I am a lesbian.”

F4 “I label my self a human being but when I am with a woman I am labeled a lesbian.” **Relationship Dynamics: Gender Roles and Power Dynamics** The discovery of one’s sexuality does not happen overnight. For this, I asked the women, what was their journey out of heterosexuality like? All of them had different stories.

F1 “Me and my friend went to the gay pride parade as ‘straight allies’. When we got there, this reporter from the Chronicle asked us about sexuality. I answered everyone’s bisexual, in a very cerebral research way...then she asked what is your name and sexual orientation, since I just went off on this thing that everyone’s bisexual, I said ‘I am bisexual’ ... I got on the phone to my sister and said ‘I think I just came out, but am not sure. I have to check tomorrows Chronicle.’ At that time I was still dating men.”

F2 “I sort of wanted to believe that I was bisexual for a long time, keep open the possibility that I could be

‘normal’ at some point. I kept trying to have relationships with men, whom I treated fairly badly in retrospect.

In high school, I strung them along for a long time, I kept wanting to think there’s something wrong with me because I am not feeling anything for them, if I keep stringing them along, at some point it may naturally develop, that I do feel something for them and that was not realistic. It was not until I went to college, I started meeting other gay people, other lesbians. It didn’t seem so much like the end of the world if I was gay and it didn’t preclude me having what ever kind of life I wanted to have. At that point I started to realize that is who I was.”

F3 “I was in this class, where we were encouraged to ask ourselves questions and I remember thinking, “I am attracted to women.” There was an assignment and I was like, yeah, I fit into that middle category. When I was physically with women it was confirmed for me that I liked that.” **F4** “My first kiss was from a girl. My first relationship was with a boy and my first sexual relationship was with a woman. Since I can remember, I’ve been attracted to both sexes. When I was a little girl I felt very attracted to girls and boys. I didn’t know what that was, and it was very confusing for me cause I didn’t know what was happening. At 14 years old, I understood there was a sexual attraction (to woman) actually, but I did not know that it could be. So I was worried, not to be attracted to so many women, because I thought that I should feel different than men. It was not until 17-18 years old that I understood that I was attracted to both sexes equally. I expected to have magic happen with a man that the one would come and then I would know that he was the one, but no. I didn’t know there were lesbians, so I thought it was normal in a certain way and when the real attraction came I would feel it. At 18 I had a close encounter with a female friend and understood that that was attraction and that was it. I liked men and women and it was equally the same. It took me a long time to accept that... I was trying to find my identity, but then I realized I didn’t need to find my identity, but the right person. Women don’t try and overpower you, don’t want to, so it’s a more equal relationship, so I’ve been involved more with women than men since I made that discovery” 27

Everyone plays roles in relationships. The question is what roles are we playing and do you play different roles for different people. Does your role change when you are with a person of a different sex compared to the same sex? **F1** describes not knowing her role in her first female relationship **F1** “In college I dated this woman, who just got out of a relationship with a guy, and who was very feminine. I

thought that I had to be more masculine; sometimes I felt like we were acting. I thought she wanted a more masculine person. I played with lowering my voice, pretended to be more jealous than I actually was... In my senior year I started dating a woman. I wasn't trying to act like the man in relationship. I was trying to act as much as myself as I actually could, so I could enjoy being a girl who wears lip-gloss and kisses a girl who wears lip-gloss as well."

For F1 and F2, dating men consisted of the man, in a sense, trying to catch them. For F2, the role she played for women switched with the one she played with men.

F1 "When I dated men, I was trying to be the sort of feminine woman that was pretending not to be a lesbian, acting like a hurried business woman would act. I didn't want to slow down long enough to have to sleep with him or cuddle with him. A woman who had so much on her plate that dating is the last thing on her mind, a woman who was always on the move."

F2 "With women I've always been sort of the pursuer, I guess in some ways you can say, is the traditionally male role, I don't know, I'm always the one who seeks the person out. The reverse happened when I was with men. In my mind, and I was young and I know this isn't fair, I sort of saw it as getting back, because I had something they wanted, but not something I had to give up. Because I didn't want to have sexual relations with them or anything like that, I could get things from them, emotionally and get a certain amount of worship, for lack of a better word. I feel like I could make them do things, sort of the reverse of my relationships with women in some way... Women had something I wanted. I was longing for them and I felt so privileged in some ways that a woman I was attracted to or in love with would want to be with me. I would do a lot for them and really put myself out there. With men I sort of expected them to do that for me, because it got me that sense of being really wanted, that I didn't always get from being in relationships with women." For F3 and F4, who are both attracted to men and woman, they talked about the roles the men they dated expected them to play.

F3 "When I dated men, it was normal, standard, heterosexual. When I started being with women, I felt like I was able to occupy both sides and have a little more freedom to be where ever I was in the moment, whether it was the more masculine or feminine side. With men, the feminine side more naturally happened, and depending on the man that I was with, they sometimes would not be comfortable if I was being masculine or exhibiting some of those traits. They would say little comments, like 'why are you doing that?', 'you should do this'."

F4 "With the men, I would allow them to perform some masculine traits, like let them open the door for me and sometimes I would challenge them, 'I don't want you to open the door for me.'" 28

In relationships, there are not just roles, but there are also power dynamics, in some relationships more than others. How do the power dynamics change in different relationships? With people of different sexes? F2, F3 and F4 all talked about the different power relations they had while dating men and women.

F2 "I often felt more powerless in my relationships with woman, because it was real on an emotional level. It was something that I wanted so much. If you're in love with someone or just very longing for them, you just feel like they have you wrapped around their finger, with men, once I realized I could be attractive, I could have a certain kind of power over them."

F3 "When I dated men, there was a sense of sometimes yielding to what they say, or taking their word

for it, or going along with whatever they say, or saying okay, they know what they're talking about and maybe I don't, and that occurs with me much more with men than with women. With women there's a lot more sort of exchange and back and forth and communication about these details... Sometimes there is pressure from men, when they are like 'hey I know what am talking about, leave it'. Often woman give more space for questioning."

F4 "The places where you could see the dominance was in sexual relationships where men always wanted to be in control, and I would let them... I had one relationship with a female, and she was older than me, around like 4 years older, and she wanted to have a certain dominance. For example she didn't want me going out if I wasn't going with her, or she didn't want me to wear make up even though she would wear makeup, but am not sure if that was a dominance thing or if she wanted to look better because we're still girls and are still competing; I don't know for whom... I think it's like a kind of power relationship. Women are valued more for their physical appearance than by their strength, so that's the way a woman can show that she is more powerful, is by being more beautiful or feminine or more attractive in some way...I think most men who I dated, wanted to break me down; they wanted to be with me because I was very strong. I think it became an obsession for them because they wanted to be with me, to break me down, and that would prove that they where very powerful because the managed to break me down. Sometimes they were very macho. This one man I dated wouldn't want me to go out, even though he would go out. If I were to go out, I wasn't supposed to do that, because I was a girl. We talked about getting married and he told me he wouldn't want me to work, because he wouldn't want another guy looking at my butt... I broke up with him... I come from a very known family, people know who I am, where I come from, and one woman I dated wanted to use that, use my power, she felt more powerful being with me. But my other relationships with women are more equal, it's like being with a friend, you just have sex with that friend." **F1**, Described the equality she has found with dating women.

F1 "If you're both feminine, which is what I personally like, who does have the power? It changes back and forth. Who makes certain decisions; is it sexy when you push for something you want or is it sexy when you make them come to you?"

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When asked if they felt a partner ever reminded them of a parent, **F1**, **F3** and **F4** all said yes. **F2** said no. I followed that question up with asking if they felt that recreating the relationship dynamics of their parents, the heterosexual relationships that they grew up with, if this is a heterosexual pattern.

And can we change these patterns through gay and lesbian relationships?

F1 "Yes there are patterns that you can change through lesbian relationships and we are re-conceiving gender all the time. But at the same time you're always in a relationship with a person, so they've come with their norms and baggage... We all grow up with a family or in some particular dynamic, even if we intellectually want to be different, even so our earliest memories and the things that impact us as very little children will be with us. I would say, yes we can change the patterns of one person having more power, change the patterns of somebody being subservient and somebody being very powerful and making all the decisions....At the same time if what we want resembles the way that we grew up it's pretty understandable" **F2** "You're less likely to end up with a partner who is willing to play the opposite sex role, but I've watched gay people screw up relationships the same way their parents did. You can be a gay man and still have married your mother."

F3 “I think it’s more likely that it will change in those relationships, but those patterns still can occur.”

F4 “I think so, I once told my mom that I would never marry a guy and she asked me why and I said, “Tell me the name of one guy who has never cheated on his wife or girlfriend,” and she couldn’t. At least in my context I’ve never met a couple that wouldn’t perform the same patriarchal traits, like cheating on their wives.

I think it’s very important for Mexican men, to show their masculinity by having many women. So if you are a man, even though you don’t sleep with another woman, then you are not considered manly enough. Men have to work and bring the bread to the house, the one who is supposed to be the head of the family. Women can work but it’s an option. If you are a man it’s not an option, you have to do it.” I asked about patterns within lesbian and gay relationships, and if they are different or the same as those in heterosexual relationships.

