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Fishers of Men: An Exploration of the Identity Negotiations of Gay Male Anglican Clergy

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ABSTRACT

Fishers of Men: An Exploration of the Identity Negotiations of Gay Male Anglican Clergy

The lives of gay clergy have been the focus of much public talk in recent times. Following the nomination of Jeffrey John as Bishop of Reading, and the confirmation of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire, the Anglican communion has entered a period of intense debate concerning the acceptability of gay clergy which threatens to break the ties which bind the communion. Gay clergy whether 'out' or 'closeted', celibate or 'active' stand as public representatives of the institutional Church in their community, while at the same time not being fully accepted or affirmed as individuals by the Church they represent. Further to this, as representatives of the Church in community the clergy are constrained by the duties and obligations they have to their parish, and the expectations of their parishioners.

The thesis explores the narratives of a number of gay male clergymen in the Church of England collected through a combination of questionnaire, interview and diary methods. The thesis focuses on issues of identity creation, management and presentation in order to illustrate the need for negotiation, and the situated nature of identity. In doing so the thesis explores how within the narratives of the respondents the influence of individualised, detraditionalized understandings of religion and sexuality can be seen, though these are constrained by expectations acting upon the clergy from Church and congregation. Therefore negotiations occur not only between aspects of identity, but also between duty and choice. In exploring these negotiations the thesis accesses the work of Goffman, Giddens and Plummer and takes forward an understanding of identity as situated and fluid, but also requiring stability and continuation to enable the individual to locate and connect. The thesis explores this ongoing negotiation, and illustrates how late modern individuals continue to be required to face up to the interplay of tradition and innovation in the creation, presentation and management of the identity stories – specifically stories of Christian, gay and Clerical identity.

Table of Contents

TABLE OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

This thesis takes as its focus the lived experiences of gay male clergy within the Church of England. The thesis concentrates upon the multi-dimensional identity negotiations these individuals have faced and continue to face being gay, Christian and clergy.

Gay clergy have become a central focus of debates within the Church of England concerning homosexuality. Though issues concerning homosexuality have for some time been the subject of public talk in the Church, more recent events have seen this issue emerge as not only an issue of discussion, but an issue which threatens the very fabric of the Anglican Communion. Following the nomination of Jeffrey John as bishop of Reading in 2003, and the confirmation of Gene Robinson as bishop of New Hampshire (also in 2003), the Church has entered a time when talk about homosexuality has exploded throughout many areas of the Church, manifesting in global, national and local debate, often far removed from the experiences of individual gay clergy. Within these debates the liberal wing of the Communion (most often seen to be centred in the Anglo-Catholic tradition, and within the western Churches) vocalises arguments for the inclusion of gay and lesbian believers and clergy, whilst the Conservative wing of the Communion (most often seen to be centred within evangelicalism, and with strong support from African and Asian Churches) vocalises arguments for the repentance of individuals with gay and lesbian sexualities.

In attempting to bridge the divide between these two positions the institutional Church neither fully rejects, not fully affirms gay and lesbian believers. The official stance of the Church as defined within official statements is that being homosexual involves both orientation and practice (separated within the definition). Having a homosexual orientation is acceptable. However, actively embracing that orientation through practice remains censured. Though more recent statements from the Church have illustrated a partial acceptance of gay believers in committed partnerships within parish communities, the official position of the Church concerning homosexual clergy remains that they should not act upon their orientation. This continued lack of affirmation means gay and lesbian clergy continue to face opposition and constraint in their

positions within the Church (Chapter 2 provides a detailed discussion of Church documents and statements).

The continued constraint gay and lesbian believers face within the Church is experienced in parallel to increasing liberalisation in other aspects of British society. Concentrating purely on governmental legislation, recent years have seen the lowering of the age of consent for gay men to equal the age of consent for heterosexuals (2001), clause 28 which outlawed the 'promotion' of homosexuality in schools being repealed (2003), gay and lesbian individuals may now enter civil partnerships (2005), gaining many of the same rights as married heterosexuals, and legislation has been passed outlawing discrimination based on sexuality in the workplace (though religious organisations remain exempt) (2003). Therefore whilst continued liberalisation occurs within secular spheres, the Church continues to lag behind in terms of acceptance of homosexuality. For individuals who experience life as gay and Christian the need for negotiation emerges within the context of increasing liberalisation and acceptance in wider society, but a continued experience of censure and opposition within the Church.

The thesis explores how 29 gay male clergy in the Church of England negotiate their religious, sexual and clerical identities, in the light of Church constraint of sexuality, widening social acceptance of homosexuality, and indeed lessening social obligations to believing. By using a humanistic method the thesis centres discussion on the experiences and understandings of the respondents, and through this accesses information concerning identity negotiation and the continued influence of duty. Essentially the thesis concentrates upon interaction and how individual gay clergy experience the interactions between being a late modern reflexive individual, and being a representative of an at times pre-modern, at times modern, and at times late modern institution, in the capacity of priest with the continuing duties and obligations this entails.

Research Aims

The research had two major aims:

1. To explore the identity creation, negotiation and presentation of gay male Anglican clergy

2. To explore the interplay of tradition and innovation, or structure and agency within this identity 'work'.

Therefore the thesis concentrates on the processes of negotiation undertaken by these clergy in constructing, managing and presenting their gay, Christian and clerical identities. The central argument of the thesis is that all choice affects available choice. The construction and maintenance of one identity affects and shapes others. Therefore in constructing gay identity the clergy may constrain their clerical identity choices, in being Clergy they may find their Christian identities constrained.

Though the thesis primarily discusses issues of identity, it is important to bear in mind its relation to contemporary debates within the Church. Primarily, as mentioned above debates concerning the acceptability of gay clergy which have grown in recent years following the events surrounding Jeffrey John and Gene Robinson. These debates moved beyond the confines of the Church and were taken up in the media, and by society at large (Bates (2004) provides an overview of such issues). For some these events underlined the 'backwardness' of the Church, whilst for others it represented an attack on the sanctity of a religious institution and its standards.

Despite the growing public discussion of issues related to gay clergy, academic discussion has remained stifled. Two previous studies exist concerning gay clergy in the Church of England, and a handful of studies in Britain and America have discussed gay Catholic priests, with a further few American studies exploring the lives of gay men ordained within protestant denominations (These studies are discussed in Chapter 2).

The current thesis shares focus with many of these studies. However its essentially humanistic emphasis allows a more nuanced exploration of the identity work of gay clergy. Centring on the experience of individuals the thesis explores the effects of structure, and the continued negotiations which these individuals face. In doing so the thesis further explores issues of difficulty raised by being gay, Christian and clergy. By critically assessing the influence of forces of individualisation and detraditionalization on these individuals, and the constraints they face in constructing, managing and presenting different identities, the thesis moves beyond a concentration on the difficulties of being gay and clergy in favour of a more holistic approach to understand what it is like to be gay, Christian and clergy, and the constraints and freedoms this entails. Therefore the thesis will explore a number of research questions. These include:

1. How do gay male clergy view their Christian, gay and clergy identities?
2. How are these identities presented in interaction?
3. How do the clergy deal with perceived incompatibility of various identities?
4. What influences, informs and constrains identity in the lives of the clergy?

Outline of the Thesis

To discuss the above-mentioned issues the thesis is organised into seven chapters. Following this introductory chapter, the thesis moves on to discuss existing literature related to the current study.

The literature review has four distinct sections. (1) A review of Church statements, (2) A discussion of previous literature on gay clergy, (3) An overview of the theory of identity used in the study, (4) A discussion of previous literature on Christian, gay and clergy identities.

The exploration of published Church reports, statements, and discussions on issues of homosexuality clarifies the current Church position, and emphasises the need for a study of gay clergy in the Anglican Church. It is shown that Church statements have

been neither static nor revolutionary (either conservatively or liberally), though a continuous thread has linked statements over the last thirty years. This being that the Church sees need for further listening, talking and studying. The thesis argues however that this listening has not been realised in full. The Church's attempts to listen are constrained by sense of threat experienced by gay clergy. Stories remain silenced. Therefore the thesis is positioned to aid this listening process, by allowing the telling of stories whether previously untold, told to indifference, told to opposition, or told to affirmation. The need for an avenue through which these stories can be told in relative safety is provided through an academic retelling.

The review then moves on to discuss previous literature on gay clergy. In reviewing this literature the thesis illustrates the need for the current study, partly due to the scarcity of such literature, and therefore the need for additional study in general, but also because the current study offers a new way of exploring the lives of gay clergy through exploring their identities as Christian, gay, and clergy. Such an approach allows the taking forward of issues raised in previous literature, and a more in-depth approach to exploring these issues in the lives of those facing them.

After establishing the relevance of such identity study the literature review then explains the approach to identity which will be taken forward. With reference to Mills' emphasis on the importance of history, biography and structure, the thesis argues that an approach to identity based in interaction best allows access to such study. Centring on the work of Goffman, Giddens and Plummer.

Goffman's emphasis on identity in interaction as fluid and changeable, affected by environment and expectation is related directly to the current study. This changeable nature of identity dependent upon situation can be directly linked to ideas of closeting, and silencing identity. However Goffman's work gives access to an understanding of fluid identity which goes beyond negative concepts of hiding, and closeting, emphasising the everyday nature of 'multiple selves'.

Giddens' discussion of identity in terms of the reflexive self is then explored. The thesis argues that this conception of a reflexive self which considers possibility and acts

accordingly, creating a personal biography allows an understanding of self which connects strongly with the understanding of social identity in interaction. However though Giddens emphasises the continued interplay of structure and agency within identity, eventual primacy lies with the agent as director and controller of identity. The thesis discusses some criticisms which have been raised concerning Giddens' work stemming from this issue.

The thesis then explores Plummer's discussion of identity, with particular reference to 'Telling Sexual Stories' (Plummer 1995). In Plummer's consideration of story and narrative, the external is given importance in the way in which story is told. He emphasises that the way a story is told, what is told, and why it is told depends upon audience. It is this concept of identity which is carried forward through the thesis, conceptualised in terms of a continuous, though flexible self-identity one tells to oneself, and a fluid, changeable social identity influenced and constrained by external, and internal negotiation. In essence where Giddens refers to self as director, or designer, the thesis takes forward a concept of self as chief negotiator.

Following this the review focuses upon previous literature related to the various identities to be discussed, specifically Christian, gay and clerical identity. Thereby illustrating the need for a study with such emphasis.

In discussing literature related to religious identity the thesis concentrates primarily on writing which emphasises the effects of individualisation, and detraditionalization. In doing so the thesis argues that concepts of religious identity are transforming, and are conceptualised in terms related closely to Giddens' reflexive self. Belief systems are tailor-made, self becomes a central organising feature. With reference to Woodhead's discussion of the 'turn to life', and Wilcox's exploration of individualised religion the thesis emphasises the importance of the personal in the creation and maintenance of a belief system. Following this the review explores how some authors have seen these issues manifest within work on gay Christians. The thesis argues that although clergy remain religious authorities, and therefore face expectations regarding their public faith, as individual Christians they are not exempt from the influence of the freedoms such

individualisation allows. Emphasising the need to negotiate their private and public faiths, as well as their sexual and religious identities.

The review then goes on to discuss literature related to gay identity, in doing so the thesis begins by exploring the essentialist / constructionist debate, and efforts made to move beyond such debate with reference to Weeks, Plummer, Fuss and Sedgwick. In doing so the thesis reaffirms the importance of discussing essentialism as an important part of individual understanding. The review also explores previous discussions of the 'closet', and questions whether proud has to mean 'out'. Finally discussions of how gay identity is managed and presented are explored in order to explore how negotiation remains constant in this aspect of identity management also.

Finally the review explores previous literature on the clergy. In discussing this literature the review emphasises that there are large gaps in the literature on the clergy, with the majority of studies emphasising the ministry as a profession. The thesis argues that the vocation to the clergy goes beyond this, and is, in and of itself an aspect of identity. The thesis explores how being clergy is managed, and suggests that a split can be seen between vocational and professional aspects of the clergy. Again therefore the thesis emphasises the need for negotiation, and how negotiation is constant in identity management and presentation.

In Chapter 3 the thesis discusses the research methodology of the study. The chapter begins by discussing how the idea for the study came into being, and from this how the research was designed. The thesis then presents the finalised research design emphasising the humanistic focus of the research.

Following this chapter 3 goes on to discuss, sampling methods, and the sample. Within this the chapter discusses difficulties arising from the 'hidden' nature of the population.

The methodology chapter then explores in more depth the design and implementation of each of the research tools. In doing so the chapter draws out the usefulness of each tool, and also the problems faced by undertaking each aspect of the research design. Each aspect of the research design is discussed in more detail, and the ethical considerations

of each aspect are discussed. The chapter then concentrates upon my own reflections as author upon how I may have affected, influenced or shaped the research, illustrating the reflective nature of the research process, and the emphasis upon how situation affects interaction.

Finally, this chapter explores how analysis of the data collected was carried out. This discussion of the analysis illustrates how themes emerged from the data and were taken forward in the writing process.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 present the research findings, and the discussion of this data. Chapter 4 discusses issues which can be primarily related to the negotiation of Christian identity, Chapter 5 – gay identity, and Chapter 6 – clerical identity. In presenting and discussing data relevant to each of these identities, the chapters begin by introducing concepts related to the respondents' understandings of each identity. To illustrate, Chapter 4 discusses respondents' concepts of God, and understanding of Christianity. Chapter 5 discusses respondents' claims to an essential sexuality, and their acceptance of their sexuality. Chapter 6 discusses call to ministry, and understanding of the clergy role. In doing so each chapter illustrates that there is an essential aspect within the respondents' understandings of their Christian, gay and clergy identities.

Each of these three chapters then go on to explore how in the living, these identity aspects inform and influence, and in turn are enabled and constrained by other aspects of identity and by the situated nature of everyday living. In doing so Chapter 4 explores how religious identity and sexuality are negotiated, and where support is garnered from to enable this integration. Using the example of sexual morality the chapter then shows how this integration both enables and constrains living as gay and Christian in the lives of the respondents. The chapter then explores how being clergy affects personal spirituality, again illustrating the ability to combine these aspects of identity, but also showing how the narratives of the respondents illustrate the difficulties being clergy and Christian in late modernity brings forward. In doing so the chapter emphasises the main thrust of argument of the thesis, that the clergy are not exempt from wider changes in society, rather they to great extent embrace the freedoms which individualisation allows. However, acceptance of these freedoms remain constrained by the duties and

obligations of structure, requiring of the individual continuous negotiation, and reflexive awareness of expectation and situated constraints.

Chapter 5, following on from discussion of understanding of sexuality, re-examines the concept of 'the closet'. With reference to the narratives of the respondents the chapter questions the binary of 'in' and 'out', arguing that the closet is collapsible and should be seen in a more nuanced way than as a place of hiding. The thesis expands on four ways in which the closet is used by respondents in the management and presentation of social identity. This emphasises the situated and changeable nature of social identity and reconnects with Goffman's work, discussed in the literature, that embracing multiple social selves is normal, everyday practice, not necessarily an illustration of dystonic identity. Finally, the chapter explores how the respondents 'live' their sexuality in terms of sexual relationships, relationships in the wider gay community, and how their status as Christians and clergymen informs and affects their relationships with community. In doing so the chapter illustrates the negotiation between freedom and constraint in the organisation of these relationships and aspects of life. The chapter explores the influence of individualised morality, and detraditionalized relationship structures to explore the negotiations which occur in the living out of the respondents' gay identities.

Again the chapter emphasises the need for negotiation between freedom and constraint emphasising how understanding of expectation and reaction is reflexively considered by the respondents, and an aspect of their organising of their identity presentations. Also in questioning negativity of 'closet' the chapter emphasises the constrains of 'liberal modernity' for to be free is to be open, to be happy is to conform to shared understandings of 'being true to yourself', the chapter therefore illustrates that the detraditionalization of late modernity can be seen as a 're', rather than 'de'-traditionalization, a concept which will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Chapter 6 moves on from discussion of call, and understanding of the clergy role to explore further in practice what is developed as a separation between the vocational and professional aspects of clergy identity. In doing so the chapter emphasises that it is the sense of vocation with which respondents most clearly identify, and by emphasising the

importance of what they understand to be vocational aspects of being clergy the respondents distance themselves from aspects of the professional. On a base level this can be read simply as separating aspects of 'job' into likes and dislikes, which it can be said all people have. However the thesis argues there is more to this separation, for in separating vocational from professional the respondents separate what is asked of them of God, and what is asked of them by institution and parish. This separation of vocation and profession allows the personal separation of belief and institution.

The chapter then takes forward this separation of vocational and professional and explores the negotiation between vocation and profession, and indeed wider negotiations that occur in living out a clergy identity. In essence the chapter argues that understanding of vocation is becoming more related to individualised understandings of charge from God, rather than structured Church expectations. However in order to continue vocation, a certain degree of acceptance of professionalised constraint is required.

The final chapter of the thesis, Chapter 7 discusses the broad theoretical themes which emerge from the previous discussion of the respondents' narratives. The chapter begins by further exploring the dynamics of identity construction, management and presentation discussed in the thesis. With reference to 'tapestries of identity' the chapter emphasises the continued influence of structures and constraints in construction and management of identity. Using the metaphor of tapestries, the chapter explores how aspects of identity interact, connect and influence in the creation of life-stories/ biographies/ identities/ tapestries, thereby illustrating the continued need for negotiation of tradition and innovation in the construction management and presentation of identities.

The chapter then discusses three specific theoretical issues which emerge from the current study. Firstly, the chapter focuses upon the importance of essentialist understanding in the narratives of the respondents. From this it is argued that social science must continue to engage with such understandings and recognise their importance in the construction of individuals' stories of meaning. Secondly, the chapter explores issues of 'identity integration' raised within the study discussing the

difficulties which may arise in such efforts. Thirdly, the chapter engages with the 'turn to life' and the evidence of this in the research. Within this discussion the chapter argues for an increase in the use of humanistic method, and a focussing on personal belief stories in the sociological study of religion.

The chapter then moves to a discussion of more 'practical' findings. The chapter asks the Church to listen to the stories of the respondents and explores how the respondents' narratives illustrate their value as priests within the Church. Following this, how the stories of the respondents can add to the current Church debates is explored. The chapter argues that throughout the history of Anglicanism has been a central thread of tolerance of difference. Disagreements have been incorporated, different thoughts, theologies and moralities continued under the broad umbrella of the Anglican Communion. In discussions of homosexuality this tradition of toleration has been to some extent forgotten with both sides of the debate pushing the institution to rule firmly and finally on the 'Church's' attitude to homosexuality and the issues arising from this.

Returning to questions of clergy identity, the chapter raises two areas of negotiation seen within the respondents' narratives. The chapter makes a number of recommendations to the Church, which it is hoped would benefit all clergy regardless of sexuality in the undertaking of life as clergy.

The thesis concludes with a number of recommendations for future research, which, it is hoped will add to this study, and further knowledge.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

The aim of this chapter is to explore pre-existing literature related to the study of gay clergy. In doing so the chapter illustrates the many gaps in knowledge that remain concerning this population. The chapter is presented in four distinct parts. To begin an overview of events and Church statements concerning homosexuality is presented. In doing this the chapter illustrates the position that gay clergy find themselves in within the Church, and also raises some questions regarding the position of the Church.

Following this the chapter discusses previous attempts to research gay clergy. The chapter shows that much more work is needed in the study of this population, though each of the previous studies have been lauded as 'groundbreaking', many are now ageing and also many had very narrow focus. In discussing these the chapter emphasises the need for the current study focussed on identity work.

The Chapter then presents an understanding of identity, which is based in interaction. Concentrating on the work of Goffman, Giddens and Plummer, the chapter illustrates the relevance of such an approach for the current study, and presents a concept of identity which will be taken forward.

The chapter then discusses recent work on Christianity, gay sexuality, and the clergy and emphasises the importance of engaging with such issues in the current study of gay clergy.

Gay Clergy and the Church of England: An Analysis of Church Statements

Opposition to homosexual practice in Christianity has often been traced back to before Christianity's inception. Opponents of gay Christians regularly refer to Old Testament scripture citing verses such as Leviticus 20: 13 which reads:

If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what
is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own hands.
(New International Version)

Similarly, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19) is seen to outlaw homosexual
practice. Also the New Testament teachings of St. Paul are referred to by opponents of
inclusion. For example:

Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes
nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor
slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6: 9-10
New International Version).

However such texts and their meanings have been and continue to be questioned by
those who question conservative understandings of these texts (e.g. McNeill 1988;
Helminiak 2000). Further, a number of theologians and historians writing concerning
Christianity and homosexuality argue that a definite line of opposition from inception to
present is not traceable. Rather exception and affirmation can be found in the history of
Christianity (e.g. Boswell 1980); and within biblical story itself (e.g. Olyan 2006).

Focusing on the Anglican tradition it is perhaps more possible to trace a definite and
continuous line. Coleman for example shows that opposition to homosexuality was
around at the inception of the Anglican Tradition (Coleman 1989). However though
this opposition has perhaps been constant in theory, it has often been silent, existing
both unchallenged and without being vocalised as 'policy'. More recently the issue of
acceptance of gay believers and clergy has come to the fore, the report 'Some Issues in
Human Sexuality' by a working party of the House of Bishops (2003) traced the
beginnings of this upsurge in interest to the publication of an academic paper in entitled
'The Problem of Sexual Inversion' (Bailey 1952).

Bailey's article is seen by the report to though not provide an outright defence of
homosexuality argued for the Church support of decriminalising homosexual acts. The
discussion emerging from Bailey's work led to Church discussion and the publication of

'The Problem of Homosexuality - An Interim report' by the Moral Welfare Council of the Church of England in 1954. This 1954 report saw the distinction of 'invert' and 'pervert' enter the language of Church. Through this distinction the Church accepted homosexuality, for some individuals (inverts), as being beyond their control. However though accepting this desire or 'urge' was beyond the individual's responsibility, acting upon this 'urge' remained an 'immoral expression' (House of Bishops 2003 :paragraph 1.3.6).

This report is seen as influencing the 'Wolfenden Report' which led to a change in the law (The Sexual Offences Act 1967), legalising consensual sex between men (lesbian sex never having been outlawed) over the age of 21 (Coleman 1989). However this was not an acceptance of homosexual activity by the Church of England, rather it was a distinction between what should and should not be punishable by the state. Arguably the Church reasserted its control, rather than state control over issues of sexual morality.

Following the change in the law, the gay liberation movement evolved, offering support to individuals. However much of this support was 'fiercely critical of the Christian tradition' (Coleman 1989: 140). Coleman therefore argues there was a need for specific Christian support. The Gay Christian Movement was formed in 1976, becoming the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM) in 1985. The emergence of these groups, more recently including Changing Attitude, The Evangelical Gay and Lesbian Alliance, and the Clergy Consultation (an organisation specifically to support gay clergy, and encourage acceptance of gay clergy) saw a gay voice, emerge within the Church for gay believers. The developments described, the legalisation of homosexual acts, the emergence of the gay liberation movement, and subsequently the founding of gay Christian organisations emphasised that being gay and Christian was an issue that required discussion. Indeed, an issue that had to be addressed by the Church.

Interestingly Coleman discusses that as early as 1970 the Church was discussing a limited 'acceptance' of homosexual relationships 'if it is the best they can achieve' (Coleman 1989: 149). However the report, in which this statement was made, was never published. Rather it received 'restricted circulation'. Two other reports followed this, The Gloucester Report of 1979, and the unpublished 'Osbourne' Report of 1989.

These illustrated a growing thoughtfulness concerning homosexuality within aspects of the Church, and indeed a firming of a debate, with lack of consensus becoming more clear.

The two most recent official statements from the Church on homosexuality again illustrate both continuation and change. The first, following a debate at General Synod stemming from a private members motion by Trevor Higton in 1987, and the second, the House of Bishops report 'Issues in Human Sexuality' (1991). Higton's motion called for a reaffirming of 'biblical standards of morality' arguing Christian leaders should be exemplary in their moralities (Bates 2004: 93). The conclusion of the debate, which stemmed from Higton's motion included statements which reaffirmed the Church's position on 'homosexual genital acts' as falling short of the Christian ideal (Synod Report 1987), and reaffirmed that clergy are to be 'exemplary' in their sexual moralities.

The second, which remains *the* Church statement, is the 1991 statement *'Issues in Human Sexuality'*. A response to the calls of the Communion-wide Lambeth conference of 1988 for greater thought and discussion on the issue of homosexuality, and the House of Bishops awareness of a changing pastoral situation within the Church in England (House of Bishops 1991: vii). This statement saw the Church moving from the language of 'inverts' and 'perverts' and 'homosexual genital acts', to the language of 'homosexual orientation' this discussion of orientation shows the Church's accessing of current social and scientific debates concerning sexual identity. Such language also allowed for a separation of identity and practice in the Church's discussion of homosexuality. With a line to be drawn between homosexual Christians who were celibate, and homosexual Christians who engaged in sexual activity. In discussing the former the report emphasised

> This is a path of great faithfulness, travelled often under the weight of a very heavy cross. It is deserving of all praise and of the support of Church members through prayer, understanding and active friendship. (House of Bishops 1991: paragraph 5.5)

In terms of the later the Church discussed an accepting rejection, or rejecting acceptance:

> While unable, therefore, to commend the way of life just described
> [monogamous homosexual relationships] as in itself as faithful a reflection of
> God's purposes in creation as the heterophile, we do not reject those who
> sincerely believe it is God's call to them. (House of Bishops 1991: paragraph
> 5.6)

The Church's discussion here emphasises a number of interesting points, there is within this statement an implicit 'love the sinner, but hate the sin' (Yip and Keenan 2004), there is also an emphasis upon the importance of individual experience and understanding, for the report recognises that individuals may feel their relationship is a reflection of what God wants from them. Therefore there is room for disagreement, the statement is not final, nor all encompassing, for although the Church feels unable to recognise and affirm sexually active 'homophiles', it does encourage parishes to accept and support them. However the distinction between clergy and lay believers remains. For example:

> The Church is also bound to take care that the ideal itself is not misrepresented
> or obscured; and to this end the example of its ordained ministers is of crucial
> significance. This means that certain possibilities are not open to the clergy by
> comparison with the laity, something that in principle has always been accepted.
> (House of Bishops 1991: paragraph 5.13)

The report asserts that as clergy are the representatives of the Church, and due to their pastoral roles the clergy must be 'free of anything which will make it difficult for others to have confidence in them' (House of Bishops 1991: paragraph 5.14), also reasserting the authority of the Church over the 'private' lives of its clergy saying:

> Though the Church is not infallible, there is at any given time such a thing as the
> mind of the Church on matters of faith and life. Those who disagree with that
> mind are free to argue for change. What they are not free to do is to go against
> that mind in their own practice. (House of Bishops 1991: paragraph 5.15)

Therefore the Church reaffirms its authority over existing clergy and the way they live, or organise their own 'practice', tying the clergy to an institutionalised morality. This expectation emphasises what is expected of clergy, and distances the Church from gay clergy, though accepting the publicly celibate. Further, this underlines the experiences of 'practicing' gay clergy as dangerous, and beyond acceptability.

The above-mentioned reports emerged from the Church of England. These reports show an attempt, by the Church, to engage with the difficulties associated with the question of gay believers and gay clergy. Although the attitude, and approach of the Church to homosexuality has evolved, central to each statement has been the continuing inability of the Church to fully incorporate gay clergy or believers. However this has become a subject of increasing debate with more vocal proponents of both inclusion and exclusion, illustrating a lack of consensus within the Church, despite the 'mind' of the institution.

Looking to the discussions of the worldwide Anglican Communion on the subject a similar picture can be seen. The previous three Lambeth Conferences (the conference of bishops and archbishops from around the communion, held every 10 years) have discussed the issue of homosexuality. These conference discussions though a decade apart have come to broadly similar conclusions. They reassert that the Communion does not affirm gay believers, though acknowledge a diversity of opinion within the Communion, and state further discussion is required. Both the 1978 and 1988 reports emphasised the need for the Church to take into account research on sexuality, and to listen to the experiences of gay people, with the 1978 report emphasising the need for pastoral care, while the 1988 report emphasises the human rights of gay and lesbian people (House of Bishops 2003).

The most recent Lambeth Conference in 1998 again saw the Church call for listening, and pastoral care and support for 'homosexual persons'. However the report reaffirmed 'traditional' statements, claiming homosexual practice was incompatible with scriptural teaching, affirming celibacy as the Christian way of life for homosexual people, and

refusing to ordain those in 'same-gender unions' (The Anglican Communion 1999a: 33). However, the report again recognised disagreement within the Church.

This disagreement illustrates the 'gay issue' facing the Church in terms of both lay believers and clergy. The call from all sides for the Church to finally rule one way or the other cements the discussion as an 'issue'. And growing vocal discussion further cements the position of gay clergy as a risky one.

Despite calls from the Church for listening and reflection the experiences of gay clergy remain beyond the remit of these discussions for two reasons in particular. Firstly, vocal opposition to homosexuality within areas of the Church make open discussion painful, and mean that discussion occurs within what is a particularly difficult context. As can be seen in the events of Lambeth 1998 when one openly gay man was subjected to an attempted exorcism by an African archbishop (a discussion of this can be found in Carrette and Keller 1999). Secondly, as described in the House of Bishops 1991 report. Gay clergy are not 'free' to practice. Therefore open discussion of experience holds with it the danger of repercussions which clergy may be unwilling to face.

The difficulties faced by gay clergy are further illustrated by recent issues. Illustrated by the threat of schism which hangs over the Anglican Communion particularly since the nomination of Jeffrey John in June 2003, (who later stood down) as bishop of Reading (UK), and the nomination and confirmation (November 2003) of Gene Robinson as bishop of New Hampshire (U.S.A). These nominations brought to the fore discussion of homosexuality within the Church and saw an explosion of media interest. Despite Jeffrey John's public declaration that his relationship was celibate, and therefore living within the rules of the Church, opposition emerged from both within England particularly through groups such as *Reform*, and also from the global Communion . Many non-western Churches who signed the Kuala Lumpar statement in 1997 reaffirming their opposition to the acceptance of homosexuality. Opposition emerged from similar parts of the American Episcopal Church and wider Communion following Gene Robinson's nomination, though Gene Robinson differed from Jeffrey John in that he openly affirmed that he was in a practicing gay relationship, opposition was based on similar tenets. However Gene Robinson was confirmed as bishop in 2003 this, along

with the Church in Canada's blessing gay couples led to the eventual publication of the Windsor report in 2004.

