

OUT AND WORKING:  
AN ANALYSIS OF THE CAREER NARRATIVES OF THREE GAY MEN

By  
Tanis Marilyn Anne Sugden  
B.Ed., The University of British Columbia, 1989

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTERS OF ARTS

in  
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
Faculty of Education  
Department of Counselling Psychology

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

November 1991

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Department of COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

Date Sept. 23/91

## Abstract

From the interviews conducted with the three study participants, the interviewer derived descriptive narratives which were subsequently validated by the study participants. The participants were self-identified gay men and provided extensive narrative accounts of their careers in response to unstructured interview questions. The narratives were coalesced into a unified story which represents the critical elements of the narratives. These elements represent the process of career development that study participants experienced. Participants indicated the importance of socialization factors, role models, personal acceptance and opportunities for demonstrating competence as major considerations in their career choices. Life themes were introduced at the beginning of the story and were represented in the storied materials as well as the story structure.

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## Acknowledgements

My sincere thanks to Larry Cochrane without whose patience and support this research would not have been completed. Additional gratitude to Richard Cavell for his knowledge and assistance.

I would also like to thank Ian Fairclough, the study participants and Charles Stone for their ongoing support of this project.

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CHAPTER I

Background to the Problem

As research has progressed through a variety of perspectives on homosexuality (Bayer & Spitzer, 1982; Boswell, 1980; Weinberg, 1972), it has revealed that those identifying themselves as homosexuals conduct their lives in a variety of ways, in a multitude of contexts and with unique meaning structures (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Weinberg, 1972; Williams & Weinberg, 1974). A major aspect of these persons lives is how they conduct their career, the sequence of occupations and life roles, and the interaction with the social environment of work.

Recent research has explored the contribution society's attitudes make to the development of a homosexual identity (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; McDonald, 1982; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Sophie, 1986; Troiden & Goode, 1980) but has not considered its effect on the roles the individual may take nor on the decision making process in establishing these roles. Blair (1972) notes that career counselling has fostered the perspective of free and informed choice within a knowledge of the work world. Yet, without the recognition of the special factors facing the gay person, career counselling with a homosexual client may not occur with a full knowledge of the

work world or even completely free choice given the particular issues of societal reponse to a homosexual identity. This study explores the experience of career development for gay men in order to identify the pertinent issues for career counselling.

#### Problem Statement:

The purpose of this investigation is to explore the experience of a homosexual identity in the career development of gay men. The study also explores the unique contexts of each individual and the meaning structures the individual has established for those decisions within the contexts.

#### Definition of Terms:

1. Career: The course of events which constitute a life; the sequence of occupations and other life roles which combine to express one's commitment to work in his or her total pattern of self-development; the series of remunerated and non-remunerated positions occupied by a person from adolescence through retirement; the work-related roles such as those of student, employee and pensioner together with complementary avocational, familial, and civic roles (Super, 1976, p.4.).

2. Career Development: The lifelong behavioural processes and the influences on them that lead to one's work values, choice of occupation(s), creation of a career pattern, decision making style, role integration, self and career identity, educational literacy and related phenomena (Herr & Cramer, 1984,

p.17.).

3. Gay: An individual whose self-identification or identity regarding sexual orientation is towards persons of the same sex.

4. Homosexual: One who has a sexual propensity for persons of the same sex who may or may not identify themselves as such (Boswell, 1980).

### Research Question

This investigation was conducted within the naturalistic paradigm and as such was conducted with a question under consideration rather than with a specific hypothesis being tested. It is understood by this approach that an understanding of human behaviour can only be discovered when one understands the framework within which the individual under study interprets his or her environment, and that this can only be understood when one understands the individual's thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and actions (Owens, 1982).

Study participants were asked to describe their career recollections, experiences and awarenesses in light of their experience of their homosexuality. The interviewer addressed an initial unstructured statement to each study participant regarding his personal career path. This statement served to initiate the discourse and elicit the narrative material.

## CHAPTER II

### Review of the Literature

Homosexuality has been considered from a variety of perspectives: religious, criminal, psychopathological and social psychological. An overview of these positions provides an historical and cultural context for both society's understanding and treatment of homosexuality and for the research question of this thesis. The development and progression of these perspectives illustrates the importance and the reasoning for the study of the career development of gay men.

From the advent of the Judeo-Christian tradition, the Western World has, for the most part, established and maintained a negative attitude toward homosexual practices. Although there have been fluctuations in the active discrimination of homosexuals, the establishment of prejudice can be traced to the period of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire and the growth of the Christian Church (Boswell, 1980). At this time, a verifiable shift in perceptions and attitudes toward homosexual practices took place, altering from permissiveness to hostility. With the increasing institutionalization of the church the hostile attitude became entrenched in the traditions of the church. Homosexuality was considered a common law crime against the church and laws to this effect were enacted in common law. In the twelfth century, during a period of increased intolerance of minority groups, the discrimination against homosexuals

became widespread and was given religious justification. Acts of homosexuality were condemned and those implicated were castrated or put to death.

Modern revisions of the Canon law of the churchstate have reduced the strictures placed against those found "guilty" of a homosexual act. However, the modern justice system still reflects the current prejudice against homosexuals held by the society at large (Levitt & Klassen, 1974). This judicial discrimination is evident in three areas. First, sodomy laws have not been repealed although few people have been charged under them in the last two decades; sodomy laws are in place in 45 of the United States of America, in the United Kingdom and in Canada (DeCecco, 1977). These laws have almost exclusively been applied to homosexual acts although sodomy can be a heterosexual act as well. Second, the age of consent for sexual acts is higher for homosexual acts than heterosexual acts (Parliamentary Committee on Equality Rights [PCER], 1985). Finally, until very recently, there are few conclusive precedents upholding the civil and constitutional rights of homosexuals (Knutson, 1977). Federal governments are large perpetrators of this discrimination, refusing housing, civil employment, and military enrollment if an individual admits to homosexual practices (PCER, 1985).

A further consideration of homosexuality extends from the medical model which, at the onset of the twentieth century, developed an analysis of the homosexual. There have been three

trends which have developed from this perspective. The first, the psychoanalytic, considered homosexuality to result from arrested psychosexual development (Freud 1920, 1922; Beiber 1967, 1974, 1976) and analytic treatment was proposed as a mode of curative treatment. The second trend was developed on the basis of learning theory (Acosta, 1975; Gold & Neufeld, 1965) and contributed to the field of psychopathology. Homosexuality was hypothesized to be the result of the learning process and treatment using reconditioning was suggested (Bancroft, 1969; Callahan & Leitenberg, 1973; Feldman & MacCulloch, 1967; Freund, 1977; McConaghy, Proctor, & Barr, 1972). Finally, a biochemical proposition was made that homosexuality was the result of physical differences in the composition of the individual (Money, 1972) although no immediate treatment could be prescribed. The overall consensus was that homosexuality was a disease and its inclusion in the nomenclature of the American Psychiatric Association was sought.

The final perspective which contributes to the current approach to homosexuality is derived from social psychological investigations of cultural minority groups. In a study of sexual practices, Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin (1948) noted the range of human sexual practices and suggested that they were best represented as a continuum on a 7-point scale ranging from exclusively homosexual to exclusively heterosexual. In a broader perspective, Gordon Allport (1954) provided an analysis of prejudice which facilitates an understanding of the dynamics

of the acquisition and function of prejudice in society. An additional contribution to the study of homosexuality was made by Goffman (1963) in his analysis of the effects of stigmatization of an individual and cultural subgroups. These works and the additional works of social psychologists in the field of discrimination (Erlich, 1975; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) provide the basis for a shift in research perspectives in the study of homosexuality. Additionally, homophile civil rights organizations began to object to the discriminatory practices of psychology (Davidson, 1976; Weinberg, 1972) and civil and judicial practices (Knutson, 1977). Further studies also indicated that while homosexuality was considered a pathology, little evidence could be found to substantiate the claim that homosexuals had poor psychological adjustments (Hooker, 1951; Ross, 1978). Consequently, the American Psychiatric Association has removed any reference to homosexuality in its official nomenclature (Bayer & Spitzer, 1982; Dececco, 1985).

While it is too early to consider the previous views of homosexuality as sinful, criminal or sick as fully dismissed, some shifts to less heterosexually biased research is occurring (Moring & Charles, 1983). A series of research studies using a survey of a large number of homosexuals (Bell & Weinberg, 1978; Bell, Weinberg, & Hammersmith, 1982; Saghir & Robins, 1973; Weinberg & Williams, 1974; Williams & Weinberg, 1971) have established the diverse nature of a homosexual identity. These studies have also noted that the experience of the homosexual

identity is found in all facets of the individual's life to varying degrees. Though these studies must be considered with their limitations in mind, with particular emphasis on their biased sampling (Harry, 1986), they do indicate a need for research which reflects the diversity of the homosexual experience. These studies attempted to compile a comprehensive overview of elements of homosexual lifestyles. Their findings in the area of career were restricted due to the limited number of questions each survey asked but some indication was given that this area would need further investigation.

Williams and Weinberg (1971) surveyed 63 men from homophile organizations in two urban centers. Of their respondents, 16% reported being refused or losing jobs because of their sexual orientation and 58% of those with a dishonourable discharge from military service experienced job discrimination. Those who did not encounter such discrimination were employed in stereotypical or low status jobs. Questions in this study were limited in number and asked only about discrimination. No questions were posed as to how job discrimination was perceived, what measures were taken by individuals to avoid discrimination or what positive effects homosexuality may have had in employment.

In a similar study of 89 men from the same urban areas, Saghir and Robins (1973) reported that 16% lost their jobs or had their employment threatened due to their homosexuality; 32% of respondents felt that their homosexuality restricted both their ambitions, career choice and possible advancement. A

correlation was found between high status employment and employment difficulties. No consideration was made for the possibility of perceived discrimination and its effects on employment difficulties and no further questions explored what factors of the homosexuality restricted career ambition, choice or advancement. Both this study and the Williams and Weinberg study suffer from the limited number of subjects involved in the surveys as well as limited sampling sources.

In a study of 1057 men from the same two urban centers, Weinberg and Williams (1974) reported that 30% of the respondents suffered problems on the job related to their sexual orientation and, again, 16% of their sample reported having their employment terminated because of their homosexuality. This study also included some consideration of social class and its effect on homosexuality. The authors concluded that those in higher social classes had fewer contacts with other homosexuals and that "social status apparently effects the ways in which the person manages his homosexuality" (p. 274). The findings of this study seem to indicate more clearly the possible complexity in managing a homosexual identity and career, although the limited dimension of the questions do not identify the nature of this complexity.

The final large scale survey which was conducted with the aim of providing a more comprehensive picture of the homosexual lifestyle was Bell and Weinberg (1978). This study examined 686 men from a single urban area from a broader base of sources and

reported similar findings. Twenty-five percent of the homosexual males reported their homosexuality had a somewhat harmful or harmful effect on their careers. Eleven percent of the homosexual males reported that their homosexuality had a somewhat positive or positive effect on their careers. Twenty percent reported they had lost or had their jobs threatened because of their homosexuality. Seventeen percent reported losing promotions due to their sexual orientation. This supports the findings of the other studies conducted in the same decade. Despite all of the limitations of each study, the interaction between sexual orientation and job discrimination is strongly indicated. These findings are also indicative of the need for further inquiries into this domain which are more comprehensive in nature.