F1 “We get to break out of those gender molds. We don’t have to be cardboard cut outs of “this is what a man is; this is what a woman is.” But if we want what we want, that’s the way it is. We don’t have to change our underlying desires. If we desire and are attracted to feminine women, rather than making ourselves attracted to butch women or biker chicks.....or we can go for the career woman, who is strong and also soft, vulnerable and expressive.

F2 “Those relationships tend to be more egalitarian, just because you have to negotiate more. In a straight relationship it’s a little easier to assume that the woman’s going to do the dishes and the man’s going to fix the car. In a gay relationship you come into it not knowing who’s going to be responsible for what, you actually have to sit down and talk to each other about it. I think on the whole it’s a good thing because it allows you to negotiate your roles instead of just stepping into them. I think a lot of straight people it doesn’t even occur to them to ask if that’s what they wanted or not.”

F3 “Yes, there are less patterns, there is more diversity of what can occur, in my experience.” **F4** “They also use patterns, which are considered heterosexual patterns, just used in their roles, like the active/passive. Some women use more masculine traits, but their partners are more feminine. Or I’ve seen 30

some couples use their own language, in which there is no real visual power relationship and it’s more like a friendship.”

Biological influences on Gender

Biology has long been a question for gender. How much does biology affect gender identity? **F1**

views biology’s impact on gender, as hormonal, something that affects people’s physical traits and feelings.

F1 “I do think hormones impact our gender...Biology affects my gender because, like it or not, women, in our 20’s and 30’s start to feel these nesting and reproductive instincts, not everyone, but a majority start to look up and say, ‘Ya know, there’s something that appeals to me about being pregnant, having a baby, nurturing a baby that never did before,’ but it’s a strong biological urge.” **F1**, who as a profession is a hormone specialist in Acupuncture, goes on to explain her answer further.

F1 “We all have, what we consider male hormones, like testosterone and female hormones, like

estrogen and progesterone. We all have those within our body, and yes when you have higher levels of estrogen and progesterone, then you start to display, at least in your body, not to say anything about your mind, because your mind is a different story, but you start to display different traits that we associate with being feminine...

If you start giving a woman testosterone, not only does she start to grow facial hair and have sort of a physical change, which could be subtle or could be overt, but it's possible to have an emotional response as well." F2's view on the biological impact of gender is different, but still exploratory.

F2 "It's one of those questions that is impossible to answer, because I have nothing to compare the experience to. I think probably to a degree, I have thought about or asked myself before, if I was born in a male body, because I do identity as a woman and I feel fairly happy with that feminine role and energy. If I had been born as a man would I put myself through what people put themselves through to reconcile my mind and my body, and I don't think I would. I think that if I were in a male body I don't think I would be the most masculine man that ever was, but I think I would learn to play that role, and I think that I would learn eventually to be comfortable with it and it's not my first choice. I think that answer means that it's mostly [gender roles] something that I learned and can unlearn." For F3 and F4, biology's impact on gender, is more their idea and enjoyment of being a woman, and the freedoms that come with it.

F3 "As a woman, society is more accepting of women occupying a broad range of roles and identities and characteristics, than it is of men doing that, I can have short hair or long hair, I can wear pants or dresses, and 31

that's okay. If a man wants to wear make-up both people (men and women) will react adversely to that. Being born a woman in a way there's a little more freedom, to go where I want to go, than if I was born a man." **F4** "I enjoy being a woman, I've never wanted to be a man. I love my body as a woman body; I enjoy having curves and I enjoy a woman's body. And I enjoy the power a woman's body can have with a woman or a man, that attraction. [Being a woman] probably has opened more doors, I know I can be attractive to men and woman and that makes me more powerful, I believe... Sometimes I had to learn how to speak patriarchy, and sometimes that's useful. Sometimes when I want something small, I just smile and a lot of doors are open. I use my role as what they think a woman should be, to achieve certain things." I asked the interviewees what their current gender identity is. All the answers were reaffirming of their identity of being a woman.

F1 "A feminine woman, my gender and sex are aligned and at the same time I am gay. I don't want to be a different gender, but I do want to be a lesbian and with women who are more like me. I am attracted to the feminine and the communication."

F2 "A woman, female, I am pretty comfortable with the feminine role. On the outside I come off as fairly traditional... Female gender is more performance oriented than male gender, more costumey and I enjoy that.

I really like the beauty of the clothes, the jewelry, and the makeup. I think I would miss that if I didn't have it."

F3 "I identify as a woman. I feel there is freedom in that for me, that I don't necessarily have to look a certain way or act a certain way, that it's broad."

F4 “As a woman, I play with my femininity. Sometimes I like to look feminine and sometimes I don’t.

Sometimes I like to look androgynous, and so I play with that. The way I feel, sometimes I like to look sporty it just depends, and I like to do that because that reinforces my conception that I can change. Because I am not lesbian, am not heterosexual am bisexual so I can change, am not defined by anything, not even by myself, just the way I feel at the moment.”

What have you learned living outside of Heterosexuality Living outside of heterosexuality, is not something that everybody gets to do. With living outside of the social norm, one learns and sees things different than the people who are living within heterosexuality and not questioning the social discourse they live within. I asked the women what they have learned about themselves from living outside of heterosexuality.

F1 “Being true to yourself is way more fun and worth all of the risks... Living in heterosexuality was incredibly uncomfortable, even though I did it for many years. Even after I realized I was a lesbian.” **F2** “I am not always as courageous as I like to be. It is hard to come out to people. What they don’t tell you when you come out for the first time is that it’s not a one time thing. You’re going to be doing it for the rest of your life, over and over again, and it’s not even that I always fear how people react, it’s just this extra burden that you have to deal with. Your sexuality is always assumed; you don’t have to come out as straight, so it’s not something straight people have to do.”

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F3 “It’s not as simple as society or the media would have us believe, living outside of heterosexuality. It’s like being who I am in all aspects of my life, not just as a lover or a partner or a woman, but like being more willing to ask myself questions in other aspects of my life, not just my love life or gender.”

F4 “That it is so fun, it opens so many doors, and mostly it opens your mind. I never know what a limit is because I never had them, I’ve never had any fear to say that I feel attracted to a woman or that I feel attracted to a man and of course that opens a lot of doors, there are no boundaries for me. I can feel attracted to a white woman or a black man. I don’t see any distinctions and I think when you learn to look at life like that, instead of seeing a lot of doors closed you see a lot of doors open... I think I define the world in a different way then the heterosexual conception, the heterosexual concept has a lot of limits, this is like this and it can not change. Where as this has a certain shape, but it can change, you can mold it. So for me there are not rules... Except human rights, but no rules that say how people can love, because I don’t think that can be ruled, unless someone does not love you back.”

I asked, what have you learned about others, from living outside of heterosexuality?

Both F1 and F2, reflected on others that lead them back to themselves, and how they want to be living.

F1 “People don’t really care as much as you think. Most people who one would care about, like family and friends, are pretty happy to know you and enjoy your company, and are not terribly concerned with what others are thinking about you and that’s important. I am still too concerned about what other people think and what it looks like from the outside.”

F2 “I think the big thing that I learned is that people are very much in their own point of view. People that I might think might be more aware of gay issues and gay life, just aren’t. It’s been a revelation to me that something that is so incredibly important to me is so incredibly unimportant to somebody else,

and it's also made me realize, I can do that too in other contexts."

Both F3 and F4, talked about how they have learned to be more tolerant and less critical.

F3 "I've learned to try not to make assumptions, whether it's about sexuality or where someone is from or anything. Learning to remember I don't know anything about this person. When I see someone I see how they look how they are dressed and that's very little information about who they are." **F4** "To respect a lot, and not be surprised, some people like weird things and we have no right to judge. By judging them we are opening the door for people to judge us. Of course there are illegal things like pedophilia, or rape, but outside of that. People have different tastes and people are weird, if that's what makes them happy, who are you to say that you shouldn't do that."

The final question I asked was, "What have you learned about society, from living outside of heterosexuality?"

F1 "We are well on our way. It's taken many hundreds of years to get to the point where we fear gay people and fear woman's power. It's taken thousands of years to ingrain that in our society and yet it's only taken what 30 or 40 years tops to have this complete turn around. Women's rights and the movements of the 60's, 33

the feminist movements, second wave of feminism, that's a very short time. Five thousand years of patriarchy compared to 40 years of feminism. We see these simple changes all over... We're very malleable as a society. I hope that we continue to be more flexible, because you know I certainly do still feel occasionally threatened or occasionally I can't be honest about being gay. I can't come out to everyone, but I think that it is changing. I am pretty optimistic about human beings in general."

F2 "Maybe it brought to the forefront that there is no one society, and with a society as big as the one we live in, there's going to be sub-cultures within sub-cultures and there is no one monolith, but either one can be freeing in its own way to be a part of and repressive in it's own ways to be a part of, and you can sort of move from one to another. That is a positive thing to realize; the place you are, is not necessarily the place you have to be. It's not moving from one side of the country to the other, but sometimes walking down the block, will put you in a different world."