The Windsor report underlined the current position of the Communion. Its conclusions asked for calm on both sides of the debate. The report called for apologies from the American and Canadian churches for acting against the prevailing mood of the Communion. The report however also called for calm from opponents calling for an end to violent language within the debate. In essence the Windsor report called for a period of reflection. Asking individual Churches to move with rather than separate from the Communion (The Lambeth Commission on Communion 2004). This report was more of an attempt to hold Churches together than make a stance on homosexuality, however it was seen as being too liberal by conservatives, and too conservative by liberals.

The most recent statement from the House of Bishops emerged in 2005. Following the moves to introduce civil partnerships for gay and lesbian couples in Britain the House of Bishops released a statement stating their position. This reaffirmed the position of the 1991 report (which remains the official position of the Church) and emphasised the difference between celibate and practicing. The statement reaffirmed that the Church of England believed sexual intercourse belongs in marriage, and added sexual relationships outside marriages heterosexual or homosexual, fell short 'of God's purposes for human beings' (House of Bishops 2005: paragraph 4).

The statement reaffirmed that the Church and its clergy should not bless sexual gay relationships, however as the Church believed civil partnerships were not exclusively for gay and lesbian couples who intended to have a sexual relationship the statement discussed this as follows:

> Where clergy are approached by people asking for prayer in relation to entering into a civil partnership they should respond pastorally and sensitively in the light of the circumstances of each case. (House of Bishops 2005: paragraph 18)

The statement also reaffirmed previous teaching concerning gay clergy's relationships. The statement allowed clergy to enter civil partnerships however to do this the clergy must declare to their bishop that these relationships are intended to be celibate. Again stating that clergy were not free to go beyond the current 'mind' of the Church in their own practice:

> While clergy are fully entitled to argue, in the continuing debate, for a change in that teaching, they are not entitled to claim the liberty to set it aside, simply because of the passage of the Civil Partnerships Act. Because of the ambiguities surrounding the character and public nature of civil partnerships, the House of Bishops would advise clergy to weigh carefully the perceptions and assumptions which would inevitably accompany a decision to register such a relationship. (House of Bishops 2005: paragraph 22)

The official position of both the Anglican Communion as a whole, and the Church of England specifically remains that homosexual acts in any context are beyond affirmation by Church. Although from 1991 onwards a tolerance of committed monogamous relationships has emerged in terms of gay and lesbian lay believers, this has not been extended to the clergy.

Gay clergy therefore find themselves on the edge of acceptable moral boundaries of Anglicanism, unacceptable if practicing. However, the reaction to the nomination of Jeffrey John (despite his pronouncement that he was living within the boundaries of acceptability, in fact, living as the 1991 statement puts it, 'a path of great faithfulness, travelled often under the weight of a very heavy cross' (House of Bishops 1991: 5.5)) suggests that though separation between orientation and practice exists in official Church documentation, allowing space for 'theoretically' gay clergy. The Church as a whole has not reaffirmed this teaching. Therefore gay clergy stand as both part of and apart from the Church, though working within the Church and for the Church, their position is made precarious due to their sexuality (whether practiced or not). For they are outside of acceptability in the eyes of official Church statement, and acting beyond their freedoms if they practice. If they do not, the stigma homosexuality holds within the Church means they remain, though celibate, under threat.

Previous Research on Gay Clergy

This section will discuss the limited number of previous studies which have been undertaken concerning gay clergy. Initially focussing on the two previous studies of gay clergy in the Church of England, before extending the discussion to other denominations and countries.

Ben Fletcher's study of stress among homosexual clergy (1990) was a continuation of a study of stress in the wider clergy population. Fletcher argued that issues which caused stress in the clergy were felt more extremely among gay clergy due to the secrecy required concerning sexuality. His research involved administering a stress survey to 390 gay Anglican priests (44% of which were completed). The survey covered work demands, the influence of sexuality, support structures accessed and available to the clergy, and sections exploring medical and stress related information.

Fletcher found that the majority of his respondents remained satisfied in their clerical role, however high levels of strain were found. 26% of the respondents disclosed feeling like they were going to have a nervous breakdown in the preceding year (Fletcher 1990: 67). Further, in comparing the results of this research to his previous study of clergy in general Fletcher found scores of homosexual clergy on depression scales to be 'significantly higher' (Fletcher 1990: 68). Also in exploring the difficulties raised by sexuality Fletcher found that the highest rated demand was 'the established Church of England views on homosexuality' (Fletcher 1990: 76), illustrating the difficulties raised by continued lack of affirmation by the Church.

Although in publication Fletcher's study was published along with a case study from one gay priest the work remained essentially quantitative and focussed upon issues of stress. The findings of the study illustrated that gay clergy did experience greater levels of stress, Fletcher argues to almost dangerous excess. However details of the causes and experiences of such stress remains untapped. In terms of the present study Fletcher's work provides interesting background, however there are a number of issues

with his work, not least that the work is now over fifteen years old, and was released prior to '*Issues in Human Sexuality*', not to mention the nominations of Jeffrey John and Gene Robinson. As such it referred to a time in the Church which was very different to the current climate, with less public talk either affirming or opposing gay clergy. The focus on stress also means that the discussion of clergy experience is narrowed. Though obviously issues of stress are influential in the way that the clergy orientate and organise their lives, talk and actions. Issues of joy, satisfaction, fear, and ambivalence are also important. Further to this the quantitative nature of the work leaves questions unanswered, indeed the very suitability of primarily quantitative research for exploring such a subject is questionable.

The second study is that of Heskins (2005). Heskins, taking his lead from the report of the Lambeth conference in 1998 sought to explore the possibility of Christian living in same-sex partnerships involving the clergy. Using the experiences of gay and lesbian clergy Heskins illustrated acceptance and affirmation experienced by the clergy and explored how such examples could be seen as within biblical, and Church moral standards.

Heskins found that many of the clergy within his study had experienced affirmation in their local communities; that the respondents were able to provide ministry which other clergy shied away from – particularly to the gay community; and that although the respondents had faced and experienced repression from the institution they continued to hold onto a hope that this may change. Heskins' focus on relationships also allowed access to stories of affirming and supportive same-sex relationships and the attachment to Christian morality which was central to many of these relationships; he also discussed that committed gay and lesbian relationships allowed respondents to feel acceptance by God.

Heskins uses this information to talk directly to the Church about sexuality, respectability and indeed the role of the Church. However, Heskins' focus remains narrow, the book primarily concerns the relationships of gay clergy, and as such says little about single gay clergy. Again as with Fletcher's study, Heskins' book provides

information which is of interest to the current study but remains primarily a book about the relationships of gay clergy, not their identities.

Widening the net to other denominations a thoughtful exploration of the experiences of 21 gay Roman Catholic priests was undertaken by Elizabeth Stuart (1993). Stuart's study was again based on questionnaire research, however the questionnaire was purely qualitative and was provided as a 'start point' for respondents who were invited to write beyond the questions, or to ignore the questionnaire and write about their experiences. This approach encouraged story telling, and gave at least some control to participants. Though a small scale study in terms of respondent number, the work is rich in detail. Stuart's findings illustrated a number of issues that gay clergy face. She found that Roman Catholic Priests and Ordinands believed there was a lack of understanding in seminaries and official documents. Stuart also found demands of celibacy were problematic for respondents. The above discussion has shown that the Anglican Church continues to call its gay priests to celibacy, therefore such findings are relevant to this study.

Stuart's study also explored areas where the respondents gained satisfaction in their working lives. She found that primarily the respondents enjoyed and gained satisfaction from their sacramental and pastoral roles. From this Stuart argues that the Church should recognise and support these men as they embody what the Church wants from its clergy, and further, that the respondents' sexualities are influential in this.

Stuart's study illustrates the value of going beyond quantitative data in the study of gay clergy. The personal narratives elicited by the study provide a rich source of information. Though based in the Roman Catholic tradition many of Stuart's findings resonate with the findings of Fletcher, and provide important insights which relate to the current study.

Beyond these three studies of British gay clergy, studies have also been undertaken in the U.S.A. Of particular significance is Wolf's (1989) study of 101 Roman Catholic gay clergy. Again Wolf 's study employed questionnaires and was primarily quantitative in

nature. The study explored issues of spirituality, satisfaction with role, feelings towards sexuality, sexual practice, work problems and relationships both in and outside of work (questions related to spirituality, satisfaction, and work problems are compared to the findings of a national survey of Roman Catholic Priests undertaken in the U.S.A. by 'the Ad Hoc Committee on Pastoral Research and Practices of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops'). As such Wolf's study is more wide-ranging than Fletcher's. However his use of heavily quantitative data again lacks the depth of other more qualitative work. Wolf does attempt to answer this criticism by accessing the qualitative data of Wagner (1981) (discussed below). Wolf highlights the similar level of positive spiritual experiences experienced by both gay and straight clergy, however in terms of negative experiences he finds straight clergy are more likely to feel tempted away from God, whilst gay clergy are more likely to feel rejected by God Also, despite finding that the gay priests in his study reported more problems than the comparison sample, they were happier than the comparison sample (Wolf 1989).

In addition, Wolf found that the gay clergy developed more 'personally defined spirituality with regard to sexuality' (Wolf 1989: 64) due to the lack of discussion existing in the Church, and rejection by Church authority concerning sexuality (this issue will be explored further in the current study). A further significant point raised by Wolf's study is that his respondents are seen to desire long-term relationships, despite the need for secrecy which could make anonymous sexual contact desirable, an issue which could directly be influenced by the priests attachment to Christian sexual morality (another issue which will be explored further in the current thesis).

Wagner's (1981) study was again based within the Roman Catholic tradition in America. In total Wagner interviewed 50 gay priests and religious. However Wagner's discussions of data are brief, and his attempts to quantify much of his qualitative data remove the depth of experience interviews may have allowed access to. Despite this a number of findings remain of importance. He found that all of his respondents experienced fear of discovery, though their level of openness in community varied. Also Wagner's discussion of attitudes towards celibacy by his respondents found that the vast majority rejected Church teaching, feeling celibacy is a gift rather than something which can be required of an individual, such understanding freed a number

of respondents in Wagner's study from guilt about sexual activity, however for others feelings of guilt remained. Discussions of fear will be taken forward and explored further in the current study.

Finally, in terms of Roman Catholicism, Sipe's (1990) study was based on the experiences of both gay and straight catholic priests. Further the study differs in its methods as the work is based data emerging from clinical interviews and workshops. However Sipe's study raises an issue of importance for the current thesis. He discusses secrecy within the Roman Catholic Church as an attempt to protect institution from scandal, but this secrecy also had the dual affect of shielding activity, and also 'boundaried' it as both unacceptable and beyond discussion. In essence institutional silence re-enforcing personal silence and fear.

Moving beyond Roman Catholic experience Comstock (1996) undertook a study of gay and lesbian Christians in the United Church of Christ (UCC), and the United Methodist Church (UMC). He discusses the sample size as 289 UCC questionnaire respondents, and 199 UMC questionnaire respondents. Of these one quarter were clergy (Comstock 1996:45). 20 respondents were interviewed (10 from each denomination) of which 10 were clergy (5 from each denomination). In discussing issues related to ordination and ministry Comstock found, in contrast to Stuart, that many of his respondents had positive experiences of seminary or college, however some respondents experienced dismissal later (Comstock 1996: 140). Comstock identifies a reluctance to be out among the gay clergy in his study, and explores the possibility of 'selective outness' (Comstock 1996: 142), to some extent this was a positive process as it was linked to gaining trust of certain individuals in hierarchy, or congregation. However Comstock also points out that for some 'selective outness' was enforced (Comstock 1996: 142)

Therefore secrecy required more than silence, it required creative answering/ passing/ or lying. This emphasises the need for negotiation, and Comstock discusses how the ordination process is negotiated with use of silence, and the need for negotiation with hierarchy for acceptance. A number of Comstock's ordained respondents talked about their experiences in terms of 'fear' and 'pain' (Comstock 1996:146). Though Comstock's discussion is limited through space (being confined to one chapter within

30

his book) his discussion of negotiation, fear, and discrimination illustrate these issues to be of profound importance for gay clergy. These issues will be explored further in this study through the experiences of gay male Anglican clergy.

Most recently Hibbs (2006) undertook a study of coming out amongst gay male clergy in the USA based on interview data from 8 respondents. He discussed silence surrounding homosexuality and the priesthood in institutional Church, though he also discussed that a number of respondents had found affirmation in their local congregations, and that his respondents placed a high importance on empathy and inclusiveness in ministry, feeling their own experiences of being gay had aided them in keeping such issues central (Hibbs 2006). Another issue raised which reflects the findings of previous studies is his discussion of a duality in his respondents' lives in terms of gay and clergy identity. Though his discussion of this issue is short, the recognition is important, for as he argues:

> Many of the participants described a significant need to escape the church at times to maintain this duality. They talked about a need to associate with other individuals like they were. They mentioned having to connect with a gay culture. This was coupled with their need to maintain their identity with a religious organizational culture (Hibbs 2006: 159)

Hibbs' discussion relates to the need for negotiation, for the consideration and active awareness of need to be gay, and clergy and to fulfil the needs each identity requires.

A final significant issue raised by Hibbs' is closely related to the fact that his study is primarily based on 'coming out', his respondents discussed the importance of being out with their congregations, and the need to have a sense of honesty and integrity in their ministry. However this thesis will explore the link between openness and integrity is not necessarily as clear-cut as Hibbs' study suggests.

The above summary of research on gay clergy in Anglican, Roman Catholic and mainline protestant denominations in the U.S.A. show gay clergy a population worthy of study within social science research. It is important to recognise that denominational

differences are present. However common issues of lack of support (Wolf 1989, Fletcher 1990, Stuart 1993), discrimination (Wolf 1989, Comstock 1996), and fear (Wagner 1981, Fletcher 1990, Comstock 1996) exist beyond boundaries of denomination. These issues can be seen to stem from what Hibbs refers to as the duality of gay clergy, the difficulties of combining gay and clergy identity. Therefore this study proposes to explore the lives of gay clergy by centring on issues of identity, explored through respondents' understandings, experiences, and management of their gay, Christian and clergy lives.

The thesis will explore a number of the issues raised in previous research including silence, fear, Church attitude, relationships with congregation, how gay life is lived, and the interconnection of gay and clergy life. However the thesis will also explore the issues raised for gay clergy in being Christian. In doing so the thesis explores how the difference between being a lay believer and being an ordained member of the clergy, as mentioned in the official Church statements on sexuality affects the respondents in the study, and also how Christian belief interacts with both gay and clergy life. In order to do this the thesis considers each of these three identities in turn. Beginning with a discussion of issues related to how the respondents understand each identity, before looking at how in lived experience, or interaction these identities are constrained or enabled by other life choices, situations, and expectations.

To explain further the importance of interaction, and a situated understanding of identity the thesis will now discuss a concept of identity based in the symbolic interactionist tradition, traced through the work of Goffman, Giddens and Plummer. This discussion will show how identity is understood within this study and emphasise the importance of both consistency and flexibility in identity.

Presentation, Reflexivity and Narrative: Identity in Interaction

The concept of identity has become a watchword in the social sciences. More than this identity has become a watchword for self-help texts, television talk shows, the advertising industry and indeed everyday talk. Identity describes how we see ourselves,

what we want others to know about us, and to take from our appearance and possessions. However, as Elliott suggests identity is more than this, he writes about the construction of identity in the following way

> As directors of our own self-narratives, we draw upon psychic frames of memory and desire, as well as the wider cultural and social resources, in fashioning the self. Such self-constitution is not only something which happens through our own actions. It is also something that happens to us, through the design of other people, the impact of cultural conventions and social practices, and the force of social processes and political institutions. (Elliott 2001: 2)

Important in Elliott's discussion is the recognition that identity formation and management is at least a two-way process. One's identity emerges not only from what one believes one is, or wishes to be. It also emerges in context (Layder 2004), and is influenced by the expectations of others and the options available at a particular time. The construction and management of identity therefore requires both reflexivity and reactivity.

Often within understandings of identity a sense of consistency is key. Knowing who and what you are reflects good mental health, and reflects self-acceptance (Furedi 2003). This process of self-definition also grants access to specific social contacts, and distances oneself from unwanted social groupings (Woodward 1997). Consistency of identity therefore is seen to reflect consistent knowledge of self, a sense of integrity and an understanding of place. However since the mid 1980s concepts of identity and theoretical discussions thereof have to some extent removed this sense of permanence. Understandings of identity in social scientific literature have become more fluid, and fragmented. (Kellner 1992).

In the postmodern, consistency is replaced by 'momentary'. The self is in flux if not disappearing completely. Identification is therefore momentary and changeable, choice governs in place of constraint (Bauman 2004), and change is as easy as continuation. In this postmodern understanding of identity identification remains a necessary aspect of social connection, however its permanence is increasingly questioned.

Returning to the previous discussion of research into gay clergy the findings of this research reflect elements of both continuous identity, seen particularly in terms of Hibbs' discussion of the duality of being gay and clergy, a duality which is conceived as being constant. But also there is a discussion of fluidity as clergy hide sexuality during their working lives, finding space to be gay in separating their sexual activity from the day to day (Wolf 1989, Sipe 1990). Therefore in studying gay clergy it is necessary to approach identity through an understanding which allows for both consistency and fluidity. Specifically illustrating the possibility of a consistent though changeable self-identity, which is fluid in its presentation in interaction.

The discussion of identity so far has illustrated the multi-faceted nature of the concept. Identity is felt, understood, performed and reacted to. This multi-faceted nature can be seen through how we position ourselves and communicate ourselves while being read, expected off by others, and received by others in interaction. One of the classic texts on interaction discusses the self in interaction as follows:

> Everyone presents himself to others and to himself, and sees himself in the mirrors of their judgements. The masks he then and thereafter presents to the world and its citizens are fashioned upon his anticipations of their judgements. (Strauss 1977:9)

Strauss' discussion illustrates identity as a social phenomenon, an issue which is clarified in Jenkins' discussion. Which centralises the social in all aspects of identity formation and management:

> All human identities are in some sense – and usually a stronger rather than a weaker sense – *social* identities. It cannot be otherwise, if only because identity is about meaning, and meaning is not an essential property of words and things. Meanings are always the outcome of agreement or disagreement, always a matter of convention and innovation, always to some extent shared, always to some extent negotiable. (Jenkins 1996: 4 *italics* in original)

Importantly Jenkins raises the issue that meaning is socially created, therefore identity - which refers to meaning, is at base social. The social therefore is a constant presence in processes of identification, for as Woodward asserts identity is to do with similarity and difference (Woodward 1997). By identifying with a group we become included and in turn include other members of that group, however we may also exclude ourselves from membership of other groups, and similarly exclude members of those other groups from identifying with us. Identity is therefore inclusive and exclusive – hence social, and dependent on acceptance of particular shared meanings.

An individual affirms their understanding of themselves as clever/ attractive/ funny through the reactions and responses of others in interaction, our sense of self being formed through social interaction, and indeed in return our social interactions being informed by our sense of self. This understanding of identity gives access to a way of studying gay clergy which allows both a flexibility and a sense of consistency, understood within the interplay of the social and the individual.

Symbolic interactionism emerged from the Chicago school at the beginning of the 20th century. Central to the theoretical approach of symbolic interaction is the understanding that meaning emerges through interaction (Blumer 1969). A wonderful example explaining the importance of this issue is given by Plummer:

> A 'pornographic book' is not the same 'object' in the worlds of school-boys, priests, moral crusaders, 'sex fiends', anxious parents, printers and newsagents. In each of these cases, the meanings that emerge from a situation involving a 'pornographic book' are likely to vary. The object itself does not possess 'meaning', but rather the meanings arise through interaction and remain constantly negotiable. (Plummer 1975: 12)

Plummer's example of the pornographic book emphasises the interactional nature of meaning. Finding meaning, organising meaning and reacting to meaning are bound up in the social, the interactional and the situational. Following this interactionist understanding we are able to pull out a way of understanding identity in terms of interaction.

Mead (1974) discussed how the self emerges through interaction. For Mead it is through the experience of the reactions of others to ourselves that we form a sense of who we are or should be. Mead conceptualised self in terms of the 'I' and the 'me'. Distinguishing between these aspects of self Mead saw the 'me' being formed through experience of others which is internalised, whilst the 'I' refers to the desires and wants of the individual.

In relation to the current thesis such a conceptualisation is important for it allows both an awareness of self need and desire, and an understanding of the limitations applied to this through social position. The 'I' may particularly become problematic in late modernity due to the increased choice and widening of socially acceptable practice therein (Giddens 1991, Weeks 1995, Bauman 2001). Individualised society encourages the celebration of self, the following of desires in order to 'be who you want to be'. However such freedoms emerge with a continued understanding of the attitudes of others. Therefore though the 'me' is aware of increasing social acceptance of homosexuality, for example, it also remains aware, for the clergy in this study, that parishioners, or localised society see this identity as problematic.

Further to this the concept of 'role' as understood in interactionism is important. The interactionist understanding of 'role' must be seen against the functionalist understanding. Functionalist discussions of role centre on sets of responsibilities. If an individual performs a specific role they must undertake the set aspects of this role. However the interactionist understanding brings such solid notions of role into question. Jenkins' discusses this issue:

> But much will be situationally responsive and improvisatory within the mutual ebb and flow of the interaction order. (Jenkins 1996: 134)

The interactionist understanding of role emphasises its changeability; role is and must be negotiable. Understandings of role change not only in terms of geographical or cultural location, but may also change more locally. The role of the clergyman changes dependent on situation, for example a pastoral chat on a village street requires the

clergyman to behave differently to when undertaking a funeral service. Further in undertaking a funeral service the clergyman does not only have to be aware of the location of 'funeral service' he must also be aware of the expectations of the other 'players'. Do the family require distance or familiarity? Does the clergyman himself feel strong emotion? Was the individual's death a 'shock', or a 'blessed relief'? Undertaking role therefore requires negotiation. To refer to Plummer again though both functionalist and interactionist understandings of role can be seen in terms of a drama within which roles are played out difference remains:

> If the dramaturgical analogy is to be used by the interactionist, it should adopt a view of drama as improvisation rather than classical drama (Plummer 1975: 19).

In the work of Goffman this dramaturgical analogy is explored in much greater depth. Self and its presentation is related to the theatrical. This is most obvious in '*The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*' (Goffman 1971).

Presenting Identity

Goffman explores how the self is presented, and how this presentation changes dependent upon the situation. A central issue within this discussion is expectation. Goffman suggests that within interaction - in meeting, in talking, we have expectations of how others will behave and the expectations they may have of us. These expectations shape how individuals react to and interact with others. Further the communication involved in interaction stretches beyond direct talk to include the external. By making use of both direct and indirect communication the individual may attempt to shape the interaction. Goffman discusses these processes as an information game.

> This kind of control upon the part of the individual reinstates the symmetry of the communication process, and sets the stage for a kind of information game – a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery. (Goffman 1971:20)

For Goffman interaction is therefore not only the location through which self is formed, interaction is also to some extent competitive, and can be controlled and influenced by the individual. Significantly Goffman sees two reasons why particular signifiers may be used and upheld by individuals in interaction.

> When the individual employs these strategies and tactics to protect his own projections, we may refer to them as 'defensive practices'; when a participant employs them to save the definition of the situation projected by another, we speak of 'protective practices' or 'tact'. (Goffman 1971:24-25)

Such an understanding is of importance to the current study. For gay clergy defensive practice may be involved when closeting, protecting their social position, their job security, the respect of their congregation, however such closeting may also be protective. Protective of the institution of the Church, protective of congregation who may struggle with the knowledge of having a gay clergyman. Goffman's discussion of self therefore gives us a way of understanding the dynamics involved in identity management, and how these relate to the need to camouflage or closet aspects of self or *identity*.

Similarly Goffman allows an understanding of situation which illustrates the way in which performance can be managed, this is given through his discussion of 'front' and 'back' regions. Related explicitly to front and back-stage. One presents a publicly accepted self front-stage, while backstage allows place for those aspects of self which must be separated/ hidden/ controlled in interaction. Similarly the props necessary for interaction can be prepared for use, the dark and sombre black shirt can be ironed, removing suggestions of sloppiness, or untidiness, the white 'dog-collar' can be starched and put in place, the evidence of a 'sneaky cigarette' can be removed with breath fresheners, inappropriate tattoos or piercings covered. However, though backstage gives space to prepare it must also be carefully managed. As Goffman points out:

If a factory worker is to succeed in giving the appearance of working hard all day, then he must have a safe place to hide the jig that enables him to turn out a day's work with less than a full day's effort. If the bereaved are to be given the illusion that the dead one is really in a deep and tranquil sleep, then the undertaker must be able to keep the bereaved from the workroom where the corpses are drained, stuffed and painted in preparation for their final performance. (Goffman 1971: 116)

Control of boundaries and knowledge are central to Goffman's understandings of identity performance. In 'everyday life' we shift from situation to situation, in doing so we must present ourselves in ways that are appropriate to the situations we find our selves in, or inappropriate if we wish not to be accepted into the interacting group. Awareness of our own and others' expectations play important part in this, and Goffman's discussion of the dramaturgical model allows a way of understanding identity presentation wherein changeability can be accepted as normal, and the use of front and back regions allows a sense of consistency to understanding of self.

In addition, Goffman (1968) in his discussion of stigma, makes reference to homosexuality allowing an understanding of why homosexuality becomes an issue for gay clergy. He wrote

An individual who might have been received easily in ordinary social intercourse possesses a trait that can obtrude itself upon attention and turn those of us whom he meets away from him. Breaking the claim that his other attributes have on us. He possesses a stigma, an undesired differentness from what we had anticipated. (Goffman 1968:15).

Though, as mentioned in Chapter 1 an increasing liberalisation and acceptance of homosexuality can be seen within wider society. In Church situations one can see homosexuality remaining a stigmatising attribute. Goffman discusses how this stigmatising aspect affects interaction. For as a stigma homosexuality is not immediately knowable to others, therefore in Goffman's understanding the gay person is discreditable rather than discredited. The issue therefore for the individual is whether

to display, whether to tell, whether to lie (Goffman 1968: 57). Goffman discusses how signs are used by individuals to hide stigmatising aspects of identity, passing. This concept of passing illustrates the negotiated nature of interaction, how information is hidden, or other information about self emphasised in order to pass as 'normal'. Goffman's understanding of the 'passing' individual emphasises awareness in interaction, the 'passing' individual is required to be on their guard in interaction, to be constantly aware.

Goffman's discussion of stigma also revisits his discussion of regions. He discusses three regions where the stigmatised individual moves in and out of. The forbidden, the civil, and the back. Knowledge of, and the separation of these places allows the stigmatised individual to organise and be aware of how their behaviour and presentations should be managed.

Relating these discussions to his understanding of interaction Goffman problematises the normal. He writes:

> For example, in an important sense there is only one complete unblushing male in America: a young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight and height and a recent record in sports. ... Any male who fails to qualify in any of these ways is likely to view himself – during moments at least – as unworthy, incomplete and inferior; at times he is likely to pass and at times he is likely to find himself apologetic or aggressive concerning known-about aspects of himself he knows are probably seen as undesirable. (Goffman 1968: 153)

As such stigma moves beyond the obviously different, stigma is experienced by all, and it is through our viewing the world from the view of the 'ideal' that stigma emerges as an issue.

Goffman's work illustrates that lived identities are changeable, and that this changeability is normal and everyday. We express and present ourselves in line with our understandings of ideals and expectations, we creatively express and present

ourselves dependent upon situation. Goffman's discussion of stigmatised identity also allows a way of exploring the pressures experienced by gay clergy and their possible position as stigmatised or 'discreditable' individuals, and a conceptual framework for understanding how these individuals may organise life, and manage identity presentation. However the strategies used are those which are used by all in the everyday. Goffman's work on interaction therefore allows for an understanding of fluidity in presented identities.

Goffman's work particularly concentrates on everyday experience within interaction, though to some extent Goffman discusses societal norms and ideals, and overarching societal narratives he does not discuss the interrelation of these issues in the way other sociologists have. Though Goffman's discussion of interaction is important for the current thesis, it is necessary to further explore the discussions of others. In following through the development of interactionist thought Giddens' discussion of the interplay of structure and agency is of great importance.

Identity and the Reflexive Self

Giddens' discussion of identity is most thoroughly explored in '*Modernity and Self-Identity*' (1991). In this hugely influential book Giddens develops his understanding of self-identity in terms of the reflexive self. The reflexive self here referring to the self understood by the individual in terms of their biography. Giddens discusses this concept as follows

> Identity here still presumes continuity across time and space: but self-identity is such continuity as interpreted reflexively by the agent. (Giddens 1991: 53)

For Giddens therefore self becomes a project, a self-told story which must be worked out reflexively in the light of past, present and possible futures. The individual emphasises the relevant and edits the irrelevant, forming a story of self-identity. Giddens argues that this understanding of self must be 'reasonably stable' (Giddens 1991: 54), and importantly this project of self is concerned with 'self as I want to be'

(Giddens 1991:68). Therefore self-identity is worked out with reference to possible futures, the individual reaching towards an ideal self. Giddens' discussion of self-identity is tied up with his discussion of changing social structures. Of primary importance here are the increasing pluralisation of expert systems, and the existence of symbolic tokens. The rise of expert systems, and the commodification of expert knowledge leads to increasing social specialisation, this rise is aided by symbolic tokens, such as money, which have standard value and can be exchanged.

