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**How to Become a Straight Man:
A Study of Young Hong Kong Heterosexual Adult Men**

By

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of

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Abstract

Abstract of thesis titled 'How to Become a Straight Man: A Study of Young Hong Kong Heterosexual Adult Men' submitted by Chan Cheuk-lun on August 2005 for the degree of Master of Philosophy at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

The aim of this study is to investigate heterosexual (or straight) male sexuality through an examination of the sex lives of thirteen young adult Chinese men in Hong Kong. Male sexuality is a cornerstone of male identity, which consists of the concepts of gender and sexual identity. In fact, concepts such as 'masculinity', 'man', and 'male sex' are reliant on the institution of heterosexuality for their coherence. It is frequently acknowledged that heterosexuality is essential to the construction of 'hegemonic masculinity'. According to Connell (1995), hegemonic masculinity refers to cultural strategies that some people (mainly men) are required to use in order to inhabit positions of dominance.

By following Connell (1995)'s 3x3 matrix of gender study, I investigated the life courses of thirteen young, heterosexual Hong Kong men as a basis upon which to gain an understanding of their conception of being straight men. These thirteen men were interviewed from July to December 2003, and their self-stories¹ of their sexual lives were collected. According to Plummer (2001), self-stories are one form of 'life

¹ I will be explaining what self-stories mean in Chapter 2 when discussing the methodology of this research.

document'. Other examples are life stories, life narratives, 'mysteries', auto/biographies, oral histories, personal testaments, and life documents. I investigated different aspects/dimensions/parts of their sex lives; namely, *The Moment of Engagement*, *The First Sex Act*, *Sexual Virility*, and *Sexual Relationships*. In these chapters, I examine local ideologies and discourses on such issues as phallocentricism, sexual hierarchies, and romantic love, which organize the sexuality of Hong Kong straight males into symbolic practises that exist outside of an individual's life. In addition, a conglomerate of linked institutions such as the mass media, schools (sex education), the family, and romantic love that support male heterosexual practises in Hong Kong is also investigated.

This empirical study perceives Hong Kong straight male sexuality not merely as a construct of identity. Identity is also a becoming and even a performance that is historically and contextually contingent. Through the self-stories of thirteen young Hong Kong men, I demonstrate the regulatory and disciplinary nature of straight male identity. What I have learned from studies of gender and sexuality has caused me to regard straight male identity as pluralistic and multiple in nature.

Furthermore, the agencies of Hong Kong straight men during the complex process of constructing/becoming/performing their gender and sexual identities are examined with the help of the concept of *body reflexive practises*. This concept helps

me to bridge the concepts of gender and sexual identity when examining the role of sexuality in the daily life of a straight man. It also brings the body (material) back into abstract theoretical discussions of gender (masculinity) and sexuality (heterosexuality).

This is a pioneer study on Hong Kong straight male sexuality. Through this research I hope to contribute to gender and sexuality studies and other local debates such as pornography (and cyberporn), the medicalization of male sexuality, and sexual ethics.

CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it reproduced no material previously published or written, nor material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

Chan Cheuk-lun

31st August 2005

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Male sexuality is a cornerstone of male identity, which consists of both gender and sexual identity. Garlick (2003:157) has argued that a key point often neglected in the literature on men and masculinities is that concepts such as ‘masculinity’, ‘man’, and ‘male sex’ are reliant on the institution of heterosexuality for their coherence.

The aim of this empirical research is thus to investigate heterosexual (or straight) male sexuality through an examination of the sex lives of thirteen young adult Chinese men in Hong Kong. I used an oral history approach to collect the stories of this group of men in order to study how they became straight men.

It is frequently acknowledged that heterosexuality is essential to the constructions of ‘hegemonic masculinity’. Drawing from Gramsci’s original concept of hegemony in the context of class relations and relating it to the study of gender and sexual relations, Connell (1995) provided a powerful account of how we can incorporate power into an analysis of masculinity by articulating the notion of hegemonic masculinity. He argued that hegemonic masculinity refers to the cultural strategies that some people (mainly men) are required to use in order to inhabit positions of dominance (Kong, 2005).

Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity is thus of great use in this study of Hong Kong straight men. Their heterosexual practises can be seen as various cultural strategies employed to allow them to inhabit their positions in the conventional ideologies and discourses that construct straight male sexuality. For example, as I will illustrate in this thesis, phallogentrism, sexual hierarchies, romantic love, and homosexuality/ BDSM/ commercial sex as marginality are most common ideologies and discourses that construct straight male sexuality in Hong Kong society. Moreover, they are embedded in major social institutions such as the family, schools, and the mass media that require young Hong Kong heterosexual men to acknowledge and conform to them.

What I have learned from studies of gender and sexuality has given me the foundation to examine straight male sexuality in Hong Kong. Below, I outline the ways in which such studies have guided me in my own research.

The Notion of Hegemonic Masculinity

A Brief History of the Creation of Hegemonic (heterosexual) Masculinity

The creation of 'man' is the creation of 'masculinity' and the hegemonic form is 'heterosexual'. From the time of the ancient Greeks until the Enlightenment, differences between males and females were generally conceived of as differences of degree. Women were considered an inferior version of men. The belief was that 'man

is the yardstick of perfection, against which the female sex is a measure' (Peterson, 2003:60).

From One-Sex to Two-Sex

Prior to the Enlightenment, as Laqueur (1990:6-8) has argued, the general conceptions of 'sex' and 'gender' as we perceive them today were bound together in a 'one-sex model'. This means that, in the past, it was gender rather than sex that was primary or 'real'; i.e., male was the privileged sex.

However, since the eighteenth century, biologists have posited the stable and ahistorical sexed body as the epistemic foundation for social order. Hence, Laqueur has claimed, 'some time in the eighteenth century, sex as we know it was invented' (149). This was due in part to the decline of traditional, religious forms of legitimating gender differences and the need for a new, and scientific, approach (the 'two-sex model') to replace it. In addition the change in approach was very much influenced by the social and political context of the time.

Medicine Replaced Religion

According to Nye (1999:143-144), in the course of the nineteenth century, the states of the industrializing West took a keen interest in the health and well-being of

populations that were becoming steadily more numerous, urban, and dangerous to public order. Doctors and public health authorities systematically studied the forms of sexual behaviour they considered most dangerous to morality, health, and public order.

In this era, the medical man replaced the priest as the authority and expert on sexual desire, and medical discourse gradually became the form in which the pathologies and norms of sexual health were publicly discussed. The medical practitioners who specialized in sexology gradually concluded that these and many related sexual problems were not the consequence of simple willful 'perversity'. Since the early Christian era, sexual problems were no longer being regarded as mere 'perversities', but as true 'perversions' deeply rooted in the organism over which individuals had little control.

The 'discovery' of sexual perversions by the experts suggested that certain categories were deviations corresponding to a 'natural' sexual aim and object. This was the historical moment when 'sexuality' achieved a phenomenological status that made it a possible, and therefore an appropriate, object of scientific study. Since then, 'sex' has been intersected with 'gender' in the construction of identity. In fact, the concept of heterosexuality emerged at about the same time that perversions such as inversion, sadism, masochism, and fetishism were being catalogued. Indeed, as Katz

(1995: 21-3) has argued, heterosexuality, in which individuals of different sexes engage in sex for pleasure alone and not for procreation, initially was itself a perversion.

Heterosexuality as a Perversion

The term 'heterosexual' first appeared in America in an article published in 1892 by the physician James G. Kiernan to characterize those guilty of 'reproductive deviance'.

The first American translation of Kraft-Ebing's *Psychopathia sexualis* appeared the following year and introduced Americans to the notion of 'opposite' sex perversion under the rubric of the hyphenated 'hetero-sexual'.

From the context of the U.S., as Chauncey (1994:120-5) argued, if homosexuality did not exist in the early nineteenth century, then neither did heterosexuality, for each category depends for its existence on the other. It is not sufficient to consider the appearance of heterosexuality as a new category of behaviour; it had existed for as long as homosexuality had been an invention of medical experts.

The very capacity of men to shift between male and female love objects demonstrates that a different sexual regime governed their emotions. 'Normal' men only began to mean 'heterosexual' men in the late nineteenth century, when men

began to make their 'normalcy' contingent on their renunciation of such intimacies with men (Foucault, 1978; Weeks, 1981). They become heterosexual, only when they defined themselves and organized their affective and physical relations to exclude any sentiments or behaviour that might be marked as homosexual. Chauncey has traced the social and linguistic dialectic that gave rise to the homosexual/ heterosexual binary at the beginning of the twentieth century in Western society. This dialectic established the ground for 'heterosexuality' as the 'male sex' that has become the social norm in contemporary society.

Hence, we can see that heterosexuality is a medical invention that came in the wake of the medical intervention of homosexuality. This constructionist view opens the door to studies of the production of all sexual identities. 'Homosexuality', 'heterosexuality', 'bisexuality', and other sexual identities are all seen as 'classifications'; i.e., as historically contingent categories, rather than transhistorical phenomena. Thus, constructionism allows us to study the 'making' of sexual subjects in different historical or ethnic contexts.

Changes over Space and Time: Heterosexuality in China and Hong Kong

Contrasting China to the West, Barlow (1996) argued that before the 1920s the concept of *jia* (lineage unit, family) was the primary site for the production of gender:

marriage and sexuality were to serve the lineage by reproduction. Hence, personal love and pleasure were only supplements to the main goal.

Brownell and Wasserstrom (2002) saw two theoretical implications from Barlow's argument. First, it would be impossible to write a Chinese history of heterosexuality as an institution and of sexual identities in the European metaphysical sense. Second, it would be inappropriate to ground discussions of Chinese gender processes in the sexed body so central to 'Western' gender processes. Thus, before the early twentieth century, sexual identity grounded on anatomical differences did not hold a central place in Chinese construction of gender. For example, Sommer (2002) has illustrated in detail that male homosexuality was permitted in the legal code of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). As long as a man's behaviour did not threaten the patriarchal Confucian family structure (for example, if he performed wonderfully as a son, husband, and father), he could engage in homosexual behaviour without having his manhood called into question.

Given that the Qing dynasty lasted until 1911, neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality was a central issue in Chinese traditional sexual culture. In contrast, Hong Kong has been as a British colony since 1840. Hong Kong has developed from a small fishing village into a commercial and financial center of international significance within the span of a century (Tsang 1987:26). The most rapid changes

have taken place in the last forty years. Hong Kong society has evolved from a typical Chinese agrarian culture into a modern, pluralistic, and relatively westernized community. A wide range of cultural values, ideas, and systems from the West has influenced the traditional ones, including the idea of love, the idea of sexuality, and the system of marriage.

Tsang (1987) has suggested that his historical review shows that sexuality in Hong Kong has come under a very strong western influence and that, in this respect, the Chinese traditions have not been well preserved. Hong Kong people have adopted a new language to talk about heterosexual intimacy and a new pattern for regulating it. Historically, such influences have arrived together with colonization.

Nevertheless, local academics have paid little attention to studies on sexuality. But, recently, some scholars have begun to research gay sexuality and female sexuality. For example, Travis Kong has investigated the identity and body politics of Hong Kong gay men. In the postcolonial era, Hong Kong gay men are tending to shift from institutional politics to cultural politics. They are also tending to take the path of micro-resistance in combating societal and familial domination (Kong, 2002; 2004). Petula Ho has explored the possibilities of therapeutic service for reconstructing the narratives with Hong Kong gay men and their families (Ho, 1998). She also has investigated the relationships that Hong Kong gay men have with Western partners

and their sexual practises. The negotiation of anal intercourse in inter-racial gay relationships in Hong Kong reveals that the forces of colonial domination are being met with subversive resistance (Ho & Tsang, 2000).

The subject of female sexuality has also attracted a great deal of attention from local feminists. Chan *et al.* (2001) have produced an edited book, 差異與平等: 香港婦女運動的新挑戰 (Difference and equality: new challenges for the women's movement in Hong Kong), consisting of articles that explore various issues on the sexuality of Hong Kong women, such as extra-marital affairs, sexual violence, the sexuality of teenage girls, the rights of female sex workers, and sexual politics in Hong Kong. In 2004, Anita Kit-wa Chan and Wong Wai-ling published another edited volume, *Gendering Hong Kong*, which is a collection of articles on gender discourses in Hong Kong. However, the contents of most of the articles are very similar to those contained in the volume by Chan *et al.*

Nonetheless, Professor Ng Man Lun, of the Department of Psychiatry of the University of Hong Kong, has published books and articles on social, cultural, and clinical studies of Chinese sexuality and the general application of this knowledge in Chinese communities, particularly Hong Kong (Ng, 1990; 1991; 1994; 1997; 1998). But the subject of straight male sexuality in Hong Kong has thus far received little attention.

Straight Male Sexuality as a Construct of Identity

I have outlined above how heterosexuality has been constructed as the 'male sex', which has become the social norm in contemporary society, including Hong Kong. I have adopted the constructionist sense of heterosexuality that "makes" most of the males living in Hong Kong into sexual subjects who are "straight men". The 'making' of a straight man produces both his gender and sexually identity.

This empirical approaches Hong Kong straight male sexuality not merely as a construct of identity. First, identity is also a becoming and even a performance that is historically and contextually contingent. Second, identity is regulatory and disciplinary in nature. Finally, identity is pluralistic and multiple in nature. These theoretical understandings of straight male identity come from the critiques of the dualistic categories of masculinity/femininity and heterosexuality/homosexuality in gender and sexuality studies. These two critiques are elaborated upon below.

Hegemonic (heterosexual) Masculinity and Its Discontent

First Critique: Masculinity/Femininity

As mentioned above, the conception of heterosexuality is a gendered one. Heterosexuality has been produced and defined as the male sex. In fact, heterosexuality implies that males and females are two opposing entities. 'Even the natural sciences itself', as Connell (1995:6) has argued, 'has a gendered character'.

Western science and technology are culturally masculinized. For example, the guiding metaphors of scientific research, the impersonality of its discourse, the structures of power and communication in science, all stem from the social position of dominant men in a gendered world. The dominance of science in discussions of masculinity thus reflects the position of masculinity in the social relations of gender.

Orthodox Psychology: Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung

Sigmund Freud forged a revolutionary path for psychology at the turn of century. He made the first attempt to construct a scientific account of masculinity. His suggestion of the existence of an Oedipal complex has had a profound effect on studies of the psychological aspect of masculinity in each man's sexual development.

Briefly put, Freud has argued that we are born to be sexual beings. Heterosexual beings are the result of the subordination of desires at the Oedipal stage. (Connell, 1995:8-11). After breaking with Freud, another important figure of orthodox psychology, Carl Jung produced different theories of masculinity with alternative readings of emotional life. With regard to men, his main concern was with 'archetypal' masculinity and femininity. His account of masculinity no longer focused on the process of repression but on the resulting balance between a masculine persona and a feminine anima. Jung's analysis not only resolved Freud's dilemma of how to

overcome the polarity of masculine/ feminine, but also presented the familiar opposition as rooted in timeless truths about the human psyche (Connell, 1995:12-14).

Radical Psychoanalysis

After Freud and Jung, radical psychoanalysis played a very important role in the construction of theories of masculinity. Famous writers such as Adler, Reich, de Beauvoir, Lacan, and Chodorow have all written about issues of gender, although not all were mainly concerned about masculinity. For example, de Beauvoir and Chodorow put forward feminist ideas about psychoanalysis, with the aim of theorizing about femininity rather than masculinity (Connell, 1995: 15-21). A clinical knowledge of masculinity (Freud's orthodox psychoanalysis and the later radical psychoanalysis) gave us an essential, but very incomplete, tool to use in understanding masculinity. Its worthiness depends in our ability to grasp the structure of personality and the complexities of desire at the same time as the structuring of social relations. To achieve this we have to look at how the social sciences created knowledge about masculinity.

Sex Role Theory

Another common theory that sharply contrasts masculinity and femininity is the sex role theory in social psychology, or functionalism in sociology, which dominated American literature on masculinity in the 1970s and 1980s. Sex role theory assumes that being a man or woman means performing according to the general set of expectations that is attached to one's sex. As a result, there are always two sex roles (male and female) in any cultural context, and masculinity and femininity could be interpreted as 'internalized' sex roles, the products of social meaning or 'socialization'. Masculinity/ femininity scales in psychology, Parson's theory of instrumental (masculine) and expressive (feminine) orientations that saw masculinity as being rooted in social psychology' are prominent examples (Parsons & Bales, 1956).

In sex role theory, action is linked to a structure defined by biological difference, the dichotomy of male and female, but not to a structure defined by social relations. Sex roles are defined as reciprocal, and polarization is a necessary part of the concept. The distinction between behaviour and expectation is essential to the role metaphor. However, the literature on male sex roles fails to document behaviour and expectation separately, and takes neither as evidence of the other. The result is the inability to understand resistance in sexual politics. People contesting power, such as feminist, simply cannot be represented in the role categories of 'norm' and 'deviance'.

Women's Liberation

Social struggles on gender issues have certainly generated highly significant information and insights about masculinity. For example, Connell (1995: 40) has suggested that the most important analyses of masculinity have emerged from the women's liberation movement. The feminist movement can be traced as early as the 1790s in France, inspired by the French Revolution. Then, from the 1830s, American feminists became active, and were also closely involved with groups devoted to the abolition of slavery. Between 1866 and 1920, massive marches and street demonstrations were held in Europe to fight for the right of women to vote (Giddens, 1993).

However, no new agenda in feminism had yet been articulated till the rise of a second wave of feminism in the 1960s. From this period onwards, a number of different versions of feminism were articulated, for example, liberal feminism, Marxist/socialist feminism, radical feminism, and cultural feminism, and later, post-modern feminism, eco-feminism, and multi-cultural feminism. A much wider range of issues were discussed in this second wave of feminism, including family and welfare, work and employment, education, religion, class, race, and sexuality (di Leonardo and Lancaster, 1996).

In feminist theory, mainstream masculinity is perceived as being linked to power. In some formulations, masculinity is virtually equated to the exercise of power in its most naked forms. This critique has focused on heterosexual men.

Over the past few decades, feminist criticisms of gender divisions have rejected any transhistorical or transcultural definitions of gender. This is the constructionist notion that both masculinity and femininity are social products.

The main implication of the debate between the essentialists and constructionists is that gender is not an essence but a social construction. Masculinity and femininity are inherently relational concepts, carrying meaning in relation to each other, as a social demarcation and a cultural opposition. Masculinity as an object of knowledge is always *masculinity-in-relation*. Masculinities are configurations of practise structured by gender relations. As Connell (1995: 43-4) has argued, ‘we can have a systematic knowledge of masculinity, but this knowledge does not follow the model of positivistic science. Such knowledge is based on a critique of the real, not just a reflection of it. We can only have a meaningful science of masculinity in this sense.’

To shed light on these criticisms, this study will replace the term ‘masculinity’ with ‘masculinities’. Despite a fixed gender binary code, Hong Kong culture provides a wide range of different categories to illustrate various kinds of masculinities.

Second Critique: Heterosexual/Homosexual

Since the gay liberation in the early 1970s, lesbians and gay men have coined the terms like ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ and ‘homophobia’ as the main forms of oppression from a masculine but heterosexual society. At first, gay men mobilized for civil rights, safety and cultural space, acting from long years of experience of rejection and abuse by heterosexual men. Then, both lesbians and gay men acknowledged that the oppression was not just limited to the personal, but that definitions of ‘real’ masculinity functioned to exclude homosexual men in general.

Queer Intervention

In gay and lesbian studies, the recent emergence of the concept of “queer” further subverts the heterosexuality/homosexuality dichotomy. Queer is seen as a partial deconstruction of our discourses and a creation of greater openness in the way we think of our gender and sexual categories. However, the term ‘queer’ needs clarification. The traditional term ‘gay and lesbian’ apparently assumes a polarized division between hetero-and homosexuality and is usually conflated with white and middle class. By contrast, queer embraces the multiplicity of sexualities by adding other ‘non-conventional’ sexualities such as bisexual, transvestite, and pre- and post-operational transsexuals; and including other outcast positions along racial, ethnic,

and class lines. Hence, queer includes 'deviants' and 'perverts' who may subvert hetero/homo divisions and exceed conventional delineations of sexual identity as well as other non-sexual normative practises (Seidman, 1996).

Queer theory's project, then, entails disturbing and troubling the notion of heterosexuality. Queer theory aims at interrogating the binary opposites of gay/straight, man/ woman, and destabilizing the boundaries between them. In *Gender Trouble* (1990), Butler offered a strong critique of the system of compulsory heterosexuality, which is the norm in the current bipolar sex/gender system. She contested the very notion of gender originating from sex and argued that gender is produced by a ritualized repetition of conventions, and that this ritual is socially compelled, to a certain extent, by the force of compulsory heterosexuality. The performance of gender is produced retroactively by the illusion of an inner gender core or natural sex. Although women and men are forced to conform to a binary men/women or masculine/ feminine opposition that appears to be natural, the social construction of sexuality is never fully installed.

Queer theory criticizes the heterosexual/homosexual binary as a master framework for subordinating the homosexual as the other. It also criticizes the refusal to consider the ethnic modeling of homosexuality by rethinking identity as a category containing conflicting and multiple meanings. Homosexuality always interlocks with

other categories such as gender, race, and class. In order to gain further insights on queer theory, this study will treat 'heterosexuality' as 'heterosexualities' which is pluralistic and multiple, and intertwines with other categories including gender, race, and class.

Body Reflexive Practise

The critiques of the dualistic categories of masculinity/femininity and heterosexuality/homosexuality in gender and sexuality studies have prompted me to regard Hong Kong straight male sexuality as more than a construct of identity. Rather, both gender and sexual identities are involved, and require a becoming and even a performance that is historically and contextually contingent. Straight male sexuality is both regulatory/disciplinary and plural/multiple in nature. In this sense, straight men always have their agencies in the complex processes of constructing/becoming/performing as sexual subjects.

However, as Connell (1995:45) has argued, 'Mass culture generally assumes there is a fixed, true masculinity beneath the flow of daily life.' Hence, terms like 'real man', 'natural man', and 'deeply masculine' have been shared across an impressive spectrum including by the men's movement, Jungian psychoanalysts, Christian fundamentalists, sociobiologists, and the essentialist school of feminism. True masculinity is always thought to proceed from men's bodies. Such a belief is a

very important part of the modern ideology of gender, at least in the English-speaking world.

Essentialism and social-constructionism have been the two dominant but opposing concepts of the body in recent decades. On the one hand, essentialism translates the dominant ideology into the language of biological science; the body is regarded as a natural machine that produces gender differences, e.g. through genetic programming, hormonal differences, or the different roles of the sexes in reproduction. On the other hand, in social-constructionism, which has swept the humanities and social sciences, the body is a more or less neutral surface or landscape on which social symbolism is imprinted. These arguments are being read as a new version of the old 'nature vs. nurture' controversy. Others have proposed a common-sense compromise: both biology and social influence combine to produce gender differences in behaviour (Shilling, 1993; Grosz, 1994).

As a result, Connell (1995:46) has suggested that, 'The way out is to go beyond abstract argument alone and look into the evidence from the life history of men. To rethink the relation between men's bodies and masculinity is to acknowledge that the physical sense of maleness and femaleness is central to the cultural interpretation of gender.' Masculine gender is 'a certain feel to the skin, certain muscular shapes and tensions, certain postures and ways of moving, certain possibilities in sex. Bodily

experience is often central in memories of our own lives, and thus in our understanding of who and what we are.’

This understanding of men’s bodies helps to assert the activity, literally the agency, of bodies in the social process. As (Connell, 1995:60) has argued, ‘Bodies are seen as sharing in social agency, in generating and shaping courses of social conduct.’ Hence, all daily life practises, including heterosexual practises, are reflexive in nature. The concept of *body reflexive practise* enables me to examine the agencies of Hong Kong straight men during the complex process of constructing/becoming/performing their gender and sexual identities. This concept helps the researcher to bridge the concepts of gender and sexual identity when examining the role of sexuality in the daily life of a straight man. And finally, the concept also brings back the body (material) back into the abstract theoretical discussions of gender (masculinity) and sexuality (heterosexuality).

A Hong Kong Hegemonic Masculinity Study

How is Such a Critique of Hong Kong Straight Male Sexuality Possible?

Although a new masculinity politics has existed in Western society for a few decades, a similar men’s movement has yet to be launched in Hong Kong. This is because the Hong Kong society has its specific historical and ethnic contexts. Nonetheless, the newly emerging masculinity politics in the West is worth examining for the insights

that such a development could shed on the situation in Hong Kong.

Newly Emerging Masculinity Politics

Following the critiques from feminists and queer theory, various forms of masculinity politics emerged in Western society as a cultural project. Morgan (1992:24) has discussed the wide range of writing styles and different focuses of writings on the subject, including the personal, autobiographical, theoretical, and analytical:

Some have celebrated men and masculinity, some others have denounced their own gender; many, if not most of all, have seen a need for some kind of change, personal and/ or political. Men have demanded (as have some women) that men should 'get in touch with their feelings', or that they should confront the violence that they perpetrated or of which they are capable, that they should take a critical look at all their practises in the home, in interpersonal relationships, in public life and at work. Yet, perhaps, we still have a long way to go.

Haywood and Mac an Ghail (2003:125) have summarized three forms of masculinity politics, namely male liberationists, men against sexism, and the new men's movement. Male liberationists, working within a sex role approach, have mobilized liberal feminist discourses of equal rights and fairness to argue that both women and

men suffer from the sexism arising from negative gender stereotyping socialization.¹ Men against sexism have aligned themselves with socialist and radical feminist positions. They oppose the patriarchal power relations that accompany the institutional oppression of women.² Instead of male liberationists and anti-sexist men, some men's groups have taken a conservation position on the issue of male sexuality, and even hold anti-women stances. For example, in *Iron John: A Book about Men* (1990), John Bly analysed the Iron John³ story in depth and used it to examine the nature of modern man and the male psyche. Among its arguments were that the lack of male mentors (such as Iron John is in the fairy tale) has resulted in adult men who are less than developed mentally and emotionally. In addition, because there are few meaningful rites of passage in the modern Western world, there is no longer any clear division between the child and the responsible adult. Bly's book advocated the return of a stronger, more masculine man (in the traditional sense), but one who also respects modern-day feminist values.