F3 "Even people who have many gay friends and are excepting of gay people, that they still can be really surprised when they find out you're not straight and there is this momentary 'oh really?' and then it's gone, usually and they're like 'okay cool' but there is often surprise when someone finds out your not straight. I think most people consider heterosexuality the norm, and that for most people they are more comfortable with that, it's a default, they are used to thinking in that way." **F4** "That society can be so judgmental, and sometimes they are drowning in a glass of water, that they make problems out of nothing. I just don't understand why society has to regulate sex and who you want to sleep with. what do they care if I sleep with a man or with a woman? Why do they care what I do under the sheets of my bed? Why does that have to be important, why does it have to be different, if I have the same ideas, I slept with men I slept with women and I still think the same? I don't think sleeping with a guy makes me think different and so I don't know why that would enable me to be a better person in society, and society will reject you sometimes. I've never been rejected really for being who I am, but maybe because I kind of fit into society because I am not a masculine person, I define myself as a girl and even though I don't care about looking feminine, I think I look feminine. I know other women who are very against being feminine so they are masculine on purpose and they face rejection, I think it's a way of

societies saying ‘we won’t accept anything we don’t agree with.’”

Those interviews and answers help define an image of womanhood that is not often looked at.

Those women are women, identifying with the female energy, feminine traits and behaviors. Yet at the same time challenging what it means to be female through their different relationships and different actions. Not being afraid to play the more masculine deemed roles in society; rejecting aspects of femininity that they do not agree with and finding strength in the areas of womanhood that they do agree with. Their sexuality challenged their gender identities, expanding their ideas of femininity.

Chapter 3: The Men

Family Background

M1 was born in 1949, growing up in Los Angeles California. M2 was born in 1984, growing up in Sarasota Florida. M3 was born in 1979 growing up in Cartagena Colombia, and M4 was born in 1982, growing up in rural Wisconsin. All four males came from two parent households. M1 describes his two-parent household as not being stable, due to his fathers binge drinking problem.

M1 “My father would work for a year and then disappear for two weeks.” When M1’s father would disappear, his mother took on the primary role of care giver and financial provider. M2’s parents both worked; mom worked as a nurse director and father as a free-lance attorney; M2’s mother was the primary care giver, but said his father helped as well. M3 and M4 both came from two parent households, where the fathers were the primary financial providers and their mothers were the primary care givers. M3’s mother went back to work when he left for college.

M1 grew up Catholic, but renounced the Church at age 12, still going to church with his mother to make her happy. M2 was raised Jewish and is part of the recent structure Judaism sect today, which he describes as very liberal towards gender and sexual issues. M3 was raised Catholic, M4 was raised Methodist. Both M3 and M4 describe their mothers as the ones who took them to church, and are now on their own not very religious.

Gender Identity Background

Everyone learns gender in different ways; the question is how gender is learned throughout different periods of human development. When I asked M1 how he learned gender during his elementary years, his answer was very direct.

M1 “I watched everybody else. We mimic, we are a mimicking people and we mimic the people around us.” For M2, his answer was more detailed, tracing back memories from pre-school through elementary school.

M2 “They [his parents] always bought me boy toys; they never bought me dolls or anything. They bought me army toys or gender neutral toys like legos and log-building blocks, but I guess even those are more boyish toys... When I was younger I always used to play dress up too. It was a common part of my childhood. I had a 35

bin full of dress up clothes, and used to play with my friends. So that was there as an option... I remember when I was in pre-school and I had a boy friend over and I was three or four and I thought it was a fun idea to take off our clothes and play doctor...In Elementary school it was definitely, boys are supposed to date girls. I had a kindergarten girlfriend. We would go kiss in the corner of the playground, and we would also play cat’s cradle. So I was doing some of the girl things, but kissing the girl too, because that was the expectation. I think there are definitely expectations for what boys are supposed to do in sports, what boys are supposed to like and if you don’t fit those categories, it sucks, especially if you are a boy and just aren’t good at those things. Boys are supposed to be good at sports and if you’re not, does that question your boyiness? I think it definitely does; even as an adult people [men] get picked on just because they have effeminate traits or because they aren’t Macho.”

For M3 and M4, their earliest memories of learning how to be a boy centered around family and friends. M4 struggled with the dichotomy of what was “me”, and what was “them”.

M3 “I remember for example, I had two brothers growing up (one 10 years older, one 9 years older), so in a way they initiated me into the rights of manhood. I lived in a man’s world; all my friends were boys I used to do karate when I was a kid from five to ten.”

M4 “I think from watching my dad, and from being with other kids. I guess like my mom was there all the time, so what she told me about it, like how to act and behave. Obviously she couldn’t model those behaviors, but she was the one who was always there. It was her guiding behavior... It’s tough to figure out how much of being a boy is directed by me and how much is parent directed, simple things like what toys I played with, what Halloween costume you’re going to wear, how much of that is because I wanted to be playing with He-man and how much is because that was just what was around, I don’t know In the pre-teen years, what seemed to be on M1’s mind and the biggest influence was puberty and the specifically biological boy traits that go along with that.

M1 “I don’t know if you know about boys, but boys get 15 hard-on’s a day. They have no control over them at all, they just come. You’re hornier than a hoot owl at that age. All of a sudden you go into puberty and you’re popping boners all over the place. You have no idea what to do with them, they’re just there, it’s true, it drives boys crazy.”

For M2 and M3, their recollections about their gender identity as pre-teens centered around key memories; with M2 it was not just his emerging sexuality, but also school and religious socialization moments. M3 remembered the impact of a specific incident concerning his emerging sexuality, as well as social factors.

M2 “I think maybe a small piece of it was religious, I was active in Judaism, I learned about bar mitzvah and bas mitzvah, I learned in pieces what women and men did. I remember the sports like gym class, P.E. class, there was some picking-on of people for what they did as compared to the things that that category is 36

supposed to do. I did really well in the presidential fitness test, I set the flexibility record, because I was in gymnastics, and people were like great, but you’re a boy, even the teachers were like, ‘This kid is flexible, that’s weird.’ That probably wasn’t celebrated as it would’ve been if I had been a girl who was super flexible. There were also definite gender norms. I was kind of on the outskirts of this friend group, this group of like 20ish boys and girls. And I wanted to be in, and to be in you had to flirt with the girls all the time. You had to have your little relationship. I remember when I was in 7th and 8th grade I had a lot of these really short relationships. I had a crush on so and so, and then a three day relationship, because that was what you were supposed to do. But I hung out with more guys than girls. I was definitely closer to boys at that point. I remember as a pre-teen the pornographic instincts, the sexual instincts that I had, on my own time when you are playing on the internet, was towards looking at men, but I was still hooking up with women and going through relationships with women, probably because society told me that’s what you’re expected to do.” **M3** “I remember an incident, where my parents actually caught me playing sexually with my male cousin.

They got really angry and had a talk with me that boys don’t do that with other boys, that was horrible and they hit me; they separated my cousin and I. I was about 11 and my cousin was 13... I remember that I had a boy group. I hung out with the jock group, from when I was 13 to 18. I played soccer and I

did karate as well.”

M4, in his pre-teens, learned how to be a boy through movies, and activities M4 “From movies more than anything, else like Rambo and Arnold Schwarzenegger. My family hunts, so I grew up hunting, like birds and deer and what not, practicing shooting guns and bows and arrows, those were all activities with my dad. I was also in boy scouts, so I guess that would probably have influenced a lot through out the entire process, being socialized with boys in a certain way in a hierarchal structure. What you do as a boy you go hiking and camping, outdoors.”

During high school M1, had bigger problems than gender conformity, which was the easiest part for him, due to his physicality.

M1 “I didn’t do well in high school. The last semester I got five F’s and one A. The A was in physical education,. I was kind of butch. It was my attention deficit disorder. I just couldn’t concentrate; they didn’t know anything about it in those days. I had a sister who was really popular who was dating the mayors son, who was on the varsity basketball team, and something happened in the locker room and he took a swing at me and I ducked, and his fist hit the locker, he broke all the fingers in his hand so he couldn’t play basketball, so I had the whole basketball team after me... I didn’t feel like an insider. My life at home was just miserable.

The rent was paid, there was food in the fridge, but there wasn’t any harmony at home.” For M2, high school was about discovering and expanding his ideas on gender and sexuality.

M2 “With boys it was always blah blah blah straight sex, and I probably wasn’t that interested in the blah blah blah straight sex. Even though in 10th and 11th grade I had a long term girlfriend and that was the last time I dated a woman. Until I turned 17, I never kissed a boy even. But there was interest. But I didn’t really feel oppressed and for a while I thought I was bisexual...In high school, I became more aware of sexuality and what that meant. Before, gender was more like this is what boys do and this is what girls do, and boys dig girls 37

and men inseminate woman and have babies and then when I became a bit older I started to see more gender non-conformity, I do remember in 8th or 9th grade I got picked on incessantly by this one girl for being gay, and this was before I even knew I was gay. I think I had behaviors that transcended what was expected of the boy category. When I first came out to myself, and told one friend, I was 17. I left high school and went to New College. When I was 17 my parents said if you are bi, just be with a woman it will make your life easier.