Other more theoretical articles, also indicate the need for further research in the area of career. Escoffier (1975), in an article considering the concept of stigmatization (Goffman, 1963) and applying it to the careers of homosexual men, proposed the dynamics of its interaction. He suggests that research must consider not only the direct positive and negative consequences for the job but also economic consequences as well. He also concludes that studies should evaluate the effect of the homosexual's perception of the anticipated discrimination, the psychological consequences of these perceptions, and the overall impact on the work environment. Levine (1979) indicates a need for research considering the psychological consequences of

continued identity management on the job and he calls for a further consideration of the implications of the nature of the job and the length of employment on the individual.

Several initial studies since this call for research have been conducted to further examine the pertinent issues of employment and discrimination. Adam (1981) sent resumes applying for legal articling positions to prospective employers. Those resumes which had a reference to Gay affiliation had fewer replies than those resumes which did not indicate any possible sexual orientation. Adam concludes that the perception of discrimination is one based in reality. The job applicant may not receive an outright negative rejection; however, no response can also be viewed as a form of rejection in itself.

In a study of employment discrimination with a sample of homosexual women, Levine and Leonard (1984) found that 60% of their sample anticipated discrimination if their sexual orientation were known. The effects of "passing" as a heterosexual as a coping strategy were anxiety, alienation and social isolation. Some women applied other strategies as well by becoming self employed or moving to a job where their sexual orientation was accepted. In another study of lesbians at work, Schneider (1987) found that not only did certain environments make disclosure easier, such as small settings or the human services field. Schneider also concluded that risk taking, making a disclosure, was reduced by higher level of pay and previous experiences of discrimination. No similar studies have

been conducted with men.

A hazard of the current research examining the role of a homosexual identity in career development is the construct of minority status. While there is an increasing number of studies being conducted with lesbians, little has been examined to date about male homosexuals. Research literature has already indicated that the woman in the workplace has minority status, and lesbians fall under that rubric (Levine & Leonard, 1984); no similar admission has been agreed on for male homosexuals. Although males are the majority in the occupational realm, male homosexuals are a discreditable, invisible minority amongst them (Goffman, 1963). As a consequence, they may face greater consequences should their homosexuality be disclosed at work. Anticipation of this "fall from grace" may also have an effect on the career decisions of the homosexual male.

The anticipation of discrimination, the necessity to "pass" as heterosexual and the difficulty in advancement have been illustrated as a concern for homosexuals (Morin, 1977). Research conducted by Etringer, Hetherington and Hillerbrand (1990) investigated the differing levels of anxiety in relation to career decision making in students and found that gay men in their sample had higher levels of career uncertainty than heterosexual males and lesbians. They indicate that while there are limitations to their study, it does suggest some differences in the career decision making process which warrants further exploration. Coleman and Remafedi (1989) state that gay and

lesbian adolescents express ambivalence towards or abandonment of their educational and career goals. These issues have not been suitably examined by contemporary career counselling research. Buhrke (1989) describes the inherent bias of career counselling as it fails to address the restriction of job possibilities, military and civil, for the homosexual and the tacit requirement of "passing" in most occupations. In an early vocational monograph, Blair (1972) states, "there are problems which arise as a result of the other decisions and society's prejudices and these have been virtually unknown or ignored in vocational guidance offices" (p. 2). It is in response to the paucity of research and to these calls for investigation, that the current study is being conducted.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

Given the numerous questions arising from the paucity of research conducted in this area, this thesis is exploratory in nature. Much of the research conducted to date has been carried out within the positivist framework with particular biases guiding the approach and, frequently, the findings as well. In order to facilitate an understanding of the complexity and dimensions of the experience of the career, the multitude of possible influences on it, and the diversity of homosexual identities, this research was conducted from a constructivist framework and employ methods of naturalistic inquiry (Magoon, 1977; Owens, 1982).

This study employs the use of an unstructured interview design and narrative data was collected and analyzed as the study proceeded. This approach, consisting of an ongoing appraisal of data gathering, analysis and interpretation is described by Glaser (1978) as grounded theory technique.

In accordance with the grounded theory approach, participants were selected on the basis of their experience with the phenomenon. Participants in this study were selected on the basis of their self-disclosed gay identity and their involvement in their career development. Letters were sent out through a series of personal contacts, inviting participation in the study. Consequently, the interviewer was not acquainted with

the participants prior to the initiation of the study. Under ideal circumstances participants would be drawn upon until completeness of the material was determined through data saturation. However, due to time constraints and limited funds, this investigation confined itself to three participants. This restricts theoretical generalizations that can be generated from the study but the study remains a valid representation of the experience of some individuals.

Informal conversational interviews (Patton, 1980) were used to facilitate the disclosure of narrative material. This method is described by Mishler (1986) as the most effective means of gathering storied material: "We are more likely to find stories reported in the studies using relatively unstructured interviews where respondents are invited to speak in their own voices, allowed to control the introduction and flow of topics, and encouraged to extend their responses" (p. 69). The quotations reported in the thesis are taken directly from the transcripts of the interview and indicate not only the subject matter but also the way in which the participants speak. The idiosyncracies of speech are maintained for the purpose of illustrating structure as well as context. The interviewer posed the initial statement that the purpose of the study was to explore a person's career development in light of a homosexual identity. Participants began recounting their tale immediately following this statement and little interjection or questioning occurred following this initial statement. Interviews lasted

approximately four hours for the initial interview with a validation interview approximately 1 hour in length following the analysis of the interview content. Participants were also contacted throughout the review of the recorded interviews for on-going verification.

Responses to the interview provided the material to explore the meaning the participants give to their career as well as the format which organizes that meaning. The significance of the narrative accounts is posited in Sartre's (1938) fictional account of an individual: "a man is always a teller of tales, he lives surrounded by his stories and the stories of others, he sees everything that happens to him through them; and he tries to live his life as if he were telling a story" (p.39).

Further, Polkinghorne (1988) indicates that the "narrative is a meaning structure that organizes events and human actions into a whole, thereby attributing significance to individual actions and events according to their effect on the whole" (p. 18). In describing the investigation of this narrative discourse, Cochrane (1986) states: "Meaning is contextual, implicit in a portrait or story. There is no one place to look. One simply enters the circle, assessing parts to comprehend the whole and assessing the whole to comprehend the parts. Understanding generates more understanding until a general appreciation is reached" (p14-15). Thus a qualitative inquiry into the narrative suggests the investigation of a person's complex meaning for themselves, both through the explicit inclusion of

events as well as the implicit statements suggested by structure and form.

A qualitative inquiry into the meaning of the narrative material relies on the interviewer to become involved in depth with the story being presented. The researcher is required to have not only a comprehensive understanding of the relevant subject areas but also an intuitive ability to note the recurrence of themes, patterns and intonations as well as the implications of the plot for these features of the story. The researcher must become an instrument of resonance (May, 1983) to adequately integrate the material being presented by the narrator.

In this thesis, analysis restricts itself to the constructions of meaning that the participants indicate in their narrative. This is done in an effort to avoid superimposing the academic or theoretical constructs held by the interviewer on the personal and social constructs of the narrators. Analysis of the stories will provide a view of the aggregate experiences of the study participants.

In view of the qualitative methodology applied in this study, appropriate methods of ensuring reliability and validity were employed. Study participants reviewed interpretations to ensure content validity. Through extensive interviews reliability was ensured as portions of the narrative were reiterated. As anticipated the narrative shifted slightly as the participant's insight increased and the story evolved

although the content remained consistent. Verification by the study participant was an on-going procedure.

All material elicited was disguised to ensure confidentiality and the consideration of the rights and privileges of the narrative actor remained the foremost concern guiding the data gathering process.

## CHAPTER IV

### Doug's Story

Doug is twenty seven years old and is employed coordinating volunteers for a small community based organization. At the time of the interview he had completed a year and a half of undergraduate work in a local university, trained in Audio Production and in a related internship, and served in both a volunteer and paid capacity at a small AIDS service organization. Doug considers his career course directionless: "What I consider my big problem [is] not not having had a plan, but not having a focussed ambition."

Doug was a good student in high school. He completed his courses with excellent grades, except chemistry, which held no interest for him. "I was taking classes I had absolutely no interest in but was taking them because you had to do the academic stream or the other, whatever it's called. So, um, chemistry is the one [class] that sticks out as the first class I got a B in. Um and I hated it. I just had no use for it whatsoever." When he entered university but couldn't identify a specific interest, he dropped a couple of classes in his second year. He didn't feel inclined to attempt the classes again, nor could he determine a major, so at the end of his second year he left university. "It was connected with not being focussed and that really became a problem in university because I questioned the whole reason for doing it." Doug found it essential to see the direct bearing his learning had on a path of progress but

this was difficult as he couldn't choose a direction to pursue. Doug's inability to find his "focussed ambition" is deeply disconcerting to him. He attempts to account for his lack of direction: "its not the case of not being interested in anything, it's more being a case of being too interested in too many things. And not being able to narrow it down to one thing that I'm passionate about or interested in or to work at. Because that's what it takes to work at something, is to really want that something . . . ." In essence, Doug has not had to establish his passion, even sexual, with the world at large. Of his homosexuality he states, "there was no coming out to be done . . . because short of . . . talking openly about my sex life or my desires or whatever, which is not me anyway, or affecting some behaviour, which is also not me . . . there doesn't seem to be a way to get that comfortably across . . . I haven't felt comfortable doing that and some of that is definitely um, to do with self image and confidence." Doug's difficulty in defining himself to others is reflected in his difficulty in defining his choices.

During school Doug had established a group of friends with whom he socialized. He began a relationship with a man who lived in the United States but felt his friends never really wanted to know about it. His sexual orientation was not a topic openly discussed. He found that as a consequence of a visit to his lover, his friends ostracized him. "There came a point when I was more or less ostracized from that group of people.

And it [his relationship] had never been really open because no one initiated discussion of it, and I didn't feel close enough to anyone to want to talk about it even conversationally. Even if they didn't know what they were doing, [they] uh found ways to avoid having it come up. And I played along rather than jeopardize their acceptance, I guess." After this incident, he ended up connecting with another couple of people who were also being ostracized from the social group, one of whom was gay, and reestablished social ties. The loss of those social connections at the university further eroded his commitment to continue his education.

While attending university Doug had been employed part time doing word processing. When he decided not to re-register at the university for the next term he continued to word process, expanding a part time commitment into a full time one. Doug had started word processing as a summer job prior to entering university. He liked the job for quite some time as it held his interest more than school did. He could see its purposes and recognize tangible results.

He had been making plans, however, to quit and visit Europe. Just before he was prepared to leave the firm he was with, they eliminated his position. The owner of the company had brought in a friend who had no experience in the field to operate the company. Rather than foster Doug's role in the firm, the new operator failed to realize the purpose of his job responsibilities and terminated the job. Doug's own plan to

leave the company was preempted: "it was a little early for me but it wasn't a big deal because I wasn't interested in working for him. Because he didn't even value me at a personal level to find out what I did."