The rise of abstract systems (symbolic tokens and expert systems) bring about a decline in the role of tradition. The pluralisation of authorities in late modernity mean the need to choose between expert systems. Therefore the need for the individual to consider possible futures emerges through the rise of abstract systems. Giddens refers to having 'no choice but to choose' (Giddens 1991:81), we choose our 'lifestyles' which give form to our personal self narratives. Giddens explains this as follows:

> To act in, to engage with, a world of plural choices is to opt for alternatives, given that the signposts established by tradition are now blank. Thus someone might decide, for example, to ignore the research findings which appear to show that a diet high in fruit and fibre, and low in sugar, fat and alcohol, is physically beneficial … She might resolutely stick to the same diet of dense, fatty and sugary foods that people in the previous generation consumed. Yet, given the available options in matters of diet and the fact that the individual has at least some awareness of them, such conduct still forms part of a distinctive lifestyle (Giddens 1991: 82-83)

Living and eating 'traditionally' is a choice, and indeed a choice made with reference to other possible choices. Giddens' discussion of the self then encompasses the need for constant choice and choosing. The choices made being incorporated into ones sense of, or narrative of self. Further, choice is made even more necessary through the conflicting claims of abstract systems. This conflict requires individuals to make a choice, to separate themselves from other choices.

For Giddens the individual interacts with wider social changes, picks, chooses and organises life options in lifestyle and self-identity. Though aspects of Goffman's work can be seen, for example in Giddens' discussion of life sectors, where individuals are seen to segment life, wherein activities adopted in one life sector may be at variance with activities undertaken by the individual in other life sectors. And perhaps at a more basic level understanding of the reflexive self can only be seen in the social and through interaction whether face-to-face, or through other forms of interaction across time and space. For knowledge of possible futures, through which individuals make decisions can only occur through experience, whether first hand, or understood through vicarious experience. In fact in his discussion of social interactions, and the presentation of self, Giddens makes use of the work of Goffman. He argues that Goffman's discussion of fluidity, and changing self in presentation, rather than symbolising fragmentation of self, actually may be one way in which the self comes reflexively to form coherent self-understanding. He writes:

> Yet again it would not be correct to see contextual diversity as simply, and inevitably promoting the fragmentation of self, let alone its disintegration into multiple 'selves' … A person may make use of diversity in order to create a distinctive self-identity which positively incorporates elements from different settings into an integrated narrative. (Giddens 1991: 190)

For Giddens then self-identity exists in separation from presented identity. Self-understanding, separated from self-presentation. This separation allows for the reflexive understanding of self and the reflexive ordering of experience, this reflexivity joining the dots between the diversity of self-presentation. Due to the make-up of society the individual acts in a variety of situations, through understanding self in this diversity the individual then forms a reflexive self-narrative in which integrity can be found. This understanding of self allows for a variation between felt/self-understood self, and self as presented to others. Therefore a life separated in sectors, for example professional clergyman by day, sauna customer by night can be held together through one's self-told story.

The detraditionalization which allows for freedom of choice, and concentration of lifestyle is also seen by Giddens to free relationships from their traditional binds. Relationships, indeed intimacy itself becomes privatised. Marriages can be entered into, and left behind. Just as self identity is seen by Giddens to be reflexively ordered in terms of reaching for the aim or goal of being the self one wants to be, relationships are reflexively ordered in terms of the relationship one wants to be in. Part of the detraditionalization of the intimate is the increase of awareness of possible relationships.

Detraditionalization sees an increase in possible acceptable relationships. This in turn is linked to the growing acceptance societally of homosexuality, and brings about a situation in which individuals may choose same-sex relationships more freely than previously (Giddens 1992). Giddens' work therefore highlights increasing freedoms in reflexive creation and management of self, and allows for a sense of consistency in self-telling, and changeability in social tellings of self. However, though much of Giddens' work is of interest, and allows a development of understanding of gay clergy, particularly in terms of growing self- awareness, and wish to develop relationships, be out, and gain acceptance. Giddens for all of his efforts to maintain the link between structure and agency, in the end appears to move excessively to the latter. This is most obviously seen in the abovementioned quote 'self as I want to be' (Giddens 1991: 68). Within this the individual is conceptualised as being in control of the advancement of self. However this understanding plays down the role of societal pressure Giddens wishes to incorporate, and fails to fully discuss the constraints late modernity, and its enforced reflexivity have on the individual. A number of theorists have discussed this issue. Two examples are discussed below.

Sweetman discusses this issue with reference to Bourdieu's concept of habitus. Habitus Sweetman discusses as:

> Our overall orientation to or way of being in the world; our predisposed ways of thinking, acting and moving in and through the social environment that encompasses posture, demeanour, outlook, expectations and tastes ... Whilst it

may appear natural, habitus is a product of our upbringing, and more particularly our class. It is class- culture *embodied* (Sweetman 2003: 532 *italics in original*).

Through a discussion of late modern society, similar to that of Giddens, Sweetman illustrates the increasing need for reflexivity asked of the late-modern individual by late-modern society. Therefore Sweetman posits that the 'pervasive reflexivity' discussed by theorists such as Giddens in fact refers to 'an habitual reflexivity that itself reflects wider structural demands' (Sweetman 2003: 543). In essence we are reflexive because that is what society asks of us. Reflexivity of self is a reflection of the values and structures of late-modern society, not an escape or a freedom from such structure.

A different though related argument is put forward by Adams in his critique of Giddens' discussion of the reflexive self. Adams (2003) returns to the 'social psychology' of Mead, which he argues sees the creation of the self within interaction. At base level therefore the self, and from this self-identity cannot escape the confines of the cultural, or the social, for that is what the self essentially is – a social construction. Therefore reflexivity must emerge through the social, be a reflection of societal structures. Adams' critique of the reflexive self does not remove the possibility of increasing reflexivity in self-identity, rather it emphasises that such reflexivity must be understood in relation to social structures and emerging from such structures.

Both Adams' and Sweetman's discussions of reflexivity allow an understanding of increased reflexivity which reflects changing, developing or emerging social structures. An alternative discussion, which it can be argued allows a similar understanding to emerge is found in the later work of Plummer (1995, 2001, 2003).

Narrating Identity

Plummer in '*Telling Sexual Stories*' (1995) argues for a 'sociology of stories'. For Plummer this sociology of stories can only be seen in terms of symbolic interaction, for stories involve telling and hearing, and it is in the interaction between teller and listener that these stories become meaningful. It would however be wrong to see these stories

as of relevance only to social identity. Stories are also, in a sense which reflects the work of Giddens, integral to self-identity. Plummer discusses this as follows:

> We are constantly writing the story of the world around us; its periods and places, its purposes and programmes, its people and plots. We invent identities for ourselves and others, and locate ourselves in these imagined maps (Plummer 1995: 20)

Plummer's discussion of storied life illustrates the interconnection of self and society. Identity is formed through, and in relation to the telling of, hearing of, and knowing of stories. Self-identity therefore is social, for self-identity must be created in and through an awareness of the boundaries of identification as previously socially told. Narrative or story has been discussed by a number of theorists, central to much of this discussion is the meaning stories give to objects (Bauman 2001). Returning to the previous example of a 'pornographic book' we see how meanings are produced through the interaction of individual with object. Similarly self-identity emerges through meaning worked out through stories of self. Importantly, within this discussion we must not lose sight of the importance of cultural, social, historical and environmental context in the creation of story. Plummer discusses the changing nature of stories, and is worth quoting at length:

> The meaning of stories are never fixed but emerge out of a ceaselessly changing stream of historically grounded interactions between producers and readers in shifting *contexts*. ... always and everywhere the meaning of stories shifts and sways in the *contexts* to which they are linked. Life stories get told and read in different ways in different contexts. The consuming of a tale centres upon different *interpretive communities* who can hear the stories in certain ways (and hence not others) and who may produce their own 'memories'. These communities themselves are part of wider habitual or recurring networks of collective activity. Stories do not float around abstractly but are grounded in historically evolving communities, structured through age, class, race, gender. (Plummer 2001: 43 *italics in original*)

Within this discussion Plummer highlights not only the situated nature of stories, but also how the social nature of stories emphasises their changeability through the involvement of teller, coaxer and reader (Plummer 1995). This social nature in itself also affects what stories can be told, for Plummer this is understood in terms of 'the stream of power' (Plummer 1995:26). Therefore stories told are selectively censored in their telling, the story of self we tell ourselves, differ from the stories of self we may be able to tell in different settings. For example in discussing the 'coming out' story Plummer argues there are contexts in which the individual may feel enabled to tell their sexuality, and contexts in which they may feel constrained. Stories are thus controlled, and edited in their telling in reference to likely hearers or readers. In this way the 'sociology of stories' allows an approach to identity which both allows consistency and fluidity in self-identity, and changeability and control in self-identity's social telling. The sociology of stories offers a way of incorporating both the interactional discussions of Goffman, and reflexivity as discussed by Giddens.

In terms of late or reflexive modernity the sociology of stories allows an understanding of how path through life is negotiated. As the individual encounters diverse, conflicting stories, or meaning systems, the individual interprets and includes aspects of these stories into their own biography. In this way the individual gains power over structures through their interpretation of such stories of meaning.

Therefore the individual through encountering societal structures beyond their control, gains power in these encounters through increased knowledge and ability to choose. However whereas Giddens sees much of this power, and the choices made as removed from tradition and inherited knowledge. Plummer, through his conception of stories as historically located sees decisions made, and story incorporation as connected intimately to history, biography and structure.

When discussing the lives of the silenced the sociology of stories becomes even more relevant. Jamieson for example discusses how the term 'stories' removes hierarchical judgements of validity of accounts (Jamieson 1998). Therefore, through discussion of

story silenced, or discriminated voices can be viewed in and off themselves rather than with need to refer to hierarchical systems of official voices.

The thesis moves forward viewing identity in terms which encapsulate reflexive choice, awareness of self and censure of self in interaction. Roles of teller, and reader of story, and the need for an awareness of the situatedness of stories and experience are included.

The chapter takes forward the previous discussion of the position of gay clergy, and this understanding of identity. It now goes on to explore previous literature on religious, sexual and clergy identities emphasising the need for a discussion of each in exploring the lives of gay clergy.

Exploring Contemporary Religious Identity

Religious belief (or lack of it) is one of the many aspects which make up self-identity, or self-narrative. Being Christian, for example, influences not only one's religious discussions and stories, but also influences other aspects of lived experience. Understanding religious identity as a personal story requires discussion however, particularly in terms of the inclusion of personal choice and negotiation into the process of defining and managing religious identity.

Religious Individualism and the 'Turn to Life'

The concept of religious individualism has gained a growing acceptance among many theorists of religion in recent years. Religious individualism refers to a construction of religion with reference to individual experience and need. Roof (1999) argues that religious individualism or 'lived religion' is constructed through three aspects these being scripts, practices and agency. In essence, though scripts and practices remain central to religious belief these are understood and negotiated through the human agent in order to construct a belief system which is meaningful to the individual. One consequence of this is discussed by Wilcox '[Religious] teachings, however, are also seeds that sprout plants never anticipated by many religious authorities' (Wilcox 2003:

77). The human 'agent' incorporating religious teaching and practice into their life-story negotiates and interprets beliefs and practices shaping them into a personalised belief system which may differ in more or less extreme ways from the 'tradition' they emerge from.

There are two particular issues which influence this individualisation of belief. The first is the need for 'choice' in the religious world, and the second is the acceptance of the role of self in making religious 'choice'. Both of which are intrinsically connected to the collapse, or perceived collapse of grand / meta narratives.

The possibility of choice in the religious realm emerges through its pluralisation (Repstad 2003, Veverka 2004). Experience of other religious traditions and worldviews alerts the individual to possible choice. Veverka discusses this in the following way:

> Our inevitable encounters with religious 'others' alert us to the spiritual depth, power and beauty in different religious traditions as well as confront us with the darker shadow side of our own. Whatever the strength of our own commitments, we know on some level that it is possible to choose otherwise. (Veverka 2004: 43)

'Choice' must therefore be made. For as Giddens suggests in his discussion of diet cited above, in our world of possibilities even sticking resolutely to the traditional is a choice. Personal choice has become central to organisation of religious life for a number of theorists, for example in terms of 'rational choice' (Stark and Bainbridge 1987), and the commodification of religion (Lyon 2000). However 'choice' does not necessarily include negotiation, or the personal shaping of belief, rather it may only increase options of forms of belief which may or may not meet the demands of the religious 'consumer'.

As shown above religious individualism involves negotiation, and creative interpretation of script and practice through agency. The increase of 'choice' in the religious realm does not go far enough to allow this incorporation of agency. The importance of self must be incorporated, as Geyer and Baumeister (2005) discuss:

Historically, a central and explicit goal of religion and morality in general has been to restrain the self and to override people's tendency to act out of self-interested motives. Now people must find a way to reconcile historical conceptions of morality with the recent formulation of the self as a source of value with inherently authoritative claims. (Geyer and Baumeister 2005: 419)

The religious realm in this view is not separated from wider social change, such as the processes of detraditionalization and individualization. Rather it is caught up in these transformations which Beck and Beck-Gernsheim see as inescapable, 'a compulsion' wherein the individual must 'stage-manage, not only one's own biography but the bonds and networks surrounding it' (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002:4). Evidence for increasingly individualised life can be found in the work of Putnam (2001), not only are we increasingly *Bowling Alone,* we are also increasingly eating alone, playing alone, and praying alone. This decline in civic engagement centres self and individualised needs and desires.

Linda Woodhead in her discussion of the 'turn to life' in religion, describes this centring as follows:

> If no one can tell me how to live my life, then no one can dictate my religion in advance. Whilst tradition, creed and ritual may be useful, it is ultimately *I* who have to give them authority in my life. In that sense I am my own authority and must kneel before no other. (Woodhead 2001: 113)

For Woodhead there are two aspects two this 'turn to life'. The 'turn to life' involves a personalisation of belief, that is belief is worked out in relation to self – the 'subjective turn' (Heelas and Woodhead 2005). But also there is a 'this-worldly' turn, religion is expected to provide answers and improve 'this' life, not just make promises for the next. These improvements are not just for the individual, but religion is expected to improve the lot of '(hu)mankind'. Hunt for example refers to the development of a 'social gospel' (Hunt 2005: 109) concerned with human rights, and the abolition of poverty. The 'turn to life' therefore is made up by a 'turn to *my* life' and a 'turn to *this*

life'. Stories of religion must be incorporated with stories of self, and stories of the world around us.

As Woodhead rightly points out, there is a danger that such discussions of this 'turn to life' will be primarily seen to be related to 'do-it-yourself' spiritualities, particularly those related to new age practice, and spiritual lives separated from institutional belonging. While to be sure such religiosity is linked to the turn to life (see for example Heelas' (1996) discussion of 'New Age', and Davie's (1994) discussion of 'Believing without Belonging'), evidence of the turn to life can and should be seen within organised religion, Christianity being most relevant to the current study (see for example Hoge, Dinges, Johnson and Gonzales 2001, Woodhead 2001, Hunt 2005). One interesting example of this 'turn to life' is illustrated by an advertisement by the 'Churches Advertising Network' (www.churchads.org.uk) which appeared on billboards in England during the run-up to Christmas 2003. The advert depicted a traditional illustration of the nativity, however the infant Jesus is pictured in the red and white costume of Father Christmas. Beneath the picture the tag-line urged 'Go on ask him for something this Christmas'. However, the question left unanswered was 'Ask him for what?' Salvation? Peace on earth? A new bicycle?

The advertisement, in not telling the reader what to ask for leaves space for an understanding of Jesus as giver of gifts for 'the next life', 'this life', or 'my life'. The 'turn to life' then, combined with the proliferation of choice in the religious realm allows for an understanding of individualised religion where narratives of personal belief are negotiated with reference to tradition, experience, and desire.

Belief in God has been seen as one aspect of religiosity/spirituality which halts total centralisation of self. Heelas and Woodhead's 'The Spiritual Revolution' (2005) discusses a 'subjective turn' wherein a variety of spiritual practice is incorporated into the individual's personal belief story with the goal of furthering the self, what Heelas (2003) refers to as the 'higher self'. Within this, understanding the self is central not only as organiser of spiritual belief, but also as goal. Therefore though a 'subjective turn' can be seen in Christianity, for Heelas and Woodhead the central focus of

congregational religion on something beyond the self means such individualisation stops short of a 'spiritual revolution'.

However, this distinction may be complicated through reference to discussions concerning conceptualisations of God. Barrett and Keil (1996) discuss anthropomorphism in God concepts. God is objectified and thus interacted with. As such, conception of God emerges from the self, and it has been argued can reflect the self (Jolley and Taulbee 1986). The creation of 'God stories' as well as 'belief stories' therefore emerge through the negotiation of tradition, experience, and desire. Though Christian identity involves a central focus on the divine, self has an influence on the interpretation of this divine 'other', which though distinct from a divine 'me' reflects a subjectivization which allows the incorporation of the personal into not only belief but also the divine. Therefore in taking forward discussion of the 'turn to life' the thesis concentrates on personal belief stories, which are created reflexively with reference to traditional structure.

As mentioned above the emergence of choice, and the incorporation of 'agency' into the religious realm are both innately related to the collapse of grand/meta narrative (Hunt 2005). The collapse of religious grand narrative occurs through and allows the realization of the possibility of choice. Also the collapse of grand narrative brings about an openness in which personal narrative gains ground. Plummer discusses such collapse as follows:

> Our formerly strong conviction of unity, permanence, continuity – of one moral order under God – has started to collapse, and what we now find instead are fragmentations, pluralizations, multiplicities. (Plummer 2003: 18)

Acceptance is replaced by choice, authority moves towards self. Personal narrative does not necessarily reflect grand narrative, and awareness of others divergences from the 'norm' become influential. A wonderful conception of the sociality of religious belief is given by Besecke (2005) who describes religion as 'A social conversation about transcendent meaning' (Besecke 2005: 181) for Besecke belief is not only

influenced by institution, or self but also through our interactions with others and their tellings of their understandings.

Taking forward the concept of 'religious individualism' understood in terms of personal story of belief influenced by institution, self and others. The chapter will now explore how such a concept has been related to gay Christians in previous studies.

The 'Turn to (gay) Life'

Gay Christians have been seen as evidence of individualised religion. Traditionally Christian belief is seen as excluding gay and lesbian people from acceptance within the Christian community. Wilcox (2003) argues, not only that gay Christians are undertaking creative interpretation of traditional belief, but are in fact forced to do so, due to the attitude of mainstream churches to homosexuality. Empirical studies have shown that this interpretation is undertaken in different ways. For some lesbian, gay and bi-sexual (LGB) believers space for belief is found within affirming congregations (Rodriguez and Oullette 2000, Hendershot 2001, Wilcox 2002), for others space is found through distance from institutional religion (Yip 2000, Wilcox 2003), others continue to express their religious beliefs within mainstream traditions (Yip 1998, O'Brien 2004). Also, taking on Besecke's discussion of 'religion as conversation about transcendent meaning' LGB Christians may also find space for belief talk in support groups (Thumma 1991, Wolkomir 2001), conversion (ex-gay) groups (Ponticelli 1999, Wolkomir 2001), and in therapy (see Miville and Ferguson 2004, and Morrow and Beckstead 2004 for discussions of therapy for LGB believers).

Though LGB Christians find space to believe in such varied contexts central to many experiences are the need to negotiate with institutional, traditional, previous personal and oppositional understandings of Christian teaching. As Wilcox suggests this can be seen as being enforced in order to be able to incorporate both gay and Christian identity in personal biography - the *'raison d'être'* of LGB Christians (O'Brien 2004).

This primacy of self (Yip 2002), or the central role of agency in interpretation can be seen in terms of script, practice and acceptance of influence or *'authority'*. Script interpretation is particularly clear in two ways, firstly Bible verses which have been seen as condemnatory of homosexuality are examined and reinterpreted (Bardella 2001, Wilcox 2003, Yip 2005a). And secondly, conceptions of God (Thumma 1991, Wilcox 2002), and Jesus (Bardella 2001, Yip 2005a) are understood in relation to issues of sexuality.

Practices are also re-interpreted with the need for belonging questioned through those who 'leave the Church to keep their faith' (Yip 2000). Worship services are reinterpreted by gay-positive churches to incorporate and celebrate gay identity (Dillon 1999), buildings may incorporate gay symbol (Hendershot 2001), and prayer may reflect a relationship with God which is different to that expected by traditional Church (Wilcox 2003).

Authority in this individualised context must be understood in terms of Bauman's discussion of legislators and interpreters (1989), this authority is chosen, and is not necessarily accepted 'wholesale', authorities do not provide a concrete understanding of 'truth', but rather offer an interpretation which can be accepted, accepted in part, or accepted for brief periods. Though gay Christians may continue to accept traditional authorities, for example the Pope, the clergy and institutional authority structures. The self is also seen as authority as shown above, and other less established authorities may be given influence for example gay Christian authors (e.g. McNeill 1988), affirming institutions and their leaders (Lease, Horne and Noffsinger-Frazier 2005), support-group facilitators (Thumma 1991, Wolkomir 2001), and therapists. Such authorities are allowed influence by the individual, they are chosen and reflect the centrality of self in the construction of belief story.

Moving forward the thesis will explore the religious lives of gay clergy with reference to such 'religious individualism', though clergy as representatives of Church face particular situational constraints which may be less pronounced in the lives of lay believers they also remain gay Christians and as such are required to negotiate with the tradition they identify with in order to find space. The thesis argues that gay clergy

access a range of authorities, and actively negotiate with and interpret script and practice in order to incorporate sexuality and spirituality. However, this occurs within the peculiar situation of being representatives of institution, and will be influenced by such context.

Exploring Contemporary Gay Identity

The thesis now discusses gay sexual identity, concentrating on understanding of sexuality, and management/presentation of sexuality before discussing how such concepts relate to the study of gay Christians and gay clergy.

Understanding of Gay Identity

Within the social scientific literature on sexuality the debate between essentialist and constructionist understandings of sexuality has been a central feature since the 1980s. Within current social theory, for many authors the victory trumpet has sounded and constructionism reigns (Richardson 2000). An interesting discussion of the failings of essentialist argument is provided by Sinfield, who draws thoughtful parallels between gay and religious identity:

> Many lesbians and gay men believe that asserting essential, coherent sexual identities as natural – in our genes, perhaps – will strengthen our case against homophobia. Like an ethnic group. However, essentialist assumptions have not protected Jews, or Blacks, or innumerable native peoples from oppression and exploitation. They have not protected women. Conversely, religious faith is not generally reckoned to be innate, and that has not discouraged believers from asserting rights. (Sinfield 1998: 17)

For Sinfield the inflexibility or claim to genetics which is central to essentialist understanding of sexuality has not provided the acceptance or 'protection' expected, and in fact non-essential identities have gained similar freedoms. Constructionist understandings have been seen to be of greater power and value by social scientists due

55

to their 'queerying' of the heterosexual ascendancy. The work of Foucault is often cited in such discussion, and is explained eloquently by Bersani as follows:

> Power in our society functions primarily not by repressing spontaneous sexual drives but by producing multiple sexualities, and that through the classification, distribution, and moral rating of those sexualities the individuals practicing them can be approved, treated, marginalized, sequestered, disciplined, or normalised. (Bersani 1995: 81)

For Foucault the construction of homosexuality is seen through labelling or classification, as was heterosexuality, however where heterosexuality is approved, homosexuality is marginalized. This understanding is also put forward by Weeks, who describes sexuality as a palpable social presence which shapes both our public and private lives (Weeks 2003). However this presence is a conceptualisation, or labelling of a set of desires and actions, not a naturally occurring cross-cultural inflexible phenomenon. For radical constructionists it is through the shaping and naming of *sexualities* that the acceptable *heterosexual* face of sexual attraction is normalised. Therefore it is not through the arguing for the 'naturalness' of same-sex attraction that the boundaries of acceptability are broken, rather it is only through the queering of the history of sexuality that an equality of sexualities can be achieved.

Despite such argument, essentialist thought has become central to much 'pro-gay' discourse. Whisman, for example, discusses this saying:

> The claim of 'no choice' is to a pro-gay stance as the claim of 'choice' is to an anti-gay one; a foundational argument. (Whisman 1996:3)

This aspect of essentialist argument, that there is 'no choice' allows argument that change is not possible, the gay person is gay, it is 'not their fault'! However, for Whisman it is this aspect of the essentialist argument that is most questionable. If essentialist argument argues against fault, it admits the possibility of fault. Arguing 'no choice' as defence, implicitly suggests that if there was choice being gay would be the

wrong choice, thereby seeing homosexuality as acceptable only because heterosexuality is not possible.

Despite these perceived failings, claim to essentialism remains strong, both as a political strategy, and also in individual's understandings of their sexuality. Politically essentialism has been seen to aid liberalisation of the gay age of consent, repeal of Section 28, and policy change on same-sex adoption (Waites 2005). One major way in which such essentialism has been incorporated into public thought is through the results of scientific study, which claim to illustrate biological difference between gay and straight men, and lesbian and straight women (LeVay 1997, Wilson and Rahman 2004). Such scientific 'rational' evidence is a powerful influence of both individuals and policy makers (Weeks 1995). However, although such evidence may lead to an acceptance of private homosexuality, it does not necessarily equal an incorporation of gay lives. Though lesbian and gay sexuality may be tolerated as a private issue, acceptance of gay life, whether seen to have biological basis or otherwise does not necessarily come in tandem (Yalda 1999).

For the individual, essentialism can also remain powerfully persuasive. For many gay and lesbian people essentialist understanding is seen as most descriptive of their own experiences and early life memories (Brekhus 2003). Also essentialism gives access to a coherent and consistent understanding of sexual identity which can offer a way of understanding and accepting desire, and offers a means of connection to a community, even an *ethnicity'* (Sinfield 1998). Plummer discusses the understanding of sexuality as essential and the importance of such understandings with reference to personal story:

> In every major western city throughout the world, people have become 'gay' or 'lesbian' or even, since the late 1980's, 'queer' all over again! Identities are built around sexuality; an experience becomes an essence. (Plummer 1995: 86)

An essential understanding therefore allows the lesbian or gay individual to construct a sexual identity which is constant, and traceable through life. In terms of individuals' sexual stories therefore, essentialism continues to serve a purpose. As a story self-told it sorts, manages and explains sexual desire.

Therefore in the current study the focus will be on the uses of understanding of sexuality for the individual. That is, how, for example, an essentialist understanding is incorporated within an individual's story of self, and the value such an understanding can be seen to have. Such an approach has been discussed by theorists who have attempted to move beyond the essentialism/constructionism debate.

Sedgwick reframes the debate referring to the 'minoritizing' view, and the 'universalising' view. The minoritizing view seeing the issue of homosexual/heterosexual definition as 'of active importance primarily for a small, distinct, relatively fixed homosexual minority' (Sedgwick 1994:1), and the universalising view seen 'as issue of continuing, and determinative importance in the lives of people across the spectrum of sexualities (Sedgwick 1994:1). Further, Sedgwick goes on to argue that reason can be seen for the legitimacy of both accounts (Sedgwick 1994), and so in avoiding the trappings of 'the debate' then Sedgwick describes her approach as:

> Repeatedly to ask how certain categorizations work, what enactments they are performing and what relations they are creating, rather than what they essentially *mean*, has been my principal strategy. (Sedgwick 1994: 27)

Sedgwick moves beyond the essential/constructionist argument by emphasising the contextualised use of the arguments, and how they 'work', rather than focussing on the implicit meaning of each. In fact it has been argued each approach essentialist or constructionist, has the other at its base (Fuss 1989). Sedgwick therefore widens the scope of study from usefulness of terms to reasons for the use of terms and their effects. A similar approach is taken by Weeks (1995) and Plummer (1995, 2003). Referred to by Weeks as a 'particularist' approach, which is to:

> Understand the specifics of any sexual phenomenon: the histories and narratives which organise it, the power structures which shape it, the struggles which attempt to define it. (Weeks 1995: 6)

This 'particularist' approach moves beyond concepts of essential or constructed bases for sexuality. Exploring instead the meanings, negotiations and influences which act upon experience of sexuality. That is, how sexuality is experienced by the individual, what shapes experience, why this shaping occurs, and the context in which it takes place. Emphasising the individualised nature of sexual identity construction and experience. This 'particularist' approach is, I argue, especially suited to a storied understanding of identity. As discussed earlier, stories are shaped through interaction and negotiation, and illustrate such negotiations in the process of their making and retelling. Understanding sexual identity as a story of sexuality allows recognition of the multiple influences which are at work in the story's construction. For gay clergy, for example, the influence of Church, of religious belief, of position as authority figure, and of position as citizen of a particular country will all have influence over stories of sexuality encountered by the clergy, and the incorporation of such stories into personal narrative.

Managing Gay Identity

The second issue of importance for the current study concerning sexual identity is 'the closet'. Though this issue is generally discussed in terms of two positions – 'in' or 'out', I argue that management of sexual identity is an issue for which a 'particularist' approach is potentially greatly suited.

In contemporary Western 'secular' society being 'out' of the closet is seen to be a reflection of a healthy, complete gay individual. Seidman, Meeks and Traschen (1999) explain that individuals who are 'in' the closet are

> Stigmatised as living false, unhappy lives and are pressured to be public without considering that the calculus of benefits and costs vary considerably depending on how individuals are socially positioned (Seidman, Meeks and Traschen 1999:10).

Such understandings conceptualise 'outness' as the gay and lesbian goal. 'Outness' is a sign of completeness and authenticity. Further, for some the concepts of gay identity and coming out are intrinsically linked. For example, King and Noelle (2005) introducing their research on 'coming out stories' write:

> For lesbians and gay men, coming out stories represent important touchstones in personal history … The coming out story may be seen as a particularly meaningful personal memory, as it is the central tale of one's emerging sexual identity. (King and Noelle 2005: 279)

So tied up are 'coming out' and gay identity here, that it is implied that one may not have a gay identity without coming out. Such an understanding of 'coming out' relates it as a linear process. One is either in or out, or on the way between one or the other (Cass 1984). However I suggest that both 'the closet' and 'coming out' are much less solid than they appear here. Those who are closeted in some situations may be out in others, also those who have been out may in fact go back in depending on reactions and consequences of the decision to be open. The 'particularist' approach allows the discussion of closeting in terms of the contexts in which it is used, and the influences upon the individuals movement 'in' and 'out'. It is closeting as an action which the focus should be on.