Men's movement in Hong Kong

Chan (2001:95) has argued that there is no men's movement in Hong Kong. However, he suggests that there have been discussions on 'the man's role' and that services for men have been developed. Since 1991, *突破* (Breakthrough), a religious organization, has organized workshops, seminars, and training courses, and published

books on the changing role of men and fatherhood (Au, 1996; Choi & Au, 1998).

Local social work or social service agencies began providing services for men in the 1990s. According to Chan (2001:207-9), Caritas, one of the largest social service NGOs in Hong Kong launched their Men's Centre⁴ in 1998. It is a multi-service center specifically designed for men, offering services such as social and developmental groups, seminars, talks, training courses, interesting groups, and family life education programme. All other men's services are less established or much smaller in scale, and most started only in recent years. The format of the services varies greatly, ranging from therapeutic groups for violent men, mutual support groups for the unemployed, seminars, workshops or training courses, social groups for men in the community, men's drop-in centers, and summer programme for fathers and their children.

Local studies on masculinity are surprisingly sparse, but recently, a few scholars have begun to publish work on the subject. For example, gender/sexual politics is discussed in Ng Chun Hung's *Cultural Chit-Chat* (1996), *Cultural Chit-Chat Again* (1997), and *Cultural Chit-Chat 3* (2004).

The contribution of this empirical research

This study will contribute to gender and sexuality studies as well as to the recently emerging men's studies. Straight male sexuality is a topic that is often ignored in

studies of both gender and sexuality, as gender studies are alleged to be ‘women’s studies’ and studies on sexuality devote a disproportionate amount of effort on LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender) studies.

Male heterosexuality has always been used as the standard against which to measure other sexual beings (normality) or as the object of attack (enemy, all evil). Men’s studies have taken up the task of challenging the normalcy of male heterosexuality. Thus, this thesis can certainly contribute to the newly emerging literature of men’s studies – the more so as, even in the field of men’s studies, discussions of straight male sexuality are not common.

In addition, this research applies the concept of hegemonic masculinity in a local context. Through the personal stories of thirteen young Hong Kong straight men, the existence of ‘hegemonic masculinity’ will be shown. In one sense, all of the interviewees have attempted to attain ‘hegemonic masculinity’ through successful vaginal penetration, sexual virility, sexual potency, or by being a good man. But they have all suffered from different degrees of anxiety, stress, and frustration. These issues will be discussed in detail in this thesis.

Masculinity or heterosexuality has dual aspects. These can be power and domination, or possibility and resistance. Again, the personal stories of thirteen young Hong Kong straight men will show the dominance of sexual and gender ideology in

the wider society, which is actively causing gender and sexual divisions. But there is a range of possibilities through which gender and sexuality can be negotiated. Thus, this study proves again that, 'whenever there is power, there is resistance' (c.f. Foucault, 1978). The duality of masculinity or heterosexuality has provided me the background to treat masculinity or heterosexuality as a process of becoming, constantly being threatened, and having to be won over.

Furthermore, in this study male sexuality is viewed as a body reflexive practise that goes beyond any kind of social normativity through social modeling, sensuous experimentation, and bodily play. Finally, this study has local implications. For example, I will argue that the institution of the family is an affective unit in the early development of a young men's masculinity or heterosexuality. The effectiveness of school and sex education in Hong Kong will also be examined. The mass media, specifically pornography and cyberporn, play an important role in the early learning and development of a young man's masculinity or heterosexuality. The medicalization of male sexuality is another social concern relating to the mythical obsession of the general public with sexual virility and sexual potency. Medicalized heterosexual men neglect their psychological well-being. Lastly, this study will examine heterosexual relationships in Hong Kong and suggest possible pluralistic sexual ethics for Hong Kong straight men.

Notes:

¹ See Nichols (1975) and Farrell (1974).

² See Seidler (1992).

³ *Iron John* is a fairy tale found in the collections of the Brothers Grimm about a wild man and a prince. Most people see the story as a parable about a boy maturing into adulthood, although some see a few elements of pederasty. The story also became the basis for a popular book that spawned a short-lived men's movement in the early 1990's.

⁴ Website: <http://home4u.hongkong.com/arts/graphics/oniondesign/ONION/men/index.htm>

Chapter 2

Methodology and Analytical Framework

Introduction

A methodological orientation towards the qualitative tradition was chosen as appropriate for this study. Among the various research strategies, the semi-structured interview was used to collect the self-stories of Hong Kong straight men. How self-stories, a kind of life-story, can help to capture the ‘lived experiences’ or ‘history’ of the sexual lives of Hong Kong heterosexual men is elaborated upon below. The matrix of gender study proposed by Connell (1995) has been adopted to use in analysing the self-stories collected in this research. The specific procedures outlined in the grounded theory approach for collecting and analysing the data has been followed in this study. The fieldwork that was conducted for this study will be explained below. Finally, important issues connected to the research process and the limitations of the process will be highlighted.

Epistemological Concern of this Study

According to Bryman (1984), epistemology is ‘the appropriate foundation for the

study of society and its manifestations'. This refers to the philosophical positions that researchers take to distinguish between different kinds of approaches to gathering data, such as 'positivist' and 'empiricist' research. Social surveys are an example of 'quantitative' approach; while ethnography, participant observations, and unstructured interviews are examples of 'qualitative' approaches (75).

The aim of this empirical research is to investigate the sexuality of Hong Kong straight males. It would seem to be impossible to reveal the 'unfolding law' of gender and sexuality in Hong Kong. What is possible in this study is to narrate, interpret, and explain how notions of straight male sexuality have been constructed, performed, and produced. Thus, qualitative methodology was considered to be the more suitable approach to use given the main objective of this empirical research.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology differs in a number of ways from its quantitative correspondent. Becker (1996) has argued that one major epistemological advantage of qualitative research is that it enables researchers to see the social world from the point of view of the actor. Another aim of qualitative methodology is to achieve a contextual understanding of the meaning systems employed by a particular group or society. Qualitative research is also considered to be more fluid and flexible than

quantitative research because it emphasizes the possibility of novel or unanticipated discoveries and the need to alter research plans in response to unexpected situations.

This contrasts sharply with the quantitative methodologist's research design preoccupied with operational definitions, objectivity, replicability, and causality. In order to proceed with research into the social world, it is necessary to employ qualitative research methods to achieve an *inside view* of the subjects of study. However, the limitations of the qualitative approach (oral history, for example) are that it tends to be very time-consuming compared with the quantitative approach. The other limitation of the qualitative approach is that in emphasizing on the depth of the data collected, the width of the data (i.e. the representation of the data) has to be sacrificed.

I have tried to overcome and minimize the impact of the common problems of qualitative method listed above by employing a kind of snowball method of sampling to possibly find the broadest range of interviewees by approaching men from different classes, educational backgrounds, and religious backgrounds to participate.

Nevertheless, it is frequently asserted that unstructured interviews and life histories provide the 'appropriate vehicle' for a number of types of research (Bryman, 1984:78). The method of oral history is has not only proven to be significant in social research but also in psychoanalysis. Thompson (1988) has suggested that the use of

therapy to trace personal experiences in psychoanalysis is actually based on oral history. The success of family therapy in helping patients to find out their *inner truth* and to understand their families' problems shows how useful oral history can be.

Life History: *Self-Stories*

I employ life history as the major research strategy to investigate the sexuality of local straight males. I carried out in-depth semi-structured interviews to collect the *self-stories* of the thirteen young Hong Kong adult men who participated in this study.

According to Plummer (2001), self-stories are one form of 'life document'. Other examples are life stories, life narratives, 'mysteries', auto/biographies, oral histories, personal testaments, and life documents. Life documents can exist in many forms such as long and short, past and future, specific and general, fuzzy and focused, surface and deep, realistic and romantic, ordinary and extraordinary, modernist and postmodernist. Denzin (1989:186) suggested that self-stories are told by a person 'in the context of a specific set of experiences'. A self-story positions the self of the teller centrally in the narrative that is given. It is literally a story of and about the self in relation to an experience. Taking this study as an example, self-stories can refer to the moments in which a straight man engages in sex in his childhood, his first sex act, and various experiences in his sex life.

Denzin (1989:185) has stated that, 'Stories are fictions.' As a kind of human life story, self-stories are fictional and narrative accounts of how something happened. Thompson (1998) has argued that narrative is a powerful way by which to know a person's whole story. Self-stories can help to capture the various strategies a Hong Kong straight man uses to construct the sexuality of a straight male, and become and perform as a straight male. Furthermore, the self-stories gathered in this study are researched stories rather than naturalistic ones. Plummer (2001) has argued that the life stories gathered by the researcher were not usually told in a completely natural manner. With a wider, usually social science, goal in mind, the role of the researcher is always crucial in his study. Taking this empirical research as an example, I, the researcher, designed and executed the fieldwork, and the thirteen Hong Kong straight men who participated in this study were coaxed to tell their self-stories and interrogated while doing so.

The 3x3 Matrix of Gender Studies

In *Masculinities* (1995), R. W. Connell proposed a 3x3 matrix in his gender study. This matrix of gender studies emphasizes the importance of the imaginative and the social, and avoids reducing gender to a matter of mind over body and vice versa. He reconstructed a three-fold model of the structure of gender along three axes of

relations: power, production, and cathexis (emotional attachment). Along these three axes of relations, Connell further viewed gender as a social structure of social practise, which involves three sites of gender configuration (73-75) (see the diagram below):

	Power	Production	Cathexis
Individual life course			
Analysis of discourse, ideology, and culture			
Social institutions			

I suggest that this 3x3 matrix of gender study can be applied to investigate the sexuality of Hong Kong straight males. If applied, the first level of the analysis would focus on the life courses of young Hong Kong heterosexual men as a basis upon which to understand the notion of the sexuality of local straight males. Their daily life experiences will demonstrate that heterosexuality and masculinity are constructions/becoming/performances that require one to constantly engage in cognitive investigation, sensual experimentation, and corporeal learning. This is the *body-reflexive practise* that was discussed in Chapter 1. The implication of emphasizing the body in examining straight male sexuality is that one's sex life is a contested terrain of negotiation and re-negotiation between the male body and the

discourses, ideologies, and cultural and social institutions that relate to the male body.

At the second level of analysis would be a study of discourses, ideologies, and cultures arising from the fact that compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity are organized in the symbolic practise that exist outside (and thus for longer than) an individual's life. Such an analysis would important, as it is a powerful tool to use in addressing the issue of power and displaying the complexities and contradictions of cultural representations of straight male sexuality.

The third level of analysis would be an investigation of how compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity operate in local institutions. As Connell (1995) has argued, hegemonic masculinity refers to a cultural strategy that some people (mainly men) are required to employ in order to inhabit positions of power and wealth, and legitimate and reproduce the social relationship that generates their dominance. A conglomerate of linked institutions thus accompanies male heterosexual practise. An examination of social institutions such as the family, the school, and even 'love' is necessary. This analysis not only counterbalances the semiotic approach but also examines how social institutions are 'masculinized' and 'heterosexualized' in the substantive and materialistic way that structures the sexual lives of young Hong Kong heterosexual men. Furthermore, this level of analysis will examine how discourses and ideologies of heterosexuality and masculinity regulate and discipline Hong Kong

straight men within the local institutions that can be identified in their self-stories.

Because of limitations of time and resources, only the first level of analysis in the matrix has been accomplished in this study. I conducted thirteen in-depth, semi-structured interviews to investigate the life courses of thirteen Hong Kong straight men. The other two levels of analysis (of discourse, ideologies, and social institutions) have not been analyzed comprehensively.

Nonetheless, I have tried to cover the major ideologies, discourses, and social institutions that relate to the sexuality of Hong Kong straight males. For example, I have analysed the meaning of pornography in the popular culture of the 1990s. I also interrogated the young men on their ways of accessing and using pornography. The analysis of pornography shows the failure and ineffectiveness of local sex education in the education system. This indirectly led the young men to treat pornography as the dominant discourse and ideology of straight male sexuality. Their self-stories showed that, in their sex lives, they have regulated and disciplined themselves according to pornographic discourse and ideology.

As social practises, these triple sites of heterosexuality can also be interrogated along three axes of relations: power, production, and *cathexis* (emotional attachment). For example, an analysis of an individual life course can demonstrate how being straight is sustained in the regime of hegemonic masculinity (power relations), how

heterosexuality is constructed materially (production relations), and how desire are being realized in straight men (cathexis). Similarly, a discursive analysis illustrates the extent of which masculinity is sustained in popular culture or how heterosexuality is being conceptualized in medical discourses.

Fieldwork

In 2003, between July and December, I carried out thirteen in-depth semi-structured interviewees to collect thirteen self-stories of young Hong Kong heterosexual men. Each interview ranged from one to one-and-a-half hours, for a total of approximately fifteen hours of interviewing time. All of my interviewees were self-identified heterosexuals aged between twenty and twenty-five. Most of the interviews were conducted in the participants' homes or quiet places such as a public park. The participants were in various different occupations, with the exception of one who had just graduated from university and another who was unemployed. Half had graduated from university and the other half had attended secondary school (refer to Appendix I for a detailed profile of the interviewees). Through these thirteen young adult men, I seek to understand how Hong Kong men who share a heterosexual identity, make sense of their sex lives in the particular environment of Hong Kong.ⁱ

Sampling

I found most of my interviewees through personal contacts, a kind of snowball method of sampling. I have to acknowledge that my samples will be biased, but given the limitations of time and resources for this research, this was difficult to avoid. It is impossible to claim that the experiences of thirteen young adult heterosexual men represent those of heterosexual men in Hong Kong as whole. What I was most concerned about was the depth of each account. Nevertheless, I tried to find a broad range of interviewees by approaching men from different classes, educational backgrounds, and religious backgrounds to participate. Typically, my interviews began with the following introduction:

I am a student who is studying social sciences at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and I am now in the second year of my M-Phil programme. The topic of my project is the sexual lives of young Hong Kong heterosexual adult men. Your experience as a Hong Kong straight man would help me to understand what it means to be heterosexual. In the following one to one-and-a-half hours, please feel free to express your ideas and feelings related to this topic.

The Grounded Theory Approach

Furthermore, I indicated that I would like to tape-record the interviews so that I could be certain of accurately taking down their accounts. The interviews were open-ended, with interview guidelines serving as an 'agenda'.ⁱⁱ I roughly followed the interview guideline (Appendix II), but some questions were dropped while some were added for different interviewees.ⁱⁱⁱ After each interview, the tape was transcribed and coded. The different themes that occurred repeatedly in most interviews were articulated and further analysed, using the grounded theory approach. Corbin and Strauss (1990) have argued that a study using the grounded theory approach must take the specific procedures of data collection and analysis seriously, although there is flexibility and latitude within limits.

With regard to the process of data collection and analysis in this research, it should first be noted that the two are interrelated processes. According to Corbin and Strauss (1990:4), qualitative researchers often collect much of their data prior to beginning a systematic analysis. But this would violate the foundation of the grounded theory approach, as analysis is necessary from the start because it is used to direct the next interview and observations. I began analysing my data after conducting the first two pilot interviews.^{iv} The pilot interviews helped me to grasp the various potentially relevant aspects of the research topic, so that I would be better prepared to

carry out my fieldwork. The process of data collection and analysis proceeded in parallel throughout the whole study. This is why grounded theory, as a research method, always grounds theory in reality (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounding concepts in the reality of the data thus gives this method theory-observation congruence and compatibility.

Second, categories were developed and related during the analysis of the data. Categories are the 'cornerstone' of a developing theory. For example, the category of 'pornography' was developed, as it was the primary source for young Hong Kong adult men in learning about sex in their moments of engagement. I then tried to relate pornography to other categories such as local sex education to seek an explanation of the moment of engagement as a lonely experience for the young adult men. In this way, categories were defined and given explanatory power. Over time, categories could become related to one another to form a theory.

Third, broader structural conditions have been analysed. Strauss and Corbin (1990) argued that the analysis of a setting must not be restricted to the conditions that bear immediately on the phenomenon of central interest. However bringing broader conditions into the analysis requires integrating them into the theory. For example, I have brought the broader structure of 'charmed circle' suggested by Rubin (1993) to explain the particular preferences of straight men with regard to sexual practises.

Finally, in grounded theory research, coding is the fundamental analytic process used by the researcher. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggested that there are two basic types of coding: open and axial. Open coding is the interpretive process by which data are broken down analytically. I have carried out the open coding according to the questions designed in the interview guidelines. For example, can you describe about your first sexual experience? How long did it last for? Why would you regard it as your first sexual experience? Open coding and the use of it enabled me to break through subjectivity and bias. Fracturing the data forced preconceived notions and ideas to be examined against the data itself.

In axial coding, categories are related to their sub-categories, and the relationships tested against data. To continue with my example of 'first sex act', the data should be scrutinized to determine the reasons why the interviewee regarded that particular sexual experience as his first sexual experience. If I had not collected and analysed the data alternately, there would have been gaps in the theory regarding their first sex act.

Limitations

Subject-Object Dualism

Throughout the research process, including the interviews and the process of writing

this thesis, I encountered numerous problems and limitations. The first was the problem of representation. One of my main concerns throughout this study was the status of the 'object of study'. In my case, they are the thirteen young local heterosexual men.^v The subject-object dualism is an issue that can never be avoided in an interview, i.e., 'I' am the researcher and 'they' are the interviewees. For this reason, I was especially conscious of the fact that interviews are a social process. For example, I paid attention to the nature of the relationship that formed between me and the participants in the interviews, how the participants perceived this relationship, and how I felt when interacting with the participants.

Furthermore, as I have suggested, there may have been some advantage to being within the 'object' of my study, being myself a young Hong Kong heterosexual adult man. But being one of the 'other' does not mean that I can truly represent them. This is because of my ever-present status as the researcher. Furthermore, on many issues, I differed from my 'object of study', perhaps because of differences in class, age, and education level, and so forth. Perhaps, as Krieger (1991) has argued, the presentations of interviewees are always directly connected to the situated writing self of an author/researcher, the 'I'. Self-stories that emphasize the other's voice might neutralize some of the authorial effects, but throughout the writing process I have paid a great deal of attention to my authorial voice over the multiple voices of the

respondents in interpreting the interview materials.

Problem of Legitimization

The second problem I encountered was the problem of legitimization. The ‘reliability’ of the oral evidence is always a controversial one for a study that employs the oral history method. Thompson (1998) has suggested that authenticity is the first priority when evaluating historical sources. However, as the evidence from oral history is normally retrospective over a long time span, its accuracy is highly dependent on individual perceptions and interests. Furthermore, a willingness to remember is essential during an interview. Recalling is always an active process. Unwillingness, either a conscious avoidance of distasteful facts or unconscious repression, can block the act of recollection. Hence, as has Thompson argued, ‘Those are not presented at the interview and their unseen presence outside may count’ (120). The implication is that the process of interviewing is also a social relationship. Various social biases such as the age, class, and race of the interviewers and even the presence or absence of others would affect the interviewees’ power or willingness to confide their recollections to the interviewer, and therefore the end results of the interview.

On some occasions, I sensed that my interviewees were avoiding telling me about their past. Those were important moments, as anything one tries to avoid

recalling and telling either consciously or unconsciously must be important. Some of the interviewees told me that they had never told anyone on earth about their sexual lives. I was the first person to urge them to discuss sexual issues seriously. At times, they were speechless when it came to discussing their sexual sensations and experiences.

Another problem is what Paul Thompson called ‘false oral evidence’, which subjectivity; personal interests, memories, family background, and discreditable memories may cause the interviewees to give. I discovered that one interviewee had provided ‘false oral evidence’. This was because, after talking to him, I heard another story from the girlfriend of one of the interviewees. This did not mean that I had to discard all of his interview data. But it illustrated a significant point that a researcher needs to be on the alert for such tendencies.

Research Ethics

The third problem was the problem of ethics, as interviewing involves a range of moral, emotional, erotic, and political dimensions. Interviews are not simply just a matter of ‘technique’. In the interviews I conducted, I learned to appreciate my respondent’s lives, value the relationship we formed in the field, and also gained a clearer understanding of myself. Confidentiality was a very important issue when

conducting an interview. My respondents were willing to discuss very personal and sensitive issues because they trusted me.

The final problem I encountered was that the interviewees found it very difficult to talk about their sex lives. In the interviews, the participants showed the accuracy of this claim. They not only hesitated to speak about their heterosexual identities, but also about most of the details of their sex live. Some of them confessed to me during the interview that this was the first chance they had ever had to give a very authentic account of their sexual perceptions, practises, desires, and fantasies. Most of them did not have the vocabulary to talk about sexuality seriously, because so far whenever they talked about sex, they would just make joke of it.^{vi} They also had difficulty articulating their thoughts and feelings when they were asked about issues relating to masculinity.

Organization of the Contents

The major findings of the field research will be reported in Chapters 3, 4, 5, and 6. In the next chapter, I will examine the sexuality of local straight males since their earliest memories. I will borrow the concept of '*the moment of engagement*' from Connell (1995:122-123) to examine the earliest moment in which a man takes up hegemonic masculinity as his own. But I will suggest that those were lonely experiences for each

of them. This is because they have not received sufficient education and emotional support from their families and the education system. As a result, they turned to the mass media, such as the sex pages of newspapers and to pornography for explanations and guidance about their bodily changes and heterosexual desires. They have then made use of the sexual knowledge thus acquired to socialize with their peers, peppering their conversation with sex talk and sex jokes. The implication of such socialization is that the boys had their agencies both outside and within them to subordinate and expel femininity and homosexuality. These are their earliest experiences in becoming a straight male.

Then, in Chapter 4, I discuss the first sexual experiences of the thirteen young adult men. In the course of becoming a heterosexual male, one's first sex act is the first major 'trial and error'. It is also a complex interplay of a man's body with social process. Since that moment of engagement, the young men have carried on practicing, performing, identifying, and examining the conventional discourses and ideologies surrounding straight male sexuality. Most of the participants regarded accomplishing sexual intercourse for the first time as a rite of passage to becoming a straight man. Some felt that they needed to be sexually active in order to conform to the requirements of hegemonic masculinity. A small number just treated their first sexual experience as an incident that was of no special significance for their masculinity.

Nevertheless, the notion that the first sexual act was a kind of ‘task’ that a boy has to perform perfectly in order to become a qualified straight man hindered the enjoyment of the young adult men in an activity they had anticipated for so long.

Chapter 5 will discuss in detail the phallogentric notion of straight male sexuality. Sexual intercourse is a body-reflexive practise in which a straight man acts ‘like a man’ to qualify for the title of a ‘man’. It is not merely for the sake of personal or mutual sexual satisfaction. Furthermore, sexual prowess is never permanently earned and must be proven each time. I have suggested that two major sexual disorders, namely premature ejaculation and male impotence, signify a man’s ‘defeat’ in the battle to defend his title of being a ‘man’.

However, the young adult men’s self-stories illustrate that they employed different strategies to restore their masculinities from sexual dysfunction. The strategies demonstrate their ability to cope with the hegemonic notion of sexual virility.

In Chapter 6, I will examine the ideal pattern of heterosexual intimacy that consists of the elements of romantic love and monogamy in the local context. The privileged position of monogamy and romantic love disciplines the constructions of the participants’ gender and sexual identities. This ideology is governed by the local discourses of romantic love, monogamy, and sex hierarchy. Local sexual ethics

emphasizes democracy, egalitarianism, and reciprocity. The self-stories of the interviewees show that it is easy to talk about these principles but difficult to practise them. Although the interviewees have tried to fulfill these principles, their sexual relationships are under great pressure and there is no sign of improvement. As a consequence, both they and their partners are suffering.

The sex hierarchy requires the men to behave strictly according to the code of 'good sex' and 'bad sex'. This means a man has to sacrifice some of his sexual fantasies to conform to the image of a 'good man' in the charmed circle.

Nevertheless, the participants have privately resisted the hegemonic notion of monogamous romantic love. They employ various strategies to pursue sexual pleasures that are prohibited in the sex hierarchy. For example, some visit sex workers and have multiple sex partners.

This thesis concludes with a summary in Chapter 7 of the findings and with postulations on the sexuality of local straight males. The contributions and inadequacies of the present research are outlined and suggestions for further areas of research are made.

Notes:

ⁱ All of my interviewees identified themselves as straight, denying that they have homosexual orientations and experiences.

ⁱⁱ The form of an interview is always controversial and worth noting. As Thompson (1988) argued, on the one hand, a box-ticking 'questionnaire' with rigidly structured logical patterns would reduce the memories of the interviewees and result in monosyllabic or very short answers. On the other hand, a completely free interview is impossible, since in a conversation people usually have some unspoken assumptions in mind, which create different expectations that shape the interview. Therefore, I preferred to use an informal unstructured or semi-structured style of interview that employed a set of themes and topics to form questions in the course of conversation. This strategy gave the interviewees opportunities to express themselves relatively freely and provided a context for the discussion.

ⁱⁱⁱ For example, some interviewees had no experience of sexual dysfunction, so questions about this issue were irrelevant to them and thus were dropped. Some interviewees had experience with visiting sex workers, which I had not [noticed before.] [***QUERY: Do you mean 'thought to ask earlier interviewees'??]

^{iv} At the fall of 2002, I carried out two pilot interviews to consolidate the ideas and concepts that I would have to manage, before beginning the first in-depth interview in 2003.

^v More accurately, my 'object of study' is 'young Hong Kong heterosexual men'.

^{vi} This issue will be discussed in the next chapter. Most of my interviewees seldom or never discuss their true sexual feelings, desires, and fantasies with family members, relatives, or friends. Making a joke or laughing at each other is invariably the only means they have to communicate issues relating to sex.