Doug had made extensive preparations in planning a trip to Europe by speaking to many people and getting suggestions from those who had travelled on their own. When Doug returned from Europe three and a half months later, he spent a period of time unemployed and eventually picked up some word processing work through his previous firm.

It was during this time that Doug went through a period of asking "what am I doing with my life?" Doug suggests that he has faced this question about every two years in his adult life. "I haven't actually set it down to times, although that might be interesting to do. . . [it is a] what am I doing with my life type crisis and where was it going and why don't I have any specific ambition and that kind of stuff."

He had decided to return to university and had reapplied for admission. He still did not have a specific goal in mind when he made this decision but seemed to desire an opportunity to make social connections and alleviate his discomfort with himself. "It wasn't [that] I had to go back to school and do something specific, or that I had to go back to school so I can get more schooling and become something, it was more that I'm not meeting anyone, not growing, this isn't going anywhere, what I'm doing."

Just before school was to start, however, he remembered seeing an advertisement for a Recording Arts School. Doug had always had an interest in sound production and the commercial music industry. He located the school's telephone number and set an appointment to speak with them. His inquiries revealed the fees to be quite expensive. A day later he decided "what the hell" and took out a student loan and enrolled in the school. He could see that going to recording school might lead to something and have a direct bearing on a job. "It felt right in the sense that having made a decision to go back to school was really important. . . When I decided on recording school, um, in my decision about recording school, it felt much more like this was going to go somewhere. . . the thing I really liked was even though in first year it was quite a diversified set of courses...all of it was focussed in one area."

During his first year of recording school he saw a promotion for an internship program in theatre. He'd known someone who had been in this program which encouraged him to apply. He liked recording school and thought the theatre program would allow him to combine his previous interest in theatre with sound engineering. He was still doing part time word processing but he had begun to resent the attention it took away from his interest in sound production and was looking to leave. He explains, "I resented the time I had to spend doing it in order to afford to pay rent and eat because I was so interested in my other work . . . whereas when I was in

university, I preferred going to work over going to school." Subsequently, when the offer came for the internship he accepted eagerly.

Despite Doug's application to the internship program and his efforts at the recording school to perform well and attain good grades, he accounts for the opportunity to do the internship by suggesting, "things happen." In referring to his general career path, Doug says, "in concise and easy terms, which gives very little information, is things happen" and that, "sometimes life just seems to fall into place." In part, Doug waits for circumstances or the rising tide of an emotional crisis to make decisions. He does not feel very strongly about his own agency in pursuing his employment options.

He interned for the summer and enjoyed it but thought the time went by too quickly. Fortunately, there was a vacancy for a position interning through the winter; he was invited to apply, and his internship was extended. He did have to do some negotiating with the recording school in order to stay and defer a scholarship he had been awarded for a year. Unlike the summer internship, work in the winter largely consisted of touring to small theatres throughout the area. His work became boring for him, and he thought that perhaps he was in the wrong place doing the wrong thing. The job had lost its interest and excitement. He stayed for another summer to see if he would find his interest again.

At the end of the second summer he applied for a couple of

jobs in a regional theatre where he would not have to tour. For one interview he felt a friend was more committed to the work that he was, so he didn't attend the interview. "But my, I almost said best friend, and in a sense he was, there. Um but the fellow who had been the other intern [the] first summer who I met there, uh and who needed, in my judgement, the job more than I did. In that he was that was he had determined that was his career. He was more sure than I was about that. I didn't want the job enough to experience getting it over him. And I don't know what the uh the. But we have similar relative experience and that stuff. And I was older which doesn't necessarily aid. What I'm trying to say is there seemed to be a possibility in that it might go my way. And the interviewer was late and I used that as an excuse not to show up to the interview. So um I sabotaged that one." Doug toys with the consideration that he was too insecure to compete with his friend and risk not getting the job, rejects it, but indicates that this is a distinct consideration in other job searches. "That wouldn't have been a problem for me . . . and maybe somehow it would, maybe in that you know, vulnerable part that always wants to um to win, or win is not the right word, that thinks I'm inferior . . . the insecure part. Maybe in some way it would but that didn't enter into that decision. It could in other ways, other times but not in that one."

Doug was much more interested in the second job application he made. It encompassed many more elements of sound work that

he enjoyed. "The road house aspect is really interesting. And um we were both applying for that job too and we studiously avoided discussing it. In the end, neither Doug nor his best friend was offered the job. "There were politics involved. . . I didn't know the right people. So politics got me there." Doug minimizes his disappointment by suggesting once again that he had no real drive to pursue that career course: "My life would be completely different if I'd got that job, uh, but again, doing that work wasn't a burning ambition or I'd be doing it."

It is difficult for Doug to maintain both the notion that "things happen", as well as the concept that he is supposed to have a strong focus and strive for it. Often these are contradictory ideas. In the final analysis, Doug takes as his direction that if the situation does not allow for his job aspirations then he must not have had a strong enough desire to work in this area. He does not have the personal fortitude to pursue his goals in spite of obstacles or develop his career in spite of the dull routine of certain jobs. This serves as a major consideration in Doug's career decisions.

With no other options left open, Doug returned to the recording school for his final year. He had been awarded a partial scholarship for the year, and that encouraged him to go back to school. He thought at the time that returning to school was a mistake. He had lost his interest and become almost cynical about the inner network of contacts needed in the

industry. He felt he didn't have enough ambition to make it in record production. "I knew going into the second year that I was not going to be a record producer . . . [my internship] screwed me up as far as that went. Because it showed me too many other possibilities [sigh], other things that were possible and also showed me a little more about the business that I had to know at that point 'cause I was a little too realistic about my possibilities . . . Based on my personality and my, once again, the thought that it wasn't a great ambition, that I would not make it." The final decision to return to school was, as Doug indicated, "because I didn't have anything else."

In making his decisions Doug feels he needs to be action oriented, "doing something" and direction oriented "going somewhere", "growing." During the times of his unemployment, this concept drives him into a "crisis" and he makes some decision to take action, usually returning to school. The stigma attached being unemployed or not attending school prevalent in society has been internalized to such an extent that Doug strives to be active rather than face the derision of others in taking time out of working to plan any course of action.

In returning to the recording school Doug found that an instructor he had respected during his first year was a grave disappointment during his second year. The instructor no longer seemed committed to teaching his students nor to providing any feedback regarding the single assigned paper. Doug felt very

disillusioned and refused to complete his assignment for the course. He carefully thought out the repercussion of not graduating from the school and decided to take that course of action. "And by not writing my paper, I failed the class and wouldn't graduate. Which was a very conscious decision on my part. The diploma from such a school means something only to that school. Uh, it means nothing in the industry. . . . it mattered more to me not to put myself through doing a project . . . because I had no respect for it." While he did not mind not receiving his diploma, he regretted not complaining to the administration sooner about the neglect of his instructor.

Doug had also anticipated that the production industry would be a little bit more open, particularly about sexuality. He found, however, that while he was hoping that they might be wise to the ways of the world, if not accepting, they avoided the issue of his sexual orientation. "It [was] really interesting being in a theatre community because it is a separate community, to note the amount of overt homophobia that happened, or heterosexism, whichever you term it." Occasionally overt statements would be made denigrating sexual acts that are associated with gay men, or denigrating the term "gay". Rather than jeopardize the degree to which he felt accepted, Doug limited his response to cold glares, never addressing the issue directly.

Doug ended up forgetting about school and about the grades and focussed his attention on work that really interested him.

He worked for one of his instructors who had a recording studio. While he was initially not paid for the work, he was promised pay in several months when the business was established. Doug could afford to work without pay for a couple of months and did so for the experience. Despite giving his employer this information, he eventually had to leave the studio. "What ended being demoralizing was um not even having even any acknowledgement of the work that I was doing, had done." One week he became ill and was unable to get through on the phone to let those at the studio know. They never phoned him; he returned to the studio again. He says, " I guess I found out how much they cared about me."

When Doug recognizes that there have been several occasions when the men supervising him have negated the importance of his work and its outcomes. When he has some goal or outcome in mind and it is not supported by others in the work or school environment, he becomes disillusioned with his choice, finds the work or school situation untenable, and faces the need to change paths again. When the opportunity arises to continue in the field, he has a reduced desire to continue towards his original aim.

During the last week working at the studio, Doug began volunteering at a nonprofit agency working with the AIDS health crisis. The training he received at the agency was a very interesting experience for him: "it felt really good and was a sharp contrast to going to the studio which by that time felt

really bad . . . training was very different, was very experiential, and uh a lot of very deep emotional stuff. . ."

He went through a crisis period of "what am I doing with my life" again but as he enjoyed his work at the agency, he eventually indicated to the director that he was looking for work. As positions became available Doug was offered work and continues to work there after three years.

While he considers leaving his current job occasionally, Doug has no strong desire to pursue other options at this time. He does consider returning to university to finish his degree at some future date when the desire or crisis moves him again.

## CHAPTER V

### Samuel's Story

I do think I've chosen my careers not because  
I'm gay . . . I think I went where I felt welcomed.

Born on the summer solstice June 21, 1950, Samuel is a Gemini, the astrological sign denoting the contrast between two elements. He is the only son of a diplomat and his wife and was educated in a variety of private schools and by tutors depending on where his parents were stationed. His parents encouraged his self-reliance and independence, and while he had no special status of his own, he was accepted in many places to which children have no access due to his parents' position.

In giving his character definition, Samuel suggests that in a great many ways he is set apart from the majority of people. This is exemplified at the beginning of his interview when he describes an incident with his mother: "she thought of herself as a Druid. I remember as a child being taken to Stonehenge to watch the sun rise." He also notes that he is not the focus of his parents' attention; "in fact at an early age, I mistook my mother's interest around June 21st for my birthday. And of course it wasn't." Samuel regards himself as existing on the periphery of the social world and, in many ways, disregarded there. Again he describes an incident from childhood: "My parents' idea of training me was to take me along to the

restaurants that they ate in, put a restaurant menu in front of me, and carry on with their conversation and dinner." This was not an unpleasant position for Samuel. He felt he was well loved, "the apple of my mother's eye and my father's", and was encouraged to make his own decisions; "I have always been [a] precocious person because at an early age I was allowed to make up my own mind about things. I could make my own choices." Samuel indicates that this is a factor in his adult life: "I think that background is what led me to making decisions of my own as a gay person. Finding my own role models and not accepting perhaps the standard ones that were thrown at me."

While growing up, Samuel was aware of gay men in the Diplomatic Corps who provided a distinctive model for him; "that's one of the biggest influences for me . . . my early sexual experiences were nurtured in that environment." His first sexual experiences happened between 11 and 13 years of age and were with men in the Diplomatic services. The discipline he experienced and saw in the service also imparted to Samuel a strong sense of personal discipline. He feels it is critical to treat people with respect and dignity: "bad manners were not encouraged. And so I didn't develop any. And uh, even today, even when people call me with phone calls in the middle of the night, I've had many people say, "How can you be so polite?" And my retort is, "How can I not? What do I have to be upset about?" He also accounts for his active participation in the American Uniform Association, an organization primarily

comprised of gay men who have an interest in uniforms, as a result of his background. "I feel it's far more a part of my destiny. I grew up, as you can imagine, around a lot of uniformed men."