More nuanced discussions of the closet are provided in the literature. Affirming work environments have been seen to lead to individuals being more likely to come out at work (Day and Schoenrade 1997; Griffith and Hebl 2002). Close relationships to family have also been argued to aid coming out in adolescents (Beaty 1999; Waldner and Magruder 1999). Essentially, 'coming out' was more likely where the individual felt that their disclosed sexuality would be accepted. Coming out in this sense is not necessarily the death of the closet. Rather such findings illustrate the more fragmented experience many gay and lesbian people have of coming out, for example Day and Schoenrade's sample included individuals who closeted at work, but not at home (Day and Schoenrade 1997), and Wright and Connoley's (2002) work showed young gay men and lesbians may come out to support workers before coming out elsewhere. Previous literature has also called into question the binary of 'in'/'out', for example

Button (2004) found three approaches to presenting sexual identity at work (1) Non-heterosexual employees counterfeit heterosexual identities, (2) they avoid discussing the issue of sexuality, (3) they integrate a gay or lesbian identity (Button 2004). For Griffin a fourth category existed of implicit outness, where individuals did not conceal, but also did not explicitly come out (Griffin 1992).

Brekhus (2003) explored gay male identities suggesting a typology of three kinds of gay man (1) the peacock – or gay lifestyler, for whom gay identity was central and constantly shown, lifestylers being seen as living in 'gay' areas, working in 'gay' jobs, (2) the chameleon – the gay commuter who travels to spaces where they can be gay, (3) the centaur – the gay integrator who integrates their gay identity in heterosexual spaces (Brekhus 2003). Brekhus admits his typology concerns ideal types, however such typology suggests some form of consistency in these identities, and ignores the diversity of gay life and experience.

Seidman, Meeks and Traschen take a different view of the closet and being in and out thereof:

> Our point is not that sexual self-management practices are obsolete. Rather we contend that such practices are more situation-specific than patterning of a whole way of life. (Seidman, Meeks and Traschen 1999:11)

Here the closet is re-imagined as collapsible, used in different situations to different degrees, one (potentially) moves in and out of the closet. The concept of the closet being used differently dependent upon situation allows for a more contextualised understanding of performance or presentation of gay identity, which in turn emphasises the influences and constraints which act upon the individual in specific situations.

Ward and Winstanley offer an alternative approach to closeting, discussing silence. They view silence as a multi-faceted concept, and exploring both the meanings of silence, and where or when it is used (Ward and Winstanley 2003). Exploring the meaning of the closet, or silence wherein and when it is used provides a more in-depth understanding of the influences upon individuals' sexual identity in context. It also

lends itself to the discussion of stories, as silence about sexuality reflects the tellers preconceptions of 'audience' reaction (Plummer 1995). Inability to tell the story homosexuality reflects a perceived censure and illustrates the influence of external attitude on the individual's presentation of self.

The thesis takes forward the conception of 'closeting' as action. Using the particularist approach the thesis views closeting as reflective of particular interactions of history, biography and perceived constraint.

'Living' Gay Identity

A further issue of importance for the study is how gay life is 'lived', and how gay social networks are organised in order to find space to *be* gay. In essence, how individuals access and present gay 'lifestyle' (Giddens 1991, Bauman 2000).

In terms of close personal relationships Giddens (1992) has argued that detraditionalization has allowed for creative re-imaginings of relationship organisation. He suggests that because no blueprint exists for same-sex relationships (compared to the traditional marriage blueprint for heterosexual couples), gay men and lesbians are pioneers of the new freedoms in the realm of personal relationships (Weston 1991). One example of this is the issue of sexual (non) exclusivity. Yip (1997a) for example, found that four varieties of approaches to sexual exclusivity could be seen. Sexually exclusive (monogamous) relationships, sexually non-exclusive relationships, agreed sexually exclusive relationships which in practice are non-exclusive, and agreed sexually non-exclusive relationships which in practice are exclusive. Such variety of sexual non-exclusivity emerges from the separation of sexual practice from commitment.. One can be emotionally faithful, and hold a romantic commitment, whilst having other sexual partners (Adam 2006). Yip's work shows that couples negotiate their sexual relationships rather than following set standards of heterosexual relationships with regard to sexual openness, though some do follow such moralities – though even here such moralities are 'queered' in order to allow space for same-sex partners.

Creative engagement with personal relationships is not confined to the sexual relationship. Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan (2001) explore the creation and management of wider social networks by gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals. Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan argue that many gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals (LGBs) create 'families of choice'. That is, for many LGBs the concept 'family' does not necessarily relate to 'blood relatives' alone. Rather it 'includes lovers, possibly ex-lovers, intimate friends, as well as blood relatives' (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001:48).

Families of choice, do not imitate or replace 'family of origin'. Rather, the 'family of origin' is no longer necessarily the central place wherein close relationships are maintained. The malleability of the word 'family' underlines the detraditionalization of social relationships, marked by the interrelation of tradition and change (or innovation). Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan discuss this as follows.

> The language of 'family' used by many contemporary non-heterosexual people can be seen as both a challenge to conventional definitions, and an attempt to broaden these; as a hankering for legitimacy and an attempt to build something new; as an identification with existing patterns, and a more or less conscious effort to subvert them. (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001: 11)

'Families of choice' therefore illustrate both the role of tradition in the stories of LGB relationship structures, and also the role of agency in 'subverting', personalizing and extending the meaning of 'family'.

The importance of such creative re-imaginings of relationship structure is the role of agency. The individual chooses and constructs a support network which understands and empathises with their life.

A further issue in terms of gay 'lifestyle' is access to the gay 'scene' and 'community'. The individual's access to and interactions with 'scene' and 'community' again relate to how gay life is lived, understood and presented. Both 'scene' and 'community' allow

space for individual expressions of gayness, and provide means of connection to other gay people, and indeed access to support from others with shared experience.

The gay 'scene' can be understood in terms of the descriptive title of an article by Flowers, Marriott and Hart (2000) '*The Bars, the Bogs, and the Bushes*'. The gay 'scene' in this discussion therefore refers to bars, nightclubs, saunas, cottages (public toilets), and cruising grounds (e.g. parks). That is, the commercial gay scene, and meeting places for 'anonymous' sex. Holt and Griffin (2003) discuss the commercial gay scene as a place where LGBs could be themselves, a place of authenticity, freed from 'heterosexual assumption' and a space to work out sexual identities.

Valentine and Skelton (2003) similarly argue the 'scene' provides both a space where identity can be expressed, and also a space where such expressed identities can be validated. Providing 'safe' space, for many LGBs to express sexual identity, and make contact with others. However more negative understandings of the 'scene' are also expressed in the literature.

Holliday (1999) discusses the 'scene' as a space with rules and expectations where you have to 'dress right' (Holliday 1999: 480). It was a place where the individual was expected to perform sexuality, not necessarily *their* sexuality. Valentine and Skelton (2003) argue that the gay scene can be a predatory as well as an affirming space, and a place where individuals who are exploring their identity can be rushed into things. Further, being young, fit and attractive are seen as being valued on the 'scene' (Holt and Griffin 2003), therefore older non-heterosexuals can feel excluded (Heaphy, Yip and Thompson 2004). 'Scene' can be both a space that validates gay identity and a space that emphasises difference and exclusion.

Experience of 'scene' will be explored in terms of meanings attributed to experience, and how 'scene-trips' are incorporated and managed within life stories.

Gay 'community' is understood here in terms of contact with other non-heterosexuals both on and off scene. For clarity, this includes access of support groups, social groups, friendships.

As previously mentioned access to gay 'community' in terms of support groups, may be an initial point of contact for young non-heterosexuals, and provides a space wherein these individuals may begin to 'come out' (Wright and Connoley 2002; Valentine and Skelton 2003). In recent years the emergence of 'virtual groups' has provided space for emerging sexual identities to be expressed without the need for face-to-face contact (McKenna and Bargh 1998). Support groups therefore provide safe space for emerging identities to be discussed, and validated.

Gay social groups are another place in which gay individuals may be able to present and validate their sexual identities in groups where the primary focus is not on sex or partnering. This is an area which is not discussed in existing research, but these societies provide interest groups which are accepting and validating of individuals' gay identities. For example gay bikers (www.gaybikers.co.uk), gay dining clubs (e.g. www.outandout.co.uk; www.gusto-dining.co.uk), and outdoor pursuits (www.goc.uk.net).

However, access to such groups varies. Bell and Valentine (1995) discuss rural life and the difficulties this can raise for gays and lesbians, due to the lack of access to gay life, society and organisations. Similarly Weston (1998) discusses gay migration, and the appeal of the city as a place to find freedom of expression, and make greater contact with other gay people. Central to this discussion is the role of community, and gay social groups and organisations provide access to community in an important way for a number of lesbian and gay individuals, which is related to but also different from the 'scene'.

Friendship can also play an important role in feeling linked to a community of people with shared interests and experiences. Connection to others with shared history creates a bond through which self-understanding and acceptance can be validated. Such friendship provides support, and validation of identity (Nardi 1999), or as Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan argue

Non-heterosexual friendships must therefore develop simultaneously as a focus for survival and self-actualisation in a hostile world, and as a framework for love, sex, reciprocity and commitment in building alternative forms of life. (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001: 58)

That is, due to hostility, self-created and managed relationships provide support for self and also act as building blocks within the creation and management of life and lifestyle. Connection with 'community' as part of this development creates space whereby aspects of self can be presented and gain validation, in a way less possible in wider 'heterosexist' society.

Presentation of gay identity, and connection to community as discussed above show creation and display of gay identity as managed by self. Personal biography has a central effect on how such issues are managed. Detraditionalization has also been shown to be central to issues of performing and managing gay identity, the identity work of lesbians and gay men being seen as illustrative of a time of 'transition' (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001), wherein tradition and innovation co-exist. In order to explore the identity work of gay clergy it is necessary to access such debates.

Gay Identity and Gay Clergy

Previous research has shown essentialist understanding of sexuality to be important for gay Christians (Wilcox 2002, 2003). However, such argument extends beyond seeing sexuality as innate, it is also created by God, and indeed a gift from God (Yip 2005b). Access to arguments such as these are powerful against Church opposition, seeing God as creating and indeed validating homosexuality.

Such understandings also highlight the role of personal biography in understanding of sexuality. Inclusive Christian belief systems, and understandings of God as loving creator influence the way individuals understand their personal identities and desires (Wilcox 2002, 2003).

Management of sexuality ('closeting'), is a particular issue for gay clergy. Public knowledge of sexuality is seen as dangerous, and puts at risk gay clergy's jobs, homes and reputations (Wagner 1981; Fletcher 1990). Though some clergy have felt able to be open concerning their sexuality with Church and congregation (Comstock 1996), the majority of the clergy (in the literature), continue to feel the need to closet (Wolf 1989, Stuart 1993). The closet, and its uses are therefore argued to be central to the discussions of the respondents in the current study. Using a more nuanced conceptualisation of 'closeting' (as discussed above) the thesis will show the multi-faceted nature of the closet, including showing that the closet can be a place of freedom, as well as oppression.

Lifestyle organisation, is also discussed in literature on gay Christians and clergy. Yip's (1997a) discussion of gay Christian couples organisation of their sexual relationships accesses the theology of friendship, and argues that non-exclusivity stems from the Church's unwillingness to accept sexually active gay relationships. However, individuals continue to organise their sexual relationships based upon 'Christian principles such as love, justice and responsibility' though not necessarily monogamy (Yip 1997a: 300). This consideration and management of sex references theology, and is approached from individuals' positions as Christians. Such 'work' on the part of gay Christians again underlines the coexistence of tradition and innovation in lifestyle management, and the importance of biography in the construction of identity.

Similarly organisation of friendships and family, are of importance. Though such issues have not been discussed to a great extent in the literature on gay Christians and clergy, Comstock (1996) discusses how his respondents were more likely to discuss local church, and lover/partner/ family as their faith community rather than primarily feeling a sense of belonging to denomination (Comstock 1996: 177), further some respondents discussed they felt closest to groups they form themselves (Comstock 1996:179). Which could be termed 'faith communities of choice'. Such evidence from the literature suggests that gay Christians and clergy are forming and managing creative support groups and families/faith communities. Support, lacking from institutional Church has to be found or created. The individual must take responsibility for this themselves if it is not forthcoming from Church.

Finally, involvement in 'scene' and 'community' is illustrative of how the individual lives their 'gay' life. Involvement in 'scene' again has not been discussed regularly in literature on gay Christians, though Wagner (1981) asks a number of questions concerning sexual practice. However the scene is paradoxical - a 'safe' and 'risky' place. Risky, because it is a place of danger physically, in terms of disease, and danger of violence, and safe, because it is seen to be a place to be gay, have physical experiences, and be unlikely to run be seen by congregation.

Involvement in community is more fully discussed in the literature, gay positive churches stand as a place of affirmation of both sexuality and belief (Rodriguez and Oullette 2000, Hendershot 2001), as do gay Christian organisations (Yip 1997b; Gill 1998), and support groups (Thumma 1991; Wolkomir 2001), though other counselling groups may affirm belief, though not sexuality (Wolkomir 2001). For some these groups provide not only support but also access to social contacts (Yip 1997b). However, gay clergy may find such support difficult to access. Due to the very 'closeted' lives many lead. Also access to 'gay-positive' churches is less possible for the clergy due to their professional involvement in the mainstream church, and the messages such involvement may communicate to parish and hierarchy.

Due to the above reasons discussion of the gay identities of the respondents in the current study will focus on issues of understanding, management and presentation. This discussion will explore how the respondents view their gay identities and how tradition and innovation are negotiated and incorporated into the respondents' stories of gay identity.

Exploring Contemporary Clerical Identity

In discussing previous literature on the clergy this section will discuss 'Understanding the Clergy', 'Vocation and Profession', and 'Negotiating Position' before exploring the relevance of these issues to the current study.

Understanding the Clergy

Much of the existing academic literature on the clergy has been based on quantitative data and explored areas such as stress in the ministry and job satisfaction (Hoge, Shields and Griffin 1995; Zondag 2004), clergy personality type (Musson 1998; Francis and Robbins 1999), and burnout (Grosh and Olsen 2000; Hills, Francis and Rutledge 2004). Thereby the literature often focuses upon the priesthood as a profession, an activity undertaken by the individual. This has been furthered by the results of studies such as Wildhagen, Mueller and Wang (2005), and Mueller and McDuff (2002), which found clergy discuss similar reasons for changing jobs as other professions, the role of 'call' being seen to have little effect, and 'good' jobs are distinguished from 'bad' jobs in terms of higher budgets and better remuneration. However for applicants to the Anglican priesthood the service of ordination continues to call for a vocational understanding of ministry:

> They are to be messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Lord; they are to teach and to admonish, to feed and provide for his family, to search for his children in the wilderness of this world's temptations, … They are to unfold the Scriptures, to preach the word in season and out of season, and to declare the mighty acts of God. They are to preside at the Lord's table and lead his people in worship, offering with them a spiritual sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. They are to bless the people in God's name. They are to resist evil, support the weak, defend the poor, and intercede for all in need. They are to minister to the sick and prepare the dying for their death. (Common Worship 2006)

Following this statement the Bishop overseeing the service of ordination speaks directly to ordinands saying:

> We trust that long ago you began to weigh and ponder all this, and that you are fully determined, by the grace of God, to devote yourself wholly to his service, so that as you daily follow the rule and teaching of our Lord and grow into his likeness, God may sanctify the lives of all with whom you have to do. (Common Worship 2006)

The clergy are 'messengers, watchmen and stewards of the Lord' such description blurs the edges of responsibility, incorporating roles and obligations as example, as preacher, as celebrant of sacrament, as carer, and as disciplinarian. In short the priesthood is a 'way of life', seen clearly through 'devote yourself wholly to his service' and 'daily follow the rule and teaching of our Lord and grow into his likeness'.

The work of the clergy goes beyond boundaries of a professional role, the clergy are called to a lifelong commitment in which essentially, they are clergy. This goes beyond 'professionalisation', and is perhaps better understood as a 'vocationalization'. Kosek (2000) for example argues:

> The authenticity of the Christian leader requires a different way of being, where he or she guides the community of believers by his or her own way of life ... the manifestation of the authentic nature of Christian leadership ought to be exemplified by a minister's life as a living sign of his or her total surrender to God within the act of faith (Kosek 2000: 43-44)

Similarly Christopherson (1994) connects the 'call' to ministry to the individual, he argues the 'call' is used:

> To articulate the most basic ideas about who they [the clergy] are, and to make sense of their lives. (Christopherson 1994:234)

This 'call' is surprisingly under-researched in the existing sociological literature. However Towler and Coxon (1979) refer to a four-stage understanding of call in the work of Niebuhr, the four stages are:

1. The call to be a Christian
2. The secret call (feeling of being called by God)
3. The providential call (having the necessary abilities to follow the call)
4. The ecclesiastical call (acceptance by Church)

(Towler and Coxon 1979:58)

Though concentration on the importance of particular stages of this call may vary by denomination, the call always to a greater or lesser degree is understood to involve the will of God. Vocation to ministry emerges from call. Being clergy is a God-given responsibility. Therefore for those who undertake the clerical role, there is a connection to, and a responsibility for something beyond the everyday. Therefore responsibility experienced in undertaking clerical duties involves more than responsibility to Church or congregation. It involves responsibility to God.

This understanding may have a number of effects. The individual may feel affirmed by God through God's call. What the individual may feel called by God to do may differ from Church expectations. And the role of clergy through being seen as divinely ordained, becomes identity, rather than professional responsibility. The role of 'call' will be explored in the thesis in order to explore its meanings for the respondents in this study.

In addition, vocation will be discussed in the thesis in terms of identity, rather than exclusively as a 'professional role'. The respondents' connection to their position as clergy, and their understanding of the duties and obligations this entails will be explored.

Vocation and Profession

Access to discourses of vocation may be important for the respondents. However, it is unlikely that they will be wholly positive about their clergy status. Previous literature has attempted to typologise the clergy role, for example Brunette-Hill and Finke (1999) examined clergy time allocation in four areas, these being, Teaching, Priestly, Pastoral, and Administrator. Also, Kuhne and Donaldson(1995) argue that there are four areas which clergy responsibility falls into, these are Interpersonal Roles (e.g. figurehead of parish), Informational Roles (e.g. relating news to parish), Decisional Roles (e.g. mediating), and Professional

71

Roles (e.g. preaching). Such typologising is difficult however, as the boundaries between areas of responsibility are not fixed. For example the priestly role may overlap with the teaching role in the context of worship services, or the interpersonal may overlap with the decisional through representing Church in the local community.

A more helpful distinction may be found in the title of Kuhne and Donaldson's (1995) title 'Balancing Ministry and Management'. This distinction between 'ministry' and 'management' is illustrated in literature concerning satisfaction and dissatisfaction among the clergy and priesthood. Previous literature has found that clergy gain satisfaction from their roles as worship leaders (Fletcher 1990; Stuart 1993; Hoge, Shields and Griffin 1995), and in their pastoral responsibilities (Stuart 1993; O'Kane and Millar 2001). Dissatisfaction stemmed from excessive, and varied expectations (Fletcher 1990) which may lead to feelings of overwork, and over-responsibility (Hoge, Shields and Soroka 1993), administration (Towler and Coxon 1979; Fletcher 1990; Grosch and Olsen 2000), and the lack of privacy experienced by priests (Darling, Hill and McWey 2004). Such examples show a distinction between ministerial roles (sacramental, worship, and pastoral), and management roles (management of congregation, management of church and building). Hoge, Shields and Griffin (1995) discuss a separation between 'vocational' and 'professional', wherein, though an increasing number of priests were found to be willing to use the term professional, a tension was seen between the professional and vocational (vocational understood as the special status of priests defined by Holy Orders and vows).

The thesis takes forward this distinction between 'vocational' and 'professional', however 'vocational' is understood as that which is seen to come from God, and 'professional' that which comes from Church and others. Worship, sacramental, and pastoral duties may be seen as bound up in the 'call' and therefore 'vocational'. While excessive expectation and intrusion from congregation, and administrative work are 'professional' issues which come along with vocation in practice. This not only separates likes and dislikes, and places value on satisfying aspects of job. The distinction also allows the clergy to distinguish Church and

God, following what comes from God. An important distinction not just in terms of work activity, but also in terms of belief, and moral expectations (this issue will be developed within the thesis).

Negotiating Position

One area in which profession and vocation are negotiated is in terms of 'expectations'. In order to gain acceptance and validation as clergy, and space to continue vocation the clergy must, to some level, meet these expectations. Specifically clergy may feel expected to live up to an idealised clergy 'template'. Or feel they are put on a pedestal, with unreasonable expectations (Fletcher 1990, Stuart 1993). One way in which clergy have been seen to deal with such pressures is through use of a professional of 'clerical persona' (Francis, Louden, Robbins and Rutledge 2000; Louden and Francis 2003); herein the clergy are seen to play, or act up to stereotypes and expectations, controlling what knowledge of their lives is given to parishioners, thus gaining acceptance. For example, Burns and Cervero write 'While pastors appear friendly, they tend to maintain a guarded position with people outside their circle of friends.' (Burns and Cervero 2004:239), and Goffman has specifically discussed control of knowledge by clergy, in terms of reasons for job change, and controlling knowledge of private leisure (Goffman 1971).

Use of such a persona may illustrate a distance between personal and professional. Exploring this issue illustrates the continuing influence of the traditional in clergy lives, and will be explored in greater depth in the thesis.

Another issue relevant to 'being' clergy is that of authority. Secularisation theory has discussed the declining influence of the clergy in wider society (Chaves 1994; Repstad 2003, Percy 2006) and the position of the clergy within Church has been seen to be changing. Mason (Mason, M.: 2002) argues that changes in perceptions of the role of the priest has been high among both lay people and the clergy. And

Higgins (2001) argues that the decline in the authority of the clergy has occurred within as well as outside of congregations.

However, though these trends suggest a declining authority of the clergy, Monahan (1999) argues that an activated laity does not lead to role ambiguity among the clergy. Further, a number of previous studies have remarked upon clergy maintaining important roles in the local community, for example at times of trauma (Gibson and Iwaniec 2003), when people face drug and alcohol problems or marriage difficulties (O'Kane and Millar 2001), and when people may be suffering with mental health problems (Hohmann and Larson 1993). Such evidence combined with congregational expectations for clergy to be examples of Christian living (Fletcher 1990), shows a continued importance of, and need for the clergy.

Therefore, as clergy, individuals again find themselves experiencing the transition discussed by Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan (2001), they continue to see their traditional role as important, underlined by expectations and approaches for help; though 'innovation' in society and Church may suggest their influence and importance is declining. Clergy must therefore find a path for continuing their role. Clergy face the need as individuals to draw out their role, to find importance and meaning in a role where rewards may be difficult to find (Zondag 2004).

Individual stories of being clergy referring to call, position in Church, and relationships with hierarchy and congregation will be accessed in the discussion of the clergy identity of the respondents. The above discussion has shown that clergy identity is multi-faceted. It is influenced by self-understandings of call, and the importance of clergy work, as well as traditional Church stories of clergy responsibility. Understanding of importance of clergy identity is also influenced by local environment and the needs and expectations of those the clergyman serves. Just as religious and gay identities have been shown to require negotiation, clergy identity requires the same, and how clergy negotiate this identity in terms of congregational need, societal disinterest, Church expectation and self-understanding will be explored in the thesis.

Gay Clerical Identity

Surprisingly discussion of call and vocation among gay clergy is largely missing from the previous literature. However, in terms of attachment to aspects of the clergy role Wolf found little difference between gay and straight clergy (Wolf 1989), and Stuart (1993) and Hibbs (2006) both discuss the focus on 'vocational aspects of role', with Stuart specifically discussing that experience of discrimination and oppression among her respondents is seen to emphasise the importance of inclusivity, and the pastoral aspect of being clergy (Stuart 1993). Despite the lack of discussion among gay clergy, the importance of individual connection to God discussed in the literature on gay Christians (Yip 2000; Wilcox 2003) illustrates that the feeling of acceptance by God is of central importance to these individuals for the combination of sexuality and spiritual beliefs. If this perceived acceptance extends to a perceived 'call' from God for the individual to devote their lives (including their sexuality) to his service, then this is likely to be of extreme importance in the individuals understanding of self and ability to connect sexual, religious, and clergy identity in their self-identity. This issue will be discussed in greater detail in the thesis in terms of my respondents' experiences in the hope of adding to existing literature.

Experience of discrimination and marginalisation among gay clergy and emphasis on the need for inclusivity in their ministry(Hibbs 2006), is linked to gay clergy finding importance in the Church taking action on social issues (Stuart 1993); this focus on inclusivity among gay Christians has also been linked to the conception of Christ as a figure of social action and inclusivity (Yip 2005a). Such issues emphasise the need for study of individual clergy's understandings of the role and importance of clergy, and illustrate the influence personal biography has on the creation of individual stories of ministry and meaning.

Use of a professional persona among gay clergy has often been linked to fear of knowledge of sexuality (Wagner 1981), and its consequences (Anonymous 1998). However, this is only one area in which the professional persona may be used. As discussed above it is likely that gay clergy will be involved in creating personal stories of faith, for this reason aspects of faith, particularly in terms of Church

doctrine on homosexuality may be areas in which there is a gap between the expected public, and the private faith. Personal belief may be required to be covered in order to be able to be accepted by parish. This issue relates both to 'closeting' (which will be discussed in Chapter 5), and to the difficulties of combining personal and professional faith (which will be discussed in Chapters 4 +6)

Issues of 'authority' of the clergy have also been discussed in literature on gay clergy, Stuart (1993) emphasises that her respondents place value on inclusive ministry, and Hibbs (2006) emphasises the relational quality of the ministry of his respondents. For Stuart (1993) this was particularly seen with respondents eschewing the pedestal, and distancing themselves from such hierarchical understandings of parish ministry.

Further to such issues Anglican gay clergy face the need to undertake their vocation in an unaffirming institution (as discussed in the review of Church literature). Within this the clergy must serve parish and institution as gay men, despite negativity within the Church towards homosexuality. Therefore though the individuals' experiences as gay men may affect, and even be seen to better their ministry (Wolf 1989; Stuart 1993; Hibbs 2006), this incorporation of sexuality must be controlled, and constantly surveilled.

In discussing clerical identity the chapter has shown that there is a need for research exploring individual experiences and stories of ministry. Moving forward the thesis will explore how tradition (e.g. Church tradition and parishioner expectation) interacts with innovation (e.g. personal incorporation of sexuality and separation of God and Church) in respondents' experiences of ministry. Though ministry is seen as a traditional role, imbued with duty and obligation, in practice the role of agency can be seen as central in undertaking ministry.

Summary

This chapter has illustrated the peculiar situation of gay clergy. Though representatives of the institutional Church, gay clergy remain unaffirmed by the Church (as shown in the review of Church literature), and often live in fear of

being 'found out'. Therefore negotiation is central to the lives of gay clergy, not only in terms of living out their clergy identity, but also as this chapter has shown, in terms of religious and sexual identities also.

By concentrating on identity in interaction, particularly with reference to story the thesis will explore how respondents understand, manage and live their religious, sexual and clerical lives specifically concentrating on the freedoms and constraints which have influence upon this. Thereby connecting with findings of previous research, but also moving beyond these.

By discussing Christian, gay and clergy identity in separate discussions the thesis will be able to explore issues such as call, personal faith story, and understanding of sexuality which have remained under researched in the literature on gay clergy, as well as exploring how each of these identities is shaped in interaction with others (e.g. clergy and Christian identity; gay and clergy identity). Through such organisation the thesis will shed new light on how gay clergy as late-modern individuals negotiate the tensions of tradition and innovation in their understanding, management and presentation of their lives as gay Christian clergy.

The next chapter will discuss the aims of this research, the research design, its implementation and the methodological issues which arose in the research process. The chapter will also introduce the research sample and reflect upon the influence of myself as researcher.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The previous chapter explored existing literature and research relevant to the current study. This chapter now discusses how the research was approached and the reasons for this research strategy. The chapter also presents a discussion of the research process. In doing so the chapter explores the ethical and methodological issues which emerged in the research process, and reflects upon the influence of myself as researcher.

With reference to methodological literature the chapter argues that the research topic was best suited to a mixed method research design with a qualitative bias. This allows the collection of rich data, and access individual experience in a way which would not be possible using quantitative method alone. The multi-stage approach undertaken also gives access both life-history and the day-to-day.

This use of qualitative method requires an awareness of the role of the researcher in the research, and a discussion of the difficulties that arise in undertaking such a research project. The chapter discusses these issues and emphasises the continuing concern shown throughout the process in terms of the ethical and methodological issues which arose.

A discussion of the analysis process in also presented. This was thematic in nature and continued throughout data-collection, analysis and write-up stages of the research process.

Research Aims and Questions

The research undertaken had two major aims. These were,

1. To explore the identity creation, negotiation and presentation of gay male Anglican clergy.
2. To explore the interplay between tradition and innovation in this identity 'work'.

In order to meet these aims the research posed a number of questions. These included,

1. How do gay male clergy view their Christian, gay and clergy identities?
2. How are these identities presented in interaction?
3. How do the clergy deal with perceived incompatibility of various identities?
4. What influences, informs and constrains identity in the lives of the clergy?

The construction of these research questions reflects the understanding in the research aim that identities are not only presented, but also created and negotiated. The construction of these questions was influenced by the understanding of identity discussed in Chapter 2, as both historically located, and constantly evolving (Plummer 1995). In conceiving the research questions, as emergent from the aim of the research the distinctions between sexual, religious and clerical identity were central. Therefore it was important that the research questions produced scope for exploring these distinctions, and that sexual, religious, and clerical identity were seen as separate, though inter-related concepts.