With the career you want to have, because I am a teacher, it will be easier because they [the parents] won’t let you touch their children; you can get married.”

M3, during his high school years was involved in a gender segregated atmosphere, in which he had two identities.

M3 “We had very predetermined roles. I hung out with only men and the men, they taught me, but my brothers as well. I was the transmitter between the boys and the older boys. My brother taught me what an orgasm was, for example, and then I taught my friends that because I was the one with the older brothers. I think my brothers influenced a lot how my identity as a boy was shaped...I actually did have a gay identity back then in the sense that I used to fool around with boys, my cousin at 11, and then I

had a boy who sucked me at 13 and then at 15 I used to play with this other boy. So there was always that underlying element, but I was thought to be straight, hooked up with girls. I lost my virginity to a girl at 13. I dated girls throughout high school. I didn't see it [hooking up with boys] as being gay; I was just fooling around. I probably knew, I felt it, I just didn't want to admit it at that point. My friends were happy to see me dating girls and they would encourage it. We would have this-I kissed a girl, I did this to her, I sucked her titties, you know stuff like that.

It kind of made me have a stronger group solidarity.”

M4's high school years were full of self-discovery, due to a lack of influences.

M4 “Very tough to say, I don't think I had anyone teaching me at that point; peers maybe. There was no really strong role model. My dad was there but we couldn't really talk at that point. My group of friends was pretty small. I was pretty unpopular in high school, I only had two friends, three friends, and we sort of did what ever it was we felt like; which was video games and goofing off... So mostly from myself and feeling it out... It was confusing for me.”

For the men, their gender identities were heavily influenced by social factors and emerging sexual desires, but also by the emotional turmoil of transitioning from a child to an adult and dealing with interpersonal problems that can sometime overshadow and or add even more complexity to self discovery.

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Impact of Heterosexuality

I asked the men, when they started questioning heterosexuality. For M1, M2 and M3, this had to do with the realization that they had sexual attractions and emotional feelings towards men.

M1 “There are two ways that people come out, naturally or sucked in to it. I was sucked in, and it just fit. I never did well with girls. I was in my early 20's. There was a sexual revolution at that time. I came to San Francisco, I didn't know anything about sex... how do you know if you like strawberry short cake or not, you try.”

M2 “15 or 16 and that was after an extended relationship with a woman, not because of that, just, ‘Hey, I am kind of interested in men.’”

M3 “When I was 15 years old, and I started to hook up with this boy regularly. I was still hooking up with girls, but I new that I liked him.”

For M4, he physically questioned heterosexuality before he emotionally questioned heterosexuality.

The act of doing so was not defined, and confusing.

M4 “12 or 13, I had sex with my best friend, who was a male. We always slept at each other's houses from like 7 on. But at the age of 13 we found out that we each were masturbating and thought, ‘Oh we should do that together,’ and it just started from there and went and went and went. He is straight and getting married this November. I am not sure I am gay, but I am not straight. From fifteen to 18 I did not have much connection to my dad. He was there but there was not a lot of emotional connection there

The relationship with my mom was just anger, so there was no real emotional connection going on in my life and he was the only one I felt emotionally involved with, and I was also having sex with him. Through that relationship I felt in love with him and he couldn't or didn't return that emotion. It wasn't until about 10 years later that I realized what happened and why I felt so fucked up about him. It was because my heart was open in that way, and it just felt like banging on this brick wall of his heart, because he couldn't or didn't return that emotion at all. The physical was there, but he was just using it as 'this is an orgasm, it feels good, it's fine, it's safe, whatever.' For me, it was a big problem. We had all these long ass conversations about how we were straight yada yada yada, and for him that might be true, probably true, but for me it wasn't. At the time I was thinking I am straight, I am attracted to woman, but here is a sexual outlet, that's there available and safe, why not take it. I can come like three times a day, because I am not satisfied; I am 14. I didn't start coming out to myself and dealing with the possibility that I might not be straight until the age of 22-23. Between 13 and 22, there was just this huge tension going on in my life, between having sex with guys and trying to be falling in love with women, and I got really self destructive. Twenty-two was when I really started dealing with heterosexuality or not heterosexuality, and then I found a boyfriend and was in love with him." When exploring the idea of what is heterosexuality, all the men's answers lead back to a personal note on how heterosexuality has impacted and for some invaded their lives.

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M1 "Two guys with baseball bats screaming Bible scripture at me while they're beating me up...It's a life style that perpetuates the species. What would we do? Where would we get all those cute men?...I look at heterosexuality as a variation on a theme, like homosexuality, like transvestitism, people who like to have foot sex, people who like to have leather sex all of these are variations on the theme. Some heterosexuals wouldn't call heavy leather sex among heterosexuals normal, but it is a variation on the theme." **M2** "On a base level heterosexuality is, males being with females. But it comes with a lot of baggage. I guess that's the other level, hetero-normatively is a huge baggage and comes along with heterosexuality, all these norms that people expect you to follow for your gender and where you are... Heterosexual privilege, heterosexuality is the accepted norm. If you aren't heterosexual then people consider you to be abnormal, maybe not as much anymore. But it's certainly like oh yeah there's that gay guy, gay people, gay is often used as a negative, where as heterosexuality is never used as a negative, it's the positive, the normal, what you should be according to society."

M3 "On the Greek roots, it means liking a person from a different sex, being attracted and liking of different sexes...I think that it's the status quo. It's how people should behave in terms of finding partners. It's what's perpetuated in society. When I tell people where I come from that I am gay, people think it's outside the norm, that it's some kind of deviance in that since it would be the conventional behavior as opposed to the deviance."

M4 "Heterosexuality, the first word that comes to mind is 'straight- jacket', and the second word that comes to mind is 'myth'. I think that there is a heterosexual ideal, that no one really lives up to, even if they think that they do. For me, no one is 100% gay or 100%`straight. For me, it doesn't seem like human sexuality works like that, the binary. It's restrictive and unimaginative and denies the richness and fullness of what it is to be human. You can be attracted to men; you can be attractive to woman and that's okay. It doesn't mean that you're a fag. It doesn't mean that you're a breeder; it just means that you're attracted to someone. Sexuality is important, but only as an expression of love, so if your heterosexual or homosexual, you more often express your sexuality like your expression of love for a

particular gender, it's not really about who you're fucking, it's about who you're falling in love with. And I think that's a little more balanced than what my dick thinks. It's about what does my heart think and if am healthy then I can express that through my physical body." When talking about the institution of heterosexuality, M4 had very clear ideas on how he was impacted and, as a result, how he views the heterosexual institution of masculinity.

M4 "Heterosexuals are fine, it's only when especially the institutional masculinity, the hegemonic version of masculinity gets involved that it gets really sick... That's what I found in the military, a lot of people trying to live up to this masculine ideal and it's impossible and if it was possible you wouldn't want it, because there's no emotion except for anger... Physical strength, heterosexual promiscuity, patriotism is wrapped up in there and a set of ethics that is adhered to all the times, and I don't think it really matters what the ethics are as long as you have your principles: stoicism, not showing emotion, that's what it is...as opposed to what I would consider more healthy masculinity, which of course strength is a good quality, patience is a good quality, at the same time feeling the depth of emotion and the depth of love, hope, kindness, courage, no one would say those aren't masculine. In the Rambo version those don't exist and if they do exist they should be suppressed."

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The men, at one point or another, had to question heterosexuality and when questioning heterosexuality, did this lead to them questioning their gender identity? For M2, M3 and M4 it did.

M2 "Questioning heterosexuality led to questioning gender identity for me, I guess, but they were very far apart. For a long time I was identifying as a bisexual male, but really only interested in the male side, thinking maybe I'll go for a female. Then I decided to identify as a gay male, and then I was identifying as queer to be more broad and also pushing my own limits, and then I was considering identifying as trans, because gender, it's all contrived anyway and everyone's gender was fluid, so trans made much sense. But I sort of moved away from that label, because I didn't think it fit. I don't want to change my sex, I don't really want to change my gender, I just want to be the gender I am, which is somewhat fluid and morphs' basically male, with traits that are more neutral and some that are effeminate."

M3 "I would have to say that I questioned my heterosexuality first and then I started to question my gender identity. I had never seen myself as being feminine in any way or masculine for that matter in that way. I never questioned that aspect of myself. Once I came out and was comfortable being gay, I started being comfortable doing female roles as well. I am a very protective person; I am nurturing; I am a maternal man. I allowed myself to be more maternal. I started working with children. I started cooking and taking care of my friends.

In Colombia we have very fixed stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. Those things are not common at all for a man."

M4 "Yeah it did [questioning heterosexuality]. For a year or two I wasn't really sure if I was in the wrong body or not, but doing a little more research I was reassured by the fact that most transsexuals know they are transsexual for a long time. They feel like they are in the wrong body for a long time... so there was a short time I was like maybe I am a woman. And then I worked on that for a while. I am not a woman; I am just not a straight man. That was close to the time I came out, with time and becoming more and more me, feeling more and more what am feeling instead of suppressing

everything, it became clear that the version of masculinity that I subscribed to [the hegemonic version] for two decades wasn't really the fullest version." For M1, questioning heterosexuality, led to greater inquiry of heterosexuality and the impact it was having on himself and others.