Chapter 3

The Moment of Engagement

What struck me most about the local straight men that participated in this study were their worries, miseries, and anxieties about their past and current sexual lives. In exploring their discontent, this study will begin by looking at their earliest memories of sexualities. In this chapter, I will borrow the concept of '*the moment of engagement*' from Connell (1995:122-123) to examine the moment in which a man takes up hegemonic masculinity as his own. Connell (1995) applied the concept 'The Moment of Engagement' as an analytic tool in two of his case studies of masculinities, which involved 'soft' men encountering feminism and gay men in an Australian context. The concept is used to 'learn from the men's earliest memories, and their accounts of family relationships' to study the extent to which men's childhood experiences shape their masculinities. I will investigate sexual issues in the childhood to teenage years of these participants, before they engaged in sexual intercourse for the first time. The momentⁱ appears in the self-stories of all of the interviewees. Connell (1995) defined the moment of engagement as that time when a young man appropriates the project of hegemonic masculinity that he is being offered in his

childhood (122). In my case, I borrowed this concept to analyse such appropriation in childhood of the project of hegemonic masculinity as their own by local young heterosexual men, with the main focus being on their sexualities. Their self-stories are comparable, and include such issues as how they identify themselves as sexual agents and how male sexuality is defined according to normative heterosexuality.

Introduction

The first focus in this investigation of the moment of engagement of straight men is on their families. I wanted to know the extent to which the family, as a social institution, shapes a straight man's earliest recognition of heterosexual desire and helps them to become heterosexuals. Interestingly, their childhood experiences were different from those discussed in studies that were conducted in the West. Western scholars emphasize the key role of parents as primary agents of sexual socialization (Katchadourian, 1990). Much of the research on how parents affect adolescent sexual behaviour has focused on communication, and examined the explicit attempts of parents to transmit values and share information (Miller, Benson, & Galbraith, 2001). This body of research reinforces the role of parent-child communication in shaping adolescent sexual attitudes and behaviour.

However, the self-stories collected in this study reveal a completely different

picture. As boys, most of them recognized and explored their heterosexual desires on their own. This reflects how the family as a social institution is culturally and locally specific. The family in Hong Kong does not play a similar role as in Western society with regard to the moment of engagement. The boys had to rely on other institutions such as schools and the mass media to construct their sexual identities and become heterosexuals.

In contrast with families, schools are highly sexualized sites. The school is where during childhood and adolescence, boys develop their masculine identities and their heterosexuality. In the next section, I will examine the impact of local sex education on the participants with regard to the moment of engagement. In their self-stories, the interviewees expressed distaste towards the sex education they received. They preferred to pursue their sexual interests through the mass media, particularly by accessing pornography.

The mass media, particularly pornography, were more influential than parents and schools in constructing the subjectivities of the participants. I will take a brief look at how the mass media as a social institution constructs discourses and ideologies about heterosexuality. The young adult men's experiences in consuming the sex pages of newspapers and pornography helped to shape them into heterosexuals. The mass media also play the most important role in helping them to identify themselves as

straight males

To examine the interplay of schooling, masculinity, and sexuality, Mac an Ghail (1994) carried out a study in an ordinary English secondary school.ⁱⁱ In this study he examined the cultural elements making up the subjectivity of heterosexual male students within the context of schooling. These consisted of contradictory forms of compulsory heterosexuality, misogyny, and homophobia. Of particular salience was the way in which heterosexual male students were involved in a double relationship. They subordinated the 'other', including women and gay people (external relations), while at the same time expelling femininity and homosexuality from within themselves (internal relations) (Mac an Ghail, 1994: 90). This important finding helps us understand how socialization takes place at a collective level within the informal world of male peer groups, where specific subject positions are inhabited in the local context. It suggests that these earliest socializations caused the straight men to draw a boundary between 'public sex talk' and 'private sex acts' and to distinguish between 'public sexual jokes' and the 'private sexual self'. These boundaries reflect the local discourses and ideologies about straight male sexuality. I will argue that, for the straight men, what happened in the moment of engagement affected their future management of their sexual lives and behaviour as heterosexual agents.

Recognition of Heterosexual Desire

I will begin by discussing the interviewees' earliest memories of their first encounter with sex-related materials. Most of them recognized their interest in female bodies during early puberty. Kelvin (23), however, a customer service officer with an Internet provider, claimed that he has been sexually active since his teenage years and that he was already interested in sex at the age of eight. Kelvin was the only one of the participants who recognized his interest in 'bodies' in his early childhood. To be more precise, he was curious and interested in women's bodies as the 'other' for which he felt desire (Connell, 1995; Mac an Ghail, 1994):

Sometimes when I was watching those sex scenes in the movies, I would be very curious about them. For example, why would the characters look as if doing such things were so happy and pleasurable? Actually, what I meant was those things between men and women. When the story jumped from scene to scene, there were always sex scenes in between. I became more curious about the whole process of having sex. I was very interested in the naked bodies shown in those movies.

There are two points worth to note about Kelvin's recollection of his earliest encounter with sex. First, his earliest memory of sex was 'those things between men and women', that is, heterosexual practises. Second, his earliest impression of 'sex'

was 'happy and pleasurable', which differs very much from the general descriptions given by other interviewees regarding their sexual lives as adults. Although sex is still a pleasurable 'thing' to most of them, they also see their sexualities as miserable and unmanageable.

Fantasizing about Female Bodies

Mark (23), a financial planner with an international insurance agency, has had a less active sexual life than Kelvin. However, like Kelvin, he became interested in women's bodies at a young age, when he was six years old (the youngest among the participants). His first fantasies about sex involved his female classmates and teachers:

Well ... I would fantasize about the female teachers... um... how to say... for example, I would imagine kissing a female teacher I liked and hugging her, and that we were both naked. But I couldn't imagine further as I didn't have any knowledge for me to go further.

In his sexual fantasies, Mark appropriated the hegemonic notion of normative heterosexuality as his own; he has become a sexual agent. Making this first step is very important for a young man in the construction of his identity and in becoming a

man in this world. This is exactly what I have called *the moment of engagement* for a young adult man. Interestingly, when Mark tried to account for his early sexual fantasy, he suddenly pointed out that he was too naïve to imagine going further as he did not have enough sexual knowledge at the time to do so. Mark has a bachelor's degree in biochemistry, so it is not surprising that his rationality would lead him to treat his childhood experience as insignificant. As he put it, he tends to see his childhood sexuality as childish and naïve.

Paul (20) was the youngest straight man to participate in this study. His experience is similar to Mark's in that he tried to stare at the breasts of his female classmates. Paul saw his female classmates as erotic or sexually appealing objects. His identification with girls as the 'other' marked the moment that he identified himself as a heterosexual agent:

When I was studying in Form Two or Three, I started mimicking others and started dating girls. I was wondering why some girls are smaller while others are so large (*referring to the size of the girls' breasts*). Since then, I have felt very interested in girls.

What is most interesting about Paul is his objectification of specific parts of a female's body, in this case, the breasts. In popular culture, photos of female models

often focus the gaze on the breasts. Goodman (2001) defined the male gaze as a patriarchal way of seeing the world, regardless of who is doing the looking. And, literally, the gaze is male when men do the looking. Hegemonic masculinity always emphasizes certain specific parts of women's bodies, especially the breasts, as sexual insignia.

As Mac an Ghaill (1994:90) has suggested, this is one of the 'key defining processes in sexual boundary maintenance, policing and legitimization of male heterosexual identities'. In my later discussion on peer talk and pornography, I will explore the issue of how the young adult men attempted to learn the sex/gender codes that confer hegemonic masculinity by objectifying women as the 'other'. Besides the bodies of the 'others', they also found their own bodies, especially the penis, very unfamiliar and even mysterious. Having frequent erections is common for young adult men in the moment of engagement, which can be quite problematic for some of them.

Family

Many studies conducted in the West have found that parents are the primary agents of sexual socialization (Katchadourian, 1990; Miller, Benson, & Galbraith, 2001). The timing and nature of parental discussions of sexual issues with their children has also been partially addressed in these studies. Parents usually begin talking with their

children about sex during the children's preteen years (6-9). Although most parents introduce sex-related topics before their children turn 13 years of age, some do not begin these discussions until their children are older, and some parents never discuss sexuality with their children.

Nolan and Peterson (1992) found that although parents often provided factual information to younger children, the conversations with adolescents were predominantly about sociosexual issues and moral views (right and wrong). The authors noted that these later conversations were important in the transmission of values and morals. Several researchers have found that the amount as well as the content of these discussions about sex varies according to both the gender of the parent and the gender of the child. Mothers often take up the primary responsibility for sexual instruction of both male and female adolescents (Pick & Palos, 1995), while fathers are more involved in sociosexual discussions that focus on the transmission of family values related to sex, although they provided less factual information about sex than mothers (Nolin & Peterson, 1992).

However, as I will elaborate below, the life courses of the individuals I interviewed were highly incompatible with the findings of those studies conducted in Western societies. Elvis (25) is an ophthalmologist in a public hospital. Throughout the interview, he tended to apply his medical knowledge when discussing his sexuality.

He mentioned frequently having inexplicable and uncontrollable erections during adolescence. Frequent erections are one of the physiological changes that most young adult men experience in puberty:

Actually there was sex education in school, teaching about the arrival of puberty. However, no explanation was offered for erection. I don't know if you have had similar experiences. Sometimes it erected even in the classroom. Once it erected you didn't want others to recognize that, so you just couldn't stand up and walk in a normal way. Sometimes when it erects the entrance of the urethra would get stuck on the underwear, which was a little bit painful. Well, it was rather troublesome and I had to use my hand to push it down.

Loneliness in the Moment of Engagement

Except for Mark (23, financial planner) and Elvis, none of the young adult men had consulted anyone including their parents, brothers, relatives, or teachers about their sexual desires and personal experiences (like frequent erections). This differs from what has been suggested in some studies on Western men and masculinities, that a young adult man's moment of engagement should always have a 'model', such as father or older brother, to offer him versions of hegemonic masculinity to appropriate (c.f. Connell, 1995:122). Rather, the local straight men learned hegemonic masculinity through interacting with their peers, including classmates and friends,

who were the only people with whom they could talk about issues relating to sex.

However, as I will discuss later, those interactions were just limited to sex talk and sex jokes, and were not supportive in nature. A few straight men in this study revealed that they feel uneasy talking about their sexualities. They indicated that, 'Whenever you have problems about sex, you can only depend on yourself.' This statement clearly shows that the earliest recognition of male sexualities were lonely experiences. They had to deal with many unfamiliar issues relating to their bodies, sexual desires, and emotions until their first experience with sexual intercourse, which all of them regarded as their first real encounter with the opposite sex. Nevertheless, for most of them, their first experience with sexual intercourse was again a lonely one in that they had to learn about the process without any guidance and support. In the next chapter, I will discuss in detail all of the interviewees' first experience with sexual intercourse.

Much remains to be learned about how parents communicate with their children about sexual issues, particularly in non-Western cultures. Mark (23, financial planner) was the only interviewee who frequently discusses sex with his father, who acts as his mentor in the construction of masculinity and sexuality. In the families of all of the other participants, sex is definitely a taboo subject. All of the interviewees except Mark lacked a mentor or people to consult on issues relating to sexuality.

In his study on Chinese families in Hong Kong, Lau (1982) explained that non-affectionate bonding is common in such families. Although Lau's study was not about gender and sexuality,ⁱⁱⁱ it does have some bearing on these issues. In his concept of *utilitarianistic familism*, he points out that among familial interests, material interests take priority over non-material interests. This emphasis on material values defines the family as an economic unit rather than an affectionate unit. Lau (1982) argued that the obsession with material goods is the most significant driving force in people's working, and even non-working, behaviour. Material values are the major criterion used to evaluate the worth of things and people; and its application in Hong Kong to the assessment of objects that in other societies are usually considered to be beyond monetary calculation is startling. Hence, families in Hong Kong are affective in the material sense.

Kong (2002) also suggested the 'absent presence' of issues of sexuality in Hong Kong families. He has investigated the silence surrounding the gender and sexuality of gay men in the family-oriented environment of Hong Kong. However, if a family member is suspected or discovered to be gay, parents may break the silence by enquiring about and intervening in his sexuality.

The straight men in this study ranged in age from twenty to twenty five, meaning that they had been born in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the period when Lau carried

out his research. The concept of utilitarianistic familism provides the background to explain sex as a taboo in local families. All of the boys learned in their moment of engagement that it is embarrassing to talk about sex in front of one's parents. It would be even more embarrassing if any of one's sexual practises were to be discovered at home. Kelvin (23, customer service officer) was discovered when watching pornography and masturbating at the same time at home:

Yeah, once when I was in Form Two, my family came into my room when I was watching pornography. Their facial expressions showed that my behaviour disturbed them. They asked me why I wanted to watch such disgraceful things. As long as I was still young, I did not dare to defend myself. The more I worried about being caught, the greater my desire to watch the porn.... Actually I was caught while masturbating. But they just went back to their rooms as if nothing had happened (Laugh). Basically, I could carry on again....

Sex Education in School: A Failure

If the family plays a minimal part in the construction of the straight male sexuality of boys in the moment of engagement, what else contributes at an early age to their becoming straight?

Since 1978, the government has mandated nine years of compulsory education

for every child born in Hong Kong. Coincidentally, all of the men who participated in this research were born in or after 1978. Thus, in both their childhood and teenage years, they had spent most of their days in school. Therefore, it was necessary to examine whether the local education system had contributed to constructing their straight male sexuality.

Sex education had been introduced more than three decades earlier when the Hong Kong Education Department drew up the first Guidelines on Sex Education in Schools. Sex education is introduced in primary school for the purpose giving 'factual information and moral guidance'. This element is included in the Curriculum Development Committee's Health Education (Primary) Syllabus, which aims at 'providing pupils with a basic knowledge of the growth and development of the human body, including the characteristics of puberty and advice on the importance of personal hygiene' (Li *et al.*, 2001:10). As for secondary schools, the *Guidelines on sex education in secondary schools* emphasize that 'with the onset of adolescence there is a natural tendency for emotional energy to be absorbed by sexual thoughts and interests, adolescent interests are not confined to physical matters or mere fantasy but are given scope to develop and mature in practical and positive ways. At the secondary level, therefore, schools are encouraged to introduce various elements of sex education through basic subjects in the formal curriculum and through

extra-curricular activities' (1986:2).

Conceptually, the framework for sex education comprises three objectives (knowledge, values and attitudes, and skills), four aspects of sexuality (ethical, socio-cultural, psychological, and biological), and five dimensions (human development, health and behaviour, interpersonal relationships, marriage and family, as well as society and culture). The topics embodied the above concepts are organized into themes that can be fitted into the school curriculum. Various learning activities aided by audio-visual materials are suggested to enhance the presentation of the topics and to stimulate discussion on them. The guidelines were revised and expanded in 1996 in response to a query in the Legislative Council amidst heightened public concern over sexual assaults on, and the abuse of, children. They were published in December 1997, along with comprehensive curriculum guides teachers to refer to when developing their schemes of work in sex education.

However, as Li *et al.* (2001:7) has criticized, 'There is no clear, unequivocal definition of sex education provided by the authority. There is, in fact, no mention of the nature of sex education except in the appendices to the Guidelines where it is brought out somewhat in advertently.' The Education Department seems to be adopting a persuasive approach rather than taking a leadership role in promoting sex education in schools. It has positioned itself much more as a facilitator than an

enforcer of the programme. Thus, although all of the young adult men stated that they had been taught something about biological knowledge or contraceptive methods, they considered all of it impractical and useless for their future sex lives. Sex education has not been made a mandatory subject. Schools are only advised to reserve a number of teaching hours for sex education as one of their extra-curricular activities.

Yiu (23, merchandiser) discussed what he had learned in his sex education classes:

What then did you learn in your sex education classes in Hong Kong?

Just things like hair will grow when girls are growing up..., their breast will become bigger.... Actually they taught us about contraceptive methods... and that's all. They wouldn't teach us about how to have sex.

But did the classes help you in your future sex life?

No, they didn't. That requires self-learning.

Have you ever discussed those topics with your teachers?

Never!

Vince (23) is a marketing executive with a trading firm. He was educated locally until Form Five, when he sent to London for five years to complete high school and attend university. He felt that knowledge about sex should be 'taught by teachers when we are young'. However, he considered the sex education he had received in Hong Kong to be 'quite superficial', and that therefore, there was 'no proper sex education in

Hong Kong'. He believed that teachers in Hong Kong are reluctant to talk too much about sex in the classroom.

In their study, Li *et al.* (2001) suggested that, as frontline educators, teachers can clearly see the problems faced by their students regarding physical changes during puberty, dating and love relationships, exposure to pornography, and issues about self-image. However, teachers are ambivalent about taking up the role of sex educator. Up to 57.6% of the school administrators in the study agreed or strongly agreed that the teachers in their schools were not willing to hold a course on sex education. There is a paradox in that teachers think that they should take up the role of sex educator, yet do not want to do it. I would not go into detail on the reasons for this dilemma, because what concerns me most here is that during childhood and adolescence, which is the crucial stage for the construction of male sexualities, the interviewees were not able to get much information and knowledge about sexuality from their parents and teachers. What, then, contributed to their becoming straight men early in life? Given the loneliness of the experience of becoming aware of their sexuality, how did they cope?

Mass Media: *Sex Pages of Newspapers*

Most of the young adult men became aware of sex-related materials when they discovered pornography. Most of them were in early secondary school when they first read the sex pages of newspapers, adult magazines, or adult videos. The mass media was the most accessible means of acquiring information about sex. It was also the safest, as it allowed the participants to evade the scrutiny of both parents and teachers.

At the moment of engagement, the sex pages of local newspapers are the most accessible sex materials. In the 1980s to 1990s, all of the best-selling newspapers, for example, *Oriental Daily*, *Apple Daily*, *Sing Pao*, and *Tin Tin Daily*, had various special features on entertainment, culture, and everyday life. So and Chan (1999) have suggested that special features of newspapers can reflect the lives and interests of the readers and citizens of a place. Hence, the feature pages of newspapers [can](#) be seen as a means by which to investigate the local culture.

The best-selling newspapers [mentioned above](#) in the 1980s to 1990s all contained pages about sex.^{iv} In the volume 《黃菌·黃潮·黃禍資料報告書：香港色情問題研究》 (*A study of problem of eroticism in Hong Kong*), published by the Student Union of the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1978, the contents of the sex pages of newspapers were categorized into four genres: the novel, short story, Q&A columns, and miscellaneous. However, those sex pages could not attract their

readers through text alone. Hence, photos of naked or half-naked women accompanied articles in all of the categories. The photos focused on the bodies of the women and present them as sex symbols to arouse the sexual desire of male readers. The women are shown wearing bikinis to expose their slim, well-shaped bodies and their large breasts. These photos reinforce the position of women as fanciful and dominated.

The boys were already objectifying women's bodies in their moments of engagement, even though they may not have been conscious of this. For example, Kelvin (23, customer service officer) described his experience of looking at those photos:

At first I read *Apple Daily* and *Oriental Daily* because they are more erotic and funny to read. Actually, when I read those pages, I wouldn't be interested in the literal contents; I just looked the photos. And I felt that it is interesting for girls to wear so little....^v

Another feature of the sex pages that the young adult men talked about a great deal in their self-stories was the Q&A columns. Almost all of the young adult men were still in the habit of reading these columns. They see the editorials as very informative and a great resource for them to learn about what sex is and how to have it, specifically penetrative sex. Both Yiu (23, merchandiser) and Kelvin (23, customer officer) talked

about trying to 'learn' from the Q&A columns:

I have learned ... and known what fucking is meant to be. Yes, I mean I know about, but have not learned, how to fuck yet. Fucking is a difficult thing. Once I knew about it I wanted to try....

Then have you ever seen the editorials on the problems some guys have encountered?

Yes, I like reading about what others ask and trying to understand it.

(Yiu, 23, merchandiser)

It was a very good place to learn. About things I mean, I would think about how people could experience things in the way they wrote. I mean I would believe in those things when reading it. But my rationality would tell me that maybe what they encountered was fake. And maybe I would like to try what I hadn't tried before, like new things on the bed with my girlfriend.

(Kelvin, 23, customer officer)

The 'things' that Kelvin frequently referred to in his extract were the sexual experiences or problems of readers who wrote to the Q&A columns looking for solutions. Through reading those articles, both Yiu and Kelvin treated the experiences of others as examples and models to learn from in constructing their sexuality.

The early sexual explorations of most of the young adult men started with the sex pages of the newspapers because these were highly accessible at home. They

would simply not read the columns when members of their family were around them.

Mike (23, dancer) talked about this issue:

And do you have the habit of reading the sex pages of the newspapers?

Yes. But it's not a really a habit. I mean if you bring a pile of newspapers with you when going to a restaurant with your family, you wouldn't read those pages in front of them. I would read it when nobody is at home. I would feel too embarrassed to do so when they are around.

Pornography: Adult Magazines and Movies

Pornographic magazines, comics, and movies are also easily accessible. Between the ages of 12 to 15, most of the interviewees started to read adult magazines such as 《花花公子》(*Hua Hua Gong Zi, Playboys*), 《閣樓》(*Ge Lou, Penthouse*), and 《龍虎豹》(*Long Hu Bao, Dragon Tiger Leopard*). These were the most famous adult magazines in Hong Kong throughout the 1980s and 1990s. 'Adult magazines' are actually men's magazines because their readership is composed almost solely of men. They differ from other men's magazines, such as *Esquire*, which has a wide circulation.

Shi (1987) has observed that the female models in such magazines are dressed in a flirtatious manner. Their facial expressions suggest how enjoyable and sexually satisfying they are. Some are shown fiddling with their sexual organs to arouse the sexual desire of readers. Some are even shown masturbating. Chou and Zhao (1994)

also studied local adult magazines for men. They examined the sexual discourses portrayed in the three best-selling local adult magazines for men 《花花公子》 (*Hua Hua Gong Zi, Playboys*), 《閣樓》 (*Ge Lou, Penthouse*), and 《龍虎豹》 (*Long Hu Bao, Dragon Tiger Leopard*). They suggested that, in content, these magazines are full of a male-dominated heterosexual hegemony. For example, on the surface, 《花花公子》 (*Hua Hua Gong Zi, Playboys*) emphasizes safe sex, but all of its contents in fact reinforce the idea of male-dominated gender politics. Its discourses on sexual conquests, ‘one night stands’, safe sex, and the use of condoms all assume male privilege and are conducted for the sake of the sexual pleasure of men. The sexual discourses of these local magazines have been criticized for portraying women as objects, as inferior, and as servants to men’s sexual desires and pleasures.

Most of the interviewees stated that the photos in these magazines provided them with their early experiences of looking at the naked bodies of attractive women. They found such photos the most appealing feature of these magazines. They felt somewhat shocked to see photos of the sex organs of women, such as their breasts, clitoris, and genitals. During the process of learning about the unfamiliar female body, the young adult men also learned to objectify women’s bodies. Vince (23, marketing executive) portrayed his experiences in the following way:

Do you enjoy reading adult magazines?

Do I enjoy them or not? Yes, I get very excited. I mean I have had no contact with women's bodies. It's already very exciting for me, just to read the magazines.

Actually what have you get out of the magazines?

Well... the so-called beauty of the body.... That means that a nice body should be like that. And where are those sensitive areas...?

You mean the genitals?

The genitals, the breasts, everywhere.... The shape ... of women.

Besides learning about women's bodies, they also learned about various heterosexual practises such as caresses, oral sex and different positions of penetrative sex through reading the explicitly written erotic stories. Those stories provided the young adult men with room to imagine and identify with the characters in the stories. However, most young adult men only really knew about the 'real sexual' process through watching porn movies rather than reading the sex magazines mentioned above. Most of them emphasized that the porn movies produced in Japan and the US that deluged in the market during the 1990s was the main sources for them to learn what sex is and how to do it. Ming (23, assistant geologist) and Paul (20, unemployed) stated that 'you knew the whole thing by watching porn for just 3 to 4 minutes' and 'porn must be the first pathway for learning sex knowledge'. Elvis (25, ophthalmologist) has

insisted that watching the 'real case' is the only way to know about what is sex:

I have learned what sexual intercourse ... is ...

What do you mean by learned?

Well ... I knew that a man would enter into a woman and she would moan ... and knew how to enter and where to.... I mean the first time I watched porn was to watch the 'real case'...

The young men did not at first treat watching pornography as a way of learning about male sexuality on their own; such learning was a by-product. Rather, they watch pornography out of curiosity. Kelvin's (23, customer officer) earliest encounter with pornography was from within the family, from his father – not directly, but from his father's personal collection:

As long as you didn't have the courage to buy, actually you can just depend on the family, precisely the father. You have to see if daddy has a collection and try to find where it is... Gradually, I found that daddy collected porn. Then, you would wait until nobody is at home, such as after school, to find those things out and watch it.

Pornography offered an easier, accessible, and comfortable way for them to explore their desire and to satisfy themselves about heterosexual practises. The pornographic

movies also reinforced the tendency to objectify women that they assimilated when they first read the sex pages of newspapers and adult magazines. The search for pleasure was the main reason why they kept accessing pornography. The female characters in the pornographic materials actualized their sexual fantasies in visual images. In return, these images of sexual practises offered them the stimulation to engage in sexual practises such as masturbation.

Resisting the Pornographic Discourse

But there was one exception among the interviewees; Mike (23, dancer) treated pornography as a source of information and education. He bought some video compact disc (VCD) sets designed for sex education to learn the process of sexual intercourse to prepare for himself. Mike's experiences of self-learning through sex education VCDs shows that some young adult men do have their own points of view, and contrast, contest, resist, and even disrupt the phallocentrism presented in pornography:

I bought some sex education VCDs to learn the positions of intercourse and how to give the girl an orgasm. I really wanted to know more at the time. I remembered buying two or three sets.... The first one was completely uncensored but the later ones were censored. Basically, the first one talked

about communication and how to start ... that is ... it mentioned many times that we should not do it in a hurry ... shouldn't be entering too fast.... I mean those VCDs taught me that the process is very important. Sex is not just fucking. It should be an interactive activity. It's not like watching pornography, which is all about fucking. And I learned to respect the other person.