Research Design

The research design was influenced by two arguments from feminist methodology. Firstly, the research gives primary importance to the experiences of the participants (Stanley and Wise 1983). That is issues given importance in the discussions of the respondents are seen as the important issues. Though aspects of the research process use preset categories and closed answered questions, the primary aim of the research was to explore the understandings and interpretations of the respondents themselves. Secondly, the stories of gay male clergy can be seen as 'silenced stories'. These stories are silenced by the prevailing attitudes within the Church concerning homosexuality. For example, fear of consequence of being 'known' encourages gay clergy to remain closeted. As Hammersley (1995) suggests an issue of primary importance in feminist research is 'Emancipation as the goal' (Hammersley 1995:49). The research aimed to emancipate the 'stories' of gay clergy, therefore the giving space for 'telling' was an important aim of the research design.

However though influenced by such arguments from feminist methodology the research, and indeed the researcher situate themselves in terms of 'critical humanism' (Plummer 2001). Taking forward Mills' discussion of the need for concern with biography, structure and history. Plummer argues for work which 'highlights the active human subject' (Plummer 2001: 7). However this concern for the human must be located, must be 'critical'. Plummer gives five aspects of the human, as viewed by 'critical humanism'. These are

1. Embedded – The human must be understood in terms of the constantly changing history and culture of which 'it' is part.
2. Symbolic, dialogic, inter-subjective with selves – Humans are never alone, have selves capable of reflexivity and communicate with themselves and others. Importantly, humans are 'narrators of their own lives, both interpersonally and internally'.
3. Contingent – who we are depends on the world around us.
4. Dually embodied and symbolic – Humans are both 'animals and creatures with great symbolic potential'. Therefore humans cannot be separated from the animal world, they are part of it.
5. Universal – Universal potentials can be found in all humans, for example thought, emotion, and self-reflexivity.

(adapted from Plummer 2001: 262-263)

It is this approach which is taken forward in the thesis. Emphasis upon the identity stories of gay clergy, and the interactions of those clergy, along with concentration on the interplay of tradition and innovation or structure and agency allows for a study of identity which is embedded in experience, explores the influences and effects of the social, and allows access to individuals self-narration. This approach is thus firmly located within 'critical humanism'.

The focus on interaction within the thesis raises another issue. Stanley and Wise (1993) argue that knowledge is a product of interaction, suggesting therefore that the interaction from which knowledge stems needs to be accounted for. The researcher, and indeed the research becoming researchable, and therefore the environment, location and style of the research become important and influence the whole (Mishler 1991).

For this reason the role and influence of the researcher is discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

The research design was also influenced by previous literature on gay clergy. Although this is the first study of its kind, in terms of being a study of the lives, experiences and identities of gay male clergy in the Church of England, a number of previous studies on gay clergy have been undertaken (these were discussed in Chapter 2). Therefore in designing the research reference was made to the methods utilized by these studies. A table of the research methods used is provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Table of previous studies of gay clergy

Author	Date of Publication	Country	Research Method(s)	Number of Participants	Denominations Studied
Wagner	1981	America	Structured interview	50	Roman Catholic
Wolf	1989	America	Questionnaire	101	Roman Catholic
Fletcher	1990	England	Questionnaire	*e171	Church of England
Stuart	1993	England	Questionnaire (Qualitative)	21	Roman Catholic
Comstock	1996	America	Questionnaire & Interview	Q - *e 122 I - 10	UCC & UMC
Heskins	2005	England	Interview	Not stated	Church of England
Hibbs	2006	America	Interview	8	'Mainline Protestant'

*e = estimate- estimates were made where precise participant numbers were not given in the text.

Each of these publications provide some insight into aspects of the lives of gay clergy and illustrate the benefit of interview and questionnaire methods. However, in order to meet the research questions proposed for this study it was necessary to explore further.

Yip has used a combination of questionnaire and semi-structured interview in his studies of gay, lesbian and bisexual Christians (1997a+b, 2000, 2002). His analysis therefore has explored both quantitative illustrative data and qualitative descriptive data. Such an approach has allowed Yip to combine the results of both research methods illustrating consistency within his sample, and also being able to explore difference and personal experience in greater depth.

Dillon (1999) and Wilcox (2002, 2003) have used mixed method approaches in their studies of gay, lesbian and bisexual Christians in affirming congregations. Dillon combined observation and interview in her study, and Wilcox combined observation, interview and questionnaire. Again mixed methods allowed the use of a variety of approaches, through which varied data was collected. Within both of these studies observation allowed a contextualised approach to research, observing day-to-day interaction as well as exploring attitudes and life histories. Though I wished to access similar data, due to the closeted nature of many gay clergy's lives observation was not possible in this study. It was therefore important to explore other ways of accessing situated data.

Kuhne and Donaldson (1995) used structured observation to typologise the work activities of clergy, and Brunette-Hill and Finke (1999) used 'time-use' surveys, where clergy were asked to record their work activities. A further example of accessing everyday experience was found in sexuality research. Coxon (1996) reports the findings of a study which employed 'sex diaries' sexual activity of gay men in his research. These diaries allowed situated information to be recorded without the need for observation. Though these diaries were primarily records of activities, the diary method is shown by these studies to be a way of accessing day-to-day life without the need for observation

After considering the methods of previous studies I decided that there was a need for the research design to incorporate a number of stages and methods in order to access a number of different data types. Though primarily qualitative in nature, I believed a quantitative aspect to the research would add value. Quantitative data would allow

illustrations of the attitudes and experiences of the entire sample (Bryman 2001), and allow collection of a large amount of data from each respondent on a number of issues, as well as being quick to administer, and give better access to a geographically varied sample (Sarantakos 2005). However by including open-ended questions within the questionnaire it was hoped this method would still provide access to stories. Qualitative data would allow more description on the part of respondents, access to more varied data (not prescribed by the researcher), and give access to diversity of opinion and experience (Bulmer 1977). This qualitative data was to access situated information, exploring how individuals understood their lives. I also wished to incorporate both 'face-to-face' (researcher present) and 'non-contact' (researcher not present) methods. As Lee suggests in his book on researching 'sensitive' topics, through the use of 'non-contact' method participants may be more likely to share information which they would not be comfortable discussing with others. Whilst through 'face-to-face' research, information may be more freely discussed because researcher and researched build rapport (Lee 1993).

The finalised research design consisted of four stages. This design incorporated 'face-to-face' and 'non-contact' methods. The design was mainly qualitative in method due to the wish to access depth of story, though a quantitative aspect was included to allow for discussion of the entire sample. The four stages are illustrated by Figure 1:

Figure 1: The four-stage research design

Stage 1: Questionnaire (29 respondents): The questionnaire used both open-ended and closed questions and was designed to be comprehensive enough to be used as both a stand-alone research tool as well as an aspect of the complete research. However the small-scale of the sample meant the quantitative aspect of the questionnaire was employed for illustrative purposes only.

Stage 2: Interview (14 respondents: a sub-sample of the questionnaire sample): semi –structured interviews were undertaken lasting between 90 and 120 minutes. The interviews explored a number of general issues, as well as revisiting questionnaire responses.

Stage 3: Diary-keeping (10 respondents: a sub-section of participants from stage 2): respondents were asked to keep a reflective journal for two weeks. Respondents were asked to write about specific issues or incidents raised during the day, reflecting on why they chose to relate these specific events.

Stage 4: Interview (9 respondents): The clergy who kept a diary were interviewed again, this time focusing on issues raised their journal. This interview allowed further exploration of the issues, along with space for those who found the journal keeping more taxing to relate the issues they wished to. These interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes.

The four-stage research design illustrated above allowed for a research approach which accessed the stories of respondents using primarily qualitative methods, though with a quantitative aspect included. The design also allowed for a combination of 'non-contact' (questionnaire and diary), and 'face-to face' (interview) methods. This combination of approaches meant the research design was able to approach and explore the research questions from a number of angles, through a 'critical humanist' approach.

The chapter now goes on to discuss the research process, and the issues which arose in undertaking the stages of the research.

The Research Process

Sampling

The recruitment process for the research was a long and at times frustrating process. Due to the 'hidden' nature of the population studied, the notion of obtaining a 'representative' sample was considered inappropriate, due to the impossibility of defining the boundaries of this population (Heaphy, Weeks and Donovan 1998; Bryman 2001). Also the nature of the study, meant although there was a desire for a varied sample, 'representativeness' was not of high importance, due to the emphasis on difference and personal experience and biography. Rather, maximising respondent variability and accessing diverse experience was the aim.

Possibilities for recruitment were limited. This was due in part to the difficulty of identifying members of the population, because of the secrecy involved in the lives of many gay clergy. The prevalence of public discourse discussed above also meant that gay clergy were nervous of risk. Therefore the most suitable ways to proceed were those which showed respect for privacy, and most assured confidentiality.

The primary means of contacting potential respondents was through support groups. Approaching support groups for lesbian and gay Christians and clergy, asking them to inform their members about the project by forwarding flyers designed and produced by myself. This approach ensured the information was delivered to potential respondents in a manner they were comfortable with, as they had chosen to receive mailings from these organisations there was no outside influence/ or knowledge of who these were sent to.

Although there are issues relating to the use of support groups to find participants. For example, the population becomes limited to members of the support groups approached. This raises the danger that the sample will be homogenous, particularly accessing those who, in this case, are more open about their sexuality, or at least more openly liberal in their public profile (i.e. willing to receive mailings from 'gay-positive' organisations). Another danger inherent in such sampling is that members of these organisations may be more able to combine identities, that is, be more comfortable with being gay, and clergy / Christian than other non-members (Yip 1998). However attempts to balance this may be made with other sampling methods, although it is difficult to move beyond the likelihood that those who volunteer will be those who are more vocal, and more positive. The research employed snowball and personal contact sampling to attempt to balance this issue.

Therefore three sampling strategies were employed in order to create an opportunistic sample. These were (1) Through approaching support groups (2) through personal contacts (3) through snowballing. These approaches are discussed below, as they happened – rather than separately.

In the first instance groups who agreed to distribute the flyer were The Clergy Consultation (www.clergyconsultation.org) (a support group for lesbian and gay Anglican clergy based in London), Changing Attitude (www.changingattitude.org.uk) (a 'network' of Anglicans who aim to change the Church's understanding of human sexuality, with headquarters in London), and The Evangelical Fellowship for Gay and Lesbian Christians (www.eflgc.org.uk) (a support group for LGB Christians from an

evangelical background). In each case a sample of the leaflet (see Appendix 1) was provided for consideration, in each case it was accepted without modification although one group suggested changes to encourage participation, these suggestions were taken on, and changes were made. At the same time an approach was made to Affirming Catholicism, a liberal theological group from the Anglo-catholic side of the Anglican Church. Despite being interested in the research, and viewing it as a worthwhile endeavour, they suggested contacting the above groups, rather than going through them, as they had no way of targeting populations.

In the above posting 250 leaflets were sent through the Clergy Consultation, 500 through Changing Attitude, and 110 through the Evangelical fellowship. This mailing received responses from 25 individuals, though only 15 continued to complete the questionnaire

Each respondent was sent a questionnaire along with 5 leaflets they were asked to pass on if they could. Through this snowballing 2 responses were received.

One response was also gained through the personal contacts of my academic supervisors. These secondary sampling methods, though less successful in number, meant the project was publicised beyond the boundaries of support group membership.

A second mailing was then sent to increase participation, on this occasion the mailing was sent through the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement (LGCM) (www.lgcm.org.uk). As a larger organisation the LGCM has the ability to stream its members, the leaflet was therefore sent to clergy members only, though they had no records of sexuality. In total this mailing contacted 310 people, the return was 16, and 9 of these completed questionnaires. At this time I also wrote a short piece for the newsletter of the Modern Churchpeople's Union (www.modchurchunion.org), again a liberal theological organisation within the Anglican tradition. 1 response came from this, and another came forward from snowballing at this time.

As can be seen from the above the response rate to the research was low, a number of reasons attributed to this. Including:

1. The very 'hidden' nature of the population, and the secrecy that often exists in the lives of gay clergy means that any possible respondents may have been wary of taking part due to what may have been seen as a danger to themselves, their reputations, or those around them (Wagner 1981). This along with the controversial nature of the research questions is a definite reason for why some may not have made themselves known.

2. The 'multi-stage' nature of the research meant that a large amount of time, effort, and energy was asked of those who took part. Due to the busy nature of many clergy lives, erratic hours, and variety of commitments and responsibilities it is very possible that many did not feel they had the time, or perhaps the energy to take part in such a study.

3. The timing of the project was problematic, only weeks after beginning to publicise the project, the Anglican Church entered a critical moment in terms of its history, and the place of gay priests (Yip & Keenan 2004). The appointment and resignation of Jeffrey John as bishop of Reading, and the appointment and conferment of Gene Robinson as Bishop of New Hampshire saw the Anglican church enter a time of uncertainty, and gay priests enter a time where media attention was firmly on their position within the church. These events brought about a situation whereby many individuals replaced, and reinforced their defences. Along with this the danger that the project could be seen as 'jumping on the bandwagon' was constantly there, and may have put some people of coming forward.

4. Finally one respondent who is no longer in the Church spoke of a number of friends of his who had received the publicity leaflet. He said that the bishop of the diocese in which his friends were based had advised the individuals not to take part in this project. I have no evidence of this, other than anecdotal, or knowledge of any other areas in which similar issues may have arisen, however due to the situation within the church, the fear of discovery, and the perceived

risk of taking part in the project may indeed have put off other potential respondents.

These along with the usual wrong time, wrong place, lack of interest reasons can be seen as affecting the final amount of responses. However in studying such hard to reach population a lower response rate is to be expected, and therefore the response gained can be seen as adequate. This is particularly true in terms of the qualitative data which gives access to data on meaning and tells the stories of the respondents. The value of such data is not compromised by a low response rate. Also the reasons discussed above illustrate the 'hidden' and 'silenced' nature of the population, emphasising the importance of research on the topic despite small number returns.

The Sample

No boundaries were put on the sample in terms of age, ethnicity, marital status, sexual activity, or length of career. The only requirements were that individuals had at some point worked as a parish minister in the Anglican Church (in order to increase the number of respondents two responses from Wales were included in the questionnaire stage of the research), and that they self-identified as gay / homosexual. This project concentrated on one denomination due to the difficulties that may be raised through denominational difference (see Chapter 2), and on men only, as women clergy face discrimination in aspects of the Church due to gender. Of the completed questionnaires 3 were completed by retirees, 2 by individuals who had chosen to leave the ministry, 1 of whom was forced to leave due to his sexuality, 1 by a cleric currently working in chaplaincy, and 1 by an individual who still does parish work but is not affiliated with a particular parish. The remaining questionnaires (21) were completed by individuals currently in parish ministry.

Respondents came from across England and Wales and ranged in age from 38 to 75, 2 were currently married, 4 others had been previously. Around half (52%) had long-term partners. In terms of experience, time as head of congregation ranged from 6 months to 54 years. Of the 14 who continued to stage two 13 were in current ministry,

and 1 was the individual currently without a parish. More information is presented in Table 2:

Table 2: Participants in Stages 2, 3 and 4

Respondent Number	Pseudonym	Age Range	Research Involvement	Time as head of parish (years)	*Sexually Active	Relationship Status
1	Robert	60-70	Q, I, D, DI	33	R, C, I/P	Relationship
2	Eric	50-60	Q, I	25	R	Relationship
3	Luke	50-60	Q, I, D, DI	12	R	Relationship
4	Harold	50-60	Q, I, D, DI	4	A	Single
5	Adam	40-50	Q, I, D, DI	2	C, A	Single
6	George	50-60	Q, I	19	C, A	Single
7	Stephen	60-70	Q, I, D, DI	11	R, C	Relationship
8	Ian	50-60	Q, I, D, DI	11	R	Rel (stage 1+2)
9	Alan	30-40	Q, I, D, DI	2	C(stage 1+2), R (3+4)	Rel (stage 3+4)
10	Stewart	50-60	Q, I, D, DI	21	R	Relationship
11	Matthew	50-60	Q, I, D, DI	14	R, A	Married + Rel
12	Anthony	50-60	Q, I, D	27	C, A, I/P	Single
13	Gareth	50-60	Q, I	N/A	C	Divorced+ Single
14	Keith	50-60	Q, I	4	A	Single

* R= Sex in relationship, C= Casual sex, I/P= Internet/Phone sex, A= Alone/ Masturbation

These individuals were chosen to reflect the diversity of respondents, the respondent who was not currently in parish was selected due to their personal situations, and their ability to talk about issues from a different angle. 15 interviews were originally planned however one respondent pulled out at this stage, due to reconsidering his willingness to discuss his experiences 'face-to-face'.

The 10 who completed the diary were all in current parish work, and all were based in England. This sub-sample was taken forward due to willingness to participate further in the research. 9 of these respondents were interviewed in stage 4. Unfortunately a loss of contact meant the tenth interview did not take place. It is worthy of mention that all clergy approached to take part in stages 3 and 4 were willing to take part, and completed the research (excluding one loss of contact).

The chapter now discusses in greater detail the implementation of the four stages of the research process.

The Implementation of the Research and Ethical Considerations

The four stages of the research were undertaken between September 2003 when the first questionnaires were sent out and June 2005 when the final diary interview was undertaken. The following discussion explores the ethical considerations, the undertaking of these research methods and the issues which arose in their implementation.

Throughout all stages the project was undertaken in line with research guidelines from the British Sociological Association (http://www.britsoc.co.uk/Library/Ethicsguidelines2002.doc) and was approved by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee of Nottingham Trent University.

The largest ethical consideration was the confidentiality of the respondents, not only in terms of keeping communications confidential, and data anonymous, but also convincing respondents of my aim to do so.

As explained above in order to maintain confidentiality, first contact was made with possible respondents through support groups, and snowballing. Some respondents provided me with names, and contact details of other people who may have been eligible to take part in the project, however I felt contacting these people was an invasion of their privacy, and against the voluntary nature of response the project aimed for. For these reasons such possible contacts were not followed up, though informants were asked to pass on leaflets to anyone who may be willing to take part.

Another issue raised around the issue of confidentiality, particularly that of convincing respondents of my adherence to this objective, was that contact, using a flyer, advert, or short introduction meant that little space was available for assurances of confidentiality. This was particularly made clear when those who contacted me for more information did so in order to find out more about how the data would be stored and how their anonymity would be protected. In response I informed these individuals that all communications would be kept in locked filing cabinets, that all letters could be sent recorded delivery if required, that names and addresses would be kept separate from research data, and could only be traced through a code system (known only to me). These individuals were also informed that aliases could be used, and packages sent to addresses of their choosing.

Before each stage of the research respondents were reminded of their right to withdraw from the research at any time. During each stage respondents were reminded not to feel pressured into answering any questions which they would rather not (for whatever reason). Following each stage respondents were reminded they had the right to withdraw their details from the research at anytime, and were asked to contact me if they had any questions or wished to discuss any issues. Ethical issues distinct to each research method are discussed below in connection with the description of the process.

Design and Implementation of Questionnaire Stage

The questionnaire, or survey method is the most widely used method in the (limited) study of gay clergy, taking influence from the work of Stuart (1993), and Yip (2000, 2002) the questionnaire was designed to both provide the structure necessary to access information, but also participants were encouraged to edit the questioning, write around the questions, and a number of un-structured questions were included (see appendix 2). The questionnaire was designed with individual sections on profession (exploring understanding of the clergy role, areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, experience of call / vocation), belief (exploring time of acceptance of belief, understanding of Christianity, understanding of God), and sexuality (exploring time of recognition of sexuality, attitude towards sexuality, openness about sexuality, and sexual activity), there were also sections attempting to link these issues. A further 'attitude survey' section was added to further explore the beliefs and opinions of the respondents on a number of issues. This resulted in a lengthy (18 page) questionnaire.

Due to this length, the instructions for filling in the questionnaire invited clergy to fill it in section by section in different sittings, and to take the time needed rather than feeling rushed to return it. One reason why the questionnaire method is popular in the study of gay clergy is the lack of 'face-to-face' contact, this is seen to encourage participants both to come forward, and also to be more willing to answer difficult, or personal questions, due to an increased feeling of safety through lack of contact (Lee 1993). This was seen in the research process as when I met some respondents later they discussed enjoying filling in the questionnaire and exploring issues they had perhaps not thought about before.

Questionnaires were sent in plain envelopes, marked confidential, and respondents were given the opportunity to have these packages sent by Recorded Delivery. Following feedback from the first four participants, an issue regarding personal details was resolved by sending two return envelopes with each questionnaire, one for the return of personal details, and one for the questionnaire. When questionnaires were returned personal information, and coded numbering were kept on locked files on computer (and floppy disk backup in locked filing cabinet), and questionnaires were kept in a locked

filing cabinet separate to communications with respondents. The system of identification was known only to me, and I was the only key holder to the cabinets and computer passwords. Although as mentioned above a number of questionnaires were not returned, those that were had generally been filled out as requested, and all respondents indicated they were willing to take further part in the research.

The questionnaires incorporation of open-ended questions provided a rich source of qualitative data, which allowed for discussion of the stories of those who were not interviewed. Also, despite the small number of respondents the quantitative aspect of the questionnaire allowed for illustration of the attitudes of the entire sample, which were used in combination with discussion of qualitative data. The questionnaire was also used to inform the selection of a diverse sub-sample of respondents for the remaining stages of the research process, and as above-mentioned, was revisited in interviews, with respondents being asked to expand on particular questionnaire answers.

Design and Implementation of Semi-structured Interview Stage

Although semi-structured interviews have been used in the study of gay priests before, they have been used rarely, possibly due to the difficulties of arranging face-to-face meetings, and most often they have been used in 'less' academic studies (Hazel 1999). However the method is widely used in the social sciences, particularly those with sociological leanings, and has been used to great effect in related areas of study. In the study of gay Christians Wilcox (2002) and Yip (2002) have both used the method to good effect. In clergy studies examples of interview methods being used include Mellow (2002), Burns & Cervero (2004) Vignoles, Chryssochoou, and Breakwell (2004). The semi-structured interview has also become an often used method in the study of lesbian and gay professionals (e.g. Burke 1993).

In this study the use of semi-structured interviews was important because although specific areas needed to be covered during interview, for example, information from questionnaires was revisited, and an interview schedule was employed. I felt it was

important to also have the flexibility in the interaction to encourage participants to explore the issues in their own way (Marshall & Rossman 1999). Both Wilcox's (2003) study, and Burke's (1993) book on lesbian and gay police officers show how the use of interview data can be used to explore respondents' own understandings of experiences as well as locating or contextualising these narratives.

Interviews took place in locations of the participants' choosing, this aided the research by interviews taking place where participants felt most comfortable (Oakley 1981). In the majority of cases this was the respondent's home (vicarage), although I met one respondent at his church office. The interview was designed to include time before, and after for conversation, generally this time helped me to get to know the interviewee and vice-versa, the establishment of a degree of rapport being important to the process (May 1997). However on some occasions clergy began discussing related issues early on and so conversation and interview became combined.

Each interview began with the question 'What is life like as a gay clergyman?' This began the interview in a way which encouraged interviewees to consider immediately the interconnection of sexuality and profession, and the interviews progressed from there. Following this a brief 'life history' (Plummer 2001) was generated, focussing on upbringing, and awareness of Christianity, sexuality and vocation, following through to a discussion of theological college and journey to present position. From this core issues were extracted, such as feelings of difference, experience of marginalisation, struggles with identity acceptance; and these formed the basis for the remainder of the interview.

As the research continued issues were incorporated into the interview schedule which had arisen in previous interviews, these included a discussion of boundary negotiation in work; the possibility of having friends in the congregation; and issues of exclusion from the gay scene, which had not been expressly asked in the early interviews. Finally, any issues I wished to revisit from individuals questionnaires (which had not been discussed before) were touched upon.

During the course of the interview stage, I spent time with individuals driving from train stations, eating, helping with chores, and attempting to rescue birds from chimneys! These experiences helped to informalize the interview and I believe aided both parties to relax, though such informal relationships have been seen to raise issues for research (Heaphy, Weeks and Donovan 1998), in the current study such activities were seen to be generally positive. In terms of ethical issues emerging at this stage any material carried with me for the interviews was coded and anonymised.

All interviews were recorded using a small Dictaphone, and only on two occasions was this an issue. On one occasion despite having expressed being unwilling to be recorded, halfway through the first question the respondent asked me to start recording. On the second occasion the respondent appeared extremely uncomfortable at the presence of the recorder. I therefore offered to leave the player in a different room, and take notes, but the respondent said he would try and see how it went. Tapes were only identifiable through a small number on the label, and again were kept locked away, then destroyed following transcription. When travelling my bag was kept with me at all times, and taxis were taken to nearby locations, when possible, rather than the vicarages themselves.

In general these interviews were successful in exploring the research questions, although some questions were avoided by respondents, in the majority of cases full answers were given and the respondents appeared willing to answer any questions asked. Stage 2 provided rich data for the discussion of gay clergy life. Answers incorporated discussions of understandings, reflections on history, and illustrations of issues. Therefore this interview data was extremely valuable in writing up and discussing gay clergy stories.

Design and Implementation of Diary Stage

Diary, particularly reflective diary, research is a relatively new and seldom used approach in social science research (Plummer 2001). As above-mentioned the choice of this method was influenced in two ways. Firstly, the importance of studying day-to-day life is recognised in the study of professions, and has been attempted in clergy studies

before. Kuhne and Donaldson (1995) used structured observation to explore the work activities of 5 evangelical protestant clergy, and Brunette-Hill & Finke (1999) made use of 'time-use' survey data on clergy from a number of denominations. Secondly, diaries have also been used, though again in a limited way in the study of sex and sexuality (Coxon 1996).

The diary keepers for this study were provided with a blank A4 notepad, pen, and some completion guidelines (see Appendix 3). Although the possibility of a more structured diary outline was discussed with supervisors I decided that a more open approach was most appropriate. The respondents were asked to record episodes of their choice from the day, and their reflections thereon. However guidelines emphasised the importance of recording episodes which were seen to be related to professional, religious and sexual/relational issues as had been discussed in the questionnaire and previous interview. How the diary was organised was left up to the individual diary keeper. As mentioned, the diaries were completed by respondents over a period of two weeks, and were to access similar information to the time-use, and sex diaries mentioned above, but also to move beyond this and capture personal reflection as well.

The clergy were asked to go 'beyond' working hours and record episodes from days off, and after the end of the 'working day'. This enabled the examination of how aspects of their life were interconnected, and (if at all) kept separate. The success of this method was mixed, some respondents were more used to keeping diaries than others, and as a result some diaries were returned with quite basic recordings of the day's events, whilst others provided rich accounts of events, and personal reflections on these. It was possible to counteract the limited detail in some of the diaries by following up recorded events in the second interview. Again the diary functioned as a 'non-contact method' and again the success of this method was shown by respondents' comments during the second interview. For example one respondent remarked 'I didn't realise I had been so honest!' Also respondents commented on enjoying recording the diary, two respondents mentioning that they may start to keep a more permanent diary for their own reference.

Ethical issues raised by the use of this method were assuaged in the following ways. Diaries were sent out under plain wrapping and had no definable markings.

Respondents were given the choice to use the book provided or type the diary and return it electronically (Using a locked computer file) or by mail. The ability to type the diary meant that respondents wary of keeping a personal diary which may be seen by partners or congregation members, were able to avoid this risk by using locked computer files. Return postage was provided for the return of the diaries, though after a problem with the return of one, remaining participants were asked to use money provided to return the diary using Royal Mail's 'Track and Trace' service. Once returned diaries were kept locked and converted to locked *Microsoft Word* Files.

Despite the variation in length and amount of reflection, the diaries provided access to 'day-to-day' experience. The diary data allowed a connection to the lived experiences of the clergy, and access to areas of life which may not have been covered by interview alone. In addition, due to the unstructured nature of the diary, this research method provided a greater autonomy for the respondents, in that the decisions over what to include were decided by them, rather than sparked by questioning or structured diary template. The data uncovered by the diary stands as testament to the value of diary as a research tool. Within the thesis diary data adds a personal aspect to the discussion and is quoted from as a qualitative resource. The nature of the diaries also adds a particular 'day-to-day' aspect to the discussion of gay clergy stories.

Design and Implementation of Second Interview Stage

The second interviews were again semi-structured interviews. These interviews were shorter than the initial semi-structured interview - lasting up to 90 minutes. This stage was included in the research as a follow-up to the diary, partly in line with previous studies using such method (Zimmerman and Wieder 1977 – c.f. Plummer 2001), but also to explore further the significance of issues, which arose in the diaries. I, as researcher attempted to explore how issues raised by the diary related to wider aspects of the individual's life. For example, one diary included the sentence 'Sat at home and reflected on the vulnerability of living alone' (D 8). The interview allowed the further exploration of this. Is it purely the loneliness of being alone? Does he feel particularly alone due to his sexuality? Or is there something about the profession which

encourages such feeling? Also from the same day 'Arrived home too <u>late</u> to do the ironing' (D 8) is this purely the throwaway phrase it appears? Or is he saying something about his lack of personal time, and the heavy burden of the job?

This interview also gave the possibility to discuss what had happened since I last met the participants. Although the diary allowed access to day to day detail which may not be otherwise readily available, the boundary on time was strict (exploring only one two week period), therefore the second interview allowed the possibility to discuss events which occurred outside the fortnight of diary keeping, and to further explore these issues. The second interview provided a valuable way of expanding information from the diary. It also allowed for a more relaxed interview as I had met the clergy previously. Though focussed primarily on the two weeks of diary keeping the semi-structured nature of the interview allowed for exploration of related issues, and the connection of diary events to wider experience. The combination of diary and interview used in this study provided extremely rich data, and provided access to life experience which may not have been possible by interview alone, or indeed diary alone. This combination of diary and interview even separated from previous questionnaire and diary methods is a valuable source of qualitative data and should be embraced to a greater extent in the social sciences.

Having discussed the research methods employed the chapter now discusses my reflections upon my position as researcher. The chapter explores a number of issues which I feel may have affected, or influenced the research process.