Travelling with his parents gave him opportunity to explore large cities where same sex activity was readily available to him. Relocating frequently also fostered his ability to feel the importance of making a home wherever he was situated. He had spent his childhood living in hotels or rented houses whenever his parents took a new posting. Samuel suggests, "I came to accept that home was where you made it. Where you chose it to be." His concept of personal choice in determining where home was to be is paradoxical. His parents would accept the posting offered to them by the government, and he was brought along with them regardless of his own wishes. On numerous occasions during the interview he referred to being "the little kid in tow." Despite limited choices available to him, Samuel feels he is the agent of his decisions. He says of his current home, "It's not a place I'm stuck. I've travelled most of the world and I chose to live here."

Samuel actively incorporates the duality of his own agency in his definition of himself. He states, "I think there are two aspects here. Gemini loves double things, and of course, I was born on the cusp. So I think that background is what led me to making decisions of my own as a gay person. Finding my own role models and not accepting perhaps the standard ones...." Yet

sometimes he fails to acknowledge the limitations placed on some of his choices; "But, I've never, I wasn't raised in an environment where it was where I had to make concessions. And this has made it difficult for me as a person . . . . And it had actually kept me from making relationships. In fact I think my choice of jobs as a gay person again, I think I had deliberately restricted my contact with people so that I wouldn't be forced into a situation where I had to make those decisions."

In the 1960s, Samuel's parents came to Canada to officiate at a trade exposition and brought him along. He was completing school when they left Canada to retire abroad. "These were the years where a boy my age would have been just finishing high school. And would have choices [about] what to do next. I'd been keen on theatre for quite a long time. And at that time I became involved with a youth theatre company. It's a well known innovative theatre for youths. I decided that I would stay and work for these people for the summer. . . I then enrolled in the Theatre Academy." Samuel enrolled in a theatre school at the time under the tutelage of an influential acting instructor. He had a very high opinion of his new mentor: "this man was exceptional . . . Brilliant man. Worked for the National Polish Theatre for a very long time. Brilliant man. And so I stayed with him and worked with him for four years."

Samuel had been interested in theatre for a long time, and he no longer could rely on his parents financially, so he

continued to study at the theatre school for four years. Acting enabled him to gain attention but not for himself, rather for an identity he portrayed. This mirrored the type of attention he received as a child with his parents. The attention he received was a byproduct of his parents' roles. "I realize that a lot of people are looking for identity. They look to me sometime to give it to them. Just as the people who paid me to act both on stage and on camera did. To give them an identity. To create something for them that they could tune in on and focus. People have been staring at me all my life. It's part of the nature when your parents are VIPs. I wasn't a VIP. I was just in tow with my parents. But I understood the mystique that people are looking for . . . that's one of the reasons I was a success on stage."

Samuel, despite his interest in military, police and diplomatic service was not willing to pursue a career in this area. He enjoyed a distinct status and was unwilling to sublimate his own sexual thoughts and intellectual thoughts to take orders. He liked the attention that the outward vestiges of a uniform gave him and the men it attracted. "I had thought of a military career, but after my observations of other people's military and travelling, I decided I was too undisciplined to allow people to push me around. . . Where I thought the theatre would give me a chance to play out these other roles...."

During this time, Samuel held several part time jobs to finance his schooling. His parents' departure meant financial

independence was a necessity. "So I had to quickly find a way, being in theatre, to support myself. . . I realized since I was involved in theatre that the easiest way for me to make a living was to do something I was already doing. And I was already speaking." He chose to work for telephone companies and in broadcasting as they used his verbal and vocal abilities.

Additionally, his parents' departure left Samuel without a passport. In order to tour with his theatre school it was necessary for him to have a passport. His parents had made themselves personae non grata with their government due to the circumstances of their retirement; therefore, with the help of an influential man at their embassy in Canada, Samuel became a Canadian citizen. He was also disinclined to return to his native country and become the stereotype he envisioned. "The point of all my rambling here is to explain how I got stuck in Canada. 'Cause it really wasn't stuck. Again, it was a question of choice. And certainly in my childhood, if I'd gone back and had to live the life of a lonely homosexual I don't think I'd have been very happy."

Samuel began his acting career in Toronto but felt alienated there. He was disenchanted with the people of Toronto and felt rejected by what he viewed as the gay community. "I never felt that I was welcome in Toronto . . . it was a city that I always felt rejected in. . . .My gay associations there were limited because I felt rejected by the community bar life." He also hated the climate. His agent suggested that he could

get a lot of work in Vancouver, a city Samuel had visited and liked, so Samuel moved. He was offered a job and was immediately successful. He suggests that "people here embraced me in a very positive way." To feel wanted and respected as an individual has played a very important part in Samuel's career decisions.

Throughout his life, Samuel has continued his leisure interest in uniforms and regalia. As an active member of the American Uniform Association, he feels this interest sets him apart from the gay community at large and the usual set of stereotypes associated with it. He is able to play out a role within a community of individuals who endorse this behaviour. He has been very reluctant to be cast as an effeminate gay man and has carefully chosen his ventures to avoid this. "My interests are the kind of interests that last a lifetime. I don't think wearing plumed feathers in my head and putting makeup over a five o'clock shadow are going to hold me up to my old age."

While on vacation in San Francisco, Samuel reached a pivotal point. He was twenty five years old and a great success in his military regalia when he was out socializing. He participated in the Gay Pride parade and protested Anita Bryant and the Briggs initiative. While he usually felt repelled by crowds, on this occasion he felt a part of it. "I felt as though I had been brought back to a focus point. I felt good. There were hundreds of people there who were gay. With very different viewpoints. . . all kinds of interesting people . . .

I felt closer to whatever it is that I am, than I have ever felt. I felt a part of whatever that was. Of whatever being gay is." A man that he admired asked him to make a pornographic film with him, and although Samuel wasn't paid, he gained enormous satisfaction from being asked. He was accepted for himself.

Soon after this experience, Samuel was touring British Columbia when his parents died. The theatre company withheld the information from Samuel for four months until the tour was over. "I wasn't told about their death until June of that year. And so I didn't feel very good about that. I felt I couldn't really trust these people . . . So I came back to Vancouver after leaving the theatre company in June."

At this particular point Samuel hit a crisis. He asked himself, "What the hell am I doing?." The result of his deliberations was that he decided to change careers and entered a college architectural drafting course. He no longer felt respected in theatre and with his parent's death, he no longer had to play at roles.

Once again an influential man played a major role in the development of his career path. At the instigation of one of his college instructors, he entered a design competition and won a scholarship to Ryerson Polytechnical School in Toronto. "Again some guardian angel or luck. And so I decided since I won that I would follow through with that. And so I applied and was chosen etcetera for Ryerson Polytechnic." While he still

hated Toronto he determined to return and study, slugging it out for four years. "Well after the death of my parents and what I'd gone through, it seemed like I was going to go through purgatory."

In Toronto he worked on a part-time basis for several prestigious interior design houses. He thought that by concentrating on his work he would avoid the same unhappiness that had occurred earlier in Toronto. Despite his attempt, he still felt quite alienated there. Sexual contacts and relationships took subordinate roles to his own decision to work and to return to Vancouver.

In 1981 Samuel returned to Vancouver and practiced interior design for a large national company. Three years ago he moved to a new firm in charge of their design department. He has come full circle again, to return to Vancouver and reestablish himself in a successful career.

"I think in the jobs that I've had throughout this period, I've certainly chosen gay jobs without it being specifically a gay job." Of his major career choices of acting and interior design, Samuel recognizes that they are often stereotyped as jobs that homosexuals choose. However, he indicates that there are certain advantages to this; "nothing secret about my life. My interests are out in the open, people can see them. I don't ask people to accept them. They're for me. They're not for anybody else." He also states, "I realize that I'm the standard bearer, if you wish, or unique and different, but that's my trip

and I'm loyal to it." By choosing his career path, Samuel has permitted himself the freedom to express his sexual orientation within the context of his work environment and hope for little or no rejection. He was able to feel he was making no compromises.

In making his choices, Samuel has often struggled with attempting to be distinctive while being recognized as belonging. This has been evident from a variety of his efforts: his choice of citizenship, his role in the gay community, his family relationships, and most importantly, his job choices. Samuel has discovered that there is a limitation to this freedom in his career choices, a lack of acceptance even in those stereotypically gay jobs. "One of the things about being gay is that one isn't able to share one's life. The sexual part, people don't want to hear that you're making love with a big husky man. They don't want to know that you're dating a cop. They're more titillated by the sound of that rather than the reality that you're sharing your life with someone. And uh, this is hard for some people to explain. It's one of the reasons why I think gay people, and certainly why for myself, I've always maintained a distance. It had been a protective measure. A cloak if you wish. Of keeping peering eyes out of my life. . . . Once they have this information, they don't know how to use it. . . . It was merely a way for them to establish precedence. Who's better, who's bigger." Samuel limits information about himself while at work, to limit the rejection

and the possible homophobia.

Samuel is also aware that he is infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus. He has become active in a volunteer organization which assists those with AIDS. This has been his way of sharing and giving back to the community. "I hope to be able to continue to make these choices. I mean, I've made some choices about my funeral, and about my will and I make some plans about what I'm going to be doing next month. . . . I'm an independent person and I would like to remain independent for as long as my health allows me to." Samuel continues to frame his experience within his own adage, "the most effective way to cope with change is to help create it" and this fuels his leisure commitments and his ongoing work commitments. He also notes that while his life has come full circle twice, he is looking towards the future and is making his own choices.

## CHAPTER VI

### Raymond's Story

When I interviewed Raymond he was a self-employed freelance writer and had a variety of contracts and projects underway. He was forty years old and lived with his lover of nearly ten years. A well-educated man, Raymond holds two Masters degrees; one in Political Science and another in Adult Education, as well as a Doctorate in Adult Education.

Raymond considers that he "backed into writing", essentially coming to writing after a series of experiences in related educational fields. He considers that he acquired most of his jobs somewhat fortuitously. "I tried on all kinds of things before actually being able to call myself a writer. And um, how . . . I found myself in various career situations are really, um you know um, I feel a kind of serendipitous exposure to what was happening in my life." Although Raymond views his jobs as coming to him on the basis of chance encounters, he reports that as a youth he aspired to be a writer and has sought to learn his craft in whatever job he has had to date. He notes of his first job after graduating, "If I'm going to make anything out of my job, I'm going to have to write. I might as well be interested in what I'm doing from a writing perspective. And use every opportunity I can to write." He has been able to draw a learning experience from each job he has held until he reached a goal which met his personal concept of himself.

As a teenager, he and a close friend used to discuss

literature, their ideas about what life was, and dream of becoming writers. Raymond remarked ironically of his friend, "I thought at the time he had far more gifts to become a writer than I did but I still had the desire and now he's the teacher of English and doesn't do any writing and I'm the writer." This is the first indication that Raymond had found someone to spur him on in his aspirations and ambitions who eventually disappointed him. While his friend seemed to have the ability, he did not achieve the goal of becoming a writer.