M1 "The key when I was coming out, was "come out, come out, come out" and you just leave that behind, you leave your heterosexuality behind and know you're going to explore it... and finally you're going to pick up some experience. A lot of people never pick up that experience because they are too afraid...It

[heterosexuality] worked but it didn't work for me. I don't want to be too mean, but most of the misery... We wouldn't have had to come out if you didn't put us in. I knew people who went to mental hospitals because they were gay. I knew people who had lobotomies because they were gay. That's why I live in San Francisco and never leave."

For M1, M2 and M3, identifying as gay means certain freedoms, but it also means dealing with negatives imposed on them by other people and society.

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M1 "One of the great things that I like about being gay is being able to gender jump, like being able to put your hands up like a hooker on a light poll and acting the fool and being effeminate. What are they going to call me, 'Queer?' I know that. Just being able to be... Being gay there are no gender rules... That's what hurts, heterosexuals inflicting their value system, and sometimes they will do it one way or another. I think being gay is a gift. It gives you perspective on things that other people haven't got. It gives you a tolerance, if you're lucky...there is no weight, no special hand shake. Have you ever seen guys hug, one hit on the back, they even have their fucking hugs down to a ritual. I don't want to live in an environment where the hugs are down to this certain way, 'you can only hug this way' and it's the way that the straight guys and the butch guys hug.

Gag me with a spoon. There is too much structure for them, we're still finding out who we are." **M2** "On a basic level it's about who you're into. Honestly, I don't see much difference in my being interested in men and having a great long-term relationship and doing what I do, compared to being interested in women, having a great long-term relationship and doing what I do. But at the same time, it means so many more things, because it means difference, it means all of the history, it means having to come out all the time.

It's been an issue at the work place. I am out at the place I work now and it's awesome... Gay means a completely different social circle for many people. I am friends with gay and straight people, but I tend not to be friends with very masculine, macho guys, which is all the things that are typical male things to do, watch sports, drink beer, work on cars. Also a way of talking very masculine, very gruff, I like people who communicate...Gay is a term that had to be reclaimed, and Faggot is getting reclaimed right now, in the community a lot of men call each other fags, which I am still uncomfortable with." **M3** "Being gay is a way of saying I feel more comfortable dating people from my same sex and I feel more comfortable establishing emotional relationships with them as well. From my own experience I feel that being gay has liberated me a lot, allowed me to explore a lot of aspects that if I would not be gay, I would not have allowed myself to go emotionally...In my personal case I didn't have a lot of problems being gay. By 19 I was cool with it, but my parents had a lot of problems with it. That shaped what being gay was for me, in a negative way, with a lot of stereotypes and restrictions. For many years I

thought that gay people were inferior. My parents told me I would never find a good job because I was gay, so I grew up thinking I was not good enough. That I was never going to be able to achieve my personal dreams or goals because of being gay.”

Identifying as bisexual for M4 means not having to be restricted.

M4 “I find that straight men are really restricted in their imagination about sex. For me what are really vanilla sex acts really freak straight men out. Like anal play for example is like a really big ‘oh god if you put a finger up there I am going to be gay.’ Straight men, straight women, gay men, gay women, I think straight men have the least fun in bed, because of the gender identity that they subscribe too and the way their sexuality is subscribed too. What they are socialized to accept is extremely restrictive. Everything from watching TV, driving down the road, reading a book, everything has a certain way of doing things. Straight men are told who they should be attracted to at every turn. I find that they are very unimaginative when it comes to their sex lives and it sucks for them. Not to say that it isn’t that way for the other three groups I just outlined, but all I am trying to say is I think straight men have the least fun in bed; maybe straight woman, because they have to have sex with straight men.”

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Relationship Dynamics: Gender Roles and Power Dynamics The journey into one’s sexuality is different for everybody. For M2 and M3, the realization of who they were attracted and drawn to was not easy, having to deal with the struggle of self acceptance.

M2 “When I was younger, like 13ish, I started being attracted to men, but also was interested in woman.

When I was 16 I started coming out to myself and some people; I identified as bisexual. Then I slid along to identifying as gay when I was 19. There was a lot of baggage about that word, that identity. I remember how hard it was to go from being bi to being gay, the negative stigma that gay men have, definitely being gay was looked down on in my mind. At one point I thought if I were gay, it would make all these jobs so hard, it’s not something I liked to identify as, and I may have identified as queer before I identified as gay.” **M3** “I think it was always underlined. When it actually became apparent, when it became real for me, I was 18

years old. I was on a airplane, and I met this man who was about 40 years old, and he fell desperately in love with me. He started courting me, and I thought he was sexy as well, so I decided to leave that airplane with him, get into his car and have, like, real sex. Then after we had sex I actually beat him up, because of how bad I felt. When I was a teenager, we sucked each other but there was no real intercourse. There was no connection that we had. I just felt very wrong about it at that particular time. With his help [his 40 year-old boyfriend], he made me understand there was nothing wrong with being gay. He gave me a lot of love, not only sexual energy but a lot of affection and that actually helped me in that journey of solidifying my position of a gay person. We dated for two years. We had a very strange relationship, because I wasn’t out to my friends, so I always kept on lying to my friends to be with him. I started doing a lot of drugs because I was so confused. So in that sense I would have to change my answer to the previous question and say I did have a problem with being gay at one point. I actually started doing a lot of drugs to sleep that side of me. Not assume it in a sense. So I felt bad going to him, it felt good as well. So it was a very love-hate relationship from my end. Since he was 40 and very established, he could manage it very well.” M4’s Journey out of heterosexuality helped him reform his self identity and the way he processed emotions and viewed what it is to be a man; allowing him to

reassess his role in relationships.

M4 “I started to talk about the friend that I have and the sexual relationship, so after years of that going on, I was dating women on and off, and I was about 22 and I came out, and when I came out there was a female friend of mine I was spending a lot of time with, and one night I just said to her am bisexual. I even came out as bisexual. I didn’t come out as gay, and then very soon after that I found a boyfriend and I was in love with him. When I was having the conversation I was in the military, so everyone knew me as straight, so there was a lot of coming out conversations I had to have, with my parents, with my brother. Every one was super supportive, which is awesome. I could have been a lot less lucky than I was. I would always say, ‘I have a boyfriend,’ and they would say, ‘so you’re gay’ and I would say ‘I guess,’ and that sort of continued. I dated him for three and a half years, broke up with him and five months later I was with a girl. She broke up with me after six months, so now am single. But probably the next person I am going to date will be a female, because I have somebody in mind. Before I came out, the relationships I had with women were just really bad, really bad for her and bad for me, because it would always end up with her crying and me being clueless about why this person is so upset, because I was suppressing all my emotions. I couldn’t feel a lot at that point. All I felt was tension and anger. Then I came out, and started feeling love and it happened to be for a man and that 43

was wonderful, just started unpacking two decade’s worth of suppressed stuff, cried a lot, which I hadn’t done in ten years.”

M1’s journey out of heterosexuality was also a journey into a whole new world and society. M1

moved to the San Francisco area in the early 1970’s, a time and place where a new and different cultural atmosphere was being created in the United States.

M1 “The gay community was so spontaneous in those days. I knew the hippie community, but I didn’t know the gay community. I met this guy and moved down to the Castro [San Francisco neighborhood]. I had probably two or three sexual relations with two or three gay men but I hadn’t really explored it yet, and then all of a sudden I was here, I was queer and I wasn’t going shopping...you just went out, you had sex with people and you discovered that some things you like, some things are too far out. For some people it’s too far out and they venture back to heterosexuality and that’s were they stay for the rest of their lives.” How do gender roles play a part in relationships? What gender roles were playing out for the men while they dated woman, how was it different or the same when they dated men?

M1 “I went out with women...No I didn’t feel like I had to play a role, it just didn’t fit. It’s like going through a box of gloves in a drawer and nothing fits and then finally finding a pair that fits and say wow this fits. It just never worked.”

M2 “I was supposed to pay for dates more often when I was with women. When you’re with men it’s like more of a question mark, and more whoever feels like it can pay. When I was dating a woman, I paid and I was the one who was supposed to go get the car to pick her up. Most of the other role stuff I think it was just being me.”

M3 “When I dated girls I assumed the traditional gentleman role, open the doors, pay for the dinner kind of thing...When I was with the older guy he assumed sort of the paternalistic type of role, the male role and I was the female. He was rich, older; I was a student, a lot younger. He could afford to invite me; he would even give me cash sometimes. All of my boyfriends have been completely different. I’ve

had completely different roles, sexual roles. I don't think I've had one relationship that is even close to the other ones. The only thing that all my boyfriends sort of share, are their physical appearance... That's the thing I don't think gay relationships are very marked, especially with contemporary ones. With my other boyfriends it's been 50/50, we pay 50/50, and take turns sexually."