'Placing' Myself as the Researcher

The emphasis on reflexivity in this study was not to be limited to the respondents alone, rather as the researcher it was also important that I was aware of the possible effect I may have on the process and outcome of the research (Phillips 1973; Benney and Hughes 1984; Steier 1991; Cheek 1996; Denzin 1997). In preparing for the research I decided to freely invite, and answer, any questions from the respondents. This was important because the sensitive nature of the questioning within the research meant

much openness was expected from respondents and this was more likely to occur with openness from the researcher. I reasoned that refusal to do so may have caused an uneasy dynamic in the process. In addition, this openness from the researcher was important for the integrity of the project. As an open and reflexive interactionist study relational responses were required.

It is also important to explore how who I was may effect the research process. In total six issues emerged within the research process where my personal 'positioning' may have affected the research. These were:

1. Why I was doing the research.
2. My sexuality
3. My religious beliefs
4. My background / experience
5. My age
6. Interview dynamics

1. The question of why I was doing the research was the one that was raised most often by participants. Although my motivation for undertaking the work was more academic than political, my personal stance is 'pro-gay clerics'. Although many were interested in the topic of my PhD the question was more often asked in terms of whether the results would be made public. This was especially asked in terms of whether information would be fed back to support groups, and be available for the Church. It is my aim that less 'academic' publications will emerge from this work, and that respondents will be able to see the work in places of meaning to them. Although the main aim of this study was to explore concepts of identity and lifestyle using gay clergy as an example I did realise that the reasons individuals have for wishing to tell their stories was likely to be different to this (more likely to be in terms of 'speaking' to the Church, and informing Church debates). With so much being asked of and expected from respondents it seemed only right that these issues should also be addressed.

My interest in the topic of this study emerged from my previous research on religious authorities (Keenan 2003). My Masters research on the Anglican clergy raised a number of issues concerning the relationship between public and private identities in the clergy. My PhD proposal emerged from considering how these issues would be seen, managed and negotiated among clergy with 'hidden' or 'unaffirmed' identities. Following a literature review I came to the conclusion that these issues could be explored with reference to the lives of gay clergy, and such a study would be of value in adding to existing research.

2. I decided early in the process that I would be open about my own sexuality with respondents, although I had some reservations with doing this, over the course of the research this emerged as a very natural conversation to have. My discomfort partially arose from an affinity with the work of Stanley & Wise relating to standpoint epistemology (Stanley and Wise 1983), who argue that it is only those with experience of a topic who can gain true access and knowledge. As a straight man exploring the lives of gay men this caused an amount of concern, though previous methodological literature has discussed the importance of 'difference' as well as 'similarity' between researcher and researched (Heaphy, Weeks and Donovan 1998). In addition, as I was not exploring gay identity in and of itself, but rather its connections with religious and professional issues there could be seen to also be benefits to an 'alternative' sexuality, and the benefit of 'difference' was seen by some participants.

On two occasions my sexuality was seen as a positive by respondents who argued that an 'outsider' doing the research gave it a credence a gay researcher may not. To explain, it was seen that gay researchers researching gay issues may be seen as part of the 'club'. As an outsider (sympathetic, or otherwise) there is seen to be an 'objective' distance between the two.

A second reason for concern was that as a heterosexual male I have never faced the question 'How does it feel to be straight?' That is, despite a growth of literature on heteronormativity, discussion on institutionalised heterosexuality (Dunne 1997), and compulsory heterosexuality in education (Birden, Gaither,

and Laird 2000), as well as the emerging field of heterosexual studies (Masters, Johnson and Kolodny 1995; Richardson 2000). There remains a societal acceptance of heterosexuality as a given, a norm, anything else being queer and therefore in need of explanation. Doing this work, and thereby implicitly challenging the institutionalised heterosexuality of the church brought me to further consider my own heterosexuality, thereby impacting on the research process through my own changing understandings (in terms of my own understanding of my sexuality, and indeed my re-telling of my sexual identity 'story') and the impact that had on the research process.

3. My current religious beliefs were another issue that emerged. As a 'floating voter' in terms of Christianity (no longer a member of any denomination). I was intrigued to learn more about why people feel such bonds denominationally. I was wary at times that this position might affect the level at which individuals talked to me, wary of whether I could empathise with the importance of their Church attachment. However, at the same time being an 'outsider' to the Church of England provided the space for individuals to be more openly critical of aspects of the church, and to discuss perceptions of the church with me (as an outsider). Indeed my outsider status was embraced in this sense with clergy taking time to explain any references I was unsure off. However this may still have got 'in the way' of further discussion, though this was not obvious.

4. My biographical and familial background obviously relates to all of the above issues, however I feel this deserves separate consideration due to the length of time that was spent discussing this with respondents, and also its role in firing my interest in the subject to begin with. As the son of a Northern Irish Presbyterian minister I have experienced many of the issues which the clergy discussed (as a member of a clergy family, rather than 'as' a clergyman). Discussions of this provided the respondents with insights about how others close to the clergy may view their profession and the pressures thereof. As well as being of interest to many of the respondents I believe this also enhanced their confidence in my ability to appreciate and understand many of the issues they discussed.

This also brought home to me an issue which I believe initially affected the process and design of the research, this being the quite negative view of the clergy role I had. In this sense my focus on the pressures and the problems of clergy life rather than the positive aspects, and satisfaction undertaking such a role can bring, may have been rooted in my own biography. My experiences encouraged the clergy to talk more about being called, and the difference (or at times lack of difference) between being called and being born into. On occasion the unfairness, or lack of choice about the call was discussed. My experience also had another, unforeseen but positive effect. The discussion of my background opened the interview with a knowledge of what were in many ways shared experiences, though experienced from different angles. This provided a shared ground of understanding, and linked the research to some extent back to the previous discussion of standpoint research, though I had a very particular 'insider' / 'outsider' role.

5. A further issue which emerged in a number of face-to-face interviews concerned my age. At 25 (at the beginning of the research), I seemed to be younger than many respondents expected me to be. Though this was not mentioned in many cases, veiled enquiries were made. I believe the reason for this concern stemmed firstly from the age difference between myself and a number of the respondents. Coming from different generations, meant different experience, and perhaps, from their point of view, different values. As respondents were asked to talk about sex, and relationships, perhaps talking to a younger man about such issues was not easy, or something they were prepared for.

In the end the best approach appeared to be to use time before the interview to explain my interests and why I was doing the work. In general I feel these issues were dealt with and interviews progressed well, with respondents opening up and talking freely about issues. There were, however, occasions when I felt certain respondents were uncomfortable talking about certain issues, therefore the negotiation of this issue was required. I believe partially this was due to my age, or appearance, and therefore this issue required discussion here.

6. The final issue concerned the respondents' comfort level with face-to-face interviews. Often this was the first time the respondents were speaking about these issues to someone outside of their immediate friendship circle. There was therefore a hesitancy during the beginning of some of the meetings. Some questions asked by the respondents appeared to be testing the water (for example discussing Jeffrey John), trying to position me in terms of what we were going to talk about. It is here perhaps that my experience of clergy life helped most.

One respondent, following the interview, brought up an interesting issue. He spoke of being unsure of what to wear to meet me. More particularly he was unsure of whether or not to wear 'uniform'. This individual decided against this as he felt it may place a distance between us, that he would be appearing to put himself in a 'role'. He said that because he was already nervous about the interview he did not wish to make me feel the same way. Although it is impossible to tell the thought processes of other respondents in terms of their dress, some having come to the interview direct from church business, others wearing the 'dog-collar' to be more recognisable to me at train stations. There were definitely times when individuals relaxed, began talking more openly (at times more explicitly), and if 'in uniform' would often reach a stage where the collar would come off.

The above issues are discussed due to the understanding, within this research study, that research is interactional. My position as 'coaxer' and 'audience' (Plummer 1995) within the research process, means an awareness of 'me' as an aspect of the process itself is important.
The final sections of this chapter discuss the analysis undertaken, and the write-up of the thesis. It is important to note however, that fieldwork, analysis and write-up were viewed as connected, rather than, separate aspects of the research process.

Data Analysis

As abovementioned the research made use of both quantitative and qualitative methods. Data analysis therefore also involved both approaches.

The quantitative data from the questionnaires was entered into the SPSS programme. Certain open-ended answers were also quantified and entered into SPSS along with the other data. SPSS was used to generate frequency and comparison tables, this data was then used in conjunction with qualitative data to provide context and an overview of the sample.

Qualitative data from questionnaires and diaries was converted to *Microsoft Word* files for ease of use. These were used in conjunction with initial listening to recorded interviews to form initial impressions of the data, and to identify emergent themes. These themes were organised under the headings of Christian, Gay, and Clergy. The themes referred to attachment to and understanding of identity; constraint; significant others; negotiations of 'conflicting' identities; and negotiations with Church and parish .

6 initial interviews were then transcribed in full, along with 3 diary interviews. The remainder were transcribed in part, in relation to the established themes. Following this an electronic 'pile-building' approach (Bryman 2001) was used to 'read' transcriptions along with data from questionnaires and diaries. That is, transcriptions were 'cut and pasted' into *Microsoft Word* files named in relation to the themes. During this process further sub headings were developed until all of the data was incorporated.

Following this these computer files were printed and paper copies were continuously read, with notes of possible sub-themes and relationships made on them. The data was then cut and resorted. During this stage 'negotiation' and 'constraint' emerged as over-arching themes.

At this point I returned to related literature, this literature review emphasised the 'interactional' nature of the data, and the need for a situated understanding of the

'stories' being told. Therefore the over-arching theme of interaction was incorporated into the study. Following this I returned to the tapes of the part-transcribed interviews and added to these transcriptions in relation to the newly emerging themes. Through a further episode of 'pile-building' themes were added and removed from the research analysis. Within this the major themes emerging beneath the headings of Christian, Gay and Clergy were interaction; negotiation; influence of structure; essentialism; understanding of identities; identity change; and silence. These issues were taken forward in the writing of the fieldwork chapters. In doing so these issues were viewed in tandem with quantitative data, but also with reference to the stories from which quotations had been taken. This was done by making use of both 'piles' of quotations, and copies of transcripts with quotations highlighted in the writing up process.

Final organisation of categories therefore was an aspect of the combined analysis and writing up process, using the data to make a clear and convincing argument (Mason, J: 2002). Although interaction, interconnection, and negotiation were central I decided it was best to illustrate the importance of these issues by continuing to separate chapters in terms of Christian, Gay and Clergy identity. Summary of contents is provided at the beginning of each of the data chapters. The process of 'qualitative analysis' discussed above is presented graphically in Figure 2:

Figure 2: Graphic Illustration of Qualitative Analysis

Stage 1:

> **Initial Impressions of tapes, diaries and questionnaires recorded.**
> Emerging themes - Attachment to Identities; Understanding of Identities; Constraint; Significant Others; Negotiations of 'Conflicting' Identities; Negotiations with Church and Parish .

Stage 2

> **6 Initial Interviews and 3 Diary Interviews transcribed in full, remainder transcribed in part.**
> Transcriptions sorted according to 'emergent themes' using Microsoft Word. 'Sub-headings' added until all data incorporated.

Stage 3:

> **Word Files Printed, Data Read and Re-read**
> Possible sub-themes and relationships between concepts noted.
> Data cut and re-sorted **'Negotiation'** and **'Constraint'** emerge as overarching themes

Stage 4:

> **Return to Literature & Another Round of 'Pilebuilding'**
> Incorporate 'interaction' as overarching theme.
> **Major themes** = Interaction; Negotiation; Influence of Structure; Essentialism; Understanding of Identities; Identity Change; Silence

Stage 5:

> **Write-Up**
> Using 'Piles' of Quotations; Full Transcripts; and Quantitative Data

Notes on Writing-Up

It is important to clarify the way in which research data is referenced. After the initial interview respondents were assigned a number, this number was used to connect questionnaire, diary and interview transcripts. Although in the text respondents are referred to by pseudonyms the data is reference by their number. Further qualitative data from the questionnaires is assigned the letter 'Q', data from initial interview is assigned the letter 'I', data from the diaries is assigned the letter 'D', and data from the second interview, or diary interview is assigned the letters 'DI'. Therefore when reference is made to Robert (respondent 1) this will be referenced as 'Q 1', 'I 1', 'D 1' or 'DI 1'.

Summary

This chapter has presented the research undertaken, and has discussed the methodological and ethical issues which arose during the research process. The chapter has discussed the various research tools used and the reasons for their inclusion. In doing so the chapter has underlined how this study of gay clergy adds to existing research on gay clergy. Central to this is a 'critical humanist' perspective which allows for a centring of discussion on the understanding, experience and negotiations of the situated individual.

The thesis moves on to present the analysis and discussion of the data gathered through the process discussed above. This discussion is organised into three chapters entitled 'Negotiation of Christian Identity'; 'Negotiation of Gay Identity'; and 'Negotiation of Clergy Identity'. This organisation allows for the consideration of understanding of each identity, before illustrating how other aspects of identity, social structure, and community influence, enable and constrain the 'living' of these identities.

The thesis now presents the fieldwork and discussion, organised within the three chapters discussed above.

CHAPTER 4: NEGOTIATING CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

This chapter is the first of three chapters which explore and discuss the data collected during the research process. This chapter explores respondents' connection to their Christian beliefs and explores how issues of sexual and clergy identity interact in the creation management and presentation of the clergy's Christian identity stories.

Beginning with the respondents' conceptions of Christianity the chapter explores how the clergy view Christian belief, including their conceptions of God, and their access of diverse theologies. Through this discussion the chapter illustrates that stories of Christianity are situated. The respondents' personal biographies influencing their conception of the divine and their understanding of Christianity as inclusive, centred upon love. This influence of biography is argued to reflect the 'religious individualism', and the 'turn to life' discussed in Chapter 2.

Taking this argument forward the chapter argues that 'Christianity stories' are not static. Rather such stories are best understood as 'journeys of faith'. Experiences, societal pressures, Church structure, and 'conversations about transcendent meaning' (Besecke 2005) influence and alter individual understanding. Meaning, stories of Christian identity are dynamic, negotiated and edited over time.

One aspect which informs these individualised faith journeys, or stories is the respondents' sexual identities. The chapter therefore then turns to a specific discussion on the integration of sexual and religious identity. The focus of this part of the story is how respondents incorporate stories of Christianity and gay sexuality, and where in Christianity and the Christian community positive reinforcement of gay identity incorporation can be found.

Moving forward the chapter explores how the respondents construct and manage their sexual moralities. In so doing the chapter explores how pressures of gay identity and pressures from Christian identity interact in the construction of a story of morality, which, as Chapter 2 discussed has no 'blueprint', sacred or secular, to follow.

Finally the chapter explores connections and interactions between clergy and Christian identity. This issue has been under-researched both in studies of gay clergy, and studies of the clergy in general. The chapter argues that the expectations acting upon the clergy mean that respondents face a need to negotiate between Church expectations of their faith story, and their own understandings of their faith. The chapter conceptualises this in terms of a mismatch between personal and professional spirituality, distancing some respondents from their clergy identities.

Conceptions of Christianity

Central to respondents' conception of Christianity as a faith system was inclusivity, and a conception of Christianity being alive in the world, rather than separate from the worldly. The reflections of Anthony on this subject are illustrative of the thoughts of a number of respondents:

> I think the Church should be open to everybody, whoever! If they love the Lord and want to be part of the Christian fellowship then our job is to embrace them not to exclude them. (I 12)

This concentration on inclusivity, openness, and embracing people was also discussed in answers to the questionnaire question (Appendix 2 – question 1.6) '*Is there anything else you see as important to a Christian life?*':

> Accepting people for what they are, where they come from, understanding how we all fit into God's creation. (Q 13)

> Commitment to social justice (Q 14)

> Being open to change, questioning, inclusivity (Q 22)

The watchwords of openness, justice, acceptance and inclusivity, illustrated by the above quotations emphasise respondents' understandings of Christianity as a loving

religion. Such attitude was linked to a view of Christianity which reached beyond the walls of the Church.

These statements by the respondents not only emphasise what they believe Christianity is, rather implicit within such statements is what Christianity is not. It is not judging, it is does not exclude, it does not accept injustice. The use of the diary method in this study allows for access to particular episodes of experience. The following diary entry from Robert shows how such conceptions of Christianity emerge in 'living'.

> I received a phone call to say someone had died in the village and they asked for the funeral at the crematorium next Thursday. During lunch a woman phoned to say a man in the village had been killed and the widow wanted to see me. During both these calls the remark was made that the deceased didn't go to church. I assured them that church attendance was nothing compared to the needs of the bereaved. They seemed relieved. We seem to have bred a fear in people of asking for help from the church if they don't attend services. (D1)

Robert's narrative emphasises his focus upon the person. He sees his role as being there for those in need, those who are suffering, reaching out beyond the walls of the Church. Though the episodes Robert relates are 'normal' for a clergyman, his focus and emphasis on meeting need, illustrates the 'turn to life' (Woodhead 2001) in his theology, and his understanding of the role of Christianity for those 'left behind'. Robert's narrative is also critical of the prevailing attitude in the Church, which he distances his own ministry from. A number of other participants distanced their understanding of Christianity from Church teaching. This is illustrated by the narratives of Alan and Stewart:

> I think it's a sort of rules and regulations religion really. You are not meant to do this you are not meant to do that, you are not meant to be seen here, you're not meant to go there and I thought is that really what its all about? And I said why do people make it so difficult, I don't think that's got anything to do with Christianity at all, well not the way I see it. (DI 9)

Pronouncements by the national or international Church almost always make me cringe with embarrassment for their facile naïveté and anger me for their compromise with non-Gospel values. The gospel ('Good News') is universal, inclusive, affirming of the marginalized. It has little to do with personal moral (and especially sexual) behaviour. Yet the Church's preoccupations (in public at least) seem to be narrow, exclusive and life-denying. (Q10)

Both of these quotations question the establishment of firm rules and regulations concerning Christian behaviour by the Church, both emphasise the inclusivity of Christianity as a belief system, and place interpretation at the centre of Christian life rather than preset morality.

This separation of the individual's understanding of Christianity and Church was also illustrated in the questionnaire data. The respondents questioned the absolute authority of the Church, 93.1% (n=27) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement 'the opinions and rules of the Church are not necessarily those of Christianity'. The distance between Christianity and Church in the belief stories of the participants was also illustrated by questions relating to homophobia. 69% (n=20) of the respondents felt the Church of England was homophobic, however when asked if Christianity was homophobic the percentage dropped to 41.4% (n=12).

This distinction between Christian belief and Church teaching illustrates the conception of Christianity, not as moral authority, but rather moral influencer. Christianity does not set hard and fast rules but rather one's understanding of it aids decision about 'right' and 'wrong'. There have been a number of attempts to express this relationship Giddens' 'reflexive self' (Giddens 1991) and Bauman's 'Postmodern ethics' (1993) both attempted to understand the role of influencers in post or late modern life alongside the decline in the influence of traditional authority structures. Similarly Sweetman (1999) discuses postmodern life as a life project whereby the individual constructs identity through experience with reference to the influence of experienced others. By questioning the set authority of the Church and Church regulation the respondents are actively creating individualised, or reflexive understandings of faith. Christian belief is

a life project with experience of self and others, as well as Church teaching being referred to in its fruition.

One aspect of belief which influences the individual's understanding of religion is their conception of the divine. The chapter now turns to this issue in discussing how belief stories are influenced and negotiated.

Conceptions of God

In the questionnaire respondents were asked to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed with particular statements regarding the nature of God, in order to ascertain how individuals conceptualised God. The results from these questions are reported in Table 3.

Table 3: Questionnaire Responses Regarding the Nature of God

	God is a living being	God is within	God is outside of us	God is a gendered being	God is love	God is Judging	God is vengeful
Strongly agree	65.5% (n=19	51.7% (n=15)	41.4% (n=12)	3.4% (n=1)	86.2% (n=25)	10.3% (n=3)	0 (n=0)
Agree	24.1% (n=7)	41.4% (n=12)	27.6% (n=8)	0 (n=0)	13.8% (n=4)	51.7% (n=15)	3.4% (n=1)
Not Certain	6.9% (n=2)	3.4% (n=1)	13.8% (n=4)	34.5% (n=10)	0 (n=0)	13.8% (n=4)	3.4% (n=1)
Disagree	0 (n=0)	0 (n=0)	17.2% (n=5)	13.8% (n=4)	0 (n=0)	13.8% (n=4)	34.5% (n=10)
Strongly Disagree	3.4% (n=1)	0 (n=0)	0 (n=0)	48.3% (n=14)	0 (n=0)	10.3% (n=3)	58.6% (n=17)

Table 3 illustrates that by far the most widely accepted view of God is that 'God is love' (100% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed), whilst the most disagreed with statement is that 'God is vengeful' (93.1% either strongly disagreeing or disagreeing). The God conceptualised by the participants is a God who emphasises love over

judgement. Such findings underline that the respondents' conceptions of God emphasise acceptance and inclusion. Wilcox (2002) has previously explored how gay, lesbian and bi-sexual Christians view God. She states that her respondents define God in ways which support an 'LGBT-friendly' God. The results of the current study reflect this, the emphasis on love over judgement, and the distancing of belief from a vengeful God, emphasise a loving and inclusive God who accepts gay believers. To illustrate, one questionnaire also included the following statement

God loves me 'warts and all', even if others don't! (Q26)

The results from the table also show that a number of the clergy feel God is both within and outside, however it is a higher majority of the respondents who see God as within (27 compared to 20 participants). Again this is similar to Wilcox's results as it emphasises an immanence to God, this closeness is seen by Wilcox to emphasise an understanding on the part of God concerning peoples experiences, she argues that an understanding of God as immanent buttresses an understanding of a personal connection between the individual and the divine.

Although these results underline the broad findings of Wilcox (2002), they also bring into question the homogeneity of the respondents in the current study. For example despite the majority agreement with the statement 'God is a living being', one respondent strongly disagrees, and 2 others are unable to answer agree or disagree. Stewart discussed his struggle conceptualising God as follows:

I don't have a particularly personal kind of God, my prayer life isn't like that even, I find God just too [*sigh*]. I mean if there is a God, whatever you call this thing, this otherness, then I cannot conceive of this God in those kind of intimate personal ways where people have intimate cosy chats with God. I struggle, I wrestle with the whole business, y'know? It's a cloud of unknown, it's, and yet it's irresistible. (I 10)

Stuart's discussion of God was very different to the majority of other clergy. His conception of God as an indefinable 'other' is far removed from the personal

relationship other clergy discussed with God. Matthew for example discussed God in terms of something, or someone that could be felt and interacted with:

> When I'm feeling on good form I know I am held in the unconditional love and grace of God, and that he accepts me as a gay man. This feels more like the attitude of the true God. (Q11)

Such differences in God concepts illustrate the diversity of experience, and conceptions of God with individuals' Christian belief stories. This diversity reflects the multitude of areas of influence, and adherence to varieties of theologies, which exist among the participants.

Another area in which this diversity can be seen is in terms of whether God is a 'gendered being'. One respondent was separate from the consensus of disagree, and ten other respondents were 'not certain'.

As discussed in Chapter 2 Barrett and Keil (1996) discuss conceptualising God in terms of Anthropomorphism. Such ideas emphasise the central role of self. This relates to the concept of embodied spirituality (Mellor and Shilling 1997). Individuals' concepts of God are related to interpretation and connected to other influences in life and experiences, conceptions of God are thus situated within the self. Maynard, Gorsuch and Bjorck (2001) explored concept of God in terms of coping with difficult situations, positive conceptions of God were shown to aid respondents in difficult times. Such ideas explain a close connection between individual's ideas of morality, God and their theology. Bader and Froese (2005) explore this connection between image of God, theology and belief in practice. They found that individuals with an authoritarian conception of God were more likely to understand the Bible literally and hold 'conservative' moral positions. Though Stewart and Matthew's Gods appear very different, both are also removed from an 'authoritarian' God.

The respondents illustrate connection between God, theological belief, and moral position. For many, theology can be seen as connected implicitly with ideas of an immanent and loving God, although, as mentioned above, divergence from the

consensus can be seen within the respondents' experiences. Such conceptualisations of God show a connection to inclusivity and the 'love ethic' by participants and therefore inclusive and immanent concepts of God can be seen to affirm aspects of identity for gay and lesbian believers (Yip 1998, Wilcox 2002). Although Anglicanism has always included divergence, and varied theologies (Pickering 1998), the results above concerning respondents' conceptions of God can also be seen as illustrative of 'religious individualism'. The influence of self and experience on conception of God reflects the subjective turn discussed by Heelas and Woodhead (2005).

Although the central aspect of faith here remains the divine as an 'other' it is also a divine understood through and with reference to the self. The conceptions of God discussed give space to be 'gay' and 'Christian'. Immanent understandings of a loving God emphasise acceptance, personal connection, and God's care for the individual. The (non)entity discussed by Stewart is very different to this. However this conception of God sees God, and his will as unknowable. It is not so much that God is defined as loving, 'sifting' (Wilcox 2002) out biblical stories which discuss the 'vengeful' God. Rather, emphasis on the unknowable God questions all that has gone before, including the Christian moral frame. This will be discussed in greater detail in the next section, which further emphasises the individualised nature of belief stories, with reference to the diverse theologies accessed by respondents.

Diverse Theology

In discussing the diverse theologies accessed by the respondents this section will explore theologies of justice and liberal theologies, before exploring how these theologies connect to 'life'.

Central to the belief stories of all of the respondents across the sample, was the interconnection of their sexualities and their Christian belief systems. The respondents discussed that their experiences as gay men helped them to connect with others as Christians, and clergy. Being gay, and therefore having experienced rejection and discrimination, the respondents felt more able to connect with people on the 'outskirts of the Christian community (this is discussed in relation to vocation in Chapter 6). In

116

discussing their theologies, a number of respondents discussed how such connection was important in terms of their theological understandings of Christianity. Anthony's reflections on this are illustrative:

> I think part of being a good Christian is that you actually show other people that you're just like them as well. So it's not necessarily going around having a holier than thou attitude! Part of being a good Christian may well be going into the local pub and having a pint, and actually just being able to relate ordinarily and say look mate this is what Christians do. (I 12)

For Anthony being a good Christian was not separate to other aspects of life, rather being a good Christian was related to being involved and to being in touch with others, both within and outside the Church. As such Christianity is understood as connected to experience, and community. For Anthony there is a need to see Christianity as a part of all aspects of life, and related to them. Anthony's discussion is again reflective of the 'turn to life' (Woodhead 2001). Anthony's story of Christianity is one which is related to the 'here and now'. Through living as a Christian in the world, individual believers can show others what believing is, and its relevance, rather than its separation from lived experience. Anthony's story also emphasises Christianity moving from Church to pub. Christianity for Anthony is lived beyond the walls of the Church, it finds relevance where people are, and must engage them through 'Societal conversations about transcendent meaning' (Besecke 2005).

As well as a concern for the individual in this life, the 'turn to life' recognises a concern for the lives of others, and a search for social justice. Concern for others is implicit in Anthony's narrative, and was also present in the narratives of the other respondents. The thoughts of Stewart and Gareth are illustrative:

> Initially through a desire to serve / work for justice issues, especially amongst those marginalized (I had been considering a career in social work). (Q10)

> I can feel gladness in my Christianity when looking at the sufferings, and pain of Christ. It all helps me to make sense of my and others' lives. This has been

especially so when I have been alongside the terminally ill, those having problems with their sexuality and latterly helping with my depression. (Q13)

Both of the above quotations emphasise the importance of social concern within the respondents' understandings of Christianity. For Stewart, Christianity provided a way for him to practice his concern for others. For Gareth, it is particularly within his theology that he finds meaning to suffering and can help others to cope with their own suffering. One questionnaire response emphasised the difficulties theologies of justice faced in the Church:

I am drawn to a 'Social Christianity', with political undertones, and miss that in much Christianity today. (Q19)

The social concern of these individuals, and the wish for political action on the part of Christianity both reflects the 'turn to life' and resonates with aspects of liberation theology (Guiterrez 1979). Liberation theology sees faith and worship stem from action within the struggles of the worldly rather than separate to them (Pattison 1994). Liberation theology sees Christianity as intrinsically linked to the struggle for liberation, and struggles against poverty and injustice. Although emerging from Latin America liberation theology has been embraced by those arguing for the ordination of women, and acceptance of lesbian and gay Christians (e.g. Stuart 2003; Althaus-Reed 2006).

The connection of respondents to such issues reflects their own struggles to connect their gay and Christian identities (O'Brien 2004). However connection to such issues is not limited to sexuality. Harold's discussion of his theological approach illustrates this point:

I can also see that the experience of being a minority and discriminated against as a gay person has given me an empathy with other people who are going through bad times, whatever cause lies behind them. I suppose when you are wounded you've got a choice. You can either accept the wounds, and use them in a way that allows you to offer help to other people, which involves remaining

vulnerable yourself. Or you can close them over like scar tissue and become very hard, didactic and authoritarian (I 4)

Harold's narrative is reflective of how a number of respondents connected their experience of marginalisation to their understanding of theology, which was seen to make them more aware of the struggles of a number of other people. Such social theology emphasises the role of self, and the role of experience in theological understanding.