In his study, Renold (2003) has suggested that young men are able to accommodate, resist, define, and produce their heterosexualized masculinity through young boyfriend/girlfriend discourses. It is interconnected with hegemonic masculinity in that it requires complex and contradictory heterosexual performances to produce 'proper' (normal/ common) young men. Renold's argument is very similar to my argument on how the young adult men dealt with the pornographic discourse to construct their heterosexualities. As I discussed above, there was a lack of identifiable masculine role models in the family and in school in the early years when the participants, as boys were becoming heterosexuals. Thus, pornography offered them discourses of male sexuality to take up in their moment of engagement. As a result, whether or not the boys accommodated or resisted the pornographic discourse, it was highly influential at the moment of engagement.

The consequence is that women, as the other in masculinity, are objectified and desired in the construction of male sexuality within the heterosexual hegemonic order.

This conception was reinforced in sex talk that took place between peers, which will be discussed in the next section.

The other consequence is that penile-vaginal penetration has become the ‘truth of sex’, as suggested by Foucault (1978). Pornography has been the dominant discourse in making the ‘truth of sex’. The participants placed great emphasis on the ‘real case’ of sexual intercourse that they saw in the adult videos, and felt that they could learn about sex just by watching adult videos. Thus, it is not difficult to understand why penetrative sex is perceived not as part of sex but its totality. The theme ‘truth of sex’ will be further elaborated upon as an important explanation for the anxiety and pressure the interviewees felt regarding their sexual performance in their first experience with penetrative sex and in their later sex lives.

Nonetheless, as I have suggested above, some young adult men may also resist the pornographic discourse and attempt to find alternatives in their construction of male sexuality. Mike demonstrated a refusal to conform to the ideology of pornography. Instead, he deliberately tried to find other discourses that suited him. Foucault (1978) argued that this is how sexuality is deployed in the society when discourses concerning sexuality proliferate and compete with each other for the ‘truth of sex’.

Mike’s resistance against the dominant pornographic discourse concerning male

sexuality and his search for alternative discourses (sex as an interactive and communicative activity) shows the paradox of constructing one's male sexuality in the moment of engagement. Mike is among the men who are skeptical of pornography in retrospect. Mark (23, financial planner), Elvis (25 ophthalmologist), Jamie (25 ICAC investigator), and Vince (23, marketing executive), are all degree holders, and it happens that they are the most skeptical about pornography. They treated pornography as entertaining and the information conveyed as 'funny', 'exaggerated', and 'unreal'. However pornography was still a very influential factor in their moment of engagement, but they tended to deny the 'knowledge' they learned from pornography as credible. They cast doubt on pornography since the very early stage of the construction of their straight male sexuality.

The others, who are not as well educated as the above interviewees, were more convinced about the truth of the 'knowledge' they learned through pornography. This difference is very interesting. A similar disparity can also be found in the later discussion on sexual performance. The higher their education, the less they were concerned and worried about their sexual performance during intercourse. But what kind of sexual discourses did the above interviewees take up instead of the pornographic discourse? Did they adopt other kinds of hegemonic masculinity? If not pornography, where and what were the influences on the participants to become

straight men?

Peer Pressure

Learning how to have sex is a must in hegemonic masculinity. Mike's (23, dancer) case of buying sex education VCDs is an obvious example. However, the participants lost their virginity at different ages. Vince (23, marketing executive) was the youngest to first have sex, at 15; while Jamie (25, ICAC investigator) was the oldest, at 24. Before this, their peers were the only other channels for them to play out their knowledge of sex.

As discussed above, the participants did not feel about to talk about and share with their parents, teachers, and even brothers what they had learned about sex from newspapers, magazines, and pornographic movies. However, as Mac an Ghail (1994) has shown, much social learning about sex takes place at a collective level within the informal world of male peer groups, where specific subject positions are inhabited. In contrast to the processes of desexualization found within the official curriculum, sex and sexuality were compulsively and competitively discussed and played out between and within male student peer groups. This was also found in another study carried at a top-ranking Japanese senior high school (Castro-Vasquez & Izumi, 2002).^{vi} In the study, the 'master narrative' produced by the Japanese Ministry of Education

(Monbusho) to regulate the sexual behaviour of young people was analysed. The study showed that, in fact, the informants created their own sexual cultures by incorporating, discarding, or frankly rejecting notions of sex, contraception, and risk presented in sex education programme at school, in pornographic materials, and in talking with their peers. I will further examine how the boys in this study ‘learned to play out and validate’ both on their own and other men’s masculinities and heterosexuality among their peers.

Sex-Talk and Sex-Jokes: Constructing Straight Male Sexuality among Peers

Mac an Ghail (1994) discovered in his study that sex-talk is not mono-functional, but multi-functional, serving as confession, seduction, therapy, or education. According to the self stories of the young men, at the moment of engagement they also engage in different kinds of sex talk with their peers, the main forms being mocking others (of the same sex) and objectifying women (the opposite sex). The boys drew on what they had seen in pornographic materials to use in their daily socializing as heterosexuals among their peers. Both Elvis (23, ophthalmologist) and Jamie (25, ICAC investigator) showed that making fun of the size and endurance of one’s penis is not just a ‘kind of culture’; it is also a way of degrading others in the homosocial structure:

Well... you mean jokes? Our normal jokes will be like ‘the guy has a short penis...’

Do you mean that before your first sexual experience all of your talk with peers about sex consisted merely of jokes?

Of course. (Jamie, 25, ICAC investigator)

Mostly they were all jokes. Such as mocking others as impotent.... I think those are just jokes, which are not the same as reality. I mean those are just jokes, just a kind of culture. For me, there’s a gap between jokes and reality.

(Elvis 23, Ophthalmologist)

Lees (1993) has suggested that the discursive codes and conventions of sex-talk among adolescents are always the result of positioning the dominant and subordinate masculinities and femininities. My informants showed that they were not only acquiring the resources from pornography to become heterosexuals, but were further using it to construct their masculinity by competing with and subordinating other young men, even within the context of sex jokes.

Another common content of sex jokes is the objectification of women, especially ‘insignificant women’. This kind of sex talk reported by the young adult men appeared to be closely related to masculinity. ‘A male sexual discourse’ (Holland et al., 1998) constructed on pornography is a symbol of male-dominated ideology. In their sexual culture, female sexuality happens to be another means of constructing their

masculinity. 'Insignificant women', according to them, are those who do not have direct and indirect connections with them. In contrast, they will never laugh at their friends' mothers, sisters, close female friends, and girlfriends. Kelvin (23, customer service officer) has talked about how his peer group jokes about women on the street. They only emphasized talking or joking about 'insignificant women'. They have acknowledged at their young age that in terms of gender relations, women are always 'the others' to them. In the construction of their masculinity, knowing how to talk and assess women's bodies was a way to taking up the hegemonic masculinity:

When we see a woman, just having dinner or walking on the street with friends, she would be our topic of discussion. My friends are all like that. No embarrassment at all. But when you get older you know that sometimes you have to control yourself.

However, such sex jokes were not necessarily relevant to their personal experiences, for example, their own sexual relationship with girlfriends and partners. Telling sex jokes was a way of making use of the 'insignificant women' as 'the others' in the construction of their heterosexual masculinity; at the same time, it was a way of distancing their personal experiences with the women they see in the streets from the public talk of sex.

In his study of English straight male sexuality, Mac an Ghail (1994: 90) have suggested that the heterosexual male students he studied were involved in a double relationship of subordinating the 'other', including women and gays (external relations), and of, at the same time, expelling femininity and homosexuality from within themselves (internal relations). Inspired by Mac an Ghail, I have tried to determine whether homophobia also existed in the early construction of the straight male sexuality of my interviewees. One question was designed to ask them if they have had any homosexual/homosocial experiences in the moment of engagement (please refer to Appendix II). Sam (23, salesman) admitted that he finds gay men disgusting and avoids contact with any gay men. He described his understanding of anal sex as follows:

I have heard ... at first, I was wondering how to practise anal sex. And then I heard from my friends about anal sex between a man and a man. I can accept anal sex between a man and a woman. But I cannot imagine that between two men. It is because of the male identity....

Sam has not further explained his understanding of the relationship between anal sex and homosexuality. But as long as he can accept anal sex as a heterosexual practise, I assume that he associates penetration with the male identity. This is because

homosexual anal sex means one of the men should be penetrated. This may be the reason behind his denial of homosexuality. This extract is an example of the external subordination of homosexuality. Sam subordinates homosexual anal sex as 'disgusting' and 'unacceptable'. Mike (23, dancer) has further explained that he has expelled homosexuality as an internal relation within himself. His confession of homophobia is an internal denial of homosexuality. This is because he has tried to situate himself in the subjective position of being a gay man. He imagines himself being penetrated. His disgust originates from this imagination:

I knew what anal sex is ... I have read 《雄風》 (*xiong feng*)^{vii} accidentally.... And have you watched *Happy Together*^{viii} starring Leslie Cheung and Tony Leung? I am against sex between boys ... I just can't imagine.... And then when I think about a man being penetrated... sigh.... It's just disgusting. It is because I can't accept this. It is just impossible.

It was obvious that the young adult men associated homosexuality with anal intercourse. This proves that their perception of sex in both heterosexual and homosexual relationships is that it is phallic. It is interesting to hear from their self-stories that they started to circulate homophobic discourses among their peers in the moment of engagement.

Public Sex (Talk) vs. Private Sex (Act): Public Jokes vs. Private Self?

I will further elaborate how, as boys, the participants draw a boundary between their sex-talk as a public practise and sex acts as a private matter. No doubt, sex-talk plays a significant role in constructing the heterosexual identities of young adult men in the moment of engagement. It is also the boundary that a straight man should recognize when deciding whether to make public or conceal sexual issues.

Since the moment of engagement, most of the participants acknowledged that personal feelings and experiences about sex should not be made public. Joking about sex is usually the only appropriate way to talk about sex. Most of them admitted that even among their peers, sex talk is almost always shallow. They hesitate to engage in more serious sex talk because of embarrassment, lack of trust, and the competitive nature of the homosocial relationships. Serious sex talk does occur occasionally. Kelvin (23, customer service officer) and Elvis (25, ophthalmologist) have both shared with their friends their experiences with masturbation:

Would it be possible to share experiences about masturbation?

I don't think so. First, most people are too conservative and embarrassed to do so. Second, it is about self-esteem. Sharing experiences about masturbation is about being strong or weak.... We only found it easier after becoming adults. (Kelvin, 23, customer service officer)

I didn't masturbate at all.... But when I was in Form Six, I remembered that a night when I was talking with my friends. Everyone confessed that they always masturbate. I was considered weird and abnormal, as I didn't masturbate. I was really scared. And one of my friends told me that even an idiot knows how to masturbate. But I really couldn't imagine my hand as the vagina.... Since then I tried for many times and finally succeed....

(Elvis, 25, ophthalmologist)

However, I seldom heard such seriousness in their self-stories. Most of them remembered sex jokes as being dominant in the homosocial context, both as boys and currently. Distancing personal feelings and hiding sexual experiences helped to construct and then preserve their masculinities. They are inarticulate when it comes to voicing their inner feelings about sex because they feel uneasy about revealing their lonely, fragile, and insecure private self in the moment of engagement. But such avoidance could lead to more serious problems in their sex lives in the future, such as problems in communicating with their partners, which I will discuss in the coming chapters.

As Slater (1998) has argued, the private marks a realm of personal intimacy, of relationships to be defended from public scrutiny or interference, of values that cannot or should not be experienced in public life.

At the moment of engagement, the interviewees were still children or teenagers

and had yet to become adults. But they were already learning how to become men, specifically straight men. When they went to school, they had to live a life like any other men who go to work. They had to confine their inner and emotional self from the public sphere. But they found no affectionate support in the private realm. As mentioned previously, families failed to function to support the boys emotionally.

In addition, inner feelings and emotions are always defined as feminine attributes in conventional discourse. As argued above, the daily socialization among the boys in the moment of engagement was misogynistic in nature. Hence, the boys tended to conceal their inner feelings and emotions using the façade of sex to expel the femininity within them. In contrast, as part of the impact of feminism, various forms of masculinity politics emerged in Western society as a cultural project. Morgan (1992:24) has discussed the wide range of writing styles and accompanying different focuses, including personal, autobiographical, theoretical, and analytical. He noted that:

Some have celebrated men and masculinity, some others have denounced their own gender; many, if not most of all, have seen a need for some kind of change, personal and/ or political. Men have demanded (as have some women) that men should ‘get in touch with their feelings’, or that they should confront the violence that they perpetrated or of which they are capable, that they should take a critical look at all their practises in the home,

in interpersonal relationships, in public life and at work. Yet, perhaps, we still have a long way to go.

Such sensitivity involved in 'getting in touch with one's feelings' obviously cannot be found in the self-stories of the moment of engagement. The young adult men pursued the more conventional approach of distinguishing their private self by making public jokes about sex.

Conclusion

This chapter investigated the moment of engagement both as structure and agency for the young adult men to take up hegemonic masculinity as their own. The process of constructing and becoming heterosexuals was no doubt a lonely experience for them. Their body-reflexive practises showed that they received insufficient knowledge and emotional support from the family and education system. They turned to the mass media, especially pornography, to look for explanations and guidance on their bodily changes and heterosexual desires. They then made use of the sexual knowledge acquired from the mass media to socialize with their peers using sex talk and sex jokes.

At the cognitive level, they could not receive responses from their family and the education system that satisfied their curiosity about their bodily changes and

heterosexual desires. Through consuming sexual materials in the mass media, the participants as boys were able to subject themselves to the ideologies and discourses surrounding compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity. This marked the beginning of their identification as straight men. The boys showed their agencies by socializing with their peers through subordinating and expelling both femininity and homosexuality from both around and inside them.

There are certain common features in the experiences of boys in the moment of engagement. Most dealt alone with the process of recognizing their heterosexual desires and various bodily changes. Pornography was the most influential source for their earliest learning and becoming straight males. They learned to joke about sex when socializing with their peers and to keep their inner feelings and emotions private

However, the coming chapters will show the specific sexual cultures in Hong Kong society led the young men to share similar experiences in the moment of engagement. They will also discuss of each of the young men has his own agency to conform, accommodate, identify, and even resist the conventional ideologies and discourses around compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity.

There are some implications from the discussions in this chapter. First, there is a need to rethink and redesign local sex education programme in the schools. Second, the surge in Internet usage during the 1990s intensified the current situation regarding

how boys learn about their sexuality, as access to pornography has been made much easier. These two implications will be further discussed in the concluding chapter. Finally, since the moment of engagement, the young adult men have tended to refrain from articulating their inner feelings and emotions concerning sex. This has led to more serious problems for them with regard to communicating with their first sexual partners and in their sex lives afterwards. In the next chapter, I will look into the thirteen local straight men's first experience with sexual intercourse.

Notes:

¹ Mac an Ghaill (1994) presented the findings of his three-year ethnographic study conducted between 1990 and 1992, during which he investigated the social construction and regulation of masculinities in the Parnell School, a state secondary school.

² Lau (1982) inquired into the basis of political stability in Hong Kong by examining the social organization and cultural orientations of the non-elite, which are built on the key concept of *utilitarianistic familism*.

³ The three newspapers had various titles for their sex pages, which changed very frequently. *Oriental Daily* used 《開心坊》 (*Happy Place*) as the title of its sex pages in 1992. Then, until 1998, the newspaper used such names as 《男極圈》 (*Men's Polar Circle*), 《軟性料》 (*Soft Sexual Materials*), and 《遊樂園》 (*Playground*). *Tin Tin Daily* used 《快活谷》 (*Happy Valley*) in 1992, then changed to 《風月無邊》 (*Wind and Moon Without Edge*) in 1994, and then to 《成人副刊》 (*Adult Special*) in 1999.

⁴ Kelvin's (23, customer officer) self-stories were the most difficult to transcribe. He used the word 'I' and 'you' interchangeably to refer to himself. As a result, I have transcribed all of the pronouns that he used to refer to himself as 'I'. I have tried to be sensitive to this interchangeable use of 'I' and 'you', because this practise might indicate a certain evasiveness or fear of too much self-disclosure.

⁵ Castro-Vazquez and Izumi (2002) reported the second part of a research involving 300 Japan male high school students, their gender identities, and use of contraception. See also Castro-Vazquez & Izumi (2003).

⁶ 《雄風》 (*xiong feng*), 'Male Storm' is the first locally published gay magazine.

⁷ 《春光乍洩》 (*Chun Guang Zha Xie, Happy Together*) is about a Hong Kong gay couple. Yiu-fai (played by Tony Leung) and Bo-wing (played by Leslie Cheung) left Hong Kong to visit a great waterfall in South America, but in the end find themselves stuck on the streets of Buenos Aires. Yiu-fai's life takes on a new positive spin, while Po-wing's life shatters.

Chapter 4

The First Sex Act

Introduction

This chapter consists of the thirteen young straight men's various tales about their sexual coming-of-age. Almost every detail shows the complex interplay of the men's bodies with social processes. Their choice of partner', arousal, physical knowledge, skill, performance, and their partners' bodily responses constitute the body-reflexive practise of their first sex act. Their 'first sex',¹ as they defined it, was the first major act of 'trial and error' in the course of becoming a heterosexual male. Their experiences and ideological constructions in the moment of engagement both enabled and were restricted by their accomplishment of their first sex act.

I have argued in the last chapter that in the moment of engagement the young adult men came across the conventional phallogentric notion of compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity. The first sex act was a crucial moment for the young adult men to practise, perform, identify, and examine the conventional discourses and ideologies surrounding straight male sex. It was due to this duality that they would regard their first penile-vaginal penetrative act as their sexual

coming-of-age.

The young adult men's first sexual experiences differed a great deal from each other. For some, their first sexual experience was very enjoyable and memorable, while for others it was a disappointment and even a big failure. But whether the experience was pleasant or unpleasant, most treated it as the moment when the boy became a man. This means that they see the first penetrative sex act as a way to become a straight man. Such a belief proves again that the first sex act is a body-reflexive practise that both enables and disciplines the construction of one's gender and sexual identity.

At the end of this chapter, I will argue that the first sexual experience is at the same time a corporeal and cognitive experience. But the self-stories show that the young adult men tended to use their 'minds' to judge and evaluate their the experiences and performances of their 'body'. In the next two chapters, this finding will be shown to relate to both their learning in the moment of engagement and their future sexual lives.

'First Sex' as a Dual Moment

'First sex' is a dual moment when a boy takes up and performs hegemonic masculinity.

However, Holland *et al.* (1996: 144) argued that the moment of 'first sex' is not the

only constitutive moment of heterosexuality, but that:

Becoming heterosexual occurs at differing levels of social activity, from the most grounded meeting of bodies to the most abstracted level of institutionalization. Sexuality is simultaneously variable bodily states, desires and physical practises, and also culturally variable understandings of their embodiment and associated identities and social practises. Sexuality is embodied in the sense that it entails bodily activity; there is a physical aspect to sexual desire, gender and reproduction. Heterosexuality is grounded in this bodily sexuality, but it cannot be understood independently of the variable beliefs, values, ideologies, discourses, identities and social relationships through which people become socially heterosexual and practise heterosexuality. Heterosexuality lives in the distinctive lifestyles and in discourses of masculinity/femininity, normality/abnormality.

Hence, to study the first sex act of the thirteen young straight men is to examine how they became heterosexuals through embodying sexual experiences. Body-reflex practises are related to the abstract institutional level of compulsory heterosexuality. In the process of becoming heterosexuals, the young adult men perform the knowledge and skills required by hegemonic masculinity. They are required to accomplish this social transition to enter into sexual adulthood as straight men. Their first sexual experiences translate their bodily fantasies into a crucial social process in

their life course.

I asked each of the thirteen young straight men to review their first sex act in detail. Vince (23, marketing executive) remembers having had his earliest sexual experience at the age of 15, the youngest among the interviewees. Jaime (25), the ICAC investigator, engaged in sexual intercourse for the first time at 24, the oldest among the thirteen. All of the other young adult men had their first sex before the age of 20. Their first sexual partners tended to be their girlfriends at the time. Only two of the participants, Kelvin (23, customer service officer) and Yiu (23, merchandiser), had their first sex with a stranger or a colleague. This means that, with the exception of these two young adult men, the first sex act of the interviewees took place within a romantic love relationship.

Surprisingly, only two among the thirteen of used a condom or some other form of contraception the first time they had sex. Ming (23, assistant geologist), Vince (23, marketing executive), and Yiu (23, merchandiser) stated that their first sex happened ‘accidentally’ and ‘unexpectedly’, and thus, had not come prepared to use a condom was not prepared. Elvis (25, ophthalmologist) explained that he decided not to use a condom because he just wanted to ‘give it a shot’. He regarded his first attempt at sex as a ‘trial’ that must be accompanied with ‘error’. Hence, he did not want to ‘waste a condom’, as he could not guarantee that he would be successful at accomplishing his

first sex act. Elvis was hinting that he was not confident about being able to successfully penetrate his partner and then climax. But given that he had already been a medical student at the time of his first sex, he should have been familiar with both the male and female sexual organs. However, it seems that, despite his medical knowledge, he felt under pressure and doubtful about being able to accomplish this man's task (or boy's task).

Brian (24, sales manager), a good storyteller, argued that his 'good man' image would be spoiled if he had prepared a condom in advance. He meant that the sex act should happen spontaneously, especially within a romantic love relationship. Brian preferred to take the risk of getting his girlfriend pregnant rather than to give up his 'good man' image. This contradicts the findings of a study on negotiating safe sex conducted among rural youth in Australia (Hiller *et al.* 1998). The study suggests that carrying a condom was not perceived as harmful for boys in general. The boys 'wore it like a badge; they often flipped open their wallets to reveal the condom carried in it' (19).

Generally, the boys' impressions of their first experience with sexual intercourse were that it was 'shocking', 'impressive', 'occurred under pressure', 'disappointing', and even 'a failure'. Regardless of the nature of the experience, for all of them, their first sexual experience, which for them was a significant experience. For boys, unlike

girls, there is no exact marker for the arrival of puberty. For girls, the marker of puberty is their first menstruation; from then on, they have a heightened consciousness of what it means to be a woman (Martin, 1987). Hence, for girls, their first experience with sexual intercourse does not have to be a mark of becoming a woman.

First Sex: Virginity, Sexual Intercourse, and Masculinity

Yet, for the boys, the first sex act is a task that must be accomplished. As Holland *et al.* (1996) argued, men's sexual agency is expressed through 'doing' rather than 'being'. In contrast to previous generations, where gendered notions of virginity (especially with regard to women's sexualities) were institutionally linked to marriage, paternity, and the transfer of property over generations, and virginity was therefore regarded as something to be protected, young people are now generally under immense pressure to become sexually active, and the age of first sexual intercourse appears to be decreasing. However, the acquisition of heterosexual identities continues to be socially gendered and differently embodied for men and women (Holland *et al.* 1996:141). Elvis (25, ophthalmologist) reveals his views on the interaction between virginity, first sex, and masculinity:

Basically, to lose your virginity means growing up. You would feel better if you have had sex and lost your virginity.... For example, when I was studying in secondary school, my friends always talked about having to lose our virginity before eighteen and seeing who couldn't make it. But, finally, when we reached eighteen, we talked about losing it at twenty-one.... So, to lose one's virginity means an experience to me. That is, growing up and entering into adulthood ... entering a new world, which feels really cool.

Elvis mentioned that his first sex was motivated by 'love, lust, and the *impulsion* and *ideal* of losing one's virginity'. Brian (24, sales manager), explained in detail that he saw his first sex as similar to taking the exam to obtain his driver's license. Brian finally 'passed' the examination to engage in sexual intercourse for the first time in his second attempt. Passing meant performing penile-vaginal intercourse and climaxing. The achievement was not just a physical one. He mentioned receiving recognition from his peers after accomplishing the task. Doing his first sex helped him to become, in the conventional sense, a 'real man', a 'straight man'. It is clear how significant Brian's first act of sexual intercourse was in constructing his masculinity:

Well, it's just like how a person is taking an examination and forgets everything. Actually I evaluated the event afterwards. If I could have

followed her action and positioned her legs properly, I should have been able to get into it easily. But maybe I was a bit nervous at the moment and forgot what to do. But I have a point to make, which is that I have heard too much about first sex. I have been told it shouldn't be a romantic and successful experience. I think I was under that shadow and that made me so nervous. I believed that I wouldn't be able to do it the first time around and I believed that my performance was affected. Maybe I have left the shadow behind in the second attempt, which made it easier. I felt like I had finished ... to me it was similar to passing the examination to get a driver's license. My status has been elevated among my friends after I got the license.

Was this license important to you?

Yea, this one is quite important to me. Because... because I was one of the last among my friends to lost my. There got to be a kind of pressure. After that, it was like I could breathe again....

Although he tried to find excuses for his first 'failed' attempt, such as nervousness from the pressure imposed by his friends, Brian was very eager to 'pass' and to be recognized. He was not being forced into engaging in his first sex; however, felt the necessary to actively perform, construct, and accommodate the hegemonic masculinity. Brian treated his first sex as an examination, as a case of trial and error in the course of constructing his masculinity, as something that he needed to overcome in the passage to becoming a straight man.

In the next section, I will examine the reasons why the young men regarded

penile-vaginal intercourse as the dominant form of sexual activity in their first sex. I will argue that what the boys practised and accomplished in their first sex further validates their belief in sexual intercourse as the 'truth of sex'. Their belief can be traced from the pornography they consumed in the moment of engagement.