M4 "In my teens and very early twenties, when I was dating women the first time, it was very traditional; I am the man and I was in the military so she would have a secondary role to that, because if they say you're, going on deployment you can't not. Also nothing in my life, except for me, would be primary. Because I wasn't feeling any emotions so my girlfriends never lasted more than a couple of months and mostly sex-based and that was kind of it. I was very dominant in that way. Until this year, no one had ever broken up with me, that control was with me, I was at a distance, so that gave me more control, because I wasn't as invested as the 44

other person was. My boyfriend of 3 and half years, he was a mechanic and super manly. I was the breadwinner, I had the career, but I think, I was more in a feminine role. I really think we were fairly equal, because we lived together, it was like who does the dishes, who does the cleaning and it could switch back and forth. It was kind of lovely that way, who could be more feminine that week, whatever. I think of the two of us I was more domestic and that was okay. Now in this new period of my life, looking back at the relationship I had with this woman, I think it broke up because she was looking for more traditional gender roles and I am not really in that place, and other reasons too...One of the things is that I wasn't being , and she was young, but I wasn't being as much of an asshole as she was used to dating." Power dynamics are always present in relationships, whether they are balanced or unbalanced. The question is what are the different power relations going on and are they different with different people and different sexes. Power relations are not limited to just the people within the relationship.

Sometimes there are third parties as well.

M1 "Lots of power dynamics, just like yours [heterosexuals]. You meet two people when you meet somebody on a date, the person they are trying to be and then the person they really are." **M2** "There was a power dynamic with my last girlfriend but I don't think it had anything to do with our

[romantic] relationship, more with our professional relationship, we were co-directing our high school play.

Maybe one time, she and I were making out in a car and I noticed I always tilted my head to one side, so I asked her if she was right or left handed. I think she thought I was trying to initiate a hand job and got mad. I suppose men are supposed to initiate stuff like that...All the guys I've ever dated, I haven't really seen any power dynamics, maybe slightly with this one guy I dated. I was older by a few years; there might have been some age stuff. But I don't think any gender stuff."

M3 "I've had four boyfriends in the past ten years. With my first boyfriend, he had power because he was older, but I controlled him very much because he was in love with me, so I told him what to do and he would do it. With my second boyfriend, and this is very interesting, I admitted to myself I was gay, because I never did with the other guy, I never did. I started dating a younger guy and my parents caught me having sex with him. They actually kicked me out of the house after that. It was a very long traumatic kind of process. My parents asked me 'Are you gay?', I said, "Yes I am, and I don't care.' They asked me to live a double life, I said,

‘No way. I am not going to marry a woman.’ They kept saying, ‘Decide, decide.’ and I said, ‘Okay, am gay.’

With the second boyfriend the power dynamics were pretty balanced, like, I would say, they have all been with the rest of my boyfriends...It depends on the person you date as well. Some people feel more comfortable taking certain roles, but that doesn’t necessarily make you more or less powerful.” **M4** “The one I can speak the best about is my boyfriend. The reason is, I was pretty much the sole income earner, and that created some serious problems with us, because it was supposed to be a dual-income situation and he couldn’t get his shit together enough to make an income and that put a lot of strain on us. From a power standpoint, more pressure was being put on me, than I was willing to accept. So how it translates, and that’s one of the stressors, how he would deal with that was to get depressed, and my response to that was to become totally co-dependant. So I was super controlling, so if he was happy it was my good job that he’s happy and if he was depressed it was my fault he was depressed, there was something I was not doing and someone I was not being to make him be the other way. That passive-aggressive, dependant, co-dependant...

With the girl, just like all my relationships, I was the one with the career, and that defines what’s happening in 45

my life. I moved away to come here [Costa Rica]. I moved away from her to go to school, so that was a priority decision. My stuff, my career was more important than being close to her. For me, I had been in a long distance relationship before. I had been in a committed relationship before; it wasn’t a big deal. But for her it was. Power, I don’t know, but being the person in the relationship with a plan, opportunity and drive that was different.”

M1 and M2 never had a partner who reminded them of a parent. For M3 and M4, both of them had relationships where they felt a partner reminded them of their father, and in return they felt like they were playing the role of their mother, recreating in certain ways their mother and father dynamic. I asked the men if they thought recreating the dynamics of your parents is a heterosexual pattern. For M1, M3 and M4 it was more about socialization through the family dynamic than a solely heterosexual pattern.

M1 “Again the mimicking, it’s like the guy who sees his parents beating up each other, then goes into a relationship, that’s normal for him, but the other person he’s going out with will go ‘What the fuck is happening? I never saw anything like this before.’ There was all kinds of that stuff going on, all types of stuff we take from our parents, mostly bad, mostly good, mixed... what I got from my parents, probably attitude, doubt, suspicion. It gets handed down...I was a really bad coke head for years and I drank. You don’t hang around people who aren’t doing that because they’ll ask you ‘Why are you doing that?’ You hang around people who are doing that, because if they call you on your shit, you’ll call them on their shit. Some people date who they feel comfortable with, if you’re raised blue collar you probably date blue collar. If you’re a Stanford whiz kid you’re probably going to date a Stanford whiz kid, there are exceptions to the rules... It was the hippie days; it was a journey. The first two or three relationships I had failed, because the only criteria I had was my parents and mimicking, and using those values and those values were fucked, but that’s what I had. And it took five drug rehabs to figure that out and a whole lot of therapy.” **M3** “In a sense that it’s what you know, so it’s what you feel comfortable with, if you see characteristics in your parents in your partner, then you feel comfortable, because you grew up with them, you’re used to them.

You're used to liking and not liking them, you're used to having problems with some characteristics, which is comfortable as well, if you know what you don't like and the person has it, you know what you don't like." **M4** "No, because when I was reminded of my parents I was in a homosexual relationship. When I was reminded of my parent's relationships, the roles were that I would remind myself of my mom and he would remind me of my dad. So in that way, the gender roles are kind of like that, but I am a male and just displaying some feminine traits. No it's more a relationship model more than a heterosexual one... even if I grew up in a house with two moms or two dads, in whatever relationship I had I would probably still model those relationships."

Whether or not recreating your parent's relationship is a heterosexual pattern, I asked if these patterns could change through gay and lesbian relationships. M2 and M3 feel lesbian and gay 46

relationships can change relationship patterns. M4 agrees, but also thinks relationship patterns can change within heterosexual relationships with some conscious assessment.

M2 "I don't even think it's about can we change them; I think we are changing them. It's funny because my students often ask me, 'well who's the guy?' Are you talking about whose the assertive partner when we have sex? Or are you talking about our behaviors and I think for many of them they really just want to know about the sex thing. But they're young, they're teens and the thing about homosexuality that they don't get is 'You're having sex and there's penis and anus and what?' So when they ask that question I think that's what they're asking about. I think things are much more evenly distributed in lesbian and gay relationships. You don't have to have the bread winner be the father and the mother is the care giver. There's a lot more flexibility on that, there's a lot more change on that. This year I can be the bread winner and you'll stay home and watch the kid and next year we can switch, that's okay. I think that all the stereotypical things fall much more to individual likings, am not really into X [this or that] thing, but you are. Those patterns fall by the wayside. We got these things to accomplish, let's do them, alternating for most of them." **M3** "I think that gay and lesbian relationships do challenge a lot of the stereotypes and the traditional relationships, but I think more in the sense of the power balance and the recreating of your family members within that partner sort of thing. But definitely the power balance is a lot different in gay relationships, at least the ones I've been in. In the sense that one person does not have all the power and then the other one is powerless, weak, but we equally have the power."

M4 "Yeah I think so, but they can also change in heterosexual relationships; it just takes more awareness. I think they can change because people, who aren't fully heterosexual, automatically have to question what's going on more. And so there's a way that they have the opportunity to be much more aware than the average person has to be. If you're in a relationship with someone of the same sex you have to question gender roles and how this works and who am I and what is this in the relationship. Where if you're straight, you just fall right into the pattern, which doesn't mean gay people don't fall into patterns, but at least there's an opportunity there for deeper questioning."

Are there different patterns within lesbian and gay relationships? M1, M2, M3 and M4 all said yes.

M3 describes various patterns in gay relationships, some positive, some negative and some recreating gender roles of heterosexuality.

M3 "Yeah, I think that there are patterns for example. There are non-traditional patterns in gay relationships."

We both fulfill both the masculine and feminine role of the relationship in ways, where traditionally the women fulfill the feminine roles, and the men perform the masculine roles. In this we balance each other out a bit more...between two men; it can get very violent, which it did in one of my relationships. Testosterone flying all over, 'you did this', 'you did that' 'RAHHH!', where with a woman, it would be a lot more complicated to hit a woman, with two men, we feel like we are on the same level in terms of strength. So we would. I punched him, he punched me back. I once dated a guy who was very macho, and he felt that I should stay at home and be his bitch basically, but I am not that kind of a person, but there are obviously gay men who are looking for that and other gay men that are looking for the opposite. One is looking for a 'man'

and the other is looking for a 'woman' but they just like sex with a man." 47

Biological Influences

When asking the question, if biology has an impact on gender identity, M1 and M2 saw that it did, through their male sexual organ and hormones.

M1 "Men spend a good part of their lives chasing their penises, even gay men. Men are men. Men are just horny, some more than others."