Another theological frame related by some of the respondents was a more radical liberal theology. This approach again places self as a dynamic feature of religiosity and theology. For those connecting to such theology this was often seen to stem from time at theological college. Stewart discusses this as follows:

> I'd come to this faith and was very certain about it all, went to theological college and then discovered that Christianity isn't about certainty it's about exploration, it's like exploring anything you discover it's all theory and tentative and all the rest of this… and puff years went up in a puff of smoke. By the end of my first year at theological college I believed nothing! You know, 'Do You believe in God?' 'Well what do you mean by God?'. (I 10)

Ian also reflected on the appeal of more radical liberal theology. He discussed his experiences saying:

> It may go back to this being on the margins again, and so I remember being, absolutely animated by 'faith in doubt' going down the road of Christian Humanism. … They excited me greatly, apathetic spirituality, the God of the darkness, the God of not being there is terrifying, but its very real, and I did have a whole experience of that, hung over a great big dark abyss, very much interested in Elijah and the cave and the symbolism of the raven which is the bird of the darkness and all that sort of thing. So it's not easy, it's a sort of spirituality of the wilderness. … the parable where the master goes away to a far

country and leaves the servant to get on with things in faith and trust, and that speaks a lot to me, the distance. (I 8)

Both Robert and Stewart's acceptance of liberal theology, or Christian non-realism (Cupitt 1995) seem in emphasis distinct from the immanence of God in liberation theologies. They are to an extent a form of Christian agnosticism, moving away from a definable objectified God, to a connection to the divine through self-understanding. Such theology has its roots in the work of Robinson's (1963) theology. To illustrate, one famous quote from this text reads:

> Suppose belief in God does not, indeed cannot, mean being persuaded of the 'existence' of some entity, even a supreme entity, which might or might not be there, like life on Mars? Suppose the atheists are right – but that this is no more the end or denial of Christianity than the discrediting of the God 'up there'. (Robinson 1963: 17)

For the respondents accessing such theology, the certainty of the Bible and God as understood are questioned, much of the bible is treated as myth and so again experience, and the application of Christian principle, as understood through self, becomes central to religiosity. Such liberal theology provides space for the inclusion of dissident identity, the centrality of self-understanding allowing for the negotiation of identity.

Both of these theologies (liberation and liberal) centre experience of God (or absence of God), and understanding of Christian principle at the heart of belief. By placing experience and interpretation at the centre of Christian faith, and emphasising the importance of context, these theological systems give space to the individual believer to question and explore the meaning of Christianity. The individual can create a personal story of belief, and negotiate space for aspects of identity, which may be sidelined in traditional theologies or understandings of Christianity.

To some extent the above findings may be questioned in terms of their relevance to individualism. As previously mentioned Anglicanism has historically been seen as a broad ship of theological opinion and position, however for many of the respondents the

need for interpretation was a challenge to the official Church, as shown previously, rather than an aspect of Church tradition.

The value and place of self and experience as a guiding principle within spirituality, is reflected in these theologies. Bellah's (1985) individualisation of religion is relevant to participants' narratives. However, such individualised, or self-organised belief does not necessarily negate the importance of community, and shared understanding, as mentioned above community and connection to others is in fact central. For liberal and liberation theology, both make sense only in terms of the social, through connection to others, and 'this' world.

Besecke (2005) discusses the problems with referring to changes in religious life as privatisation, arguing it is more useful to view religion in terms of communication or conversation. In connecting to the importance of community and shared experience, ideas of individualisation are not removed, rather the boundaries of what is religious are questioned. Besecke, for example, discusses how magazine articles can be religious, and underline the community nature of belief. Writer and reader connect, readers discuss the ideas with each other and so on (Besecke 2005). The experiences and reflections of respondents concerning the connectedness of Christian belief can be seen to illustrate the importance of story and context (particularly in terms of a 'turn to life' and 'liberation theology'), for they are constructed through and retold within the social. Shared experience in this sense is exactly that, a sharing of experience through communication, rather than a 'separated from life' sharing of religious principle.

Other theorists of religion have also discussed this changing of understanding of the connection of religious community. Riis (1989) in discussing the case of Nordic countries argues that although religion has moved from the public to the private sphere, community and connection between individuals' privatised understandings remains central. King also argues for the importance of community in spiritual belief, this community stretching beyond shared belief to embrace pluralism and understand difference (King 2001). Although much previous writing on the individualisation, or detraditionalization of religion has recognized of the existence of belief outside of the 'traditional' religious spaces of Churches (Heelas 1996, Roof 1993), such

understandings as related above show that such social effects are not separated from more traditional religious beliefs, supporting the discussions of Woodhead (2001), and Heelas and Woodhead (2005).

The above discussions of respondents' stories of Christianity has illustrated a move away from static 'given' understandings of Christianity towards a more fluid understanding of Christian identity which takes into account differing influencers and experiences (including Church tradition; sexuality; various theological frames and God concepts), illustrating the interaction of the structures of Church, with the agency of the believer. Rather than linked to a decline in belief the respondents illustrate an intense and meaningful connection between their lived experiences and their personal belief systems. This can be seen in terms of the work of Lyon (2000), who writes:

> Today's religious choices may reflect a seriousness of faith that did not figure in the lives of those involved in organised religion from the cradle. (Lyon 2000:77)

Whether situating belief within or outside of mainstream denomination, 'choosing' belief, and incorporating such belief stories into self-identity, enable an intense connection to faith, a 'seriousness of faith' which is peculiar to privatised 'claimed' faith. The construction of a personal story of belief is not only constructed through reference to a variety of influences. Rather continued belief must take into account the constant varied influences at play. Acceptance of, or conversion to Christianity is not an endpoint, but rather a beginning of a life project of Christianity, a journey of faith.

Journeys of Faith

The term journey of faith is used in this study to describe the continual negotiation and fluidity of the meaning of Christian belief. Following a discussion of the nature of Anglicanism this section explores respondents' faith journeys with reference to changing theologies, and denominational switch, before illustrating the acceptance of changing theologies within the tradition – through reference to Matthew's story.

Although self-identification as 'Christian' may remain fairly consistent for individuals across the lifespan, the meaning of the term may be more fluid. As mentioned above the Anglican denomination is seen as a broad church in the sense that within the boundaries of the Anglican Communion and even within the Church of England a variety of theological positions exist. Pickering (1998) for example refers to Anglicanism as a mélange incorporating Catholic, Protestant and liberal ideas. Parsons (1989) refers to this variety when discussing 'choice of doctrines' within the tradition (Parsons 1989:3). Such variety has been seen as a necessary tension in the church, and has been approached in official Church publication, for example the report of the 1998 Lambeth Conference discussed diversity saying

'Because Christians are called to serve and embody the values and aspirations of the reign of God in specific context, they are always in creative dialogue and tension with whatever culture they call their own' (The Anglican Communion 1999 b:19).

Although this statement refers to the differences between countries it underlines the existence of diversity possible within one nation Church. In recent dialogues concerning debates over the 'gay issue' in the Anglican Church the existence of such diversity has been highlighted in terms of the 'conservative' and 'liberal' wings of the church (Bates 2004). With the range of opinion that exists under the umbrella of Anglicanism, it is perhaps unsurprising that respondents discussed variations in their belief stories over time. Despite the tensions raised by such diversity of theology this was seen as a positive aspect of the Church of England by a number of the respondents. For example Luke when discussing the different sides of the debate on the 'gay issue' said

To me the great strength of the Church of England is the great pool in the middle, and we are all swimming in it and we all fit in somewhere and we are all learning from one another. I don't want to sit at either end, I want to be in the middle, I want to be where God is, I want to be where the people are. (I3)

This reflection on the structure of the Church of England shows how variations in belief are possible, and underlines the statement from the Church itself that 'Sharing the stories of God's presence among us in our many contexts can strengthen our faith and give us new insights and courage to sing the Lord's song in our own land' (The Anglican Communion 1999b:19). Sociologically, such a mélange allows the respondents room to question and explore, while remaining connected to Anglicanism. It allows the freedom for discussion and disagreement, and the diversity strengthens claims to Christian identity which may disagree with the views of other aspects of the Church. Although disagreement may exist in other denominations, factions, and theological differences are not so 'built' into the structures. Apart from the Roman Catholic Church no other Western Christian denomination has such an obvious hierarchical structure, this dynamic of structure and negotiation sets the Anglican Church apart. The historical structuring of Anglicanism may limit understandings of 'Journeys of Faith' as evidence of detraditionalization of religion. However as has been illustrated above the creative structuring of belief stories by the respondents goes beyond simply accessing diversity in Church structure, and is seen in terms of opposition to Church structure. 'Journeys of Faith' therefore illustrate the respondents' negotiation of faith story with reference to both, the diversity of Anglicanism, and creative self-reflexivity.

Many of the respondents discussed their journeys of faith, and the variety of influences encountered. Although the journeys were often quite different, reference can be made to a few to illustrate the diverse aspects of journey of faith even within one denomination:

> I mean it was just an amazing sort of personal spiritual journey, through Anglicanism, I never rejected Christianity but I've certainly had a pilgrimage which has taken me through sort of small town church going, and assuming that the Church of England was to be located in the church where I went and everything else approximated to it, through to a theological education which exposed me to northern European theological rigour and I now see my principal commitment as Christianity expressed through and secondary to that the Church of England. (I6)

I always believed I came from a Conservative Evangelical background. I
always believed that those who worship God worshipped in Church, and those
who didn't, didn't! Then when I had my own parish and began to watch all
sorts of things that were going on. Like the church was open all day and I began
to see things like, there would be parishioners in church praying on their own
but I'd never see them in the public act of worship … I now realize it would be
wrong to believe that it's only the believing people who are found in the pews
on Sunday. There is much more going on outside and it's a joy actually to go
outside to them. Sometimes it's rather refreshing to meet people who were not
conditioned by Church structures and Church way of life but are themselves just
honest, and wouldn't know when you talk about Lent they wouldn't have a clue
what you're talking about but they'd know there is a God and they'd know that
God loves them and in their own particular way they want to be on the right side
of God. (DI1)

George (I6) and Robert (DI1) illustrate the fluid nature of belief. Though the influences
they reference are very different, for George discussion centres on widening knowledge
of theology, while Robert discusses learning from others. Both illustrate Christian belief
is not static, rather it is influenced by experiences, and the religious understandings of
others. This reiterates Luke's argument earlier that being in the midst of things is
important, influencing and being influenced, not only then underlining the personal
nature of faith, but also the community aspect and the importance of shared experience.
Conceptions of Christianity are dynamic and interactive, these stories of belief are
edited and re-edited similarly to other identity stories (Plummer 1995).

Another aspect of 'Journey of Faith' for some respondents involved shifts in
denominational allegiance. Generally such shifts occurred during childhood and early
adulthood. Anthony's narrative of denominational change is illustrative:

I wanted to be part of what I though was the 'real' church. I don't know why,
(but) I thought that the Church of England was the 'real' Church, and the

Methodist Church a pale imitation of the real thing. Which is a bit embarrassing now as I am so committed to humanism! (I12)

The above quotation from Anthony illustrates a move in denomination due to dissatisfaction. Though the majority of such experiences were in early life a number of participants discussed later denominational exploration. One respondent attended both Anglican and Roman Catholic seminaries during his training, and three respondents had explored the possibility of calls to the religious (monastic) life. These denominational explorations relate to the concept of 'seeking' discussed in literature on 'alternative spiritualities (Roof 1993), and denominational choice often referred to in discussions of consumerised religion (Lyon 2000), and the rational choice theory of religion (Stark and Bainbridge 1987). Central to each of these discussions is the individuals search for 'fit', to find what fits them, and to find where they fit. Denominational change reflects the search for fit, and illustrates that what fits now, may not in the future. The 'embarrassment' Anthony relates, serves as illustration of this.

One particular story illustrated how profound change can be in an individual's journey of faith. As a married gay clergyman Matthew has struggled with reconciling his sexual and religious identities, this struggle has profoundly affected his understandings of Christianity. He recounts:

> Then I had quite a big swing towards Evangelicalism, and a feeling that I was being asked to give all that up (gay lifestyle). I then became horribly judgemental, which I deeply repent of now. I tidied my life up, got my marriage back on track, and after about 6 or 7 years began to realize that that just wasn't the answer, it wasn't actually representing the totality of who I was. (I11)

Matthew's comments show how the spiritual journey does not exist as separate from the rest of experience, rather it is often tied up with other issues such as the journey of sexuality (Comstock 1996). In narrating his changing sexual life Matthew also points to how strong changes in the journey of faith can be and the effect such changes can have on lifestyle. This change, for Matthew, went further as it occurred within his time as minister to a congregation. Although the congregation did not know about Matthew's

sexuality they were part of a congregation whose style of worship changed with the variation of their clergyman's theology. Although congregants did not share Matthew's experiences they show an acceptance of the flexibility of theology, even for the clergy.

Matthew's experiences relate to Bidwell's (2001) concept of 'maturing religious experience', that one's religious understandings develop over time in relation to other changes in experience and understanding. Through Matthew's 'life project' his theology changes, and his understandings of what can be Christian also diversify. The importance of journey, of seeking, and of private relationship with God as shown in this study draws a link between the religious authority of self, and the self as centre of how one interacts with society. Although studies on secularisation have focussed on the division between the religious and other aspects of society (Bruce 1995), discussion based within understandings of individualisation and detraditionalization, particularly when based within the experiences of the individual, emphasise the connective nature of life.

The above discussions of 'Journeys of Faith' illustrate the malleability of stories of Christianity, and the interactional nature of the creation of such stories. The 'subjective turn' discussed by Heelas and Woodhead (2005) is illustrated by the need for affirmation of 'self' within belief story in the above discussion.

The conception of faith journeys as 'life-projects' emphasises the need to see stories of belief in conjunction with discussions of wider social life. Reiner (2005) explores the similarities between Bellah's discussion of individualized religion and Giddens' work on identity, seeing religion as a reflexive project with self at the centre. Although Anglicanism has been shown to incorporate diversity. This diversity being linked to the historical differences which were present at the conception of the denomination. The journeys of faith narrated by respondents imply a change from 'given' to 'found' Anglicanism, which is reflective of more modern, rather than, historical diversity in the religious realm. These journeys not only reflect the individualization and fluidity of Christian identity stories, but they also reflect the issues raised by religious pluralism (Repstad 2003, Veverka 2004).

The decline in acceptance of grand narratives (Plummer 2003), suggests traditional authority structures lose 'given' authority, and become instead one of many possible 'chosen' authorities. This brings about a situation in which individual choice is as valid as accepted ideology, whether within one denomination, or through a more fractured seeking. This religious pluralism increases the variety of religious 'knowledge' accessible to the individual. Encouraging exploration, as the respondents' narratives illustrate. King (2001) argues that such a change is beneficial due to the changing nature of the world around us. Flexible spirituality, she argues, allows the individual to make connections in the multicultural world and gives meaning to diversity, even within one religious denomination.

The discussion presented in the chapter so far have illustrated the interactional and fluid nature of Christian identity stories. The personal stories of the respondents have emphasised inclusion, love, and social justice, this has been shown to create space and allow an affirmation of self to be experienced through belief. The 'journey of faith' is a 'life-project' which must affirm and connect the self with religious conceptions. The respondents' concepts of faith, God and theology were influenced by a number of factors both traditional and innovational. Moving forward the chapter will now explore how stories of Christian identity are worked out, specifically in relation to gay identity.

Incorporating Sexuality and Religious Belief

Previous literature has explored the tensions emerging from holding both gay and Christian identity (e.g. Thumma 1991, Mahaffy 1996, Yip 1997b, Wolkomir 2001, Wilcox 2002 – discussed in Chapter 1). Thumma (1991) conceptualises this issue as identity dissonance. Within this literature scriptural texts that have traditionally been interpreted as prohibiting homosexual sex (for example Genesis 19, Leviticus 20 v13, Romans 1 v 26-27) are seen as the primary basis for the contemporary censure of homosexuality in the Church (Yip 2005a).

Though a number of previous studies focus on the need for participants to reassess a conservative Christian identity in order to find 'fit' between their Christian and gay

selves (Thumma 1991, Wolkomir 2001), for many of the respondents in the current study religious and sexual 'awakenings' occurred in tandem. This timing meant that individuals were less likely to feel such strong dissonance internally, and a number of respondents felt at the time that such dissonance was not an issue. Despite this all the respondents discussed occasions where they felt required to engage with 'plain word' (Rae 2000: 4) interpretations and reassess the texts in order to negotiate the interpretive space to find 'fit' between their Christian and gay identities, whether retrospectively or in order to defend their position in the light of increasing opposition. In the respondents' narratives three forms of opposing argument were used against 'plain word' interpretations of scripture which has been related to censure of homosexuality.

The first of these is that 'plain word' interpretations are misinterpretations. Data from the questionnaire showed that 96.6% (n=28) either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement '*Traditional understandings of biblical teaching on homosexuality are inaccurate*'. This suggestion of misinterpretation was evident in interview. One example of this is Anthony's reflection on his experience:

> I realized I was a Christian, God loves me, I love God, so there must be some other way of looking at these texts. You know if people like me are to be stoned to death [*Leviticus*]… well, that can't be right. (I12)

The second way in which 'plain word' interpretations were countered was through suggesting that 'plain word' approaches were viewing texts out of context. An example of this is in Adam's discussion of the texts:

> I've always tended to see those passages, including St. Paul's … as being sort of contextual, for their time, really … I think you have got to weigh it with the culture in which it was written. (I5)

The third, and most often cited response was to appeal to the broader themes of the bible, thus emphasising the texts as a small part of the whole, and thus perhaps irrelevant, no matter what their meaning, Here Ian's succinct answer is illustrative:

It's the fundamentalist that claims monopoly of biblical orthodoxy. But, I can be biblically orthodox. But, you know, you champion the big things, about social justice and inclusion, and the broad things that are there all the way through, to me that is orthodox biblical. (I8)

Opposing strategies to these texts have been discussed in previous literature. Wilcox for example sees a similar three-pronged approach to the texts by her LGB Christian respondents. She discusses these as linguistic, historical, and appeal to the primary teaching of Christ as unconditional love (Wilcox 2003), this typology of argument relates with the three counter-arguments put forward by the respondents. Others have added further strategies, for example Yip (2005a) discusses the understanding of Jesus as a marginal figure, fighting for social justice and standing against the official Church. Bardella (2001) also sees theological reinterpretation as a strategy of opposition discussing the centrality of friendship over heterosexual marriage in scripture (also discussed in Jordon, Sweeney, and Mellott 2006), and discusses 'queer' interpretations of the person of Christ.

Central to all of these approaches is a questioning of the 'authority' of 'plain word' interpretation. Although, for example, linguistic arguments may out rightly question the correctness of traditional understandings, the importance of such strategies is the space they provide for possible alternative translations. By questioning the solidity of the 'plain word' interpretations gay Christians not only question the definition of the text but also lay responsibility for the condemnation of homosexuality in the hands of men rather than the hands of God. Wolkomir in discussing the work of a gay Christian support group wrote:

It became apparent that ideological manoeuvring was the key to revising dominant Christian ideology and the collective identity 'Christian' to accommodate the men's sexuality. (Wolkomir 2001:410)

The key for Wolkomir to allowing the accommodation of sexuality was providing the possibility of space where sexuality could be included. The above examples of challenge to 'plain word' understandings of scripture allow that space by emphasising

that such widely accepted understandings are *interpretations*, rather than the 'word of God'. This allows for the creation of interpretive space wherein the individual becomes central to the translation, interpreting the text through their own experience, rather than following the now deconstructed dominant ideology. In essence, rather than Church sanctioned interpretation being accepted unquestioningly, strategies of reinterpretation create space wherein the individual reflexively negotiates meaning.

Gay Christians therefore find interpretive space through the personal deconstruction of religious grand narratives. The recognition of 'plain word' interpretations as interpretations, opens the possibility for other interpretations which are equally valid. Aspects of personal belief story in terms of such prohibitive texts are therefore worked through, edited and re-edited with reference to tradition, experience, and knowledge of alternative interpretations (e.g. through support groups, gay Christian organisations, with reference to books, magazines or 'experienced others').

The re-interpretation of these prohibitive texts undertaken by Gay Christians may be in line with what Wilcox refers to as a 'metaphorical' understanding of the bible, individuals taking what they can use and 'sifting out' the rest (Wilcox 2002: 508). However the approach discussed by the respondents is more nuanced than this. It is not that aspects of the bible are sifted out, rather they are viewed in line with an understanding of the bible's central principles as being love, social justice and inclusion, in a sense the bible is read through a lens of inclusivity. This not only gives space to negotiate dissident identity as shown above, it also removes difficulties raised by passages which appear contradictory to current Christian thinking. Harold offered an example of this:

If you take the bible at face value slavery is all right! Democracy is a sin! (I4)

And Stephen argued it is not only homosexuality which the Bible is unclear upon:

You can prove anything in the bible if you want to! It's a bit like Shakespeare! (I7)

131

Though this flexibility of religious text can be viewed negatively, and to some extent can be used by critics of gay Christians to reassert the claim that 'they are not real Christians' The prominence of such reflexivity in the lives of the respondents can also be seen in a positive light. Both in terms of Lyon's discussion of post-modern religion, and his argument that reflexive religious belief stories allow strength of connection to faith, and also in the fact that the discussions above illustrate a need for gay Christians to involve themselves deeply in theology, biblical study and theological thought. Aspects of liberation theology, and body theology affirm the importance of understanding faith and locating and relating it to your own life and experience, and the respondents' narratives presented above emphasise their involvement in and familiarity with a broad range of theological positions which reflects a seriousness of thought, which is not only encouraged, but necessitated by their sexualities.

The above discussion has illustrated that space for incorporation of sexuality and religious belief among respondents is grounded in a serious involvement with and reflection upon Christian belief. The space for incorporation emerges through negotiation with and deconstruction of existing Christian grand narrative, and experience and incorporation of Christian innovation within personal belief narrative.

Also the above discussion has centralised *interpretation*. Though understanding accepted tradition as interpretation enables space for incorporation, this incorporation itself is based upon interpretation. It is thus questionable, and fragile. Interpretation of scripture, is as flexible and malleable as other aspects of belief stories. Therefore understandings based on interpretation require support. For example Wolkomir (2001) and Thumma (1991) suggest the possibility of difference is not enough. Within the support groups studied by Wolkomir and Thumma the interpretive space provided by questioning required buttressing by negating those who disagreed with the new 'gay Christian' identity. This thereby established the new identity as a true Christian identity.

For many of the clergy in the current study this was not the case. The inclusivity of their identity did not exclude the excluders, but rather extended to them in toleration. Therefore affirmation of the clergy's position and collaboration of their gay and

Christian identities needed to emerge from elsewhere. The evidence from the research suggests this came from two distinct places, which the chapter now turns to consider.

Support for Gay Christian Identity

The previous section has discussed how through negotiation with accepted Christian tradition, and emergent Christian belief innovation gay Christians find interpretive space, for the integration of gay and Christian identities. However as discussed this space is not necessarily validated socially in the Church. Rather the dominant ideology continues to question the acceptability of homosexuality. This section of the chapter will consider where support for integration is found. With reference to 'religious individualisation' and its questioning of accepted authorities the chapter will argue that the respondents found support from two distinct places. Firstly, through the narratives and experiences of others who have negotiated gay Christian identity – one of the proliferation of authorities (Giddens 1991). Secondly, through their relationship with God, where a personal sense of God's love is of crucial importance in individualised understandings of belief (Wilcox 2002, Yip 2002)

The Experiences and Support of Others

Support from others was an important source of affirmation of gay Christian identity for a number of the clergy. This emerged in a number of ways including through support groups and organisations, through literature, and in a more informal way through meeting people who influenced them. Luke's narrative illustrated this:

> I think I was very lucky in hitting a group of people who have come gently and
> quietly all the way through their ministry to the nature of their sexuality and
> their ministry together. (I3)

Luke discusses here how others who were gay and in the ministry had gone before him, their experiences were an aid in coming to terms with who he was. Another example of

this is provided in the reminiscences of Robert. Robert's relation of this story was prompted by meeting a man who reminded him of a priest he used to know. He recorded this meeting in his diary:

> He held my attention because he was the double of Fr. Daly – a gay priest who retired and came to live in the parish I served in. The likeness was uncanny and brought back memories of Fr. sharing his gay secrets after his housekeeper had delivered the tea and left us alone. (D1 *names changed*)

Robert discussed this priest further during interview, and explained the importance of this priest's influence:

> Straight away I knew, and he knew that we were both gay. Well, he wanted me to go to tea regularly, and I went. He opened up about the gay thing and was as camp as can be! He was ever so funny, and we got on like a house on fire, and I loved him dearly. As an Anglo-Catholic he was almost totally opposite to my own churchmanship but he'd had an interesting life and I think I did learn an awful lot from him. I think what I was learning from him was that it was safe to enjoy being gay, it wasn't any condition. It wasn't something to be ashamed off. It was your personality and if you enjoyed it you would go a long way in accepting yourself for who you were, and what you were doing. (DI1)

Robert's reflections about Father Daly illustrate what an importance the experiences and stories of others could have in the respondents' journeys to self-acceptance. Giddens (1991) argues that in late modernity the concept of authority has widened, influences may come from a number of directions, and individuals sift out those with which they align. He argues that traditional authorities have lost force, and become one of a proliferation of possible authorities, centring the self as organiser of these possibilities. There is no reason why the Church should be separated from this process of social change. This becomes important because although the institutional Church continues to at best tolerate active gay Christians, it is not the only authority the respondents access, nor even necessarily the most important. The experiences, and stories of others act as influence, and example. They are a point of reference for the

reflexive consideration of identity management, and the construction of stories of religious belief.

This influence can also be seen in publicly told stories. Ian's narrative illustrates this:

> One influential book was the J.J. McNeill book, which gave a very positive thing about why God might have made us this way, and there was a lot of good American reading. Also a lecturer (at theological college) was very much involved in the Quakers, and was very positive towards homosexual support. I mean, he wasn't himself, but that was very helpful as well. (I8)

In exploring the literature, Ian illustrates that he is not happy to just accept what is given by the church, he explores various perspectives and considers them critically. Such reading not only gives a differing view but also supports this with theological debate. Thumma (1991) argues that the work of the pro-gay evangelical support group he studied benefited from emphasising its closeness to 'traditional' evangelism, as this underlined the acceptability of the group, and reflected authority with which the members identified. One can suggest that theological argument such as that within McNeill's (1988) book gains credence by engaging with the texts in a manner which is familiar, and accepted in theological work. Such bodies of work therefore become another source of influence, and if these engage with the thoughts of the reader can be a powerful source of affirmation. In addition the lecturer Ian refers to was a lecturer in his theological training college. Again, this example comes from an academic (and Church) setting, an area which is generally viewed as worthy of respect thereby gaining particular influence. This location for influence was also discussed by Keith:

> On my ordination course there was a director of pastoral counselling who came and did a session and I thought that is someone I could talk to and he would probably understand. So I made an appointment to go and see him. I didn't feel I could approach the chaplain of the university which is unfortunate because if you cant approach the student chaplain who can you approach? Any way this particular priest helped me to just accept myself as I was saying 'this is the way God made you – you have got to get on with it. (I14)

Ian and Keith reflect religious individualism. Influenced from a range of knowledge sources, and they consider these critically, incorporating the stories gained within their own story of his Christian identity. For Keith this was particularly negotiated as he discussed coming from 'a conservative biblical view'.

The stories of others gained through meeting, group or literature then provide an opportunity for affirmation for gay Christians. Obviously the power of this affirmation depends first on the receiver's access to these stories, and second to their acceptance of the affirmation. Plummer (1995) discusses how stories are dynamic, what is heard in one way among one group, may be heard differently elsewhere. What is discarded by one group may be emotionally engaged with by others. The stories discussed above illustrate 'successful stories', where stories told are connected to and given continuing life. However, though these stories are connected with and give affirmation to the respondents, others may hear such stories as 'deviant stories'; 'un-Christian stories'; or possibly worst of all 'dull stories'. The story's power to affirm does not exist in and off the story itself, it emerges through the dynamic of the telling. Further, to gain affirmation from such stories one must be able to hear them (effect of geographical location is discussed in Chapter 5).

The other area through which powerful affirmation was felt by the respondents was through their relationship with God.

Relationship with God

The respondents particularly discussed a sense of affirmation of their sexuality through their relationships with God. Although individual respondent's understandings of the nature of God varied, all discussed how their relationship with God influenced the negotiation of their sexuality and religious identity. One of the way in which respondents discussed this was in terms of their theological understandings of the relation between God and humanity. Stephen's reflections are illustrative of this.

> If I am made in the image of God, if all things come from God, how can this not
> be? ... I can't believe that God likes straight people and not gay people. (I7)

He went on to explore this further saying:

> If you believe, as I do, and preach regularly, that we are made in the image of
> God, then, I must reflect something of God as well. Therefore if I am made in
> the image of God what does that mean if I am also gay? (I7)

Similar opinion was expressed by others:

> I fully believe I am created in God's image as a unique individual, enabling me
> to fully accept myself, my sexuality and my love for another man (Q25)

This understanding of relationship with God - being that one is made in the image of
God. Provides a powerful affirmation of identity as gay man. Such ideas connect
powerfully with an understanding of embodied theology through which the individual
reflects the divine (Isherwood and Stuart 1998). If as Stephen suggests he reflects
something of God then it stands to reason that his sexuality is also a reflection of God.
This argument is powerful as it reflects on a widely accepted (within the Church)
theological understanding, that God made humans in his image. Wilcox comments on
the power of such theologising saying:

> Such an all-encompassing vision of divinity has the potential to sacralize
> sexuality, thus providing an eminently powerful affirmation of LGBT identity.
> (Wilcox 2002: 508).