In exploring his career options, Raymond had difficulty telling his parents what career he considered pursuing. For a while, he wanted to be a priest. He had been singing in the church choir and was under the guidance of a priest he liked. "I went through a lot of different phases but I remember the first one was that I really wanted to be a priest (laugh). And I think a lot of that was who I idolized at the time in my life. I was the male soprano at that time and, you know, locked onto the priest as a model." His parents would not have been happy with this choice though. He suggests that they were "probably shocked" by his notion. His grandmother, a protestant convert, was too suspicious of the church to endorse this possibility with any enthusiasm.

Raymond's next idea was to enter dentistry. This idea was primarily due to his experience with his orthodontist, a woman who was a dominant figure in his life at the time. "The next idea I seized onto was becoming a dentist. And uh, this largely

came out of the next person that I found who was a really dominant figure in my life. I was having my teeth straightened by a woman orthodontist who made orthodontics seem like the most fun thing you could possibly do with your life . . . that was received with as great news because dentists make lots of money and in a European family, being a professional who wears a white coat and makes lots of money is about the best thing you can do." His family's endorsement of his decision was an important consideration. When he enrolled in university, it was with the thought that he'd pursue dentistry, his parents having been much more supportive of this career choice.

In the first year of university, while enrolled in a science program, Raymond realized that there was some conflict between the two ideas of writing and dentistry. Of his science curriculum he says, "that wasn't what my deepest desire was . . . I wanted to understand what I couldn't understand and that was society . . . the way things work." He left his sciences program to take social science courses which came as a shock to his parents.

Two central issues were highlighted by Raymond's tale of changing his fields of study: first, a desire to explore his relationship with the social milieu given his sexual orientation and, second, the desire to separate from his parents. In discussing this first major career shift, Raymond suggests that in hindsight he may well have been attempting to address his sexuality . "I think in retrospect that I could see now that I

may have been dealing at the time unconsciously with psychosexual issues." He was hoping to understand the social world and his place in it, perhaps even to understand his own sexual urges. He expected the issue of his sexuality to loom up on him, although while at university Raymond took a very passive approach to his sexual issues and conduct. He said, "I kind of came to the idea, largely without support, that I was supposed to outgrow this [homosexuality]." In evaluating his personal realm, he did not conform to any image he had of gay men. He found no model who represented his own interest in athletics, particularly swimming, who also had attractions to the same sex. "I continued to . . . deal in a closeted way and I had no reference points. The only gays that I knew were very flamboyant and femme . . . that was absolutely the opposite of me . . . So there were a lot of things that did not get dealt with in my life." Raymond's career shift was, in part, defined by a search to find some answers about himself by seeking some societal standard or model he could compare himself to.

In a great many respects the tale of changing fields of study is similar to the progression of revealing a homosexual identity to parents: making a revelation which has been previously unacknowledged to his parents and acting on his recognition of his desires. By asserting his independence, his unique understanding of himself, he was able to accomplish individuation from his family. Raymond states, "I did make the move into social sciences at a huge shock to my parents. They

didn't have the resources to deal with it." This too replicates a response young adults receive from their parents at the disclosure of their sexual preference. In this manner, Raymond had attempted to separate from his parent's social expectations and he was enabled to make future personal and career decisions.

Raymond continued his education and received a Masters degree in political sciences. He was involved heavily in swimming and began managing a pool facility once he had completed his degree. This was an extension of his usual summer job as aquatics director. He was recruited shortly thereafter by a nonprofit health organization to participate in their public education programs. The advice of a professor about the influence of nonprofit agencies on public policy encouraged Raymond to take the job offer. He also determined to use every opportunity in the job to advance his writing skills. "And that is really where I realized that I was on a path that was somehow going to involve writing. I never knew how I was going to be able to define that path from one move to the next . . . ."

Determining how he would be able to define that path was difficult as he knew no one who was following the same course. He recounts, "the writers who were my age and getting their first jobs at that time were journalists. And they worked at a paper and made a lot less money than I did being an educator at the health organization. And it seemed like I was doing what needed to be done. I didn't know any freelance writers at that time who did writing for education. And you know, when you

think about it now, they must have existed, because look at all the textbooks in university. . . . One of the reasons I had such limited resources to work with as uh an agency person, an agency educator, ah, at that point, was that there wasn't any kind of, sort of, carved out territory of freelance writer . . . Whereas that is what I do now."

In the new job Raymond travelled a great deal. In fact he was given the area he'd grown up in as a major portion of his route. His superiors felt that by sending Raymond they could assure some degree of acceptance for the work they were doing. However, returning as an educated man sporting degrees from distant universities worked against him. The people rejected him. "And it was thought that I could deal with a lot of difficulties that they were having dealing with that area from Toronto. That I might be seen as one of their own. Well there was no way someone with a Master's degree . . . If anything I was a turncoat . . . I left there and now I was coming back trying to tell them what to do."

It was while he was touring his route and facing this rejection that Raymond came to know an influential man who he later realized was gay. He frequently relied on the man's wisdom and support to do his job. When the man was revealed to be misrepresenting himself, Raymond was shaken. He questioned his very ability to do his job:

I also had some incidents which were quite scary. In the first year of work I was tremendously influenced by a man who worked at a university phys. ed. department and he was the coach of the swim team who did a lot of freelance training for the agency. At one point I discovered that he was homosexual, in a really odd kind of way, in that we were travelling together through the North of the province and he was met by um his current sexual partner. He was quite a young man; 17, 18 year old man. I was about 23, 22 or 23 at the time. He would have been about 27 at the time. We were sleeping in the same hotel room together and this third man showed up. Evidently hitchhiking to Vancouver. I thought they were having sex together. I really must say that this was so odd to me because I repressed all this stuff that had gone on as a teenager to the point where it was like a rude awakening that adults were having same sex activity together. And why didn't I know about this. It kind of shook me up. It shook me up in such a way that the next morning I really wondered whether it had actually happened or whether it was a dream. . . .

I got up the next morning and I had to meet somebody and deal with this as if nothing had happened anyways. . .

But in any case this very influential man in my

life had also let on or intimated in some way that he was a professor at a reputable university. And I think that he did a number of things here which were more than intimate. I think that what he also did he began to create a kind of impression amongst us that he was writing his dissertation with none other than Alvin Toffler at an Ivy league University in the States. Well, I met somebody who also did work with agency, who also worked at the university he said he was teaching at. She had taken a contract position and she had made some very important discoveries about this guy. Who not only was he not a professor, basically he was the assistant pool manager who also had taken on responsibility for being coach of the swim team. One way or another he built this kind of identity, that he was a professor and all this sort of stuff. I guess he'd also been embezzling the department. And one way or another everything was catching up to him. This woman was the first to blow the whistle for me on him.

I went back to the city to the shocking discovery that he'd left his position at university, applied for a senior position at the agency and got it. I came to tell my boss what I'd heard and he didn't believe me. He thought that I'd made up the whole thing, you know. Well this guy survived the first wave of people discovering what had gone on at the university and

eventually everything caught up to him and he was basically forced by his own staff to resign.

A year and a half after being intensely involved with this man at work, he committed suicide in a very violent way. And he was gone.

I just can't tell you how this shocked me to my very roots, you know. That first adult homosexual who I knew and liked in a totally other identity than he presented himself and not only do I find out that he's possibly psychotic but within the short time after that discovery, he's dead. . . .

So here I was in the midst of all this, I could think of nothing else but getting out of the agency.

This experience brought Raymond to a crisis point which was reflected in his career. His search for a mentor or model who represented an ideal and aided Raymond's professional growth had brought him to a man who was lying. While his model's facade was erected not to hide his homosexuality but his lack of professional qualifications, Raymond learned the dramatic lesson that hiding the truth can be one's downfall. While this incident had no direct bearing on Raymond's own attitude toward his sexual orientation, the impact of another gay man breaking his trust shook him to the core of his being.

This time of crisis spurred Raymond to seek another job. He could think of no other recourse than leaving the organization.

"I could think of nothing else but getting out of the agency . . . I can't tell you how difficult it was . . . at the time it seemed like the most important thing for me to do was to move out of there . . . I was applying everywhere, doing everything that I thought I could do to try to get out of there." He questioned his abilities and felt he was incompetent when his support was eliminated. He felt ill equipped to do his job: "I felt I was in trouble, that I couldn't cope with my organizational responsibilities, that I needed a lot more training to do what I needed to do." His failure to locate another job diminished his esteem; "involvement in swimming hadn't anything to do with the rest of the world. People didn't see the way. . .I did." Raymond was striving at the time to maintain some feeling of control in a situation that was quite outside his domain.

In an attempt to find support within his agency, Raymond sought the advice of a well respected senior executive. It was his hope that the executive would be a mentor to him. The executive suggested that he enrol in an Adult Education program and complete a second masters degree. The positive relationship between Raymond and the executive was a short lived, however, as one day in the office the executive make a sexual advance towards him. "Uh, wouldn't you know it, this guy grabs my crotch in the middle of the office one day. You know, suddenly this guy who I'm trying to have this mentor relationship with is. . . And this set me off as well as even made me want to get out of [the agency] even more."

Given that his efforts to find a another job were failing, Raymond did take the advice of the executive and returned to school. Raymond worked on his second Master's degree on a part time basis while continuing to work at the agency. As he hadn't made any headway in trying to leave the agency, he felt that this might get him the resources he needed. The emotional crisis transposed directly to his career, making the decision to leave, failing in his efforts, and then returning to school. He attempted in several ways to stabilize his sense of personal competence.

It was also during this time that economic considerations came into effect. A major downturn in the economy made searching outside the organization even more difficult. While Raymond completed the degree, he was promoted within the agency. At the new level in the organization Raymond was relieved to leave behind him the taint of his colleague's death. He was not satisfied with feeling the insecurity of his position. "I was faced again with shaky ground, um that uh if I wasn't careful my job would be obsolete." He noted that the most secure people in the agency held doctorates; consequently in order to stabilize his own position he would need to do a doctorate. "It was patently obvious to me under those sorts of working situations that uh obviously the most powerful people in the organization at that time were Ph. D.s." He entered the degree program on a part time basis at first and only left the agency when he needed to complete his residency full time.

Prior to leaving the agency he had gained a perspective on how he might be able to utilize his writing skills as a freelance writer. Before leaving he had been in the position to hire writers once he had outlined the materials needed. "I was seeing that it could be very interesting and exciting to continue being able to work these ropes in other organizations after I'd finished my Ph. D." This enabled him to have the information he required finally to make his departure from the agency.

Graduate school quickly enveloped Raymond. It gave him "freedom from all the work network that [he] had been in." It became his playground in which to reform his life. He was also aware that his sexuality was presenting itself as a more pressing issue. He had a variety of arousing encounters, particularly at the pool and was so uncomfortable with these experiences that he gave up swimming for some time. However, he found university to be "mind expanding and life liberating," and it gave him his first opportunity to address his concerns more directly.