Proper Sex as First Sex: Heterosexual Intercourse

In their self-stories, the thirteen young straight men revealed their experiences with a range of sexual activities such as kissing, caressing, oral sex, and mutual masturbation. But all of them regarded the first time they had sexual intercourse as the first time they had truly had sex. 'Proper sex' was widely defined as a specific version of heterosexual intercourse, in which a man's penis penetrates a woman's vagina; it starts with his arousal and finishes with his climax. According to Holland *et al.* (1996: 146), 'first sex' in this embodied guise is the young man's moment, and there is no corresponding definition of the 'sex act' in terms of female agency, action, or desire; her orgasm is his production.ⁱⁱ

The young adult men's memories of first sex relate strictly to penile-vaginal intercourse as the 'main dish'. I have argued in Chapter 3 that in the moment of engagement the mass media was their major source of knowledge about sex. This source included the sex pages of local newspapers, adult magazines, comics, and

movies circulated by the mass media. Thus, pornography has been the dominant discourse in producing the 'truth of sex' (Foucault, 1978). I have suggested in Chapter 3 that the self-stories of straight men placed great emphasis on the 'real case' of sexual intercourse as portrayed in the pornographic materials, and that they perceived penetrative sex as the entire meaning of having sex. As Foucault (1978) has argued, this is how sexuality has deployed in the society. Discourses concerning sexuality always proliferate and compete with each other for the 'truth of sex'.

For most of the thirteen young straight men, phallocentrism is the dominant discourse on heterosexuality in Hong Kong society. I set up a question in the interview guideline to ask each of them to explain why they equated the first time they had sexual intercourse to the first time they had sex (refer to Appendix II for the interview guideline). Their answers included 'there was contact between sexual organs', 'we were both being naked', and 'there was penetration and ejaculation'. Mark (22, financial planner) associated his first sex with pornography. Mark was among the most educated of my interviewees, and was skeptical about the validity of the pornographic materials I discussed in Chapter 3. Nevertheless, he drew upon the phallic sex portrayed in pornography as a reference to define his first sex. This shows his identification with hegemonic masculinity, although he might cast doubt on it:

Because that's my first time to penetrate a woman, that's all.

Then how about other experiences such as kissing and touching other girls?

Would you count those as sexual experiences?

No. That's only the first time I had intercourse.

Well ... actually I want to know why you would place so much emphasis on penetration in relation to sexual experience....

This is because this is how they define sexual experience in the newspapers ... and whether one is a virgin or not depends on whether your penis has penetrated into a vagina. If you have done that, you are no longer a virgin. It's as simple as that.

However, as I am going to argue, phallocentrism was the cause of the disappointment and discontent that most of the young adult men felt with their first experience of sexual intercourse. For example, Brian's (24, sales manager) self-story discloses his disappointment for failing to 'complete the whole process' of sexual intercourse.

Of all of them, Mike (23, dancer) was the most disappointed with his first sex experience. He described it as a case of 'very very' premature ejaculation. This was a common experience of the interviewees when they had sexual intercourse for the first time. In the case of Mike, he was disappointed with his endurance. He expected himself to have the kind of endurance he saw in the sex education videos he mentioned watching in the moment of engagement (refer to p. 79). He had also taken up the sexual discourse, again from the sex education video, that it is a man's

responsibility to satisfy his partner in sexual intercourse:

At last... maybe because was really my first time to have sex ... I ejaculated prematurely. It was because I was a little bit nervous and so sensitive. Really scared.... I remembered that when I got into her, my heart was beating was so fast ... and I came.... She did not mind because it was my first time and also hers....

But how fast was it? What did you mean by premature?

How fast? Actually I don't mean that I just came while touching her.... I remembered that I got into it a little bit... and was so nervous... maybe I was scared.... I felt so complicated when I got into her... and I just came! I took it out and ejaculated outside immediately.... can you get what I mean...? It was the first time ...she was so forgiving and understanding....

Why did you feel that you had done something wrong?

It was because I could not complete the whole process ... the process of sex ... I must have done something wrong on my side ... and destroyed the whole experience.... So I had to be responsible to a certain extent ... because normally what I learned from the VCDs was that the man has to satisfy the woman, and vice versa. So if a man fails to satisfy his woman first, then the whole thing is not perfect. Maybe I'm a perfectionist; I want both of us to have an orgasm. I felt a bit guilty, as I could not achieve that. It made me think about how to prevent it from happening again. To a certain extent I felt that it was disgraceful to come prematurely.

Mike felt that ejaculating prematurely was a sign that he was too sexually incompetent to endure for enough time to give his partner sexual pleasure. As a result, Mike experienced a sense of double loss with regard to his first sex. His self-esteem received a blow. More important was his failure to show the skill and performance required by hegemonic masculinity in his first attempt. The experience of that instance of premature ejaculation still casts its shadow over Mike every time he has sex.

Most of the interviewees shared Mike's disappointment with their first experience with sexual intercourse. Brian (24, sales manager), Elvis (25, eye-doctor), Sam (23, salesman), Pong (20, unemployed), Kelvin (23, customer service officer), and Yiu (23, merchandiser) were all similarly disappointed with their sexual endurance. However, they differed from Mike in that they were not concerned about their partners' sexual satisfaction. They were simply discontented with their poor sexual endurance. There was a gap between their sexual endurance/virility the first time they had sex and the portrayal of the sex act in pornographic materials. The penis shown in pornographic sources has more endurance than theirs proved to have. This frustrated them and caused them to regard their first attempt at sexual intercourse as a failure. They failed to live up to the phallus required by hegemonic masculinity. Yiu (23, merchandiser) stated that he was 'defeated' in his first sex. It is

true that Yiu has described his first sex in a cynical manner. But the word ‘defeated’ indicates his sorrow over his ‘failure’ to perform. Throughout their sexual lives, there was always a gap between what they expected of themselves and their actual performance. Moreover, there was a lack of alternatives for these men to pursue in place of phallocentrism:

It was done very fast ... ha-ha ... I was *defeated* ... ha-ha ... around one minute I think ... 8 to 10 strokes ...

Did you feel very nervous?

I don’t know! Maybe, as that was my first encounter with a woman and a woman’s body, there should have been certain nervousness. I think ... even in my memory I am still a bit nervous.... I don’t think it was really a failure, but I was disappointed with the process. I felt that I should be ... more like the pornography I had read. I should have been more skilful, like *an ordinary man*. I felt disappointed but not like a failure. I believed that I should be more skilful ... ha-ha ... that I should have tried more positions and used other tricks....

Nevertheless, a few of the participants were able to perceive their first sex in a positive way. Jamie (25, ICAC investigator) and Vince (23, marketing executive) portrayed their first sex as a featureless incident. It seemed to be a very ordinary event in their self-stories. They give precise and straightforward answers to my questions.

Thus, the self-stories of their first sex were not self-narratives but were produced by us. Vince defined his first sex as a 'straight sex' within a romantic love relationship:

The process ... um ... actually I was not prepared to do such a thing. We were just hanging out and then we went to her home. She told me that nobody was home, and I went with her. Then I went into her room, as I was curious. We sat on her bed beside each other. After chatting for a while, we started caressing each other. Of course I touched her first. And then we just started.... It was very natural and I didn't ask for anything.... It was just *straight sex*.... Positions? Just like I have seen on TV, like missionary, doggy, and then I was about to come ... it's as simple as that.... I can't remember too much....

Jamie (25, ICAC investigator) had his first sex just two years ago, during a trip with his girlfriend. Jamie's first sex was like Vince's. Interestingly, Vince at 15 was the youngest to first experience sex; and Jamie, at 23, was the oldest. Both of them emphasized that their first sex was natural and smooth. It just happened. It was not anticipated. They did not treat it as a bodily experience. They downplayed the significance of sexuality in their lives. They did not seem to regard their sexual experience as part of the course of becoming a straight man.

Both Vince and Jamie tended to see sex in a cognitive manner. In the final section, I will argue that most of the thirteen young straight men in this study prioritized 'mind'

over 'body' in their first sex.

Mind Over Body: First Sex as a Cognitive and Corporeal Experience

I have argued several times that the first sex act is a body-reflexive practise. However, among the thirteen young adult men, Kelvin (23, customer service officer), the libertine, was the only one to describe his first sex in full detail. He expressed his personal feelings and perceptions about the event. In his retrospect, I can see that he was well aware of his bodily sensations:

Actually, she was very active in my first sex. She led me to the room, kissed me, and then French kissed with me. She took off my clothes and also hers ... and that was really the first time that I had seen a pair of breasts in front of me. The feeling was very *shocking* ... and that sexy feeling... she gave me tenderness. The pity was that I didn't receive oral sex from her ... ha-ha, which I had been anticipating for a long time. Of course, at that moment, I started to check out every inch of her body out. I used my finger to make her clitoris more visible ... and ... you could see it was really like that. I gave her oral sex at that moment ... because I have seen it in many movies and thought she would be comfortable with that. I tried to lick her pussy and use my fingers to stimulate her ... and she masturbated me ... and also my balls ... well ... positions ... it was quite normal at first ... just missionary and then doggy....

Although it was a sensational experience, he is also very concerned about his sexual competence:

Err ... actually I was very disappointed with the first sex ... ha-ha ... because it just lasted for six to seven minutes ... very disappointed.... Actually, the major reason was due to my anxiety. I was afraid that if I don't know how to have sex and how dominate the process, maybe I would not have a girlfriend in the future. So I always wanted to find an experienced woman to have my first sex with, to let me know what to do. I wanted to know how to start, how to finish, and also the process. Thus, that should have been a very good lesson. But you would always be scared of the duration ... because you don't want to end up like what you read about in the newspaper columns. It taught you how important sexual virility is to a man. Under the influence, you would be afraid of coming too fast or ejaculating prematurely. So you would feel the pressure during the process of sex. Or you would try to be less concentrated and carry on. The first time was rather difficult ... otherwise it shouldn't be just five to six minutes, but actually I was unable to be less concentrated at that moment. That was because the sensitivity was too strong ... and I had an orgasm very quickly....

Kelvin was the only one of the interviewees to be able to acknowledge both the cognitive and corporeal dimensions of first sex. All of the others tended to place their

judgments and evaluations of their sexual performances over their corporeal pleasures and sensations. This hierarchical difference reveals the 'mind' over 'body' conception. Briefly put, their self-stories position ideologies and discourses over the corporeal sensations arising from sex.

This phenomenon proves again the inadequacy of local sex education programme. The participants had acquired ideologies, discourses, knowledge, and skills about sex solely from sex materials in the mass media. They consumed the materials as spectators in the moment of engagement. Most of them identified with the subject positions of sex conqueror, performer, and womanizer as exemplars of straight men. To become such exemplars, one has to acquire the required sexual skills and perform as portrayed in the pornographic materials. But all of these ideologies and discourses are cognitive benchmarks. When it came to having the encounter with a female body and their first sex, the participants felt helpless. Brian described how he 'failed' in his first sex due to his unfamiliarity with his girlfriend's body:

Honestly ... err ... the first time was really a failure. It was because... I didn't know how to position myself ... it was just a failure ... I couldn't get into her. It was just that simple.... Such as didn't know where to put the legs and don't know what the position should be like. And I was really anxious and failed to erect, and then I just couldn't get into her ... and I also couldn't find the position (the vagina). Really didn't know what to

do ... and our legs and bodies always stuck with each other ... and she seemed to be in pain when I got into her a bit. And you know the penis would become soft again if there was problem, and it made it even more difficult. Sigh ... as a result I wanted to give up ... maybe try again next time ... because I was really under pressure.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed various issues surrounding the first sex act of the thirteen young straight men. Some of them treated accomplishing their first sexual intercourse as the passage to becoming a straight man. Others required themselves to perform with the sexual virility required by hegemonic masculinity. Only two of them (Vince and Jamie) treated their first sex as an incident without much meaning for their masculinity (but given the great anxiety relating to the issue, it could be the case that they were simply reluctant to talk about it). I have also examined their reasons for defining first sex as penile-vaginal penetration. The phallogentric notion of sex that they acquired in the moment of engagement led to them to be discontented and disappointed with their first sexual experience. As long as their experiences were mostly unsatisfactory, some of them became more and more concerned about their sexual competence in their sexual life afterwards.

Many factors are involved in successful sexual intercourse, such as an

understanding of the sexual organs of both sexes, appropriate bodily movements between the couples, the experiences of both parties with sexual intercourse, and the atmosphere during intercourse. But the participants were frustrated with their amateur performances. As a result, this kept them from enjoying the first sex that they had anticipated for so long. The first experience of sexual intercourse became a kind of 'task' that a boy had to perform perfectly. In consequence, the first sex was finally not so much an embodied experience for the young adult men, but rather a cognitive task they had to accomplish in order to become a qualified straight man. In the next chapter, I will further examine the moments in their sexual lives when they failed to perform.

Notes:

ⁱ I asked each of the thirteen young straight men to define, describe, and explain their first sexual experiences (please refer to Appendix II for the interview guidelines). The term ‘first sex’ used in this chapter refers to their first heterosexual experience (intercourse) with a woman.

ⁱⁱ I agree with Janet Holland that there is a lack of positive conceptions of active female sexuality and positive female desire or performance in the public discourse, especially regarding the first heterosexual experience. But this study only focuses on the how the thirteen young adult men accommodated and/or resisted the public discourse on male sexuality in the local context. I hope that, in the future, I will be able to examine the first sex of young women.

Chapter 5

Sexual Virility

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have examined the first time the thirteen young heterosexual men who participated in this study engaged in sexual intercourse. For most of them, this was an unsatisfactory and unsuccessful experience. Most of the young adult men expected to accomplish the act and to perform with the skill and competence required by hegemonic masculinity. The ‘task’ was to first begin with an erection, then to achieve penile-vaginal penetration, then finish by climaxing. Second, one had to be active, dominant, skilful and, most importantly, one’s erection had to be as rigid and long lasting as possible. The participants assessed the success of their first sex by these standards.

This chapter will further discuss the phallogentric notion of sexual virility. According to Tiefer (1995, p.141), sexual virility is everywhere a requirement to sustain the male role. It signifies ‘the ability to fulfill the conjugal duty, the ability to procreate, sexual power and potency’. After their first sex, the young adult men still strove to fulfill their notions of sexual virility. This was not merely for personal

satisfaction and for the satisfaction of their partner. They needed to practise sexual intercourse as a body-reflexive practise in order to act 'like a man' and to qualify for the title of a 'man'.

Furthermore, sexual prowess is never permanently earned and must be proven each time. Since the first instance of sexual intercourse, a man must continue to demonstrate sexual virility, as it plays a major role in the construction of male sexuality and masculinity. The self-stories of the participants reveal their concerns, worries, and anxieties over their inability to perform. Two major sexual disorders will be discussed: premature ejaculation and male impotence. These two sexual disorders undermine their sexual virility, which threatens their masculinities. I will argue that the participants have employed various strategies to restore their masculinities from sexual mishaps.

A Phallogentric Notion of Sexual Virility

Masculine sexuality assumes the ability to function with potency. Gagnon and Simon (1974) have argued that during adolescent masturbation, genital sexuality (i.e., erection and orgasm) acquires nonsexual motives, such as a desire for power and achievement, which have already become important during gender role training in pre-adulthood. For example, Ming (23, assistant geologist), has cast doubt on his

sexual virility during adolescent masturbation:

Actually, I have never finished successfully, which was really weird. And I was a bit scared. But I never talked about it with anybody. I really mean that I never succeeded. Until, one day, when I was in the dorm I succeeded!
And finally ...

Are you talking about masturbation?

Yes.

So you meant you had never ejaculated before that day?

Yes.

Ming's doubts about his sexual virility did not go away, even though he finally succeeded in climaxing. He was worried that he would be unable to show his sexual prowess in front of his first sexual partner:

Well, it's really important, especially because it was the beginning stage of having a relationship. But to be honest, both of us did not know much about one another. So I really wanted to know how she would respond. If I couldn't ejaculate after a long time, she might look down on me.... I imagined all of those things, which worried me. I think it's really important; I mean between men and women.

Do you mean that you were worried about being able to perform sexually, or that your sexual performance would not satisfy your partner?

Yes.

You still think this way even now?

Yes, I do.

Ming was far from being the only one among the interviewees who was so concerned about sexual virility. More than half of the thirteen young adult men in this study were very concerned about the durability of their erection during sexual intercourse. Erectile difficulty in relation with aging was another common worry. Tiefer (1995, 143) outlined the beliefs about sex that many men hold in their common concern over sexual competency. For example, the belief that the sexual experiences of most men approximate ecstatic explosiveness (the standard by which individual men compare their own experience, become disappointed and insecure when they believe that they are not doing as well as others) (belief number 3); that it is the responsibility of the man to teach his partner and to lead her in experiencing pleasure and orgasm(s) (belief number 4); that sexual prowess is a serious, task-oriented business, with no place for experimentation, unpredictability, or play (belief number 5); that women prefer intercourse, particularly 'hard-driving' intercourse, to other sexual activities (belief number 6); that all really good and normal sex must end in intercourse (belief number 7); that it is the responsibility of the man to satisfy both his partner and himself (belief number 9); and that sexual prowess is never permanently earned; it must be

continually proven (belief number 10).

I have tried to compare these sexual beliefs with the men's self-stories. For example, Paul (20, unemployed) talked about the responsibility of a man to satisfy his partner (belief number 9), otherwise, 'you have to worry, because your partner might hook up with some other men or with an ex-boyfriend for sexual satisfaction'. He also believed sexual prowess is a serious business (belief number 5); that 'a man is a man when he is hard enough (referring to the penis) when he has to fuck'. Mark (22, financial planner) was very concerned that his sexual endurance qualified as 'normal, otherwise I would feel very upset' (belief number 3). Kelvin (23, customer service officer) worried a great deal about ejaculating too quickly and about not being hard enough to satisfy his partner, because he was afraid of 'being compared with other men by his partner ... and not being considered good enough' (beliefs number 3 & 7). Mike (23, dancer), for his part, believed that 'a man should satisfy his partner with orgasm through intercourse' and that 'premature ejaculation is shameful' (beliefs 4, 5, 6, 7, & 9).

All of these demands use a long-lasting erection and 'not too rapid' ejaculation during sexual intercourse as the 'standard' to measure one's sexual virility. The gender role training in pre-adulthood suggested by Gagnon and Simon (1974) is reminiscent of the moment of engagement of these thirteen young straight men. In

Chapter 3, I argued that pornography dominated local sexual discourses. The participants have consumed pornography both as entertainment and as a learning model. At the same time, they also consumed the image of the erect penis represented in hardcore pornography. As Maddison (2003) has argued, the pornographic penis is transformed into the pornographic phallus as the signifier of patriarchal power and male privilege. The distinction between the penis and phallus comes from psychoanalytic theory,ⁱ and has been widely used by scholars in different disciplines such as cultural, media, and literary studies. Briefly put, according to Lacan (1989) the *penis* is a fleshy physical organ, whereas the *phallus* is a signifier. The phallus signifies patriarchal power, male privilege, and the difference between masculinity and femininity. But the penis (the organ) is not the phallus (the signifier). Indeed, not only do men have a ‘humble’ penis rather than a ‘mighty’ phallus, but as a signifier the phallus also represents a level of power and masculinity that no man could ever really attain.

The local young adult men’s self-stories also reveal how the penis is routinely mistaken for the phallus. Whenever one’s penis is not functioning well during intercourse, this indicates a loss of power and masculinity. With a flaccid penis, a man’s penis is unable to become his phallus. Without the phallus, one is unable to identify with hegemonic masculinity. To qualify to be called a ‘man’, one must

confirm his sexual virility through a rigid and durable erection. However, such 'normalcy' or 'competency' must be proven each time when having sex. It is no surprise, then, that any difficulty in getting the penis to become erect and endure long enough before climax can become a source of profound humiliation and despair.

From Impotence to Erectile Dysfunction

According to Kirby (2004), the term 'impotence' has been used for centuries to refer especially to the partial or complete loss of erectile ability. In most dictionaries, the definition that is given for the word never mentions sex but refers to a general loss of vigor, strength, or power. Thus, impotence describes not only the inability of a penis to become erect, but also connotes that the man who possesses it may be problematic. Tiefer (1995, p. 141) has written about the stigmatizing impact of the label: 'The word *impotence* is used to describe the man who does not get an erection, not just his penis. If a man is told by his doctor that he is impotent, and the man turns to his partner and says he is impotent, they are saying a lot more than that the penis cannot be erected.' Only two out of the thirteen young straight men in this study have experienced impotence. As for the other nine, they are very worried that, in the future, they may experience failed erections. Barbara Marshall (2002) argued that there has been a significant shift in recent years in medical discourses on the 'deflated penis',

from the notion of impotence to the concept of erectile dysfunction.ⁱⁱ She noted that this shift was in part facilitated by the introduction of new treatment therapies, most notably Viagra, but argued that ‘the more revolutionary import was to visibly sever the mechanism of penile erection from any sort of physiological or emotional arousal, or even tactile stimulation, and to reconceptualize it as a primarily physiological event’ (136).

The medicalization of male sexuality can also be seen in Hong Kong society. Before beginning this study, I carried out a preliminary search of all local newspaper accounts from January 1999 to March 2002 on the phenomenon of male impotence and the effect of ‘Viagra’. There were over two thousand articles containing the phrase ‘male impotence’ or ‘Viagra’, for a collective average of at least three to four articles per day. One newspaper article was on the social effect of ‘Viagra’.ⁱⁱⁱ Another in the same year reported the success rate of using ‘Viagra’ among impotent patients in a local hospital.^{iv} In year 2000, a newspaper headline reported the appearance in the local market of fake ‘Viagra’ that is harmful to human body.^v The report implied that there was a huge demand in Hong Kong for a drug that could ‘cure’ male impotence. The other newspaper report in 2000 reported a study being conducted in both Asia and the West to find an effective cure for ‘erectile dysfunction’.^{vi} A newspaper article in 2001 discussed the reluctance of local males to seek medical help

for their impotence problems.^{vii} The article urged local men to make use of a hotline and questionnaires to seek medical advice.

These accounts show that male impotence has gone from being regarded as an individual and biological problem to becoming a social phenomenon, due to the increasing importance of lifelong sexual activity in personal life. What causes local males to put so much effort into seeking a medicine that will ‘cure’ male impotence, and what are the consequences of such a search?

When You Can’t Act Up

Some of the young straight men that participated in this study confessed that that they were already worrying about experiencing erectile difficulties. Paul (20, unemployed) gave his reply to the following question:

Have you ever thought about failing to erect some day?

Yes, I have. That must be very scary, right? I will have to seek assistance. It must be very scary.... I’m really afraid of failing to erect some day. It would be a disaster to have the problem if I were just 30 years old. But maybe I can sustain my fitness, as I still exercise regularly ... it’s not a problem yet....

Paul is obviously believes that he may become impotent, though he tries to think of it as a problem connected to aging. Hence, in a man's early adulthood, failing to erect is not only a physiological problem but also a gendered concern.

Gagnon and Simon (1974, p. 62) wrote that, 'the capacity for erection is an important sign element of masculinity and control'. Therefore, any failure to get one's penis to raise directly means failing to demonstrate the required sexual virility to sustain one's masculinity. In their self-stories, Kelvin (23, customer service officer), the libertine and Yiu (23, merchandiser) revealed that they had experienced impotence. Kelvin, who has had many sexual partners and whose sex life is the most active of all of the interviewees, claimed to be satisfied with his general sexual virility. However, there were 'a few times' when he failed to achieve an erection. He explained that the cause was emotional problems:

If you are talking about not hard enough, I have experienced this. When you cannot concentrate ... all of a sudden you cannot get an erection. This means that it is not hard at all.... Sometimes you would be affected by your emotions ... your job and you life can have a lot of influence on the situation....

How many times did it happen?

A few times maybe. Well ... it was not frequent ... but it would normally happen during my emotional downtimes. Because when I was unhappy with my job, I would find a prostitute.... But I would sometimes be

impotent in front of her. You would feel ... why? Why should it be like that?

That should be impossible. That's it.

Besides emotional problems, Kelvin has also had erectile difficulties due to excessive sex. Kelvin regularly visits sex workers. He has experienced erectile difficulties both in front of sex workers and his girlfriend. However, to him, those were different experiences of impotence. There was one occasion when he could not 'act up' in front of a sex worker, which made him feel very embarrassed. The sex worker still carried on with 'her duty' to provide oral sex until he ejaculated. But Kelvin was very frustrated with that experience because he wanted to vent his discontent about work through sex. Finally, his impotence further deepened his melancholy.

In contrast with failing to get an erection in front of a sex worker, being impotent in front of his girlfriend was a surprisingly positive experience for Kelvin. Although he was still very embarrassed, his girlfriend was sympathetic and comforted him with intimacy. They did not carry on with other sexual practises after he failed to get an erection. Instead his girlfriend tried to communicate with Kelvin and tried to understand what was wrong. Nevertheless, it was still frustrating and embarrassing to experience impotence. He admitted that such frustration and embarrassment arose from the fact that impotence is a stigma associated with declining sexual virility and masculinity. His experiences with impotence have led Kelvin to place an emphasis on

enjoying as much sex as he can while he is still young. He anticipates that, from time to time, he will lose his sexual virility. However, Kelvin has also learned that he should try to pursue a healthier diet to avoid erectile problems. In fact, impotence has not been a serious blow to his self-esteem and masculinity; however, it has cast a shadow on him.

Yiu (23, merchandiser), for his part, has experienced a persistent impotence for two months. He had been ill before becoming impotent. In addition, he had been unemployed at the time:

At first I was a bit confused.... I don't know ... why I couldn't get an erection ... maybe because I was ill before. At first I was ... a bit ... unable to erect... and then absolutely couldn't erect ... without reason. I suspected that the dysfunction was a kind of illness....

What did you think was the reason behind your failure to get an erection?

I don't know ... may be I was too raffish.... I mean my lifestyle, and I was unemployed. I slept and woke up late, and my health was also a concern ... maybe that's why...

Then how long did it last for?

Two months ... I was unable to have sex for two months....