M2 "Not that much, but men are allowed to watch porn, and I think that gay men are allowed to watch porn and it's no big deal; gay men even more so, I don't know. It's more accepted. I think that maybe that's a hormonal false identity where things end up."

For M3 and M4, being biologically male impacted them through their sexual organ, but also through other social aspects.

M3 "In a way, having a dick did influence the way I handle myself. At the same time I don't think it's that defined. As I told you, as soon as I became gay and came to terms with it I started exploring more options in terms of my gender identity, feminine roles as well as masculine roles. I try to be a man. When I was younger I tried to assume all the masculine roles, which I would assume would be because of my biology." **M4** "I think am pretty typical, that I have a male body and am male. There are a lot of cases where somebody has a male body and is female. Biology isn't the only thing, because there are a lot of transsexuals who are in the wrong body. But for me it didn't occur to me to question my gender until I came out as not heterosexual.

So it was in a period of questioning everything, that questioning my gender started to come out and the answer I got back after some thought about it and feeling about it, was yeah, I am male. It just happens to line up to my biology, and I don't really know how that works... I think that having a dick forces me to have different attitudes towards sex, than most people with a vagina have. At the same time I have met some women who have a compulsion towards sex, and I do have a compulsion about sex. But I see that having a dick and having a vagina are different, I don't know how, but I see there's a difference. It seems like sex means more to women than it does to men, in general, like it's a promise with your body." I asked the men to describe their current gender identity. M1 and M4 both saw their current gender identity as male.

M1 "I am a man; I am a gay man; I am 60 years old." **M4** "Male. I am a man so whatever I do is there for masculine; which is not a popular idea." 48

For M2 and M3, their current gender identities were more flexible, moving between masculine and feminine standards within themselves.

M2 “Maleish... I think it’s a spectrum. I think I am on the male side of the spectrum. I have behaviors that fall closer to the midpoint or the female side. I know that I am a biological male, who’s pretty much interested in biological males.”

M3 “I have a lot of masculine values as well as feminine values. Every day more I try to eliminate the negatives of both of them: negative masculine values would be being too tough and not being able to negotiate with people trying to impose my views and my ideas and that’s it. Not listening to people or anything they say, and saying ‘this is what I want, this is what I do, and that’s it.’ Not having regard for other people; as for the negative feminine roles, gossiping, criticizing, a plotter-manipulative.” **What have you learned living outside of Heterosexuality** When asked about what they have learned about themselves by living outside of heterosexuality, M2

described self acceptance, M3 and M4 described not only self acceptance, but how living outside of heterosexuality has changed them, for the better.

M2 “I’ve learned to accept myself for who I am. I’ve learned about the diversity of humans. I’ve learned that imposed gender is artificial; you’re male so you have to do this, you’re female so you have to do that; that’s kind of silly in my opinion. It’s made me much more aware of gender fluidity and sexual fluidity living outside of heterosexuality. It makes me more aware, made me more open to outside the norm groups, like races, ethnicities and immigration status. I feel like a minority group, but I shouldn’t. I am an upper middle class male, but I do often. I see a lot of things that are artificial, consequently. I think. I see a lot of things and think you’re just doing this because you’re a guy, it’s like come on, do what you actually want to do.” **M3** “A whole new different world, man. I’ve learned to be more tolerant of people and other peoples way of seeing life. I’ve learned to have a stronger sense of myself. I’ve learned to allow myself to have these feminine values and feel good about them. I think it’s been a very positive experience being gay in that sense, I have an advantage to a lot straight people, because I allow myself to carry out a lot of roles with out limiting myself to what is culturally correct.”

M4 “Everything. I feel that without having questioned heterosexuality to begin with, nothing that I know about myself could have been. It was like the cork in a bottle that I’d been packing full of shit for years and years and years. Once I questioned that in a deep way, everything else could start to come out. I learned how to question myself and learned how to figure out what’s really going on with myself through questioning heterosexuality in this really visceral way; falling in love with a man, that will fuck up your hegemonic masculinity. It really felt like the world was ending, because everything I had built up about what was going around me was bullshit, because I had fallen in love with a man, I was totally not who I thought I was, not who I told myself I was.”

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M1, M2 and M3 through living outside of heterosexuality learned about others, that it is all about acceptance: people as individuals having to accept themselves and the people around them. M4

learned that similarly he can’t control others’ emotions, only his own.

M1 “That everybody is different. The worst enemy of gay people traditionally is closeted gay people.

See when you're not straight you don't know what straight is. You're heterosexual, so you go I am heterosexual that's what I am. A lot of people don't have that. They have feeling towards men and it makes them feel bad. They want to have prowess, they want to have a woman; they want to be butch. If they can't do it one way they'll do it by beating up gay people."

M2 "Being gay or coming out have huge impacts on the way other people view you in many ways. It sheds a lot of light on how comfortable they are with the issue when you come out to them. It's constantly coming out; society is not at the point were gay is normal. It is at the point, at least in my generation where it's not such a big deal, at least for the people in the places that I go. There are many places where that's not the case." **M3** "I've learned to be more tolerant towards other people. I've had a lot of homophobia spewed at me, so I know how that feels, and to not discriminate."

M4 "I can't take responsibility for other peoples stuff. And I can't make anybody do anything and nobody can make me do anything or feel anything. Boundaries are starting to appear darker and darker around what's me, what's you emotionally, where before it was all the same. His emotions are my emotions and it feels healthy because you feel so connected, but for me that is so unhealthy." **M1**, **M2** and **M3** by living outside of heterosexuality have all learned about society and society's potential to do better, and the need for leaders, role models and for people who are different to challenge society.

M1 "The potential of society; most people are good, but our country [The United States] doesn't give people the opportunity to show it. The media controls so much, that people are constantly chasing what the media tells them to chase, and it isn't that at all. It's having people who care about you and you care about them back; it's being good. America hasn't had a leader in a long time. We've had businessmen making gobs of money off of us. The media is geared towards making money: Are you skinny enough; are you tall enough; are your nails done well enough? It presents this environment that you are never enough... and I am." **M2** "Society is changing but slowly. There is a lot of homophobia, xenophobia. A lot of total fear of others, a fear of giving up what people consider is theirs to somebody else who they might consider is less than them.

A lot of people don't get that gay people don't have the same rights as you do 'but you do have the same rights' and it's like look at the huge list of rights that we don't have. Some of it is hypocrisy, and some of it is just not getting it. People don't know gay people so that don't get it. Coming out to someone can really help them to realize that they know someone's who's gay. I've learned I don't like coming out first thing when I meet somebody to meet them first as a person, because being gay is not my primary identity. I've become aware of the fact there aren't that many gay role models, so I've always wanted to provide that, now that am comfortable with who I am, now that am an educator and work with kids, I can contribute that. You don't have to conform you just have to be who you are."

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M3 "That is can be very hard on people who are what they deem as deviant. Society always tries to standardize, and anything that's outside that cultural norms is considered bad. It's changing, you know, slowly but surely, little grain of salt to make people more tolerant more open. In the case of gay and lesbians, by being good examples, fulfilling important roles in society, being leaders, by making other people aware that gay and lesbians are capable of doing things outside the stereotype of what gay and lesbians do. I am going to go into a conventional man's world, human security, where I know am going to receive a lot of resistance, but at the same time I know I can affect a lot of change. The conventional roles that gay men go in society can be blurred a little bit; hair stylist, pre-school, teacher, nurse. All the

roles associated with what females do. The president of Iceland is a gay woman. The mayor of Houston [Texas] is a gay woman.” M4 has learned that no matter what part of the sexual divide you are coming from in life, there is plenty of opportunity to get it wrong.

M4 “How unhealthy people are about sex on both the heterosexual and homosexual sides. We talked about really cookie cutter heterosexual relationships in which nothing is really questioned. They do this marriage thing because they are supposed to and they don’t really necessarily question who they are attracted to and what they do and don’t want to be. At the same time there are so many homosexual relationships that are totally messed up and homosexual people who are really messed up because even now it’s totally normal to have 200 partners, that is totally unhealthy.”

The interviewed men opened up and showed their inner struggle of self acceptance and the outer struggle of society trying to control and oppose their decisions to challenge hegemonic manhood.

They are men, but for them to be healthy, to be happy, they have to confront society and the male standard. They have come out of these transformations wanting more for themselves and others; role models, leaders and a different version of what it is to be masculine and a man.

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Throughout both parts of the interview section there was a clear variance between the women and men; the feel and energy of the sections were not the same. How they each saw their gender and the impact of their gender at times had common themes. However the communication styles, how the women and men felt things and the processes they went through were different. I felt that both groups expressed clear gender familiarity; the men cursing and referring to the sexual and the women expressing themselves through the interpersonal and articulating the strength they see in femininity.

Yet, it is thought provoking that the women didn't talk about the element of sexuality in their relationships, where as the pivotal moments for the men were sexual; talk of sexuality being very present in their interviews. The experiences of the women and men concerning their gender and how they were impacted by it were not similar to me; the women, it seemed, had more space in society to question and confront their gender identities, a reason for this could be societies allowance of women to challenge gender roles more openly than men. For the men it appeared like heterosexuality and society invade their gender questioning space through re-challenging them imposing what their gender identity should be. Both M2 and M3, expressed their struggle with identifying as gay, because of the negative connotations they felt that identification had. M1 talked about how he was physically targeted due to his sexuality. For the women, they did not speak about any threatening behaviors towards them due to their sexuality and gender challenging behavior, or any negative feelings towards them from others as the men did.