In his classes he met a man, Scott, who was very open about his homosexuality and was studying sexual issues as they pertained to adult education. Scott was outspoken in class and had a social network which intrigued Raymond. "I kind [of] came to see Scott, unbeknownst to him totally, you know, kind of saw him to be [the] ideal gay man." Raymond sought out Scott's social group, finding their perspectives an "antidote" to the politics of the department. Scott would invite Raymond to gay discussion groups although Raymond wouldn't attend. Unlike many

previous encounters Raymond had with other gay men, Scott's advances were not violating. When Scott left to go to Asia, Raymond suddenly discovered the emotional gap his departure left. "He suddenly left the institute [and] there was a big hole there that there was somebody who I had sort [of] been clinging to."

Raymond had come to the completion of his thesis and was celebrating when, quite by surprise, a woman who was looking for a specialty program writer was introduced to him. He applied for the job and got it. The job would enable him to travel, and he thought it would afford him an opportunity to engage in sexual activity. He states, "I decided this time I'm going to use this travel . . . I used one of my trips over there and uh one way or another I uh I uh met up with a guy and uh I came out." He used the opportunity to visit gay friends in Halifax to openly identify himself as a gay man and interact in the gay community.

The experience of having met a gay man who adequately modeled the characteristics Raymond found in himself facilitated this final step. He had entered an environment which he felt was less restrictive, and he was free of the social expectations of his previous colleagues at the agency. Additionally, as a self-employed consultant he felt he had greater agency to reveal his sexuality. While in the previous jobs he'd held he felt he had no control, he now felt he controlled the situation. "This was totally the opposite of the agency where I just find myself moved from one social thing to another. You know, where I just let everybody else control the situation . . . I'm just there to

serve . . . This situation I felt entirely different about it. Raymond, this is my situation." When he completed his contract he began to establish himself as a consultant using his old agency contacts to pursue work. It had been very important for him to gather that information prior to leaving the agency and now he was able to employ it to his benefit.

After Scott returned from Asia, Raymond and he fortuitously met again and began a relationship. With the continuing economic recession, Raymond found it difficult to find work in Toronto but did continue to freelance. Raymond briefly worked in hospital management when work became exceptionally difficult to find. He left the hospital after only a short time when he found the staff unreceptive to his suggestions. He also found it difficult to engage socially within the work context as a result of his ongoing relationship with Scott.

Raymond, having experienced the liberating environment of the university and the acceptance of his sexuality, seemed reluctant to return to more repressive environments. The structured work environment would not only limit his opportunity to write but also to express his sexual orientation. Having learned the tragic lesson of the first gay man he had known, he was reluctant to build a restrictive facade. Consequently, he decided to maintain his self-employment.

During this difficult time, there was a very bitter winter which encouraged Raymond and Scott to move westward. After a visit to Vancouver, he and Scott decided to move there. Raymond

continues as a self employed freelance writer using a series of national contacts made during his employment at the health agency. He is looking forward in his career and is exploring other areas of writing opportunities.

## CHAPTER VII

### General story

The interviewer obtained descriptive narratives which were subsequently validated by each of the three study participants. The narrative were coalesced into a unified story which illustrates the critical elements of the narratives. These elements represent the process of career development that each study participant experienced.

A story, as it is considered in this study, is comprised of three essential components: a beginning, a middle and an end. It is recited by the narrator to indicate a problem, issue or concern that is to be addressed and resolved in some manner. The beginning of the story, therefore, introduces the problem from the perspective of a temporal position at the point of conclusion or resolution. Sartre (1938) identifies this paradox in story telling: "You seem to start at the beginning . . . And in reality you have started at the end. It was there, invisible and present, it is the one which gives to words the pomp and value of a beginning . . .the end is there, transforming everything." The story begins with the consideration of the possibility of change preexisting in the narrator's mind (p.40) .

The route between the introduction of the problem and its resolution constitutes the middle of the story and indicates the various deliberations and trials encountered along the path. The middle relates the reasons for the outcome or conclusion of the story; it can also indicate the realm of possibilities

encountered during the process of resolution and justification for not selecting those alternate courses. The middle of the story seeks to bridge the disparity between the problem at the beginning and the anticipated conclusion at the end of the story.

In order to be satisfying to both the individual recounting the tale and the audience, the end of the story must provide resolution to the concern indicated at the beginning. It also serves to provide the final justification for the current position established from which future perspectives may be taken. The end unifies the progression of the problem and its possible solutions to a final reconciliation of the issue.

In soliciting the participation in this study, the interviewer made the identification of a issue. Recounting of a story would not have been possible, however, if there were not both a mutual recognition of the issue and a temporal indication of an endpoint or resolution. The stories told by the three participants in this study were abundant and each story indicated some conclusion.

Having reached the end of their narratives, each individual also made remarks as a final aside. When each narrator had concluded his story and indicated a successful resolution of the issue, he addressed an epilogue to the interviewer. The epilogue in the story serves to make a final summation of the action of the story, indicating the lesson of the tale. The epilogue allows the interviewer to come away from the experience with a synopsis commenting on the overall process of the story-telling

or future prospects for the characters.

The stories examined in this research, by virtue of their common features, unify into a general story which can provide the means of resolving the common issue of making career decisions as a gay man. Each story has as its central organizing features, a beginning, middle, and end as well as an epilogue. These features provide the structure from which the researcher generates a general story focussing on the single issue.

### The Beginning

In Western Society the notion of working and being self supporting is conferred early on in a child's development. Through a pattern of learning, both modelled behavior and didactic instruction, children are taught to explore their own abilities and interests, and the work possibilities offered by the social world. There are often severe social strictures on those who do not actively pursue a path towards a designated career path. The realm of choices is limited by the social environment, as well as the cultural and family milieu. Borow (1984, p.161) refers to this process as "occupational socialization" and defines it as "the intricate birth to death process by which one acquires one's view of the human world and its institutions, one's beliefs, loyalties, convictions of right and wrong, and habitual response modes. The learning is both

formal and informal, deliberate and incidental, conscious and unconscious." This process distinguishes the individual within the cultural context and influences the career behaviour of that individual.

This process is initially described in the narrative of career development by the three participants. They detail a host of social influences in establishing their career possibilities. The men also indicate in the beginning of their stories that they have a theme and structure which guide the telling and impress on the listener the relevance of the content. The men demonstrate that as they came into contact with role models embodying similar values to the ones they were recognizing in themselves, they determined their career possibilities more fully.

The family has an extensive impact on the development of a child including work and work related values. It provides a social structure which allows the child to come into contact with adults engaged in work. This process restricts the type of information the child has about job possibilities usually in relation to socioeconomic parameters (Herr and Cramer, 1987). The family's social context provides a tacit indication to the child of suitable career options. When parents choose to travel, they provide the child with an opportunity to meet a variety of people from different regions and also indicate the acceptability of travelling in one's career. Samuel reflects: "I had a great advantage of travel as a child. It enabled me to look at many ways and many lifestyles." If parents hold professional

positions the child is exposed to more professional roles and is more likely to see them as possibilities ( Clark, 1967; Freisen, 1986; Hotchkiss & Borow, 1984; Schulberg, Vondracek, & Crouter, 1984). Families also overtly reinforce choice by providing positive comments about choices that are acceptable and negative appraisals of those occupations which are not. Becoming a priest might prove objectionable, while becoming a dentist might be seen as a preferable alternative.

Raymond and Samuel experienced both parents' explicit reinforcement of choices as well as their indirect influence. They describe the family environment carefully to indicate its influence on the realm of occupational possibilities they explored. Raymond recounts, "although they were probably shocked because my grandmother had changed from being a catholic to being a protestant . . . whereas it would have been eminently more desirable in a catholic family to have a priest as at least one of the grandchildren." He goes on further to note that changing his mind to dentistry "was received as great news because dentists make lots of money and in a European family being a professional who wears a white coat and makes money is about the best that you can do." Receiving the affirmation from their families with regard to job possibilities was important to both Samuel and Raymond at the point of their initial career exploration.

The family may not provide structure and guidance in selecting a career. Families whose members struggle to hold

jobs, have disabilities limiting their participation in the work force, have limited contact with the child, as well as a host of other reasons, leave their impact on the development of a child's work values and knowledge of employment options. In these instances the career development may not be defined in terms of the parents' participation in the decisions towards a designated career path. Possibly an individual does not use family relationships and interactions to define personal development. Family may not be the concept around which meaning is structured. In terms of Doug's career development both of these considerations hold true. He does not relate his career development to his family history nor their influence. The absence of the role of his family in Doug's story defines the career as noteworthy as Raymond and Samuel's family description highlight their development. Doug indicates at the onset of his story that he struggles to define a career direction and that determining its focus is his individual responsibility.

The work of Virginia Satir (1983) gives support to this indication in the narratives that the family is a fundamental of career process. In Satir's terms, "The family system is the main learning context for individual behavior, thoughts, feelings" (p.35), and she goes on further to indicate that, "The parents, who teach by words and demonstration, are the ones who translate to the child the major meaning which outside forces will have to the family" (p. 36). Parents play a pivotal role in determining the career whether they take an active part in the child's

deliberations or not.

Also, each of the men gives consideration to the significant influence of both adult and peer role models for their career. Samuel suggests the importance of men in military roles. Raymond indicates that his best childhood friend is the person he discusses becoming a writer with but that the priest and orthodontist he encounters also play a large part in his thoughts about what jobs he might like to do. Doug speaks of his disappointing encounter with the owner of the company he worked for and its effect in precipitating his decision to travel. These role models are introduced at the onset of each story and further attention is given to this area of influence in the middle of each narrative.

In addition to descriptions of role models and the family milieu, a discussion of the cultural context is pertinent to the career development process each man experiences. The values of any particular culture are instilled by the family and reinforced by other cultural institutions. Each man in this study speaks clearly of their cultural heritage. Raymond's European heritage indicated that becoming a professional in a field of science was an optimal career choice. The culture enforced taking advantage of educational opportunity and surpassing the level of parental occupational attainment. Both Samuel and Doug have Anglo backgrounds where self sufficiency is a presiding value as they describe it. Their families anticipated that they were to choose careers requiring post secondary education and work to pay for

the cost of their schooling. Additionally, all three men describe that they were expected to discern their own interests and pursue careers in those areas rather than following the choice of their parents or an academic institution. This is implicitly specified in several statements; Raymond indicates this as, "that wasn't what my deepest desire was . . .", while Doug asserts, "not being able to narrow it [his career options] down to one thing I'm passionate about . . .". Samuel signifies the importance of determining his own interests in stating, "I could make my own choices." Cultural constructs instilled by the family, society and educational institutions impart self reliance and independence in decision making; the men adopted them as a part of their personal framework for progressing through their careers.

While these external factors in the career process continue throughout the career development and are implied in the narrative at several places, the beginnings of the story emphasize them as the context of the first explorations into career. This is also the case with the economic conditions at the time of initial inquiry. The ease of entering a field and the likelihood of finding a job was momentarily considered. Furthermore, the cost of relocating to attend post secondary training provided an additional factor to be considered during the early phase of career exploration. These were, however, brief deliberations made at the initial point of career exploration.