How did you feel about it?

I was really frustrated; I am a man! I was just twenty fucking something but couldn't get it up, how could that be?

Yiu believed that his persistent impotence was due to illness and unemployment. He lost his job because of illness (although he did not say what kind of illness it was) and was without a job for two months. During that period, Yiu also lost his ability to get an erection. However, he did not seek any medical advice, although he suspected the disorder was a kind of 'illness'. His girlfriend was the one who helped him restore his sexual competence:

How was her response?

She was willing to help ... just told me to relax and try again next time ... and comforted me....

Then what would you do if she really wanted to have sex?

I would use my hand....

Then she has never blamed you about that?

No ... she even helped me to restore my competence ... ha-ha ...

Have you taken any medicine?

No. I hoped I would recover by myself.

Was it a serious blow to you?

Yes, and I couldn't accept that, I am a man ... right? A twenty fucking something man shouldn't be like that....

He gave his girlfriend credit for her help and understanding. Impotence was not just an immediate blow to Yiu's self-esteem and masculinity, but also cast a shadow on his sex life afterwards:

Yes ... I am afraid that it will be like those two months again ...

Because of you experiences?

Yes... I have...

And has it affected your self-esteem?

Yes ... it was a big blow....

What is devastating about impotence is that it has both an immediate and long-lasting effect on a man who has experienced it. It is taken for granted that erectile ability is an indication of one's sexual virility. For Kelvin and Yiu, their unexpected and early experiences with impotence mean that they are aware that, for various reasons, even a young man may experience erectile difficulties. In comparison, as seen in their self-stories, premature ejaculation is a more common sexual disorder.

Do I Cum Too Quickly?

'Premature ejaculation', as Tiefer (1995, p.169) has argued, is a 'man-made' disorder. Metz *et al.* (1997) has suggested that ejaculation in response to physical and emotional stimulation is partly learned through practise and partly a result of differing constitutions. Just as men's anatomies and habits differ, their psychological and physiological responses and abilities differ. However, in recent years, ejaculating 'too quickly', which means 'too quickly' for the partner's sexual satisfaction, has come to

be seen as a 'sexual disorder' that can be treated through sex therapy and medication. The conceptualization of premature ejaculation as a physical disorder is a new step in the medicalization of male sexuality and will contribute to the further standardization, perfectionism, mechanization, and dehumanization of sexual relations between couples. I will not go in detail here about how premature ejaculation is being constructed into a male sexual disorder under the framework of the medicalization of male sexuality. I tend to see premature ejaculation as a socially constructed product, which intensifies the local heterosexual man's concern about his sexual virility. The self-stories of the participants in this study suggest how sexual endurance plays a major role in the highly demanding male sexual script.^{viii} From their words, along with erectile ability, sexual competency connotes sexual endurance for a certain period of time during intercourse for the sake of the sexual satisfaction of one's partner. Kelvin (23, customer service officer) even expressed a belief that, in terms of the sexual endurance of men, some kind of standard exists:

Actually, I think all men should be more or less the same (with regard to endurance during sexual intercourse) ...

Each of the young adult male interviewees has his standard of endurance during sexual intercourse. Most said that it was 'around ten minutes'. Therefore, whenever

one is unable to live up to the 'standard', this means that one is experiencing a sexual disorder.

Six out of the men in this study have ejaculated 'too quickly' during sexual intercourse. Of the six of them, Mike (23, dancer) was the most discontented with his sexual endurance. I have noted in Chapter 4 that Mike had a very disappointing first sexual experience. Since then, he has been dissatisfied with his sexual endurance. He feels that he lacks stability and consistency. Mike has been in a sexual relationship with the same partner since the first time he had sexual intercourse up to the time I interviewed him. He ejaculated almost immediately the first time he had sex. This caused him to feel 'defeated'. Since then, he has lived his sexual life under the shadow of his 'first defeat':

Err ... my performance was not stable enough ... that is, sometimes it was too fast ... sometimes not stable. I may have high demands on myself ... so ... I am not too satisfied. I think my short endurance is related to the lack of sex. So it seemed to me that one of us had done something wrong ... and destroyed the experience. I should be responsible for that. Because, normally, from what I have learned from the VCDs, it is a man's duty to satisfy his woman. If the woman cannot have orgasm, then it's not perfect at all. Maybe I am a perfectionist. Both of us should have an orgasm. If I can't do it, I would feel guilty and have to be responsible for it....

Mike considers himself as a perfectionist with regard to his sexual life. He expects himself to perform consistently, focusing especially on his sexual endurance during intercourse. This has put a great deal of pressure on his sexual relationship with his partner. Sexual intercourse has become a matter of hard labour for Mike. He has to do 'well' enough to meet his own standards and to satisfy his partner, and even feels the need to be 'perfect'. Mike would feel deeply disgraced if he ejaculated 'too rapidly' at any time. Being a man who is so concerned about his sexual virility, any shortfall from his self-set standards of perfection would threaten his masculinity. As a result, Mike feel that he has to prove his masculinity through sexual prowess from time to time, and especially that he has to endure 'long enough'.

Mark (22, financial planner) has had a similar experience as Mike, although he has emphasized that 'it is not a persistent problem'. He has experienced both premature and prolonged ejaculations. He defines a prolonged ejaculation as failing to finish the intercourse with his climax. He is frustrated with his deviation from the 'normal standard' of straight male sexuality:

Normally, sexual endurance is what young people are most concerned about. My normal time is around 10 minutes, and I think it shouldn't be too fast or too far from this.

Have you ever been too fast?

Err ... there have been good times and bad times. I have been.... I have

been too long and too short, but just a few times.

How did you feel about it?

Of course I was upset. I think nobody would be happy.... I felt 'sigh' ... actually I was quite upset ... yes ... because I couldn't perform as well as I thought I should....

Unlike Mike, Mark was not concerned about his partner's sexual satisfaction. He did not mind using other means such as oral sex and masturbation to satisfy his partner if intercourse could not be achieved. His partner has never complained or blamed him. Mark's major concern is that the disorder may indicate that he is in danger of becoming impotent. And that would be the end of his sexual life because he could no longer enjoy sex. Thus, Mark was very concerned about whether his sexual dysfunction was physiological or psychological:

It's mainly pressure. Such as, if you performed poorly, then there would be pressure; you would feel as if you are going to perform badly again. It's mainly mental, not physical.

Which problem frustrates you the most?

The physical problem is much more serious ... it's much scarier. I can't imagine having to retire from sex at just 40 years old. It would really be a disaster. Why do you have to make so much money if you cannot fuck again?

Mark emphasized that sexual dysfunction is an issue that a man should not overlook at any age. Sexual virility is as important as any qualification (such as physical strength, academic achievements, career, and family) he is required to have according to the standards of hegemonic masculinity. Any failure would cause him to doubt his masculinity:

Possibly you would perform badly this time, then you would be afraid that it would get worse next time. You are constantly under immense pressure. Unfortunately, if you keep performing badly several times, you will begin to doubt yourself. It's really frustrating and you would feel that you are having a lot of bad luck.

I have shown the complex interplay between sexual virility and masculinity. Through the self-stories of Kelvin (23, customer service officer), Yiu (23, merchandiser), Mike (23, dancer), and Mark (22, financial planner), I have proven that anything that the participants considered that they had done wrong with regard to penile erection and endurance was an immediate blow to their masculinity. These real cases of sexual disorder disclose the negative side of heterosexual intercourse as a bodily reflexive practise. Requiring themselves to perform according to the perceived standards of hegemonic masculinity, the interviewees' physical capacities proved to fall short. It is this that caused these four straight men such grief and sorrow. The adverse process of

sexual dysfunction has exposed the disciplinary and controlling nature of hegemonic masculinity.

Restoring/Negotiating Masculinities

I have identified at least three kinds of strategies employed by the participants to restore their masculinities from the humiliation of sexual dysfunction. First, most of them aimed to satisfy their partner. Second, two out of the thirteen straight men only required themselves to attain a self-set standard of sexual virility. Of course, the standard was also one that, in their conception, is required by hegemonic masculinity. Finally, three others did not construct their masculinities around sexual virility, considering it a relatively insignificant matter. These strategies signify their agencies for coping with the hegemonic notion of straight male sexuality.

Satisfying One's Partner

Brian (24, sales manager), Ming (23, assistant geologist), Paul (20, unemployed), Kelvin (23, customer service officer), Jamie (25, ICAC investigator), and Yiu (23, merchandiser) told self-stories about treating sexual virility seriously. Sexual virility implies erectile ability and endurance. One way to achieve this is to gain the approval of one's partner. During his first experience with sexual intercourse, Ming was

worried about his partner's responses. He understood that, as an amateur, he might not be able to perform properly. Fortunately, he did not disappoint his partner. This bolstered his self-esteem and made him feel that he had proven his masculinity.

Furthermore, Ming has mastered the techniques to prevent premature ejaculation. This has helped him to feel less anxious about failing to satisfy his partner. Ming's case shows how the standard of sexual virility is negotiable between couples. Yiu (23, merchandiser) is another example of someone who managed his problems with sexual virility within the relationship. Yiu experienced impotence but regained his ability to get an erection due to his partner's patience and comfort.

Those who have had more than one sexual partner at the same time, for example, Brian (24, sales manager), Paul (20, unemployed), and Kelvin (23, customer service officer), have even more space to restore their masculinities. The three of them regularly visit local or mainland sex workers. If they failed to perform well in front of their girlfriends, they will try learning from visiting sex workers how to upgrade their skills. Paul (20, unemployed) sometimes treats the sex workers as his 'sex tutors':

Actually I see visiting prostitutes as a way of getting practise. I mean, they can teach me different experiences. Actually, every one of them has her own experiences; you can learn from them and then use the skills in the love relationship. I feel like it does help me to have sex with my girlfriend.... They show me many different positions, and sometimes they

are very dominant and you are just like a small student and she's the teacher. She leads you in learning different positions and teaches you how to endure, and then when to ejaculate.

Paul's 'sex learning' helps him to regain his self-confidence. By employing the skills he has learned, he can perform even better when having sex with his girlfriend. As a result, his sense of masculinity is restored.

Satisfying Oneself

Mark (22, financial planner) and Mike (23, dancer) have both experienced premature ejaculation. They have suffered from the inability to perform according to their expectations of sexual virility. Mark tends to ignore his partner's pleasure and satisfaction and to focus only on his own performance:

Err ... according to my observations, I she was fine. Even though I sometimes don't perform well enough, she seems fine. Well ... I don't know. Maybe women are more concerned about love than sex. But boys are very concerned about this ... I mean about sex.

Mark has assumed that if he is sexually gratified, his partner is, too. He has also indicated that it is unnecessary for he and his partner to talk about sex. As a result, to

restore his masculinity, he only has to perform well enough from time to time to his own standard. Of course, his standard conforms to the standard required by hegemonic masculinity.

Mike (23, dancer) has always emphasized the importance of satisfying his partner. This is because of what he has learned from sex education videos that he watched in the moment of engagement. He indicated several times that the discourses in the videos that a man should be responsible for satisfying one's partner is his sexual belief. Paradoxically, he seems to only be mouthing words. The reality is that there is lack of communication between him and partner. His self-story has shown that his major concern is the inconsistency of his sexual endurance. He explained that 'she does not feel comfortable about talking'. But his partner was able to show understanding when he performed badly. I find it strange that a woman could be so sympathetic towards her boyfriend's grief and sorrow, yet would feel uncomfortable talking about her own sexual pleasure. This might indicate a striking imbalance in the power relationship between the two genders: the woman feels that it is most important to cater to the man's sexual needs, while she is ready to 'sacrifice' her own.

To restore his masculinity, Mike has tried to endure as long as he can every time he has sex:

Normally we would have sex for a few times continuously as we don't always meet regularly. The first time would be easier, and the second time could be longer (time), and the third time would make me dead. Normally, the first time I would be more concerned about my performance, and the second time I would feel under less pressure. And I would think of some methods to prevent premature ejaculation, such as relaxing....

Maybe Mike really did want to satisfy his partner sexually. But without understanding his partner's desires, expectations, inner feelings, and concerns, how would he be able to satisfy her? Simply by holding back on ejaculating for as long as he can?

Without acknowledging the importance of observing his partner's response and communicating with her about her needs, it is difficult to see how Mike can satisfy his partner. He can only satisfy himself by delaying his ejaculation. Maybe he would be delighted to break his record for sexual endurance each time.

Happy Together?

Although I have discussed in detail the ways in which local young straight men construct gender and sexual identity around sexual virility, a few of the participants did not conform to the norm. Sam (23, salesman), Elvis (25, eye-doctor), and Vince (23, marketing executive) shared the view that sexual virility merely means being able to sustain an erection and perform sexual intercourse. It seems that, for them, sexual

competence does not have too much bearing in the construction of their masculinity. Although they still need sex very much, sexual virility does not connote that if they are masculine enough. They have resisted the normative notion of masculinity in relation to sexual virility. They have their own criterion to secure masculinity instead of sexual virility as follows.

For example, Sam is a 23-year-old salesman working in a local sportswear chain store. His everyday working hours are quite long. His job has led him to treat sex as a leisure activity. Nevertheless, he still regards a sexual life as indispensable. However, he has to control his sexual desire to preserve enough stamina for work. For him, having sex is way of relaxing. Given the pressure he faces at work, he no longer cares about his sexual performance:

I don't care about how long I can endure ... it doesn't really matter. If you want to come, then you just have to ... there's no way to prolong it. And I think it's not good for me. It's uncomfortable to prolong my ejaculation.

In comparison, Elvis, a 25-year-old ophthalmologist working in a public hospital, defines sexual virility as a totally biological function, perhaps because of his professional knowledge. He is only concerned about his erectile ability for the sake of being able to perform sexual intercourse. He regards having sex as a mechanical and

taken-for-granted activity that he performs with his girlfriend. Instead of sexual virility, he is concerned about having different sexual experiences with different kinds of women. However, so far, according to his self-story, he has only had one sexual relationship, with his current girlfriend. Like Sam, Elvis did not emphasize sexuality in constructing his masculinity. His masculinity is mainly constructed around his career and status.

I will finish my discussion with Vince (23, marketing executive). Vince has a different view than the others about sexual virility and disorders. He has never cast any doubt on his sexual virility. And he has never experienced any sexual disorder. He does not care if sexual dysfunction is a physical or psychological problem. He is only concerned about whether or not he really wants to have sex:

I have had no such experience. If there were problem, it would mean that I didn't want to do it....

You have never experienced any sexual disorders? Not even once?

No. If you want to have sex, then you'll be able to get hard. There shouldn't be any problem.

Vince is a keen admirer of men who can please their women, but not through sexual prowess. Vince has stated that he would try his 'best' every time when having sex. But he has not explained what he means by 'the best'. Men like Vince treat heterosexual intercourse as mere physical practise. They are not really referring to

how they have performed. Sexual virility is not a major constitutive element of their masculinities. So, the question remains, what alternative discourse have they taken up to resist the conventional one of sexual competence required by hegemonic masculinity? I will look for the answer in the next chapter by examining issues surrounding the heterosexual relationships of the thirteen young straight men.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the phallogentric notion of sexual virility was discussed. Since the first time they had sexual intercourse, most of the thirteen local young straight men have been striving to fulfill the notions of sexual virility required by hegemonic masculinity. Hence, sexual intercourse is a body-reflexive practise for them to act 'like a man' and to qualify for the title of 'a man'. The hegemonic notion of sexual virility is simply phallic. Since the moment of engagement, the young adult men have identified with the 'pornographic phallus'.

Furthermore, sexual prowess is never permanently earned and must be proven each time. I have suggested that two major sexual disorders, namely premature ejaculation and male impotence, signify their 'defeat' when they failed to perform. This proves that local straight male sexuality is highly medicalized. In the last chapter, I will further argue that the medicalization of male sexuality is one of the implications of this study.

Moreover, I have examined the various strategies they employed to restore their masculinities from their perceived shortcomings with regard to sex and what they have done to cope with the hegemonic notion of sexual virility. In the next chapter, I will look at their sexual relationships and the role this played in their becoming straight men.

Notes:

ⁱ It specifically comes from the psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan, whose work has been highly controversial, particularly among feminists. See Grosz (1990).

ⁱⁱ The medical discourse defines 'Erectile Dysfunction' as 'a sexual dysfunction characterized by the inability to have or maintain an erection despite adequate stimulation and interest. Often referred to commonly as impotence' (Peate, 2003).

ⁱⁱⁱ See *Sing Tao Daily* 6-3-1999, D03, "The New definition of 'Viagra'."

^{iv} See *Hong Kong Daily News* 1-9-1999, A14.

^v See *Apple Daily* 27-3-2000, A1.

^{vi} See *Sun Daily* 8-9-2000, "Sun News".

^{vii} See *Sun Daily* 2-8-2001, D03 "Daily Special".

^{viii} The concept of *Sexual Scripts* was first introduced by William Simon and John Gagnon to describe sexual behaviour as governed by a set of three sexual scripts: cultural scripts, sexual scripts, and intrapsychic scripts. Examining early socialization is an important factor in studies of any birth cohort, particularly when looking at sexuality and aging. Hence, all of the self-stories told by the local straight men in his study show a local version of cultural guidelines that prescribe appropriate forms of sexual behaviour and ways of managing sexual encounters. See Simon (1996).

Chapter 6

Sexual Relationships

Introduction

In the last chapter, I have shown that the local straight men that were my interviewees required themselves to demonstrate sexual virility as a way takeoff taking up hegemonic masculinity. However, one's sexual virility needs to be proven from time to time. This means that the sexual partner's responses, needs, gratifications, satisfactions, and so forth, are always involved. I have suggested that most of the thirteen young adult men in this study are concerned about satisfying their partner. They believe that by demonstrating sexual virility, especially sexual endurance, a man can provide sexual satisfaction to his partner.

In fact, as I am going to argue in this chapter, sexual competence alone will not qualify one for the title of a 'man'. Instead of sexual virility, a man should be able to communicate with, show respect, to, negotiate with, and be sympathetic to his partner within a sexual relationship. Moreover, these attributes must be proven to the partner each time. I will argue that local hegemonic masculinity requires a man to behave as a 'good man' within a heterosexual relationship grounded on monogamous romantic

love.

This ideology is governed by discourses on the local sex hierarchy and romantic love. However, this dominant notion of sexual relationship cannot totally discipline and control the behaviour of local straight men. Some of them employed various strategies to compensate for the discontent they felt within such relationships.

An Ideal Sexual Relationship: Monogamy and Romantic love

Monogamous romantic love is the dominant form of heterosexual relationship that the young adult men in this study were pursuing. All of them regarded it as the ideal type of relationship for couples. They clearly defined monogamy as a superior form of relationship between couples. For example, Ming (23, assistant geologist) clearly stated that 'sex should be based on love, romantic love', and Elvis (25, ophthalmologist) also indicated that 'it is obviously more wonderful to have sex with a girl if you like (love) her very much'.

The contemporary notion of 'romantic love' is very different from traditional notions of love in both Anglo-American and Hong Kong society. Romantic love is a recent phenomenon. For example, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the United States began to change from an agrarian-based economy into an industrial one, and love began to be idealized as the asexual love that exists between mother and

child. This type of love has been called the family duty blueprint of love. According to Cancian (1987), in the 1920s in America, there emerged the ‘companionship blueprint’, which fuses sex, love, and marriage, but remained similar to the family duty blueprint in its reliance on the wife as the person who is primarily responsible for maintaining family relationships and its feminized conceptualization of love.

These two blueprints were challenged in the 1960s by the independent blueprint. Here, the concept of love has the goal of breaking away from the unequal relationships of companionate love by having each individual establish his or her separate life, which might be shared with another if it does not interfere with his or her independence. The interdependent blueprint appeared at the same time. In this type of love relationship, individuals are in control of their own lives and develop their own interests and goals, but they view their ability to develop themselves as individuals as a product of their relationship.

The American version’s transformation of love suggests that the emergence and spread of romantic love is a historical and contingent production within a specific geographical and cultural context. Hong Kong society has experienced a similar transformation of the notion of love in part because of the political and economic developments that have taken place in the territory when it was a British colony.

The emergence of the notion of romantic love in Hong Kong can be traced

historically to the rise of nuclear families. Husbands and wives increasingly came to regard their relationship as a form of collaboration in a joint emotional enterprise. Home became a distinct environment set off from work, and a place where individuals could expect to receive emotional support. People were more individualized, and romantic love (though with some degree of passionate love,ⁱ that is, love set apart from everyday routine with higher level of emotional involvement) introduced the idea of a narrative into an individual's life. Romantic love was regarded as a love of freedom. Unlike passionate love, which encouraged a break with routine and duty, ideals of romantic love inserted themselves directly into the emergent ties between freedom and self-realization. It encouraged sublime love rather than pure sexuality, separated quite sharply from the sexual/erotic compulsions of passionate love. Communication was considered to be a positive feature in a love relationship, loving someone was said to be the consequence of an intuitive grasp of the qualities of the other, and love was regarded as a process of being attracted to someone who can make one's life 'complete'.

Anthony Giddens has summarized the great impact of the rise of romantic love on the members of a modern society:

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‘Romantic love presumes some degree of self-interrogation. How do I feel about the other? How does the other feel about me? Are our feelings ‘profound’ enough to support a long-term involvement? Unlike *amour passion*, which uproots erratically, romantic love detaches individuals from wider social circumstances in a different way. It provides for a long-term life trajectory, oriented to an anticipated yet malleable future; and it creates a ‘shared history’ that helps separate out the marital relationships from other aspects of family organization and give it a special primacy ... romantic love raised the question of intimacy. It is incompatible with lust, and with earthy sexuality, not so much because the loved one is idealized – although this is part of the story – but because it presumes a psychic communication, a meeting of souls which is reparative in character.’ (Giddens, 1992: 44-5)

The rise of romantic love is closely related to the rise of individualization in modern society. The position of a man and woman has become more equal, more conscious, and less legitimate due to the relationship between changes in the home and workplace. Thus, a set of needs has arisen. People encounter a wide range of choices, without clear instructions for making choices. The meaning of life seems to be in flux, and therefore families have become the place where people can get emotional support. For individuals, the major component of families is love and marriage, which that provide romantic affairs and care (Beck, 1995).

As a result, this has led to a dilemma involving gender relation in heterosexual

relationships. As Beck (1992:104-5) has argued, ‘on the one hand, men and women are *released* from traditional forms and ascribed roles in the search for a “life of their own”’. On the other hand, in the prevailing diluted social relationships, people are *driven* into bonding in the search for happiness in a partnership.’ Nevertheless, we observed that the ‘historically created mixture of new consciousness and old conditions is explosive in a double sense. Through more equal educational opportunities and an increased awareness of their position, young women have built up expectations of more equality and partnership in their professional and family lives while encountering *contrary* developments in the labour market and in male behaviour. Conversely, men have practised a *rhetoric of equality*, without matching their words with deeds. On both sides the ice of illusion has grown thin; with the equalization of the prerequisites (in education and the law) the positions of men and women have become more unequal, more conscious, and less legitimated’. As I will discuss in the next section, this ‘rhetoric of equality’ has become part of local hegemonic masculinity. Through the self-stories, I will suggest that the image of the ‘good man’ rather than the ‘womanizer’ is the notion of masculinity that is required of straight men in front of their girlfriends.

Being/Playing the Good Man

Ulrich Beck's concern that 'men have practised a *rhetoric of equality*, without matching their words with deeds' (1992:105) describes perfectly the embarrassing position of heterosexual men playing with romantic love. Kelvin (23, customer service officer), Yiu (23, merchandiser), and Mike (23, dancer) have suggested the importance of respect in a sexual relationship. They emphasized that their partners had the possibility of rejecting their request to perform certain sexual practises such as oral sex and different positions for sexual intercourse. They defined such respect as *equality*. However, such equality is not based on communications and sharing between a couple. The three men believed if they relinquished their domination over their girlfriends, the relationship would be a more equal one'

These young adult men still see the male as the active initiator and the female as the submissive receiver in a heterosexual relationship. Their sexual relationships are conducted accordingly. And they believe that they have made the effort to achieve so-called equality.

Even though they have tried to discuss sexual matters with their partners, the focus was on their performance rather than on inner feelings. For example, Ming (23, assistant geologist) and Kelvin (23, customer service officer) tried to talk if they thought that their partner considered their sexual performance inadequate. Ming's

concern was about how to improve his sexual performance, and he asked his partner to coordinate her movements with his. He once discussed his premature ejaculation with his partner:

We would talk immediately, just said how we felt. But it wouldn't be discussed again during dinner.

So you were referring to premature ejaculation?

Yes I was. I thought I had tried to improve in such ways as how to control speed, my coordination and myself.

I have mentioned that, since the moment of engagement, the interviewees did not seem able to get in touch with their feelings on sexual matters. Kelvin's self-story provides an example of this. When his partner did not respond passionately, he would question his sexual performance. But he finds it difficult to disclose his anxieties due to his male pride:

But if she didn't respond well at all ... you would start to think about many things. Maybe she just didn't want to have sex? Or did she just want me to pay more attention to her. Or was just my own problem? Was there anything I had done badly? So there would be many problems you could think of. But you might not be able to discuss them with her sincerely immediately after sex. I might tell her some days later. Actually, I would

compare our feelings ... and want to know how she had felt...

In comparison, most of the young straight men, including Brain (24, sales manager), Sam (23, salesman), Mark (22, financial planner), Elvis (25, ophthalmologist), and Vince (23, sales executive) have made it clear that they think talking about sex with one's partner is unnecessary.

Vince was the most strongly opposed to talking with her partner about matters relating to sex. He defines having sex as only a bodily matter. He believes in showing 'respect' to his partner, i.e., in not forcing her to do anything she does not want to. So, any 'request' would mean forcing his partner to satisfy his needs. He has further simplified the making of any sexual requests as inappropriate and disrespectful of one's partner:

I wouldn't say anything. I think nothing (about sex) has to be discussed.