For both the women and men, the ideas of what their gender requires were tested through varying actions and questioned during numerous periods of their lives. Questioning of gender identities is something heterosexual people do not generally have to do if they do not want to tap into that aspect of themselves, the side that wants to challenge gender norms and requirements. Aspects of femininity and masculinity can be great, fun and liberating, if men and women have the strength to combine characteristics of both. The issue is when men and women are slaves to their gender: A woman feeling that she has to be beautiful always done up, hair, makeup, fashionable outfits, hyper critical of her weight; a man who feels the only emotion he can show is anger, that he has to be physically strong, intimidating, never allowing others to see any "weakness;" both feeling like their self worth is dependant on their projection and performance of gender. In the article "Sociological Research on Male and Female Homosexuality," the authors Barbara Risman and Pepper Schwartz write about the gender non-conformity seen in gay and lesbian men and women: 52

The sociological research on gender suggests that it is untenable to presume that male homosexuals are somehow inherently and even biologically 'feminine' when those behaviors usually associated with women are themselves social constructs. Similarly, it becomes untenable to presume that certain lesbians are inherently 'masculine' when those traits used to define masculinity are themselves culturally constructed and malleable (Risman and Schwartz, 1988, p.132).

As seen through the men and women interviewed in this paper, challenging gender on many levels was a conscious choice. As M1 stated, "what are they going to do, call me 'Queer?' I know that." Gender is performative, therefore the performance can change. Once the men interviewed identified themselves as gay, they started to challenge and change their ideas of masculinity and what it means to be a man, losing their gender ideals and expanding the traits they allowed themselves to identify with. For the women interviewed, it was very clear that two of them they challenged their gender identities at young

ages and questioned what it meant to be female. For the other two females interviewed, they too challenged their gender identity through their journey out of heterosexuality.

In the article by Risman and Schwartz, they find that:

...same sex couples do not mimic heterosexual relationships (peplau & Cochran 1981, Peplau 1982, Harry & Devall 1978, Tuller 1978, Lynch & Reilly 1985-1986). Nor are gay couples too dissimilar from other kinds of intimate dyads (Jones & DeCecco 1982, Kurdeck & Schmitt 1987a). For example, gay men and lesbians are as oriented to steady relationships as are heterosexual men and women (Bell & Weinberg 1978). They use their relationships as a main source of affection and companionship in much the same way as do a matched heterosexual sample (Peplau & Cochran 1981). Gay couples have as high or higher satisfaction as other couples (Dailey 1979, Duffy & Rusbult 1985-1986, Jones & Bates 1978)... Homosexual relationships were found to have certain advantages such as role flexibility, and greater equality (Risman and Schwartz, 1988, p.133-134).

Maybe the reason for such advantages as role flexibility and greater equality are due to the gender questioning that goes on within individuals who identify as bisexual/not straight, gay or lesbian. The ability to change and alter roles according to likes and dislikes, instead of the assumption that men do this and women do that:

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It may be that after the conventions of gender are removed, power inequities are so unflattering to both that partners are intensely motivated to avoid the costs of greater power and powerlessness alike. For example, gay men released from the family provider role do not reinvent it in their relationships; they prefer a more egalitarian and mutually responsible allocation of economic responsibility. Likewise, lesbians do not seek a partner to provide for them, they insist on economic parity (Risman and Schwartz, 1988, p.135).

This idea that men do not inherently want to provide and women do not want to be taken care of directly clashes with the power dynamics put forth through the heterosexual romantic script and desire paradigm. The savior/saved dichotomy which is part of the script, is essentially reestablishing the same idea: the male savior is providing safety, the powerful man is providing power. For the woman to be saved and be taken care of physically, she has to align to a powerful man, and be taken care of through emotional strength and monetary position.

The romantic script that heterosexuals are supposed to follow lays down these dynamics as desirable.

However, Arthur Brittan, in *Masculinity and Power*, refers to the Reality Construction Model; this shows that a person's gender is forever changing and reestablishing through different interactions and situations:

The reality construction model is an alternative to this biographical and developmental view of gender. It argues that gender has no fixed form, and that gender identity is what I claim it to be at this particular moment in time... Every time I see myself as a man I am doing 'identity work'. Although, it may appear that I take my masculinity for granted, in reality I only do so because I work at it. Every social

situation therefore is an occasion for identity work. Of course, it may well be that all the

‘identity work’ I do will prop up the dichotomous view of gender, but this is merely another way of saying that gender is always a construction which has to be renegotiated from situation to situation (Britten,1989, p.36)

This construction model, states that gender is renegotiated from situation to situation. This is seen through social interaction. Think about how you act in a more masculine or more feminine way depending on who you are interacting with. Does your gender behavior get more or less acute through different interactions with men or women who are more or less gender conformed? In the first section of this paper, I reference Ridgeway and Connell, in their article “Unpacking the Gender System: A Theoretical Perspective on Gender and Beliefs and Social Relations,” in which they discuss the topic of gender as a background identity, an identity that men and women internalize and 54

as a result the gender background identity impacts on what and how they do and act in different societal contexts. In essence, men and women have gender identities that are in the background of everything that they do and how they identify with certain situations. At the same time through every interaction one’s gender is redefined. This may explain how and why men and women act differently among different types of people and people of different sexes. For example a woman, who around other women is strong, outgoing, and aggressive, but once around a man, her female gender background identity of a woman, plays off the interaction with a male and his gender background identity; which leaves the woman acting more accommodating, softer and pleasing. Due to her reestablishing her gender as a female against her perceived identification of the man as male, therefore re-adjusting her gender behavior to oblige how she thinks a man should act and how a woman should act. Another example of how this works is a man who around women, feels freer to explore his more feminine side, but once around other men plays up his more masculine qualities.

This can also be seen in the romantic heterosexual script. A man around other men doesn’t open doors and protects his male friends. But once around a woman, may express his gentlemanly side, by being gentler, assisting to her needs and exerting his prowess for her to succumb to, viewing her as a woman desiring those traits. Or a woman who is strong and independent in every aspect of her life, except when she dreams of the perfect man, who in her imagination is stronger, more powerful, more intelligent than she is, and comes to her rescue emotionally, because that is what she has been taught to desire and deem attractive in a man. Women are not taught to desire effeminate men, just like men are not taught to desire masculine women. The socialization of desire plays right into the power dynamics of the man being and having more power than the woman. Even when men and women challenge their own gender, that does not mean they are challenging what they desire or what they expect from the other sex’s gender. When straight men and women interact, they are recreating what they feel is desirable for the other sex in order to be desired. Even if someone has an altered gender identity, they still may find themselves recreating these power dynamics, just in more subtle ways. The woman assuming when the man speaks, he knows what he is saying and not questioning him. The man feeling his main emotional outlet is through the woman.

For gay men and lesbian women, those roles and interactions are always up for debate and may not stay the same from day to day. They can discuss what roles are going on and who wants to fulfill 55

them and when. Since they are dating the same sex, their gender construction may not change as drastically as when a man and a woman interact. If men and women replaced their gender identities of

being a man or a woman to being human beings would this change the dynamic between the interactions? One could say yes, then people are changing their identities based on individual interface, not only assuming the gender roles and power dynamics they are used to playing into.

As we've seen, changing ones sexual orientation does not lead to a man wanting to be a woman, or a woman wanting to be a man. What it does do however, is give space to question and challenge gender norms and stereotypes. If hypothetically gender roles and power dynamics can change with or without homosexual relationships providing an alternative script, then why is the fight over gay marriage so heated? Could it be that if men were allowed to marry men and women were allowed to marry women, it would lead to a legitimization of homosexual love and relationships, and the flexibility of gender as a result of legalization? Maybe there would be more instances of men and women exploring different types of emotional and sexual relationships with people, not being as rigid in their gender views of themselves and others. If gay marriage were legal, would it make for matriarchal families? Would men leave work to raise their children? And would society accommodate this?

Perhaps, as I mentioned in the introduction, it all comes down to the seed and the patriarchal lineage. Two men trying to have a child highlights their limitations and their need for a womb; two women trying to have a child need a seed; it's the difference of needing a woman for 9 months compared to needing a man for a half an hour, thus confronting the notion that women have men's babies and as a result the blood line should follow the father; directly challenging the patriarchic structure. If men are no longer head of the family, then there is no need for them to have more power and wealth. But these are just ideas, thoughts that possibly can explain people's resistance to different lifestyles outside of heterosexuality.

As for now, it is quite possible to say that we are all suffering from heterosexuality and its gender restrictions. Until we sit down and challenge ourselves and our gender identities, as well as what we expect from others concerning their gender identities, the roles we are playing, the roles we expect others to play and all the power dynamics that come with these identities and roles. If these challenges aren't made, patriarchal heterosexuality will continue with its grasp on society.

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