At the beginning of his story each man gives some indication of how he is to tell the story of his career and how he structures the meaning of his career development. This is seen initially in the statements noting the format of the story and alluding to what each individual feels is important. When Doug begins to tell his story his sentences are filled with clauses and subclauses and they take a rambling route to complete the idea initially embarked upon. For example he states, "So I guess it wasn't until grade, I guess it was probably more early university where I realized, cause grade twelve was weird, that I hadn't really identified yet, that the problem was either not having a focussed ambition or goal and that had not been good enough, that like the problem with university was that I was taking no direct, I could see no link to the future." The vocabulary of the beginning of his story includes words noting abrupt change and shifts like "jump", and "departure." The introduction suggests the path or course the story is to take and underscores Doug's life theme that he has not had a single plan to guide his career choices.

Samuel makes a similar indication of the form and theme of the story. He initially describes the importance of the role of astrology holds for him. He places an emphasis on his astrological symbol as representing dual elements and also states that he has "somewhat come full circle" in life. For Samuel, this marks the theme of his story and the way he conceptualizes his life. It introduces the interviewer to his two career paths;

the end of his first career was marked by his parents' death and the second career will be marked by his own. His narrative highlights his life theme clearly: "Now the reason I'm backgrounding this is partly to give you an idea of who I am and where I'm coming from, but also I think there are two aspects here."

Finally, Raymond indicates the theme that in many ways he came to his career through a process which may not be immediately obvious as the means to the desired end. He states initially, "you back into writing . . . I feel somehow that is quite accurate. However, I can also say that as a teenager I saw myself as a writer." His story's beginning illustrates that there is an element which does not immediately occur to the listener but that it will be revealed in the end. This initial indication of his narrative theme foreshadows the major incident of his career when he is duped into believing his mentor's false persona and the chaos he feels when the secret is revealed to him. Furthermore, this story within the larger story, described early in the interview, functions as a morality tale which illustrates the lesson to be learned along Raymond's career path; misrepresenting oneself will be detrimental to the individual in the end.

The way the beginning is structured, the language the narrator uses, and the statement it makes, details not only the form the story will have but also the overriding theme of the individual's life. It demonstrates the narrator's method of

conceptualizing the events which have shaped his career, the way he constructs his personal meaning in light of these events. The beginning of these narratives contain the schemata which provide structure and meaning by which to follow the individual actions and events that take place. The actual method of making this schema known is a subtle one which does not explicitly state the narrator's life theme but implies the overriding notion. The beginning gives an indication of the relationship the decisions have to each other by virtue of their meaning to the actor. And the evolution of the meaning, as indicated at the story's beginning, is a significant factor in the decisions involved in the career development of each study participant.

Another pattern emerges at the beginning of the stories; each man notes their growing awareness of themselves. The men describe their increasing knowledge of themselves as having personal competencies and interests which could be applied to certain jobs, a proclivity for sexual relationships with men, and a recognition of how accepted these abilities and interests are within the world that they are entering. Each man handles the recognition of these factors in different ways. Doug avoids making any overt statements about himself and seeks to keep the peace both in reference to his homosexuality and in terms of difficult school and work experiences. He is uncomfortable in being confrontational, recognizes this in himself, and avoids situations requiring any assertion of himself. Samuel, on the other hand, specifies the importance of maintaining an image in

public despite any personal differences from that projection of himself. He was free to act on his sexual interests but determined that they were not acceptable material for public consideration. His ability to provide a public persona made it possible for him to feel competent exploring an acting career and providing to people an image that he felt they wanted to see. Raymond was aware that he wanted to explore the social structure of society despite the possible rejection this might elicit from others. He recognizes a similar dilemma around his homosexuality: "I kind of came to the idea, um, largely without any support that I was supposed to outgrow this." Initially, he chose to depart from the expectations of his family and study social sciences and to ignore his homosexual desires. That the internal experience of self is disparate from social demands demonstrates the problem to be addressed in the narrative; the middle of each man's story seeks to span the lacuna.

### The Middle

Once an interest that is related to a field of work is established, the knowledge and skills necessary to seek a position need to be obtained. In the instances of the study participants, attending post secondary training was vital. The decision to enter an educational setting which would provide the information the men sought was largely determined on the basis of the school's location and the cost of attending. Each man chose

to attend training relatively close to the location where they resided.

In addition to the specific instruction related to their field of interest, the men also had an opportunity to meet peers and instructors from whom they could obtain a greater understanding of the field. The development of a personal relationship with an individual who had the capacity to foster a broader understanding than the coursework would allow was important to the development of each study participant both at school and at work. Each man found in the course of his initial forays into education and work a significant role model, a man senior to him, to provide guidance and encouragement. The impact of the mentor's expertise was predicated on the nature and strength of their relationship. In reflecting upon a relationship with one of the significant men in the course of his career, Raymond states, "this guy had incredible charisma as a trainer and he was very intelligent." The men looked to the mentor for support as well as for an acquaintance within the field of interest. Samuel recounts the tale of the drafting professor encouraging his designing career: "my professor said, 'I hope you're not planning a career in drafting.' And I said, 'certainly not, too dreary.' He said, 'Your designs are really quite excellent. You should enter this competition' and so I did." Each man was eager to respect the mentor for their superior understanding and personal qualities which would reflect the values and enlightenment to which they aspired.

The search for a mentor to assist in the development of knowledge and a sense of personal and professional efficacy was prevalent throughout the narrative of each study participant; however, a point came in each relationship where the mentor did not completely embody all that the men had wanted. The protégé recognized a personal need or value, looked to the mentor to address the need and when the mentor was unable to, he would leave the mentor's influence. Doug relates, "One instructor that I really respected in first year had, for whatever reason, decided that he was just going to walk through the class that he was teaching that year. I became furious towards the end of it. And my way of dealing with it was not to give him anything . . . and I ended up forgetting about all that stuff and doing the work that interested me . . . working on projects that were really important." The regard for the mentor is altered when a violation of the relationship occurs, either with regard to learning or personal qualities, and results in a redirection of the protégé's work interests. Raymond narrates that after the rejection of his mentor he "could think of nothing else but getting out of the agency." After a second mentorship fails Raymond states, "and this set me off as well, even made me want to get out of the agency even more."

Mentors within the work place have been recognized as an important factor in career growth in the area of business management (Fagenson, 1989; Hunt & Michael, 1983; Phillip-Jones, 1982). They have been identified as having both career functions

of providing challenge, sponsorship and protection in the work setting, in addition to providing psychosocial functions of counselling and acceptance (Kram, 1985). In the narratives of this study, each participant notes the importance of the mentor in providing a sense of competence in the tasks associated with the job or coursework. This competence is also reflected in a broader perspective than that of the work environment by their personal statements of self worth . Frequently, when a mentoring relationship ends unhappily the narrator reports an emotional turmoil affecting personal well-being as well as the career path. For example, Raymond indicates that in the absence of his mentor, "I really can't tell you how shaky I felt my ground was at that point."

Transitions to paid employment allowed the men to further their areas of interests and to meet their financial needs. Often they described this as a fortuitous occurrence. "I was the right man at the right place", Samuel states. Raymond tells of a job offer while sitting in the university cafeteria with friends after defending his thesis: "this is so serendipitous it's unbelievable." The men see their ease in finding employment as not only an endorsement of career choice but of themselves. Doug's acceptance as an intern illustrates this point; he states, "it felt right", "it felt much more like this is going to go somewhere", "I was really thrilled" and concludes by philosophizing, "sometimes life seems to fall into place." Raymond tells of finding a job in Vancouver and notes, "People

here embraced me in a very positive way."

In finding positions related to fields of interest individuals make adjustments in their career if opportunities for satisfaction, acceptance and demonstrating competence are not present. The discrepancy between their realization of their homosexuality and the anticipated negative attitude of the social environment at work and school results in feelings of limited acceptance. "In fact I was really startled when I travelled with the theatre company how few gay people there were. . . . I was surprised at the homophobia that was in there. In the profession. In fact there is still a great deal of homophobia in the design profession," Samuel indicates. During their tenure in a job, if they become aware of unmet needs and have no potential for meliorating them, the men enter a state of becoming prepared to make a change in their career. The language used in describing the incidents prior to making a career shift speaks of, "alienation", "rejection", and "ostracization" from the social context. This emotional state preceding a change is often considered a crisis by the men. Samuel notes a point where he asks himself, "What the hell am I doing with my life?" Doug says that he frequently experiences, "what am I doing with my life and where am I going and why type crises." Often the men would question their abilities to complete their job tasks in light of this emotional state. Raymond states, "I felt I was in trouble, that I couldn't cope with my organizational responsibilities."

The state of crisis as indicated by the men is characterized by a situation around which the emotions arise. In light of the awareness of themselves and the impression of isolation, they view the external events as distressing and precipitate an effort to change career directions. Samuel, when the theatre company he is employed by fails to tell him of his parents' death, considers this a personal rejection. He sees the theatre company as serving its own interests in keeping him on tour rather than recognizing his personal concerns. This represents to him a failure to affirm him as a person within the ranks of the company. The incident spurs him to leave the company and leave acting altogether. While Samuel has faced incidents of rejection, or what he calls homophobia, throughout his acting career, he never left the profession. Only after an experience of feeling deeply fulfilled during a Gay Pride event in San Francisco does he feel the sting of personal rejection to a degree where he is emboldened to change career courses. He remarks of his Gay Pride experience, "I felt closer to whatever it is that I am than I have ever felt." Against this backdrop of Samuel's personal recognition of himself the experience with the theatre company evokes a crisis and spurs him to action.

Doug's career shifts have also come at a point that he describes as a "crisis." He has on several occasions changed career paths, often noting in the preceding factors an event which gives rise to feeling alienated. At university he experiences being ostracized from his social group when it

becomes apparent that he is dating a man who lives in the United States. Prior to returning to recording school he recalls anti-gay jokes told in his presence when he was an intern. Regarding his departure from the recording studio Doug reflects, "so I found out how much they cared about me." The level of personal acceptance he found when volunteering with the AIDS service organization was encouraging in comparison to his experience at the studio: "It felt really good and was a sharp contrast to going to the studio which by that time felt really bad." This contrast served to precipitate his inquiry with the organization about a paid position.

Raymond experienced the "crisis" state several times during his career and has consequently altered his career to allow him greater latitude to express himself more fully. After the suicide of his mentor, Raymond became extremely despondent in his position and attempted diligently to leave his job. That his mentor had been a gay man is highly significant for Raymond, "that first adult homosexual that I knew and liked . . ." and he viewed the loss of support as catastrophic. While seeking to leave the agency, Raymond was sexually harassed by the male executive that he went to after his mentor's death in hope of receiving support. Sexual harassment has been viewed as a significant factor in the loss of job motivation (Gutch, 1985; Terpstra & Baker, 1989). In view of his feelings of personal inadequacy subsequent to these two events, Raymond returned to school as a means of leaving the agency. He was deeply

threatened by the negative implications of homosexuality that both incidents revealed. It cast him into a tremendous emotional crisis in view of his realization of the impulses he had attempted to ignore.