Discussions both before and after sex are unnecessary for you?

Yes, I have never discussed about such things. Because you just have to work it out. That is, if she wants it then she would take action, and so would I. You don't have to tell – it is a matter of body language; I would feel like shit if had to talk about it.

So you mean words would break the mood?

Yes, I think so. If you have to ask or tell ... that means that something is

wrong ... it would be just like a request. But having sex is not a request but an interaction. If you try to talk, that means you feel like she doesn't want to have sex. But every time I ... we ... if I have any demands ... she would ... I mean if she doesn't want it I wouldn't force her. And I don't have any fetishes at all. So I just need basic things ... and just need her to cooperate.

Being a 'good man' means respecting one's partner. However, the concept of 'respect' is obscure. Effort is required from both sides; however, the rigid gender hierarchy in a heterosexual relationship tends to give rise to discontent in either the male or female. Kelvin had the experience of having his sexual request rejected because there was little room for communication in a heterosexual relationship:

Actually not everyone could talk. For example I have had some girlfriends ... for example, I didn't want to wear condom ... I wanted her to give me a blowjob. She would say yes in order to please me. Then she would really do so. But sometimes I would feel.... Actually they would try to discuss how they felt about coping with my request, or they would just try to cope with me. Of course, I felt very happy sexually. But, actually, I was not fully satisfied at all. Because I thought, if you were not enjoying the process.... So I always thought that your purpose is very important. If you were not at ease in coping with me, I would not feel at ease.

According to your experiences, was it true that they seldom rejected your sexual requests?

Yes, you can say so. This was because if they were girlfriends they would try to cooperate. But I have had experiences of her compromising with my request. But once we quarreled, and she brought out things about sex to argue with me. Then, I knew immediately she actually hadn't wanted to compromise with me....

Democracy, egalitarianism, and reciprocity are the principles governing contemporary heterosexual relationships. Giddens (1992) suggested that this has transformed the meaning of intimacy in late modern society. Through these principles, we are able to pursue a new form of relationship, the pure relationship.

Furthermore, a 'good man' is one who behaves according to the sex hierarchy suggested by Rubin (1993), which is embedded in the local culture. This means that, to 'respect' their partners, local straight men have to sacrifice sexual fantasies outside the charmed circle. This seems to be the solution in being a 'good man' in both senses, i.e., treating women as equals.

However, as I am going to argue in the next section, local young straight men are governed by the discourses of sex hierarchy and pure relationships to act like 'good men'. In addition to demonstrating sexual virility, as a 'good man' they are required to take up hegemonic masculinity. But the question that remains is, if a man can fulfill all of these requirements to be a 'sex warrior' and 'good man', can he have an enjoyable

sex life?

Reciprocal Sex

Giddens (1992) suggested the concept of 'pure relationship' to describe a relationship between a couple that is based solely on mutual appreciation of each other's qualities, instead of involving familial and moral obligations as in past generations. The corollary is a shift towards intimacy and equality.

Among the thirteen young straight men who participated in this study, only one man was able to achieve a 'pure relationship'. Of all of the interviewees, Yiu (23) had the most satisfactory and relaxed sex life. What he was most concerned about was not how competently he could perform sexually, but his partner's sexual satisfaction:

Are you much concerned about your sexual endurance?

Not really. I am more concerned about whether or not I am satisfying her. If it takes just one minute and she feels fine, and I feel fine too, there would be no problem at all.

So does that mean mutual satisfaction is very important to your sex life?

Yes, it is very important. It's no point in enduring for a long time. It's meaningless to endure for an hour if she's not satisfied. My performance should be based on her needs...

So you mean being able to please a woman is the most important consideration?

Yes. I am most concerned about her feelings in our relationship.

Mutual sexual satisfaction is easier to talk about than to achieve. It requires a man to have the ability to communicate and understand his partner's needs and pleasures. Yiu has shown that he has put much effort into listening to his partner's feelings:

For example, are you concerned about whether she has an orgasm?

Yes, I am concerned about that. After sex, I would ask if she has had an orgasm. I prefer talking about it causally ... just as if I were kidding because I like joking. Sometimes, I just like joking around about my performance.

But you still wanted to talk seriously through joking?

Fifty-fifty ... sometimes I tried indirectly to ask her about her feelings. I think true feelings can be discussed in such a way....

This explains why Yiu did not feel too much pressure coping with hegemonic masculinity, even though he had experienced impotency for a period of time. However, most of the local young straight men were not as concerned as Yiu about their partner's feelings, needs, and pleasures. He sees sexual competence in a less masculine sense; rather, his was the discourse of reciprocity.

Braun *et al.* (2003) argued that notions of reciprocity are not necessarily as liberating as they might at first seem, as they do not occur in a social or sexual vacuum.

In conjunction with other dominant sexual meanings, a discourse of reciprocity produces entitlements and obligations that can render 'choice' in a heterosexual relationship problematic, particularly for women.

This criticism of the discourse of reciprocity can be recognized in some of the self-stories. For example, Paul (20, unemployed) was very worried that he was not providing his girlfriend with reciprocal sexual pleasure. His anxiety indicates what Giddens (1992) has suggested – that relationships are becoming increasingly unstable because they are continuously subject to re-evaluation. Moreover, because the individuals in the relationships are engaged in a 'project of the self', which involves personal growth, change, and assessment, it is more likely that their needs and desires will change and become incompatible, or at least will be subjected to renegotiation:

But if you are talking about having sex with a girl in a relationship ... a man would worry about whether the girl is satisfied or not. But most of the girls prefer to keep things to themselves, even though they might be very demanding. But if you can't provide enough satisfaction, she may turn to other men, or even back to her ex, assuming that her ex is very competent sexually and is able to satisfy her.

In fact, this means that one's masculinity can never be made secure. For example, Mike (23, dancer), who believed that he did not perform well the first time he had

sexual intercourse and has lived under the shadow of that ever since, always emphasizes that he has a responsibility to bring his girlfriend to orgasm:

I learned from the VCDs (sex education videos) that a couple should be able to satisfy each other. This means if you are a man but are unable to bring your partner to orgasm, then the act would not be completed. Maybe I am a perfectionist. I want both of us to have orgasm each time. If not, I would feel guilty....

He was only one among many other local straight men who felt sexually vulnerable, including Brain (23, sales manager), Sam (23, salesman), Mark (22, financial planner), and Jaime (25, ICAC investigator). They all regarded bringing their partner to orgasm as the ultimate goal in a sexual relationship. Carole Vance has expressed her doubts about 'egalitarian and reciprocal sexual standards' (1984:12):

Men's concern about their partners' experiences of orgasm may signify the development of more egalitarian and reciprocal sexual standards. On the other hand, the anxious question, 'Did you come' may demarcate a new area of woman's behaviour men are expected to master and control – female orgasm.

I agree with Carole Vance's concern that egalitarianism and reciprocity may generate

another kind of control over female sexuality. In their article '*Whose Orgasm is this anyway?*' Duncombe and Marsden (1996) suggested that it is the deep contradiction of searching for *self*-fulfillment through *another* person that frustrates most straight men. I am also worrying without unpacking the phallocentrism dominating straight male sexuality; the men would be never able to perform according to the norms. They have performed a kind of 'sex work'ⁱⁱ that corresponds to 'emotion work' (Hochschild, 1983). The 'sex work' helps bring their sexual feelings closer to how they suspect sex 'ought to be' experienced. Even if, for once, they are satisfied with their performance, their worries and anxieties will only return again and again.

Sex Hierarchy

Hegemonic masculinity also requires a straight man to behave in accordance with the *sex hierarchy*. Rubin (1993) has suggested the existence of a 'hierarchy' of sexuality, as perpetuated by psychiatry and popular culture, which promotes an 'inner circle' of 'good', 'normal', and 'natural' sexuality (heterosexual, monogamous, vanilla sex) over the 'outer limits': 'bad', 'abnormal' sex (homosexual, promiscuous, sadomasochistic sex). Rubin's original aim was to criticize the judging of sexual acts according to some arbitrary line between good and bad. She also proposed taking into consideration the level of mutual consideration, coercion, and pleasure that both partners provide (refer to

Appendix III for a diagram of Rubin's sex hierarchy).

Most of the local straight men also required themselves to practise only on the *good* side of the sex hierarchy. On the one hand, they emphasized the importance of practicing *good sex*; on the other hand, they continued to problematize and demonize 'outer limit' sexualities (e.g., S/M, non-monogamy and bisexuality). For example, Ming (23, assistant geologist) has related having vanilla sexⁱⁱⁱ to the construction of his masculinity. After his first experience with sexual intercourse, he told himself to behave 'like a man'. He told himself to practise 'good', 'normal', and 'natural' sex. To maintain his sexual values, he also tried to deny 'outer limit' sexual practises such as violence and BDSM:

After the first sex, I thought I had become more masculine.

Can you indicate what kind of sexual practises you can accept and which you cannot accept?

Well ... it should be one on one ... err ... I can't accept sex toys and kinky sex. It should be very normal. I can't accept a relationship like one between a trainer and a beast.

How about BDSM?

No, I can't accept BDSM. Even being mildly violent is also unacceptable. The whole thing should be very romantic and gentle. And I have to make sure the place is not accessible by anybody.

Vince (23, marketing executive), like Ming, also defined 'outer limit' sexual practises as unnecessary, such as what he called 'pure sex'. 'Pure sex', according to him, means having sex without love between the participants. His argument is based on his experience with a one-night stand:

I didn't have hard feelings at all. I just thought that both of us wanted to have it. Actually I didn't like it ... I mean ... I regretted it. I don't like one-night stands at all....

Why?

Because it made me think that I am a man who just needs sex....

You thought that was bad sex?

Yes, it is. But I have had it and tried it ... ha-ha.... Of course I didn't think so at that moment, but it was bad. I don't like it at all ... it was pure sex.

To construct their identities, Ming and Vince both aimed to practise 'good sex' according to the sex hierarchy. This meant that they were also contributing to making such codes of behaviour the dominant ideology of straight male sexuality'. Hence, the disciplinary and regulatory nature of hegemonic masculinity was again making itself felt.

Yiu (23, merchandiser), the man who was fully satisfied with his sexual life, has further distinguished between 'good sex' and 'bad sex':

So you are talking about the differences between good sex and bad sex?

Yes I am. In my book, bad sex is just for sexual satisfaction. It's very simple and conceptually very clear.

How about the one-night stand?

Of course that's bad! That is because its only purpose is sexual satisfaction.

And how about visiting prostitutes?

It is definitely bad!

But you have thought about trying bad sex, haven't you?

Yes I have! Men are like that ... ha-ha-ha... Sometimes rationality cannot restrain your sexuality. It's as simple as that.

Do you think that your sexual life would be more complete if you had both good and bad sex?

I don't think so! Just good sex is enough for me.

All of the young straight men that participated in this study find no difficulty in acknowledging the importance of the sex hierarchy as the standard of behaviour for a socially acceptable straight man. They were willing to take up hegemonic masculinity by behaving according to the sex hierarchy, at least on the surface. They have disciplined themselves to be the 'good man' required by society, their families, and their girlfriends. They have done a good job in front of the world. Even Kelvin (23, customer service officer), the libertine, the playboy, who had started his sexual adventures at a young age, surprisingly declared that he is now pursuing a more

'steady' and 'secure' love and sexual relationship. Although he has been a typical playboy throughout his life, Kelvin has finally come to prefer a more ordinary and simple sexual life. As he has argued in his self-story, there is no eternal winner in the process of womanizing. In the end, he felt only emptiness in his life. It was for this reason that he decided to pursue a successful monogamous relationship. He finally came to privilege being a 'good man' over a being 'playboy':

Because if you have tried to have more than one woman at the same time, you would feel that ... you couldn't realize what you were doing... you would feel very distressed. Actually, why do I need to do that? Maybe in the end you are aware that was only about sexual pleasure. You would then realize that such lifestyle just leaves you feeling empty. You start thinking about concentrating and maximizing your satisfaction with just one person. This would also push you to have more communication with her. You suddenly find that you are searching for solidity rather than excitement. You gradually come to believe that a man should pursue comfort rather than excitement.

Kelvin's path to conforming to the hegemonic notion of the 'good man' was a rocky one compared with most of the other participants. Most took the 'good man' as their starting point. But then, as well be seen below, some of them began feeling discontented with their conventional sexual lives, and began to employ strategies to

deal with this discontent.

From Good to Bad: Bad Sex as Compensation for Good Sex

Mike (23) is a dancer/dancing teacher who meets many women in performances and dancing courses. He confessed that he has imagined having various sexual affairs with different kinds of women. He has tried to play the 'good man', however. People around him believe that he is a 'good boyfriend' who loves his girlfriend very much. In fact, women who admire his perfect dancer's body are always approaching Mike. He would welcome a promiscuous sexual life. But for practical reasons, he has to suppress his fantasies. One of his biggest concerns is to maintain his reputation for the sake of his dancing career. Being a womanizer would ruin his reputation and damage his career.

As for the others, five out of the thirteen young straight men in this study had sought out 'bad sex', including visiting sex workers, having one-night stands^{iv} and having multiple sexual partners.

In Chapter 5, I mentioned that Paul (20, unemployed) and Kelvin (23, customer service officer) frequently visit sex workers. Paul treats this as a learning process – as a way of upgrading his sex skills to enhance his sexual performance. Kelvin, for his part, has used it as a way of relaxing when he is upset with his work. Sam, (23) the salesman, treats visiting sex workers as a hobby. Although he has a steady girlfriend, he would

still visit sex workers during his days off. However, he is very careful not to let anyone discover his secret hobby. He will switch off his mobile phone when he is receiving services from a sex worker.

Jamie (25, investigator) became sexually active at a relatively older age. He disclosed in his self-story that he has two sex partners. One of them is his girlfriend, with whom he is having a romantic love relationship. He called the other girl his 'lover'. A 'lover' is a sexual partner outside of his monogamous romantic love relationship. He is well aware of his role in the two different relationships. Within the monogamous romantic love relationship, he is the 'good man'. He cares about his girlfriend's inner feelings and everyday life. He is willing to perform to bring her to orgasm. He feels responsible for pleasing her as a 'good man'. In comparison, with his 'lover', he is a receiver. He does not feel any responsibility to satisfy his 'lover', but rather enjoys the satisfaction she provides to him. Not being bound by romantic love, he has no commitments. It seems that the two relationships complement each other. However, Jamie still prioritizes the monogamous romantic love relationship as the basis of his intimate life. The 'lover' plays the compensatory role to give him the sexual satisfaction that is lacking in his monogamous romantic love relationship. Thus, deep down, he is still the 'good man'. He would not sacrifice his girlfriend for his 'lover'.

These strategies show that no matter how rigid the sex hierarchy is there is always

space to resist the norms, even if in a minor way. The local straight male participants still had to appear to be 'good men' in public. But in private they can search out bad sex as compensation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I examined the local notion of a heterosexual monogamous romantic love relationship through the straight men's self-stories. The privileged position of monogamous romantic love has disciplined the construction of their gender and sexual identities. I continued last chapter's discussion on sexual virility to examine how the local straight men qualified for the title of 'man' within a relationship. One should be able to communicate, to respect, to negotiate, and to be sympathetic within a sexual relationship. These skills and attributes are required by the local hegemonic masculinity. This constitutes the image of the 'good man' that a local straight man has to live up to in order to be accepted by society.

The local discourses of monogamous romantic love and the sex hierarchy govern this ideology. Monogamous romantic love emphasizes democracy, egalitarianism, and reciprocity. The self-stories show that it is easy to talk about these principles but difficult to implement them. Although the participants have tried to fulfill these requirements, their sexual relationships are under great pressure. As a consequence,

both men and women are suffering.

The sex hierarchy requires that the men behave strictly according to the code of 'good sex' and 'bad sex'. This means a man has to sacrifice some of his sexual fantasies to conform to the image of the 'good man' that is positioned in the charmed circle. I have argued that all of the thirteen young heterosexual men in this study have done a good job of this, at least on the surface. This shows that they identify with hegemonic masculinity. Their body-reflex practise can be regarded as an ideological construction as well.

Nevertheless, in private, they have resisted the hegemonic notion of monogamous romantic love. They have employed various strategies to pursue sexual pleasures that are prohibited in the sex hierarchy. For example, they visit sex workers and have multiple sex partners. This proves the complex interplay between power and resistance suggested by Foucault (1978). But, in general, such resistance takes place on a micro and private level. These straight men are still 'good men' in front of the public due to the discipline and regulation of hegemonic masculinity.

Notes:

ⁱ Passionate love also refers to infatuation, obsessive love, or love sickness. It is the type of love that is focused on physical attraction, feelings of ecstasy, and passion, romance, and exclusivity. Only recently in history has romantic love become the preferred form of love leading to a long-term relationship. See Sternberg (1988).

ⁱⁱ The term 'sex work' has been used to refer to prostitution. But some feminists have denied the distinction by asserting that marital sex is essentially a form of 'sex work' (Duncombe and Marsden, 1996).

ⁱⁱⁱ Vanilla sex is a term that refers to standard or normal sex. A conventional understanding of the term is having heterosexual intercourse. It is placed in the 'charmed circle' suggested by Gayle Rubin. See Rubin (1993).

^{iv} One-night stand is slang referring to a sexual encounter that is limited to only one occasion or that lasts for only a single night.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

This study examined ‘how’ rather than ‘when’ a boy in Hong Kong becomes a man. I have focused on the sexual lives of thirteen local straight men as a site of contestation positioned on the intersection between gender and sexuality. A *man’s* sexual life is the intersection of his gender identity (masculinity) and sexual identity (heterosexual). This is due to the belief that the ‘male sex’ underlies what it is to ‘be a man’ (Garlick, 2003:158). The institution of heterosexuality sustains the coherence of the loose concepts of ‘masculinity’, ‘man’, and ‘male sex’. Through the sexual storytelling of the thirteen Hong Kong straight men, I have examined the complex interplay between the practises of heterosexuality and the production of masculinities in this particular group.

The major investigation of this study is the everyday life heterosexual practises of a group of straight men. The corporeal dimension constitutes the major discussions and analysis of this research. However, the young adult men’s body practises are highly reflexive in relation to ideologies and discourses of hegemonic masculinity, which are disciplinary and regulatory on a day-to-day basis. Through the body

reflexive practises, the thirteen straight men can negotiate with hegemonic masculinity. This illustrates their agency to conform and accommodate themselves to, and resist hegemonic masculinity.

Furthermore, the complex interplay between heterosexual practises and the production of masculinities is always embedded in social institutions such as the family, school, mass media, medicine, and romantic love. Thus, the becoming of local straight men through heterosexuality is significant on both personal and social levels.

In this chapter, I will summarize the major findings of this study and then suggest their implications on the becoming of local straight men. Finally, I will discuss the shortcomings in my research process and its contribution to future studies.

Summary of Findings

Moment of Engagement

The investigation of local straight male sexuality started with their earliest sexual engagements. In Chapter 3, I borrowed the concept of '*the moment of engagement*' from Connell (1995:122-123) to examine the moment in which a man takes up hegemonic masculinity as his own. I have suggested that the process of constructing and becoming heterosexuals were lonely experiences for the boys. Their body-reflexive practises showed that the family and education system did not offer

them sufficient knowledge and emotional support on the matter. As a result, they turned to the mass media, such as the sex pages of newspapers, adult magazines, and pornographic movies to seek guidance and satisfaction for their bodily changes and heterosexual desires. They then they made use of the sexual knowledge acquired from the mass media to socialize with their peers through sex talk and sex jokes.

First Sex Act

Chapter 4 examined the thirteen young straight men's first experience with sexual intercourse. The first sex act is a major case of 'trial and error' in the course of becoming a heterosexual male. There is also a complex interplay between body practise and social process. Since the moment of engagement, the young adult men have carried on practicing, performing, identifying, and examining the conventional discourses and ideologies around straight male sex.

Their self-stories of their first sexual experiences differ greatly. Most of them treated their first sexual intercourse as a rite of passage to becoming a straight man. Others required themselves to perform with the sexual virility required by hegemonic masculinity. A small number simply treated their first sex as an incident with little bearing on their masculinity. For most, however, their first sexual experience was a 'task' that a boy had to perform perfectly. Nevertheless, most of the thirteen young

adult men did very much enjoy their first sexual experience, which they had anticipated for so long.

Sexual Virility

In Chapter 5, the discussion focused on the phallogentric notion of straight male sexual virility. Sexual intercourse is a body-reflexive practise for one to act 'like a man' and to qualify for the title of a 'man'. It is not merely for the sake of personal satisfaction and for the satisfaction of the couple. Sexual prowess is never permanently earned and must be proven each time. I have suggested two major sexual disorders, namely premature ejaculation and male impotence that signify a man's 'defeat' in the battle to defend his title of being a 'man'.

However, the self-stories indicated that the local straight men have various strategies that they use to negotiate their masculinities against sexual dysfunction. The implication of the strategies is that they were able to cope with the hegemonic notion of sexual virility.

Sexual Relationships

The local notion of the monogamous romantic love heterosexual relationship was examined in Chapter 6. Monogamy is the privileged form of heterosexual relationship.

The local discourses of monogamous romantic love and the sex hierarchy govern this ideology. Monogamous romantic love emphasizes democracy, egalitarianism, and reciprocity. The self-stories have shown that these principles are easy to talk about but difficult to practise. Although the straight male participants tried to fulfill these requirements, their sexual relationships came under great pressure. The consequence was that both men and women.

The sex hierarchy requires the men to behave strictly according to the code of good sex/bad sex. This means a man has to sacrifice some of his sexual fantasies to conform to the 'good man' image positioned in the charmed circle.

Nevertheless, privately, the participants have resisted the hegemonic notion of monogamous romantic love. They have employed various strategies to pursue the sexual pleasures that are prohibited in the sex hierarchy. For example, they have visited sex workers and have had multiple sex partners.

Implications

Sex Education in Hong Kong

The lonely experiences of the straight men in their earliest social learning of heterosexuality and masculinity suggest that sex education in Hong Kong is very far from being effective. Li *et al.* (2001) has criticized the Education Department for

adopting persuasion rather than direction in promoting sex education in schools. The Department is positioning itself as a facilitator much more than as an enforcer of sex education programme. Schools are only advised to reserve a number of teaching hours for sex education as one of their extra-curricular activities. Moreover, teachers are ambivalent about taking up the role of sex educator.

There are further reasons behind the inadequacy of sex education in Hong Kong schools, both with regard to quantity and quality. First, the teachers are not well trained enough as sex educators. Only 27.4% of the schools surveyed found their teachers ready for the task (Education Department, 1994).

Second, Li *et al.* (2001:18) has suggested that under the present policy there is not much incentive or support for teachers to take up the task of sex educator:

Professional peer groups such as the Hong Kong Association of Careers Masters and Guidance Masters, which have the administrative as well as the financial backing of the Education Department, do not support them. The Education Department adopts a low profile and leaves the schools to decide for themselves what weight they would like to attach to sex education.

Third, most of the school administrators are too ignorant and reserved to promote sex education. Teachers are well aware that sex education is a value-sensitive topic, and

that no easy consensus can be reached on the issue among school managers from diverse moral and religious backgrounds. The Education Department positions itself as a facilitator rather half-heartedly, and only when it is called upon to do so. This explains its failure to designate sex education as a mandatory subject in the formal curriculum. The department has not done enough to develop and finance a comprehensive training course for teachers on sex education (Li *et al.*, 2001).

Cyberporn

The self-stories of the thirteen straight men illustrate their consumption of sex materials in the local mass media in the early 1990s. Phallogentric and sexist discourses constitute the dominant sexual ideologies in the sex pages of newspapers, adult magazines, and pornographic movies imported from Japan and the West. The surge in Internet usage during the 1990s has made access to pornography much easier. According to Liu *et al.* (1996), Internet users number more than 10 million. The Internet makes it possible for users, no matter where they are located, to obtain access to all kinds of information. Users can stay at home and search for information from another country without traveling abroad. Through Usenet news services the Internet also promotes the exchange of opinions among different people. People from all walks of life spend hours 'together' reading, contributing (posting), and responding.

Since its introduction to Hong Kong more than 10 years ago, Internet use has become pervasive. Cyberporn has been regarded as a worldwide problem. Streitmatter (2004) described cyberporn as pornographic pictures/movies and sexually explicit descriptions that appear in the Internet. It is a combination of sex and computers. Users can download pornographic pictures/movies to their computers if they wish.

William and Barak (2004) believe cyberporn is popular for the following reasons. First, consumers enjoy considerable privacy on computer networks and can easily avoid the potential embarrassment of walking into an 'adult' store to acquire pornography. Second, consumers have the ability to download only those images that they find most sexually arousing. Previously, a consumer had to purchase an entire magazine or video in order to gain access to a few desired depictions. Third, the easy, discrete storage of pornographic images on a computer enables consumers to conceal them from family members, friends, and associates. Finally, new and highly advanced computer technologies are quickly absorbed into the mainstream, permitting an ever-expanding audience to gain access to pornography available on the 'Information Superhighway'.

One implication of the emergence of cyberporn is that pornography will continue to play a major role in the becoming process of Hong Kong straight men. Nowadays,

people can download a pornographic movie at home in a few minutes. The phallogentric notion of straight male sexuality permeates the Internet. The 'Information Highway' has become another platform on which to consolidate hegemonic masculinity.

However, the surge in cyberporn leads to the question of whether more diverse information on sex is making Hong Kong straight men more knowledgeable or worsening their fallacious understanding of heterosexuality. Second, the various forms of communicative software on cyberspace, such as *ICQ*,¹ *Chat Room*,² *Weblog*,³ are creating new space for intimacy. The newly emerging cybersex on the Internet is a new transgression against the traditional public/private division regarding sexuality and intimacy. People can access 'public' space (the Internet) to seek intimacy and sex partners, which have hitherto always belonged to the sphere of 'private' space.