The recognition of oneself is a precondition to the consideration of one situation as evoking a crisis. The awareness of self fosters the interpretation of a situation as threatening or alienating. In the instance of the men providing the narratives of this study, the realization of their erotic orientation towards the same sex makes the situations they describe particularly threatening. The incongruity in the acceptance they seek and the rejection they find in the social context of school or work precipitates their negative emotional state. The unpleasant emotional state motivates the men into making a career change. Rollo May (1983) suggests that this commitment to the self is a vital precursor to action. "The significance of commitment is not that it is simply a vaguely good thing or ethically to be advised. It is a necessary prerequisite for seeing truth . . . The possibility or readiness to take such a 'leap' is a necessary condition for the decisive orientation . . . . We use the term decision as meaning a decisive attitude towards existence, an attitude of commitment. In this respect, knowledge and insight follow decision rather than vice versa" (p. 166). Thus one's knowledge of a homosexual orientation, one's need for affirmation as that person, is a element of the career decision process for the men in this study.

To eliminate the crisis state, the person makes a search to find or restore a feeling of worth. Reestablishing the sense of competence and value that work previously had, the men in this study frequently returned to school. In an effort to stabilize themselves emotionally, they felt that learning new skills would give them a direction or structure they were missing during the crisis. The men also noted the freedom to explore their personal and sexual issues when in school as opposed to the work environment. Raymond states, "Now at this point I'm aware of all kinds of things, that here for example, is freedom from the work network that I had been in. . . . I know in the midst of all this my sexuality is looming in front of me." When some degree of emotional stabilization had occurred the men reentered the job market. The transition between school and work was by no means a black and white process. The financial consideration of maintaining a lifestyle independent of family support made shifts between work and school unclearly delineated. However, the pursuit of further education carried an overall effect of confirming a level of personal efficacy sufficiently substantiating any job change.

### The End

In facing the moments of crisis prior to making a decision to change jobs or return to school, each man in this study progressively articulated a set of personal values related to

work. In the process of recognizing their sexual orientation and developing a personal identity which is inclusive of their homosexuality, they have created an understanding of their participation in the social context of their careers. Each man has indicated that in response to the problem indicated at the beginning of his story he has struck a balance between his personal and work personae. The issue of recognizing their homosexuality and being an openly gay man in a work environment is reconciled through the process of determining their careers. By finding adequate role models and work situations which accepted their homosexual identity as well as provided opportunities for demonstrating their knowledge and skills, they resolved the initial problem.

After surviving a series of crises, Raymond, while finishing his doctorate, meets a gay man who represents all he values. His model addresses homosexuality in his academic research, participates in the university's society as an openly gay man, recognizes Raymond's homosexuality and does not make unwanted sexual advances. He identifies this man as the "ideal gay man." This mentor demonstrates that it is possible to reconcile one's identity with one's career. With the influence of this role model, Raymond is then able to integrate his sexual issues with his work life when he begins travelling as a consultant and begins to participate in the gay culture. He feels a sense of agency within the new social structure "this was totally opposite of the agency where I just find myself moved from one social

thing to another. I just let everybody else control the situation. In this situation I felt entirely different about it. This is my situation, I'm travelling here. If I want to make something out of this experience I'm going to do it. And I did." As a freelance writer Raymond has the personal freedom he has come to value and no longer needs to feel threatened by anticipation of rejection for his homosexuality.

In moving from a volunteer position to a full time paid position at an AIDS service organization, Doug has been able to resolve the difficulty of having a gay identity in the work place. The service organization permits him to participate in the social context of work as a gay man without fear of rejection. As the organization is for the most part serving the gay community, Doug rarely needs to become confrontational and disclose his sexual identity, something he is uncomfortable doing.

Samuel also indicates the importance of acceptance for him as a gay man at work. Interior design is considered a stereotypically gay profession and consequently his sexual orientation is not questioned. Samuel says that while in some places he "just couldn't fit in", in his current job "here I don't have to. I make a space for myself. I'm accepted. I'm often welcomed but I'm also allowed to have my privacy. And that's I think an important development part - having the privacy to discover who you are." Samuel has selected a career path that allows him to act within its social environment without feeling

alienated.

Each man concludes his story with an emphasis on the importance of having developed a degree of personal acceptance. He also stresses the significance of the freedom for personal expression and the value of acceptance and inclusion within the social context at work. He emphasises having chosen a career which permits his personal values.

### The Epilogue

Having reached the conclusion of their stories, the men shift their focus from the problem and its resolution to future considerations of their career. Having come to value the importance of expressing their personhood, including their homosexuality, while at work, their speculation is done with the notion of maintaining this openness throughout their careers. Raymond indicated that he is hoping to continue as a self employed writer and expand into other genres. During the course of the interview he momentarily considered taking an academic position at the university but quickly dispensed with the idea. In concluding his interview, Doug mentioned returning to school to finish his degree but noted that it would take another crisis to motivate him to do so and until then he plans to remain where he is. His path having not been clearly defined up to this point, he anticipates that it will continue to evolve. Finally, Samuel points to his future. He expects to continue working and

be self sufficient for as long as his health allows him and is taking steps to plan his own funeral. He states, "I know I'm not going to be around for forever, so I'm not interested in building a monument to myself . . . . I live for myself." Each man views his future through the lesson of having developed some acceptance of himself and from others in respect to his career choices.

## CHAPTER VIII

### Findings

The findings of this research indicate that there is a complex system of meaning detailed by each of the study participants which impacted on his career. The development of a sense of self which others regard and accept is a crucial element to that meaning. Inasmuch as an understanding erotic response to members of the same sex is a part of the personhood, it is also a constituent part of the individual requiring acceptance within the social context of work. This self identity which encompasses the homosexual's desires becomes the interpretive schema by which events affecting the career are understood by the homosexual individual.

The process of coming to terms with one's homosexual orientation evolves over time. The findings of this study indicated that the determination of one's career is a dynamic process as well. The relationship between these two processes is based on the meaning structure the individual holds and is complex and variable. When placed in work environments which did not provide validation for the individual's identity, participants felt ill at ease and interpreted events to be a personal rejection. The personal identification of a homosexual orientation by the participants was determined to be a precondition of a variety of situations at work being interpreted as negative. The subsequent emotional state, designated by the narrators as a crisis, preceded career change. For study

participants, the eventual endpoint of their stories was the selection of a career which combined the freedom to express themselves and a modicum of social approval.

A pivotal feature in the decision making of the gay men participating in the study was the indication of a "crisis" prior to any shift in the career process. This was construed as a negative emotional state, indicating an impending change in the narrator's situation. This investigation found that the crisis occurred when the situation jeopardized the narrator's sense of himself and decreased his feeling of competence in carrying out his work tasks. The crisis was associated with an impression of being rejected or feeling alienated. The distress was considered the prodromal state signifying a need for career change.

The multifaceted social factors which are interpreted as affirming or rejecting of career choices were also discussed in the narrative discourse analyzed. Sexual harassment, false disclosures, role models who failed to represent the values of the protégé, and difficulty of obtaining a job were all sources of negative feedback influencing career selections. Positive role models who embodied features and values of the protégé and places of work which endorsed homosexual orientations were considered more positively and influenced the decisional process. In fact, the narratives discussed in this research suggest that individuals seek mentors who will represent their aspirations and provide a guide both for personal and professional growth.

### Theoretical Implications

The impact of a person's construction of meaning is a critical component in the development of a model of career decision making. The incorporation of an understanding of the role of personal meaning into a decision making model must represent the dynamic interrelationship among social, cultural and developmental factors. The implication of this study suggests that the inclusion of the development and maintenance of identity, including the notion of sexual orientation, is pertinent to theoretical modeling in the career counselling field.

This study additionally indicates the function and nature of mentors is an important consideration in career development. Mentors provide an abundant source of information to a protégé both with respect to given job performance abilities and social interaction. As a source of reinforcement and affirmation, the mentor is a major agent in the decision making process of the protégé. The relationship and its construed importance to the protégé provide an opportunity for emotional stability in crisis evoking situations. The corollary, that the destruction of the relationship effects emotional instability and augments difficult circumstances at work, is also found. This aspect of relationship in the work environment is an important consideration for the development of a comprehensive theory of career as well as a perspective on decisional factors.

It is fair to note that the limited number of participants

in this study restricts theoretical generalizations that can be drawn from this research. This is particularly the case as no saturation of narrative material occurred which could be applied to demonstrate internal consistency of the study.

### Practical Implications

The findings of this research have direct bearing on career counselling practice. Anticipation of the work environment for an individual with a developing or developed homosexual identity is an important consideration in successful job placement. The relationships in the work place and support for the individual have potential consequences not only for the development of personal identity but also for the adjustment of the individual within that career. Counsellors need to explore the anticipation of the social aspects of work clearly with clients as an element relevant to decision making.

It is also critical to include the discussion of the major role models acting to influence the decision making process. While no one can be thought to act in an entirely independent manner, an awareness of key players may assist an individual in becoming aware of the influence of relationships on their decision as well as the various types of reinforcement they can anticipate. The counsellor may also be able to assist the client in making a comprehensive search for a mentor who adequately represents their values, thereby circumventing any negative impact of failed mentorships. Counsellors may also

consider mentorship programs to facilitate other areas of personal development.

The final area of practical implications for career counselling which can be drawn from this study is the impact of crisis states on decision making. As a central feature in change, exploring the antecedents of crisis, both the commitment to being as well as the situational determinants, may provide valuable information for the client and facilitate future decision making. Crisis may be reframed for the client in a more positive light as an indication of a commitment to personal identity thereby facilitating coping in the career change process.

#### Implications for future research

There are a host of research implications which can be drawn from this study. The nature and qualities of effective mentorship for gay men during the course of their career may need to be explored more fully. The role of the mentors in facilitating the adjustment to a homosexual identity and programs in which this could be successfully employed may also provide valuable information to the field of adult development and counselling.

Research exploring the relationship between gay self-acceptance and career stability would have implications not only for career counselling but also for an economic analysis of homosexual identities. The question of the impact of deciding to

pass as a heterosexual at work on career development and whether this differs from the way a self-disclosed gay man makes career shifts is an area of future research extending from the present inquiry. A comprehensive qualitative analysis of the career narratives of gay men may serve to illuminate the development of a gay identity as well as the transitional process between realizing the identity and revealing it to others. It may also be of interest to career development theory to establish the impact of being infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus or having an AIDS diagnosis on the career decisions of gay men

As a result of the present research, questions pertaining to the incidence and repercussions of sexual harassment for men at work should also come to light. The various meanings that sexual harassment may have for men and the coping mechanisms employed are possible areas for future inquiry. These are questions warranting further investigation to provide both clinical and scientific information.

### Summary

This research was conducted to explore the experience of a homosexual identity in the career development of three self-identified gay men. Through an analysis of the narratives of the study participants, the unique contexts of each individual and the meaning structures the individual has for those decisions within the contexts was discussed. The pertinence of this line of inquiry was to establish the particular experiences of three

gay man in the dynamic process of determining their career. The establishment of personal meaning to interpret the social context of work and make associated career decisions has relevance to both theoretical and practical concerns of career counselling.

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