Medicalization of Male Sexuality

Conrad and Schneider (1980) defined medicalization as a major intellectual trend in the twentieth century. It is a gradual social transformation whereby medicine, with its distinctive modes of thought, its models, metaphors, and institutions, has come to exercise authority over areas of life not previously considered medical. For medicalization to work, particular behavioral areas must be divided into good (i.e.,

'healthy') and bad (i.e., 'sick') aspects and must somehow be relatable to norms of biological functioning. Phallocentrism is perpetuated by this flourishing medical construction that focuses exclusively on penile erections as the essence of the sexual function and satisfaction of men. Thus, medicalization has transformed unacceptable erectile performance into a subject for medical analysis and management.

Tiefer (1995) has suggested that the mass media always favors medicalized information about sex because focusing on 'scientific developments' or 'health advice' allows subjects on sex to be published with no taint of obscenity or pornography. We can still see thousands of articles, stories, columns, and advertisements in local newspapers and magazines that use medical terminology to publicize new devices and drugs. In the past two decades, local straight men have been the audience for the medicalization of sexuality on a day-to-day basis.

There are many apparent advantages for men in the medicalization of male sexuality. As Seidler (1992) has argued, medicalized discourses at least keep the focus of sexuality on the physical and avoid inquiry into motives, values, wishes, feelings, or fantasies. In addition, physical explanations for sexual dysfunction are less stigmatizing and men are therefore better able to maintain their sense of masculinity and self-esteem. However, the primary disadvantage of medicalization is that it denies, obscures, and ignores the social causes of whatever problem is under study. For

example, impotence becomes the problem of the individual man. Being a man depends on sexual adequacy, which depends on potency. A rigid, reliable erection is necessary for full compliance with the male sexual script. The medicalization of male sexuality helps a man conform to the script rather than analysing where the script comes from or challenging it.

Perhaps the preventive medicine for male sexual problems is not Viagra or medical-based 'men's health' centres.⁴ It is possible to change the male sexual script to turn away from a rigid standard of masculine adequacy to 'a way of being, a way of communicating, a hobby, a way of being one's body – and *being* one's body – that does not impose control but rather affirms pleasure, movement, sensation, cooperation, playfulness, relating' (Tiefer, 1995:156). Masculine confidence cannot be purchased because perfect potency can never be achieved. It is just an illusion that leads to further anxieties and limitations.

Sexual Ethics

In Chapter 6, I have illustrated that for all the participants in this study monogamy is still the ideal prototype of heterosexual intimacy. Most of the young adult men indicated that any deviation from monogamy would be considered problematic. For example, 'sex without love' is used in the local context as a derogatory label. Such

sexual behaviour as one-night stands, prostitution, and polyamory is always criticized. Terms such as premarital sexual intercourse or extramarital sexual relations are always controversial in the local context. This is because any sex outside of marriage is considered deviant.

Hence, given the sexual morality or *sexual ethics* in Hong Kong, it is taken for granted that the ideal pattern of heterosexual intimacy must consist of the elements of love and monogamy. Thus, not only are straight men in Hong Kong making a choice in accepting such sexual ethics, but there is also a discourse or ideology that regulates and disciplines their heterosexual intimacy. Sexual ethics are also a kind of cultural strategy to inhabit hegemonic masculinity. As I have illustrated in Chapter 6, men in Hong Kong are required to play the role of the 'good man', at least on the surface.

Nonetheless, a number of self-stories reveal that there is space to resist the prevailing rigid sexual ethics. For example, a man can both enjoy heterosexual intimacy with different 'lovers' and maintain the façade of keeping up a monogamous relationship with his 'beloved' girlfriend. Polyamory has attracted much attention in western academia (Lano & Perry, 1995; Anapol, 1997; Easton & Liszt, 1997; Barker, 2005). Western scholars view polyamory as a source of new sexual possibilities in a monogamous world. Ultimately, they aim to overturn monogamy as the absolute sexual ethic and have suggested the possibility of having multiple relationships.

In contrast, in the local context, most people are still trying to prescribe or preserve monogamy as the idealized and standard pattern of heterosexual behaviour. In order to resist this single form of sexual ethics, some of my interviewees revealed in their self-stories that they seek out commercial sex to complement their routine and unexciting monogamous sex life. But they take pains to keep this behaviour private, as they are well aware that commercial sex is considered 'bad sex' in the local context.

The implication for straight men of pursuing commercial sex is that their negotiations with the rigid sexual ethics can only be accomplished at the micro level. All of the thirteen participants in this research, whether or not they have tried to resist the norms of heterosexuality at the personal level, could not avoid adopting hegemonic masculinity by becoming 'good men' and maintaining apparently monogamous relationships.

The notion of sexual pluralism suggested by Rubin (1985:18) may offer a way out of the dilemma of sexual ethics that Hong Kong straight men are facing. Rubin wrote,

A democratic morality should judge sexual arts by the way partners treat one another, the level of mutual consideration, the presence or absence of coercion, and the quantity and quality of the pleasures they provide.

Whether sex acts are gay or straight, coupled or in groups, naked or in underwear, commercial or free, with or without video should not be ethical concerns.

It is difficult to develop pluralistic sexual ethics without a concept of benign sexual variation, especially within the local context. This is because sexuality is always supposed to conform to a single standard. To take my thirteen interviewees as examples, most of them believe there is one best approach to sex (heterosexual intercourse in a monogamous relationship), and that everyone should adopt this approach. This notion of a single ideal sexuality characterizes most systems of thought about sex. To conclude, as Rubin (1993:19) has suggested:

Most people find it difficult to grasp that whatever they like to do sexually will be thoroughly repulsive to someone else, and that whatever repels them sexually will be the most treasured delight of someone, somewhere. One need not like or perform a particular sex act in order to recognize that someone else will and that this difference does not indicate a lack of good taste, mental health, or intelligence in either party. Most people mistake their sexual preference for a universal system that will or should work for everyone.

Contributions of this Research

This research is a pioneer study on Hong Kong straight male sexuality. As such, this study contributes to studies on gender and sexuality as well as the recently emerging men's studies. Straight male sexuality a topic that is often ignored in studies on both gender and sexuality, as it gender studies are usually alleged to be 'women's studies' and studies on sexuality tend of focus on LGBT (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and the transgendered). This thesis can certainly contribute to the newly emerging literature of men's studies. Men's studies have taken up the task of challenging the normalcy of male heterosexuality. But even in men's studies, discussions straight male sexuality is not common; thus, this thesis can help to fill this gap in the field.

Second, the myth of 'hegemonic masculinity' has been revealed through the personal stories of thirteen young Hong Kong straight men. All of them have attempted to attain 'hegemonic masculinity' through successful vaginal penetration, sexual virility, sexual potency, or by being a good man. But they have all suffered from different degrees of anxiety, stress, and frustration.

Nevertheless, there is a range of possibilities through which gender and sexuality can be negotiated. Again, the personal stories of these thirteen Hong Kong young straight men have shown the dominance of the sexual and gender ideology of the wider society, which has resulted in gender and sexual divisions. The duality of

masculinity or heterosexuality provides me the background to treat masculinity or heterosexuality as a process of becoming, constantly being threatened, and having to be won over.

Furthermore, this study views male sexuality as a body reflexive practise that goes beyond any kind of social normativity through social modeling, sensuous experimentation, and bodily play. The concept of *body reflexive practise* enables me to examine the agencies of Hong Kong straight men during the complex processes of the constructing/becoming/performing of their gender and sexual identities. Furthermore, this concept can also be used to bridge gender and sexual identity in the daily life of a straight man. The concept also bridges the body (material) and abstract theoretical discussions of gender (masculinity) and sexuality (heterosexuality).

Finally, this research contributes to an understanding of sexuality in the local context. For example, I have argued that the family institution is an affective unit in the early development of the masculinity or heterosexuality of young men. The effectiveness of school and sex education in Hong Kong was also examined. I have demonstrated that the mass media, especially pornography and cyberporn plays, an important role in the early learning and development of male masculinity or heterosexuality. The medicalization of male sexuality is another social concern relating to the general public's obsession with sexual virility and sexual potency. I

have shown that medicalized heterosexual men often overlook their psychological well being. Last, but not least, this study examined heterosexual relationships in Hong Kong and suggested possible pluralistic sexual ethics for Hong Kong straight men.

Limitations of the Current Study and Suggestions for Future Research

Throughout the research process, I encountered many difficulties and limitations that should be overcome in the future.

First, the study was largely restricted to the micro level of analysis. I carried out semi-structured interviews to collect the self-stories of the participants on sexual lives. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, this study has drawn from the *3x3 matrix of gender studies* suggested by Connell (1995) as the analytical tool. I have not strictly studied discourse, ideology, and culture in seeking to demonstrate how compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity are organized in the symbolic practises that exist outside (and thus longer than) an individual's life. I also have not extensively investigated compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity within local institutions. Although I have tried to integrate these two levels of analysis through the self-stories collected, there is still plenty of room for future research on these two levels of analysis concerning my research topic.

Second, owing to limited time, this study only concentrated on the ways in which

the thirteen local young straight men constructed their identity around their sexual lives. It is necessary to collect more comprehensive accounts of the participants' life course on other aspects such as family relationships, friendships, employment conditions, and so forth. This would make it possible go into more detail on the formation of a local straight man's identity.

Third, there is a general lack of local studies on men and masculinities. I have had to draw mostly from studies conducted in western societies. As I have argued in Chapter 1, a study on local straight male sexuality would be a locally and culturally specific study. However, I found very little theoretical discussion in Hong Kong on the subject. Fourth, a study of local straight male sexuality should also involve more discussions on females. In Chapter 6, I have shown that the female partners of young adult men play an important role in constructing the gender and sexual identities of these young men. I have concentrated on collecting only the self-stories of men in Hong Kong. However, it is important to look into how women in Hong Kong perceive local straight male identity.

I hope that further research could be conducted along the above promising lines. And this empirical study can contribute to other local studies on gender and sexuality as well.

Notes:

¹ In 1996, four young Israeli avid computer users established a new Internet company, Mirabilis. They created the company in order to introduce a new way of communicating over the Internet. In November 1996, only four months after the establishment of Mirabilis, the first version of the ICQ ('I Seek You') product was deployed over the Internet. It was enthusiastically received and immediately embraced, first by a small number of users, but soon thereafter, by hundreds of thousands. Users introduced the product to their friends in an evangelistic manner. This chain reaction created one of the largest download rates for a start-up company in the history of the Internet (see <http://www.icq.com/info/icqstory.html>).

² A chat room is an online forum where people can chat online (talk by broadcasting messages to people on the same forum in real time). Sometimes, these venues are moderated either by limiting who is allowed to speak (not common), or by having moderation volunteers patrol the venue watching for disruptive or otherwise undesirable behaviour.

³ A weblog (usually shortened to blog, but occasionally spelled web log) is a web-based publication consisting primarily of periodic articles (normally in reverse chronological order). Although most early weblogs were manually updated, tools to automate the maintenance of such sites made them accessible to a much larger population, and the use of some sort of browser-based software is now a typical aspect of 'blogging'.

⁴ Recently, a company called the 'Men's Health Solution Centre' has been set up in Hong Kong. It claims to specialize 'in providing Tri-Mix Therapy for various degrees of erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation'. The company provides such services as the evaluation of erectile dysfunction/premature ejaculation and assessment of treatments, and men's health check-ups (see <http://www.menshealthsolutions.com.hk/en/home/index.htm>).

Appendix 1

Profile of the Interviewees

Name	Age	Education level	Occupation	Salary (\$)	Religion
Brian	24	Degree	Sales Manager	5000-10000	No
Benjamin	23	Diploma	Sales Executive	5000-10000	Catholic
Sam	23	Diploma	Sportswear Salesman	5000-10000	No
Ming	23	Degree	Assistant Geologist	10000-15000	Christian
Paul	20	Certificate	Unemployed		No
Palmer	23	Degree	Fresh Graduate		No
Mark	23	Degree	Financial Planner	10000-15000	No
Elvis	25	Degree	Medical doctor	40000-45000	No
Kelvin	23	A-Level	Customer Service Officer	5000-10000	No
Jaime	25	Degree	Investigator (ICAC)	15000-20000	No
Vince	23	Degree	Marketing Executive	10000-15000	No
Mike	23	Diploma	Dancer	8000-10000	No

Appendix 2

Interview Guidelines

On Sexuality

Moments of Engagement

1. When did you start to feel interested in sex? And in the body of the opposite sex?
2. Can you remember what made you first feel interested?
3. In what way did you try to explore the subject? Did you try to ask anybody about it?

If yes, who did you ask and why? (E.g., family members and relatives, school teachers and classmates, neighbours, the mass media.)

If no, what forms of media did you turn to try to find more information, and why?

4. When and how did you recognize the physical/ psychological changes in you regarding sex from childhood to adolescence?
5. Did you receive any sex education about those changes?

If yes, from where? (E.g., family members and relatives, school teachers and classmates, neighbours, the mass media.)

What did you learn?

If no, answer No. 6.

6. Did you try to make enquiries about the changes from anybody?

If yes, who and why? (E.g., family members and relatives, school teachers and classmates, neighbours, the mass media.)

What information did you get?

If no, answer No. 7

7. Did you try to make enquiries about the changes through other forms of mass media? What were they? And why?

8. Have you ever seen the 風月版 of the newspapers (e.g., 東方日報, 天天日報, 成報, Sisters, Yes) during childhood/ adolescence?

If yes, did you enjoy reading it? Why?

Did you really read the articles or just look at the pictures?

Did you believe what they said in the columns?

9. Have you ever seen any pornography (e.g., magazines: 龍虎豹, Playboy; movies: VCRs, VCDs, or from the Internet) during childhood/adolescence?

If yes, did you enjoy reading it? Why?

10. Did you believe that they were actually doing what they appeared to be doing?

Have you ever masturbated during childhood/ adolescence?

If yes, when did you start? And how often did you do it? Did you always masturbate alone?

Have you ever being caught while doing it?

If yes, who discovered you and how did they and you react?

Is masturbation still a habit of yours?

11. Can you remember any significant sexual experiences in childhood/ adolescence?

If yes, can you describe them? Did they involve your peers (same sex) or the opposite sex?

12. Did you engage in any sex play with anybody in childhood/adolescence? If yes, can you describe it?

13. Would you regard those experiences as your first sexual experiences? If yes/ no, why?

14. Have you ever talked about sex with anyone?

If so, who and how?

15. Have you ever joked about sex in school? (E.g., in the locker room, classroom, playground.)

The First Sexual Experience

1. Can you describe your first sexual experience? (E.g., when, where, what did you do, with whom, etc.)
2. In what order did things happen during that experience please describe the acts in detail (E.g., Kissing? Touching? Blowjob? Hand job? Vaginal intercourse? Orgasm (ejaculation)? Did you use a condom? What positions did you use?
3. How long did it last for?
4. Why would you regard it as your first sexual experience?
5. Was the partner your lover (girlfriend)? Or just a friend? Or a stranger?
6. What was that experience based on? Love? Or lust?
7. Did you face any difficulties during the process? Can you describe the difficulties? And why?
8. Was that experience consistent with the beliefs about sex that you had held before? If not, in what ways was it inconsistent?

9. During that experience, did you negotiate with you partner what to do or what not to do?

If so, how?

The Sexual Life

1. How many sexual partners you had so far since the first sexual experience?

If fewer than three, can you describe your sexual life with them one by one? (Details that can be asked: when and where, the sequences/ patterns, oral sex, hand job, intercourse, position, how long it lasted for, was a condom used?)

If more than three, can you describe the most remarkable one to you? (Same as above.)

If fewer than three and if you don't have a steady partner right now, can you describe your most recent partner? (Same as above.)

2. Have you had more than one partner one at a time?

If yes, what's the difference in a sexual life with different partners?

3. Have you have had one-night stands?

If yes, can you describe it/them?

4. What's your major concern in your sexual life? (E.g., Feelings? Excitement? Orgasm? Yourself? Or your partner? Or should be mutual?)

5. Are you concerned about your sexual performance?

If yes, what aspect of it? How about the performance of your partner/partners?

6. Do you have to negotiate with your partner the details of your sexual life? (E.g., when and where to have sex, what to do and what not to do what, etc.)

If yes, how? And why?

If no, why not?

7. Do you feel pressure in your sexual life?

If yes, in what aspects? (E.g., performance, mood, etc.) And why?

8. Are you satisfied with your sexual life so far? And why?

9. Do you think the mode of communication of your relationship affects your sexual life with the same partner? And why?

10. Is it possible for you/ your partner to refuse to have sex? Why?

11. Is it possible for you/ your partner to refuse to engage in certain sexual acts (e.g., oral sex, anal sex, etc.)? And why?

12. From your experience, is it necessary for you to love someone before you have sex with her?

13. Should your partner be a virgin? How important is her virginity to you? How

important is your own virginity?

14. What do you think about your relationships? (E.g., commitment/ passion/ trust/ equality/ mutuality, etc.)

Does it affect your sexual life?

Sexual Dysfunction

1. Have you ever-experienced sexual dysfunction? (E.g. failed to get an erection, only achieved a partial erection in whenever sexual act, experienced pre-mature ejaculation?)

If yes, can you describe it? And what do you think was the reason behind it?

2. What do you regard as normal sexual functioning? And why?

3. On the experience of erectile dysfunction,

- i. How often did it happen?
- ii. What were your feelings and the response of your partner?
- iii. Did you carry on having sex? (I.e., engaging in some other act such as a hand job, fingering, oral sex, kissing, and hugging instead of vaginal intercourse?)
- iv. Did your partner complain about it or blame you?
- v. Did you take medication afterwards?
- vi. Did it happen again?
- vii. Did that experience put pressure on you? And did it affect your performance in your sexual life afterwards?
- viii. Did that experience affect your self-esteem/ self-identity?
- ix. Did that experience affect your relationship with that partner?

4. On the experience of pre-mature ejaculation:

- i. How quickly did it happen? How often?
- ii. What were your feeling and the response of your partner?
- iii. Did you carry on having sex? (I.e., engaging in some other act such as a hand job, fingering, oral sex, kissing, and hugging instead of vaginal intercourse.)
- iv. Did your partner complain about it or blame you?
- v. Did it happen again?
*If yes, did you try to use any method to solve it? Mental? Or physical?
And why?*
- vi. Did that experience put pressure on you? And did it affect your performance in your sexual life afterwards?

- vii. Did that experience affect your self-esteem/ self-identity?
- viii. Did that experience affect your relationship with that partner?

Male identity

1. How important is sex in your life?
2. How important is sex to you as a man?
3. Are you satisfied with your sexual life?
4. Are you satisfied with *yourself* in your sexual life?
5. If you could use a word or a thing to describe your sexual life, what would you use?
6. If you could use a word or a thing to describe *yourself* in your sexual life, what would you use?
7. Can you describe the best experience you have so far in your sexual life?
8. Can you describe the worst experience you have so far in your sexual life?
9. What do you think it is necessary for a man to be to have a successful sexual life?
10. As a man, what is the most important thing to you in your sexual life?
11. What is the meaning of sex in your life?
12. Has anyone influenced your sexual life
If yes, who?
If no, why?
15. When you look back on yourself, have you experienced any major changes at different stages in your sexual life so far?
If yes, what were the changes?
If no, why?
16. What do you like most in sex?
17. What do you hate most in sex?
18. What is a man?
19. What makes a man a man?
20. Do you like your body?
21. Do you regard your body as average, above/below average?
22. Which part of your body do you like the most? Why?
23. Which part of your body do you hate the most? Why?
24. Do you work out/exercise? How often and why?

General

Family

1. How many brothers and sisters do you have? (Birth order and spacing.)
2. Are you living with your family?
3. Would you mind telling me about your relationships with your family members (starting from your father, then your mother, and your brothers and sisters)?
4. How well do you get along with the members of your family? Is there anyone you feel particularly close to?

If yes, who is that person and why do you feel so close to him/her?

5. How do your parents expect you to behave towards them as a son (male)?
6. What kind of man do you think your parents hoped you would grow up to be? Did you feel any pressure from them? Why?
7. Have your parents taught you certain important things about being a man?

If yes, what things?

If no, do you regret it?

Education

1. What is your level of education?
2. Could you tell me about your educational background?
3. Where did you study? Hong Kong or in any other countries?
4. Which period of your studies do you miss most?
5. *If at university,*
What was your major? Why did you choose that subject as your major? What or who influenced you most? What did you change about yourself?
6. How important do you consider your education to be?
7. How important do you consider education to be for a man?
8. Have you thought about further studies?

If yes, have you ever had any plans? What would you study next time?

If no, this is the end of this section.

Work

1. Would you mind telling me about your work experience?
2. What is your main job?

If the interviewee is an employee, go to No. 4.

3. Why did you start up that business? *Then go to No. 8.*

4. How did you get that job?

5. How much are you being paid?

6. Do you consider this to be a good wage?

7. How well do you get along with your colleagues? Your boss?

8. How much time do you devote to your job?

9. What does your job entail?

10. Do you like your job?

11. Do you have any part-time job in addition to your main job?

If no, do you have any other sources of income other than your main job?

If yes, what is the job? How did you get that job? Do you like that job?

12. Is your present job your ideal job?

If yes, what do you expect from the job?

If no, what is your ideal job? Have you ever wanted to change your job? What do you expect from your ideal job?

13. What do you think about work, in general?

14. Why are you working? (*Probe: for money, power, status, interest, family, etc.*)

15. Do you get what you want from your job?

If no, why?

16. If you had plenty of money, would you still work?

If yes, why?

17. When do you think you will retire?

18. What will you do after your retirement?

Love

1. Are you going out with someone?

If yes, for how long? How did you meet? Have you thought about marriage?

If no, have you been out with any other people?

If yes, when and for how long? How did you meet? Why did you break up?

If no, why?

2. What do you think about love? What do you think about commitment/ loyalty in love?

3. What do you think about different forms of love:

i. Cohabitation

ii. Monogamy

iii. Polynomous

iv. Having a sex buddy

4. Did you feel pressure because you were a man in love?

Religion

1. Do you have a religion?

If yes, what is it?

To what extent are you affected by your religion?

Have you ever doubted your religion?

If yes, how did you solve that doubt?

If no, why are you so sure about your belief?

If no, have you ever had a religion?

If yes, what was it? Why did you abandon it?

If no, do you feel you need a religion?

Identity

1. How do you organize your time in relation to your private life (family/ love) and your public life (work/ religion)?

2. Are you happy with this arrangement?

If yes, go to No. 3.

If no, how do you deal with it?

3. Are you satisfied with your life?

4. Are you satisfied with yourself as a man?

5. If you could use a word or a thing to describe yourself as a man, what would you use?

6. What has been the best thing in your life so far?

7. What has been the worst thing?

8. What is the most important thing you hope to do in the future?

9. What do you think about the nature of success to a man?

10. Who do you feel responsible for?

11. What is the most important thing in your life?

12. What is the meaning of life to you?

13. What is the meaning of a man to you?

14. Does anyone influence you?

If yes, who?

If no, why?

15. When you look back on yourself, did you experience any major changes at different stages in your life?

If yes, what were the changes?

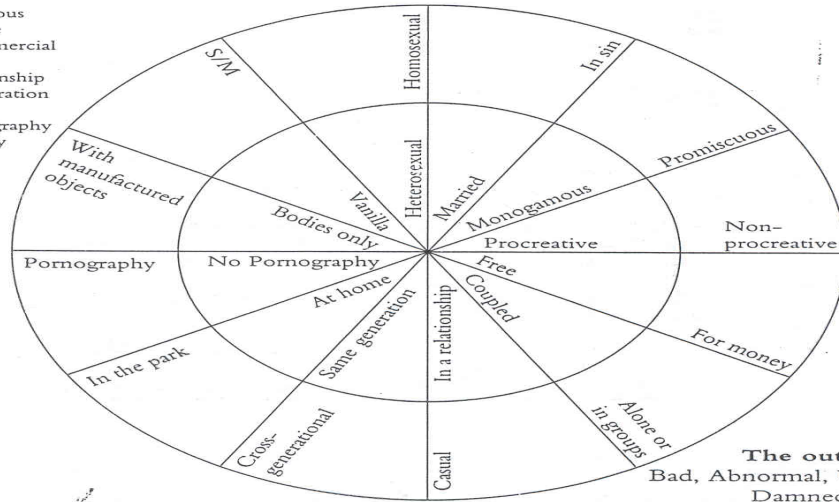
If no, why?

Appendix 3

- The hierarchical valuation of sex: The charmed circle and the outer limits

The charmed circle:
Good, Normal, Natural, Blessed Sexuality

Heterosexual
Married
Monogamous
Procreative
Non-commercial
In pairs
In a relationship
Same generation
In private
No pornography
Bodies only
Vanilla

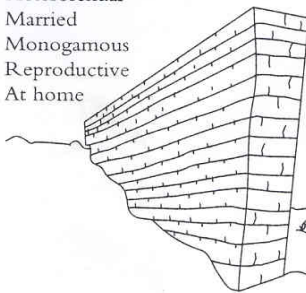


The outer limits:
Bad, Abnormal, Unnatural, Damned Sexuality

Homosexual
Unmarried
Promiscuous
Non-procreative
Commercial
Alone or in groups
Casual
Cross-generational
In public
Pornography
With manufactured objects
Sadomasochistic

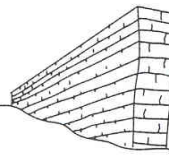
“Good” sex:

Normal, Natural, Healthy, Holy
Heterosexual
Married
Monogamous
Reproductive
At home



“The Line”

Major area of contest
Unmarried heterosexual couples
Promiscuous Heterosexuals
Masturbation



Long-term, stable lesbian and gay male couples

Lesbians in the bar
Promiscuous gay men at the baths or in the park

“Bad” sex:

Abnormal, Unnatural, Sick, Sinful, “Way Out”

Transvestites
Transsexuals
Fetishists
Sadomasochists
For money
Cross-generational

Best

Worst

The sex hierarchy: the struggle over where to draw the line

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