The power of God to affirm however is not limited to interpretations of theology. A
number of respondents discussed the importance of their personal relationships with
God and the affirmation they feel comes directly from this relationship. This feeling of
being accepted by God was particularly obvious to the clergy through their call, that
God wanted them, a gay man to serve him. The call is illustrative of the feelings of
affirmation the respondents discussed. Two examples of this are:

> If he hadn't wanted a gay minister why did he call you? That somehow, that is
> the bit that God wants, because he wants you the person, and you the minister to
> be the same person. (I3)

> The idea that God didn't know before hand that you were gay is just daft. As if
> somehow he would throw up his hands in horror and say 'Oh my God, GAY
> CLERGY? I'm not going to do that!' (I 11)

Such examples of affirmation are particularly strong because they are seen to come from God. These quotations illustrate the conception of God as inclusive, and loving as discussed earlier in the chapter. Also Matthew shows an anthropomorphic conception of God, wherein the objectified God is pictured reacting humanly. However in these examples 'God' as discussed by the respondents is conceptualised as a Guide, an encourager and an influence in their acceptance of their sexuality and the incorporation of this with their religious beliefs. The nature of the call from God, the aspect of the call to ministry referred to by Towler and Coxon as the 'secret call' (1979:58) is in a sense un-opposable. It is internal and involves only the individual and God. While this call must be validated through the 'ecclesiastical call' (Towler and Coxon 1979:58) (within which sexuality may become problematic) this does not question the intense experience of God's affirmation the individual feels through the secret call. Such feelings of affirmation by God illustrate the centrality of the personal for many believers. Both Yip (2002), and Wilcox (2002) explore the importance of a personal belief in God and how this provides flexibility in religious belief if the individual concentrates on experiencing God's affirmation personally. For gay Christians such emphasis on experience provides both the opportunity for, and the affirmation of, connecting belief and sexuality. Though difficulties may arise within the social aspect of belief, and the need for acceptance among the community one identifies, the separation between God and Church discussed previously means such opposition can be seen as stemming from Church, and human mistranslation of God's will, rather than from God. Other examples of feeling God's love included:

> God gave [my sexuality] for me to use and celebrate.(Q23)

The deep love that my partner and I have for each other and which I witness to other gay couples is a precious gift from God (Q19)

I am quite certain I am loved by God as I am. (Q16)

These reflections of the respondents of the role of God in their acceptance of self, shows the importance of the personal, individualised religious story. It is not through Church worship that God becomes alive in these men's lives, it is through their personal experiences of him. God is interacted with, individual's stories of gay identity are told to God – they come out to God. They find acceptance through their interactions with God. Such experience not only symbolises the importance of the personalised 'God story', it also reflects God's 'turn to life'. God is involved in encouraging, uplifting and affirming. God is not waiting to judge, nor disinterested, God is truly alive, for the respondents, in these stories of belief.

The discussion above has shown that the respondents in this study found affirmation for the co-existence of gay and Christian identity from a number of places. Friendship and shared stories were for some a powerful way to access knowledge of the possibility of being gay and Christian. For others more structured areas of influence were discussed, including liberal theological teaching, and published discussions of theology and experience. These more structured stories provided access to integration through use of both tradition and innovation. Finally the discussion of God in the lives of the respondents illustrated a God which was interacted with, and which provided affirmation despite and apart from institutional Church. Within these discussions is a centring of self-reflexivity, and a creation of belief story which incorporates the traditional but also extends, questions and queers it. Faith stories are built, for the respondents through a negotiation with the traditional which incorporates the innovational. Though Church remains influential, self and its negotiations are central.

The chapter now moves on to focus discussion on sexual morality, and how moral frameworks are constructed when traditional Church views all expressions of sexuality as sinful.

Sexual Morality

The issue of sexual morality is one of the areas in which the respondents' sexual and spiritual identities inform and affect each other. Giddens (1992) argued gay and lesbian people were pioneers of modern intimate relationships, due to the fact that there were no blueprints for these relationships and so there was in a sense a freedom for creativity in forming and managing these relationships. Gay and lesbian Christians face a similar lack of guidelines in terms of acceptable and unacceptable gay Christian sexual relationships. Because the Church until recently has not considered any type of gay relationship acceptable, and even now Church literature only refers to tolerable relationships, that is relationships which the Church neither condemn, nor fully condone (House of Bishops 1991). Any attempt to construct a framework for a Christian same-sex relationship which celebrates love, rather than tolerates sex, must be undertaken beyond Church guidelines.

A number of clergy suggested the Church was responsible for what they perceived as 'unacceptable' in gay lifestyle. The following narratives are illustrative:

> Because there aren't really any encouragements within the Church for any gay relationships at all. Therefore there are no expected standards of how people might behave to one another. ...[if] it won't acknowledge or affirm it, then basically it becomes king of the dance. So it's into the dark clubs and the back streets. (I 11)

> The way the Church condemned homosexuality was actually encouraging all sorts of inappropriate sexual expressions, which can be very damaging and very painful, because there is no ethic. And in the absence of an ethic people take the attitude you might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb, anything goes! So that has its price to pay and the Church is just offering people no help or support or guidance. (I 4)

Therefore the lack of an 'acceptable' choice, encourages excess, no checks or balances beyond total rejection , are seen to lead to 'might as well be hung for a sheep as for a lamb'. However, the lack of guidelines also allows individuals to create standards, to construct personal stories of morality, which connect with their personal belief narratives discussed above. Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan (2001) explore such issues suggesting that this freedom not only allows creativity but opens the way for more meaningful relationships tailored to the individuals needs.

Despite this possibility of creativity, and despite respondents' creative exploration of spiritual belief, for many this lack of guidelines led to a direct translation of Christian heterosexual sexual morality - emphasising loving, monogamous couple relationships, emphasising the importance of commitment, and negativity towards other forms of sexual expression.

Examples of direct translation included:

> I try to have fairly high standards. If I have a relationship with a guy it is with one person until such times as the relationship comes to an end. I've managed to avoid promiscuity, sometimes its not been easy. (I11)

> I think if we think about the implications of love as far as the Christian gospel is concerned it does find it's ultimate expression in two people fully giving themselves to each other, and that would be my understanding of the perfect relationship and what we are struggling for, or aiming for. (I12)

Further examples of the framing of such 'acceptable' relationships was found in the questionnaire data wherein 62.1% (n=18) of the respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement '*Sex should be part of a committed relationship*'; and 58.6 % (n=17) either agreed or strongly agreed that '*sex within a committed relationship is more Christian than that which is not*'.

By widening Christian sexual morality just enough to incorporate a particular form of homosexual relationship expression respondents are 'queering the straight', however

they are also 'straightening of the queer' as a direct result off this. For, though widening the acceptable in terms of Christian morality by including their own gay relationships. They also reinforce the boundaries of 'unacceptability' for alternative expressions of gay sexuality. There are two issues here. For some Christian morality transcends difference between same and cross-sex partnerships. For others, this direct conversion of moral framework is an illustration of heteronormativity. Richardson discusses this issue in terms of the 'good homosexual citizen' arguing a non-heterosexual lifestyle that is intimately connected to heterosexual ideals, makes the integration of homosexuality into 'acceptable' society a less arduous journey. However she also points out that such strategies further discriminate against other gay lifestyles, further distancing such lifestyles from acceptance (Richardson 2004).

These issues connect to Foucault's (1998) discussion of sexuality, he argues that the construction and normalisation of heterosexuality was achieved through the construction of 'other' sexualities as deviant. The acceptance and normalisation of heterosexuality then relied on the existence of deviant sexualities to boundary and uphold what was distinctively acceptable. By supporting a certain non-heterosexual lifestyle as Christian it is possible to see such strategies re-emerging, not only by presenting an 'acceptable' homosexuality which is so close to 'acceptable' heterosexuality in structure, but also by casting other varieties of gay lifestyle as sinful, thus emphasising the acceptability of 'Christian' homosexuality.

However, it is important to remember the situated nature of identity stories. Experience, biography, structure and history interact in the construction of the personal. The importance of this is shown in the following extract from Eric's narrative:

> I suppose both of us [he and his partner] would say that are views on sex are warped by the way that we have both been brought up. The surroundings as it were, the myths, the taboos, all those kind of things you know? (I2)

Traditional Christian morality, position as Church leader, experience of a time when expression of homosexual desire was illegal, interact with personal sexuality in the construction of sexual morality narratives. In addition it is important to stress that the

142

moral structure these men are exploring is a 'gay Christian morality', not a 'gay morality' the integration of their Christian background, and understandings may, unsurprisingly see different considerations and constructions in their moral frameworks, in comparison to 'secular' gays and lesbians.

However, it is possible to suggest that by trying to bridge the gap between Christian and gay sexual morality, rather than building bridges of inclusivity. The respondents taking this view are in effect building boundaries of exclusivity separating themselves from both the Church where they remain not fully accepted, and aspects of the gay community by deliberately distancing themselves and their sexualities, thereby becoming 'doubly marginalized'. Both Thumma (1991) and Wolkomir (2001) discuss the creation of a new 'gay Christian' identity within which the individual accepts the existence of both aspects of identity. However this 'individual' integration does not necessarily translate to social acceptance. Rather than creating an identity bridge between Christianity and gay sexuality, these individuals may in effect be separating themselves from both identities by creating a new 'boundaried' 'middle ground' identity. Although whether the clergy would be able to live a more openly 'queer' life is questionable, as possibilities open to individuals vary greatly (Seidman, Meeks and Traschen 1999), and the responsibilities and duties of the clergy may mean that possible expressions of gay sexuality are constrained. As a story, the 'gay Christian' morality distances itself from both Christian and gay audiences due to its compromise, and the distancing of gay and Christian communities from each other (Hendershot 2001)(these issues are discussed further in the concluding chapter). However, personally, such self-told integrations may be extremely powerful affirmations.

Not all of the respondents took the same view, others explored differing ways of living their sexuality, and understanding it's acceptability in Christian principle. When I initially interviewed Alan he was single, and his sexual encounters were normally anonymous. He spoke of his struggles to incorporate this in terms of his Christianity by saying:

> There are two ways of looking at it in my head, there is either the sort of liberal
> way where its all O.K. whatever you do, and that's absolutely fine, the Harry

William's thing about, you know, sex with a stranger is the closest you can be to God. And the other way you think about it is that it is all sinful, but you do it anyway. (Alan Interview)

Alan's discussion emphasises the lack of certainty that exists in an individualised world filled with doubt (Giddens 1991;Weeks 1995). Though struggling with his knowledge of traditional Christian morality he also takes on the innovative through his discussion of the possibility of anonymous sexual experiences being loving, meaningful, and fulfilling. Such understandings are not limited to radical theology of theologians such as Harry Williams, but also relate to a plastic notion of sexuality discussed by Giddens (1992), and current discussions about the nature of sexuality and non-monogamy (Yip 1997a, Heaphy; Weeks and Donovan 2004; Adam 2006) in which sex is viewed as a part of a journey of self discovery, and related to love but a different concept of love, which is related to friendship and expression of love for others (Bardella 2001). However Alan's narrative is bound up within his struggles with tradition and innovation, and finding a balance between the two.

Other respondents also recounted how they viewed their sexual activities. Stephen discussed how he understands sex by saying:

I think I'm probably someone who needs to be with someone, that doesn't necessarily mean exclusively monogamous, but it does mean being loved by someone and being able to reciprocate that in a steady relationship I think. So I guess the one-night stands were a lot better than nothing, and one or two of them I remember with huge affection. I remained friends with a lot of people I had sort of casual brief relationship with, a lot of them are still friends. It is very interesting, and I guess they were all important really because I suppose my theology says everyone is important, even if you are only in bed with them for one night. (I 7)

Stephen here explores issues of love. He suggests a reciprocal relationship though the ideal for him does not need to be monogamous. Such reflections connect to work in the social sciences on non-heterosexual relationships and non-monogamy, Yip (1997a)

144

talks about emotional monogamy, which in some senses separates the central relationship from sex with other partners however it does not leave sex outside the relationship as meaningless physicality (Yip 1997a; Heaphy, Weeks and Donovan 2004). For Stephen previous casual affairs are not looked upon as being unacceptable, but rather expressions of himself, and aspects in fact of his spirituality. For Stephen sex is seen as an expression of care and love, which is not limited to monogamous partnership. In talking about families of choice Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan (2001) show that in strong friendship circles ex-lovers are often a part, and may have been lovers of various members of the network. Such relationships then are seen as a strong basis of connection between members of the 'family of choice' (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001). For Stephen being with someone, and having sex was an expression of himself, which intimately related to his theology. Stephen's story of his sexuality is intimately linked to his story of Christianity, not through conversion of heterosexual ideal, but through a connection to self, and a theological understanding of love centred within the friendship ethic.

The inter-relation of sexuality and belief shown above in the lives of the respondents reflects the freedom and creativity of identity construction and management which can be seen as an effect of changes in late modern society. The fluidity of identity and the interpretive space, wherein the construction of identity narrative occurs, allows not only the connection of gay sexuality with Christian belief but also the variety of experience and organisation shown above. This variety illustrates the central role of the self in constructing and maintaining identity, and reflects the multitude of influence acting upon such identity construction and maintenance. It is possible to see a categorical distinction between approaches, those combining accepted heterosexual morality with gay sexuality being illustrative of a gay Christianity, whilst those who take a more theologically embodied approach reflect a queer Christianity which questions existing understandings of heterosexual morality in Christianity as well as finding space for gay sexuality. However this simplistic approach fails to conceptualise the varieties of difference that can affect the creating of identity story. Family history, Church structure, access to liberal theology, variety of involvement in gay community, access to potential sexual partners, all influence and constrain sexual story construction.

The respondents' narratives reflect the need for creativity in identity construction for gay and lesbian people. Further, gay Christians may indeed be at the forefront of the late modern project for Christianity. However, as clergy the respondents continue to have some role of authority in the lives of their parish community, and this may constrain options. The chapter now goes on to explore how this role constrains the freedoms of faith given and taken away within individualised society.

Clerical Role and Spirituality

At first glance the connection of the individual's clerical role and their spirituality may seem unproblematic, vocation, after all, arises from a connection to the spiritual (Towler and Coxon 1979). Indeed a few of the respondents did discuss their clergy and Christian identities as fully interlinked. Stewart talked about his clerical role and spirituality as follows:

> I find them completely interrelated, because, I find the whole business of God very difficult. I find, you know, private prayer very difficult, other than prayers of utter silence and contemplation. The only other prayer that makes sense at all to me is liturgical prayer, celebration of the Eucharist. Almost everything else I find, well, why bother? (I10)

Similarly Alan discusses that being a clergyman is an aspect of his 'journey of faith':

> I suppose that if you are living out a vocation that you believe that you've been called to, the fact that you are a clergyperson means that that's part of your faith journey anyway isn't it? So, when you're praying you're praying both leading worship and also you are praying for yourself at the same time. And, obviously, before I was ordained I used to have the sort of structured prayer life that I have now anyway as part of my spiritual expression. (I9)

For both Stewart and Alan their role as clergy is linked to their own spiritual development. For Stewart his difficulties with personal prayer mean that his role as

worship leader and celebrant of Eucharist actually allow him a greater access to the prayer life that he understands and connects with. For Alan, though structured prayer also connects with his own spirituality, his connection to his clergy identity is more in terms of its position as an aspect of his religious 'life-project'. and the structure of prayer within the professional life works with this. A number of the clergy discussed 'fitting' being clergy, this is reflected in the following extract from Anthony's narrative which emphasises 'fit' and the link between self and 'being' clergy,

> When I went to tell my family that I felt that I was probably called to the priesthood they weren't at all surprised. They said 'Well, we thought you would end up being a priest or a social worker or something like that'. (I12)

Anthony's reminiscence connects him as he was before ordination, with Anthony the priest. Kosek (2000) argues that clergy should embody the characteristics required by the church. For the clergy above this appears to be the case, they see their spiritual identities as fitting that required of the clerical role. They embrace the clergy aesthetic. Their understanding of what the clergyman should do, should be, and should need spiritually is embodied in their own spiritualities. In effect their private spiritualities combine with the public understanding of how a clergyman should be. Goffman (1971, 1972) argues that there is a public role which all are expected to fulfil, the clergy being no different. There are a set of expectations, a set understanding of what a clergyman is, how they should behave, what their responsibilities are. And it is in fulfilling expectations of what this role should be that the individual gains acceptance.

However, for other respondents finding 'fit' was more problematic. This is discussed in terms of two issues raised by the respondents. The first relating to differences between personal and expected spiritual belief, and the second, masking spiritual difficulties.

Mismatches of Personal and Professional Spirituality

The research identified three significant issues where mismatches of personal and professional spirituality could be seen, these were (i) theological understandings, (ii)

disbelief of text, (iii) differences in structure of spiritual practices. The experience of such difficulties raises issues about the negotiation of personal and professional integrity.

As shown above the respondents make use of, in fact to some extent are required to make use of the freedoms and creativity allowed by individualised religiosity in their personal faith stories. In attempting to connect understandings of sexuality and religiosity the respondents questioned traditional Christian understandings, and at times distanced themselves from the Church and its teaching on particular issues. The creation of personal stories of faith allowed coexistence of religious and sexual identity for the respondents, however the theological innovations undertaken to allow this innovation, may distance the clergy from the traditional spirituality expected of the clergy by parishioners. Ian, who discussed his attraction to radical liberal theology, discussed the tension which emerged from such mismatch of theological thought:

> I can't share all this. I don't feel that I am untrue in what I do say, I don't think I've ever preached anything which isn't authentic. It is that you speak metaphorically and mythologically, but not using those terms. (I8).

Ian discussion illustrates how at times he finds himself speaking about issues his congregation may understand as truths, but he views as myths and metaphors. In order to find space to go on, he avoids discussing his own understandings, rather presenting an understanding of Christianity which is acceptable to his congregants. In this way Ian is consciously holding back from fully expressing his personal theology in order to fulfil his professional role rather than sharing his personal understandings. In this way a gap emerges between the 'clergyman', the 'Christian', and the 'individual' (Although research has been carried out which is connected with such issues, for example Hoge, Shields and Griffin's work on clergy satisfaction (1995). Little has been written on the clergy's spiritualities in relation to their profession). Ian's experiences and reflections illustrate his need to be aware of this kind of balancing act where differing aspects of who he is meet. He faces a negotiation of personal and professional integrity. Though personally he relates to metaphorical understandings of Christianity professionally he is expected to relate such teaching and story as 'truth'. In order to perform his role

therefore Ian faces the need to constrain his private belief, and is not able to explore such understandings socially within his Church community. Ian's personal belief story, though incorporating innovation, must be presented as traditional in his local Christian society. Role as religious leader therefore constrains Ian's public celebration of his private belief story.

Disbelief in particular aspects of Church worship, liturgy or praise was also seen as a tension for some respondents. This issue reflects an enforced public incorporation of belief, rather than an enforced constraint. This 'required' incorporation may relate to specific sentences, or verses rather than a variation in theological outlook, Alan though he saw his professional and personal spiritualities as intertwined reflected upon this:

> I mean it brings a tension as well, in the fact that sometimes you are obliged to say things and sometimes you do think, actually what am I doing? What is this actually about, and you plough on regardless don't you, because part of your role is to enable other people isn't it really, and who are you to say well actually this isn't doing it for me, so it is obviously not going to do it for you.

Alan's reflections are illustrative of the experiences of other respondents, he underlines the need to negotiate this by referring to his role as an enabler (Fletcher 1990, Louden and Francis 2003), the clergyman is required to provide a service to the congregation which enables them and encourages them to continue their Christian lives, the clergyman therefore has a responsibility to present worship in a way that is meaningful to the congregation. Alan's diary gives an example of how this issue occurs in practice. Recording Sunday worship Alan reflected

> Mass at the parish. Tried really hard to concentrate but it all drifted over me. More forsaking everything and following the way of the cross, we do believe some very odd stuff. (D9)

Alan's example reflects, not only that he has to say things which he might not believe, but also that this issue can distance him from his professional work and belief story. Such issues illustrate the gap between the personal and the professional underlining the specific constraints and expectations at work in the clergy's public faith stories. In

essence, through knowledge of their audiences the clergy are required to present a story of faith which may be distinct from their personal understanding in order to connect with and fulfil congregants expectations of their clergyman.

Thirdly the pressures of a professional spirituality were seen to be problematic in the discussions of a number of respondents. Especially focussing on the daily offices of morning and evening prayer. Matthew's discussion of this is illustrative

> I'm supposed to say morning and evening prayer every day which I'm afraid I have to admit I rarely do. I will do sometimes with the curate, to make sure that he knows that I'm doing it! I suppose one thing for the evangelical years which is quite liberating in a way was that it taught you that you could pray anywhere, and sometimes I pray reasonably well in car journeys when I'm driving because it's a quiet space, so I prefer that rather more fluid through the day prayer to set times. (I 11)

Within Matthew's discussion it can be seen that there is a tension between what he feels personally is rewarding in prayer life, and what the Church says he as a vicar should do. Further, he feels he should give the impression to his curate that this is what he does. In essence, the respondents' public faith stories are created, not just with reference to the expectations of others, but also with reference to the individuals own understanding of what it means to be clergy. This difficulty was shared by Harold who discussed one way in which he attempts to cope with this difficulty

> I'm glad on the whole that I don't say morning prayer on my own. I did this morning, but on the whole it's an exception. ... Sometimes people dismiss these things as just habit, but there are such things as good habits. Good habits can sometimes help to carry you through (I4))

Harold's thoughts about his prayer life illustrate that although he struggles with aspects of clergy role, he often benefits from practice associated with it. This benefit may be in terms of a feeling of closeness to God, and a fulfilment personally through prayer. However such reflection may also be concerned with meeting individual understandings

of 'being' clergy. That is, by fulfilling such duties the individual gains a sense of clergy authenticity.

Each of the above three issues reflect the tension experienced by respondents in meeting the expectations of Church and congregation as to how they should act as clergy. They reflect the tension between freedom and constraint in individualised society, Bauman (2003) argues that although society has become more individualised, the amount of choices and opportunities one has depends upon place, experience and access. Although respondents have the freedom to access and experience such choice, place within the Church community can mean limitation of expression. So although freedoms emerge from processes of individualisation they also remain constrained by responsibility.

Similarly, the pressures of constraint can be seen with reference to the work of Goffman. Goffman suggests that within interaction there is a set of shared expectations and understandings about each participant in the interaction (Goffman 1971). Relating this to the respondents, clergy behaviour is constrained by the expectations placed upon them. In order to gain acceptance as clergy and therefore to be able to continue in the role there is a responsibility to act out the clergy role as socially expected. This illustrates a tension between professional and personal which may be further illustrated with reference to professionalisation. When a man who plays with trains becomes a train driver, a hobby becomes a profession, an area off escapism and enjoyment becomes regulated and enforced. If we view the clergy as professional Christians then here again it is possible to see that something personal, and meaningful is constrained and influenced by other factors, the performance of Christianity is externally regulated from above by Church authority, and from below by congregation. Stories of belief become controlled and compromised by the expected stories of clergy life.

If we conceptualise the issues discussed above in terms of the negotiation of private and public faith stories. This negotiation can be explained with reference to dialectics (Hinde 1997; Baxter 1998). Baxter (1998) discusses how negotiation between opposing forces, or in this case responsibilities allows the continuation of both. For example if the clergy move too fully towards the professional organisation of spirituality they may

feel a distancing from God and their personal relationship with faith, however if they move too fully towards personal spirituality their role as clergy may be affected and their acceptance by congregation may lessen. Therefore the negotiation between these two aspects is constant, and contextual, when in particular circumstances clergy may move further towards professional spirituality than personal, for example in the pulpit, at other times in personal prayer for example, clergy may distance themselves from the professional bringing to God their personal understandings of faith. Constantly negotiating in order to find space to go on.

Concealing Difficulties

Another related issue present in the data was feeling unable to fully express their spiritual difficulties publicly. The clergy are expected to guide others in a Christian life, and to lead by example (Christopherson 1994). Though this issue was only discussed by one respondent, this narrative was a powerful example of how spiritual experience can be constrained by position as clergy.

In interview Matthew discussed how he was struggling with his own relationship with God. This struggle underlined the distance which is possible between the personal and professional spirituality. His discussion is quoted at length below:

> In the last two to three years I have been going through somewhat of a prolonged crisis of faith. I haven't lost my faith, its still there, but I think with all the accumulation of things - about sexuality and having gone through a deep relationship which didn't work out, and finding myself in another which is deep as well but different. - Its kind of, there's been a lot of rethinking going on... but again because you don't want to drag your congregation down. You may not talk very much about spiritual crisis. You may preach one sermon about that a year, to help those [in the congregation] who are in that situation but on the whole you don't talk about it regularly because that would not be helpful for your flock to know. So you do have to operate on two levels. (I11)

For Matthew, the expectations which he experiences from the congregation to lead by example, mean that the spiritual life which he relates to them is a healthy one. His understanding of the clergy role as enabler means he must be encouraging and positive. Matthew translates this as meaning he is unable to be fully open with his congregation about the issues he is facing in his own personal spiritual life. Matthew illustrates that at times the clergy can be seen to 'operate on two levels'. In Goffman's terms Matthew's narrative illustrates both a 'front' and a 'back' region in his spiritual story. The 'front' is that which is expressed publicly, and meets the needs of the social interaction within which he is presenting (i.e. Church). The 'back' region is where struggles are kept, 'boundaried' from congregational knowledge.

In being constrained by social expectation, whilst freed by individual creativity some of the clergy had in effect, as discussed above, two spiritualities the professional and the personal. Therefore, although detraditionalized understandings of religion offer freedom for individual fulfilment of spiritual need, this remains a balancing act within the structures of the community in which one locates oneself. For the clergy this community includes the Anglican Church, and particularly their own parish in which they face the professional expectation to fulfil the (various) understandings of the clergy role their parishioners may hold.

Summary

The central theme of this chapter is that stories of Christian identity are dynamic and negotiated. They are 'situated' knowledges of self. In exploring this central theme the chapter began by discussing the respondents' conceptions of their Christian faith, God and theology. These discussions highlighted the central role of self in the constructions of personal faith stories, and also the interactional nature of belief story creation. A number of influences were discussed which informed the respondents' belief stories, and their separation from, and questioning of Church, illustrating a negotiation of such traditional authority with other social influences, and placing self-reflexivity at the centre of belief story creation.

In discussing respondents' 'journeys of faith' the chapter illustrated the dynamic nature of stories of Christian identity. Though access to the label 'Christian' was often constant. The meaning of this label varied over time, again in relation to multiple influences and experiences.

In specifically considering the interaction and negotiation of gay and Christian identity the chapter illustrated that such negotiations were undertaken within the interaction of tradition and innovation. Though respondents accessed innovative stories of Christianity, for some respondents these required grounding in trusted sources. These sources included, though are not limited to, friends, support groups and theologians, and perhaps the most trusted source of all – God.

The respondents' narratives of sexual morality illustrated that personal stories of Christian identity interacted with sexuality in the construction and management of such frameworks. Again, although the need for innovation was clear, such innovative work was often grounded in Christian tradition, the two examples of this being conversion of heterosexual Christian moral frameworks, and the accessing of the theology of friendship.

Finally, the chapter explored the specific issues raised by membership of the clergy. The chapter illustrated that the particular expectations faced by the clergy as religious leaders led a number of respondents to distinguish personal and public/professional spiritualities. This distinction illustrated the need for negotiation between clergy and Christian identity, and the tension that emerges between access to and acceptance of innovative personal spiritualities clergy face as late-modern believers, and the expectations and responsibilities they have to meet as representatives of institutional Church.

In the next chapter the thesis carries on the focus on identity stories as negotiated and dynamic in a discussion of respondents' narratives of gay identity, specifically discussing issues of understanding, management and presentation.

CHAPTER 5: NEGOTIATING GAY IDENTITY

Following the previous chapter's discussion of the respondents' religious identities, this chapter focuses on the narratives of sexual identity present in the research.

Beginning with the respondents' understandings of their sexualities the chapter illustrates the continuing importance of essentialism as a central aspect of the respondents' narratives of their sexualities. From this the 'essentialism' discussed by the respondents is explored further. It is shown by the chapter that such claims to essentialism are rooted in context, situated in terms of the life experiences and positions of the respondents.

This understanding of sexual identity roots the respondents' experiences within a consistent and coherent sense of who they are. However it is complicated by their position as clergy and the difficulties faced by this position. In essence, the inability to constantly 'live' their sexualities. The chapter illustrates this with reference to the 'management' strategies used by the respondents focussing on 'closeting' as an action which has a number of influencing factors, not all negative. The central issue illustrated by this discussion is that the management of sexual identity is undertaken in negotiation with clergy identity. Therefore sexual identity must be negotiated and is fluid and changeable in its public expression.

The chapter then moves on to discuss varying aspects of gay identity. The chapter explores how respondents organise and access their relationships, their sexual lives, and their connections to the 'gay community'. In doing so the chapter illustrates the various negotiations which are undertaken in order to find space for expression and 'living' of gay identity.

Understanding Sexuality

In order to explore the respondents' sexual identities it is important to discuss how they view and narrate these identities. Although, as the literature review discussed, in the social sciences the debate between essentialist and constructionist ideas of sexuality has all but disappeared in the literature (Hawkes 1996), with constructionist understandings becoming widely accepted by social and cultural theorists (Richardson 2000). For many gay and lesbian individuals outside such circles the debate is by no means over, most relevantly literature on gay Christians highlights the importance of essentialist understanding of sexuality for many (Yip 2005b, Wilcox 2002).

Some lesbian and gay people have in fact seen constructionist understandings of sexuality as ignorant of the reality of being gay, and therein worthy of derision. George, in discussing his understanding of his sexuality related the following story:

> So you know, what it is that made me a homosexual, I don't know. My mother certainly didn't knit one! Have you heard that silly story? (Michael: No), One person, one gay says to another 'My mother made me a homosexual', the other says 'oh, if I give her the wool will she knit me one?' (I 6)

George's relation of this story was to illustrate the 'silliness' of any understanding of sexuality other than an essential one. Loosening attachment to a sense of essential sexuality is seen as a risky act especially for the respondents within such an unaffirming institution as the Church of England (as discussed in Chapter 2).

For the respondents in the current study essentialist understandings of sexuality remained extremely powerful, the vast majority of respondents saw their sexuality as something innate (75.9% (n=22)) this is shown in Table 4:

Table 4: Respondents' Understanding of Sexuality

View sexuality as	Inborn	God-given	Choice
Yes %	75.9 (n = 22)	79.3 (n = 23)	0

One of the major ways in which the clergy discussed this essentialist argument was with reference to early-life memories. The following quotations from the narratives of Ian and Anthony are illustrative of this:

> I think I can almost date a moment when I was about 12 when it really hit home. Although I didn't label it as such, you know? But the attraction to the male form, oh I can remember that quite vividly. But then I can look back to my younger days and sense a feeling of being different in a way which I think was, I think that was probably located in sexuality. (I 8)

> At school we had these odd benches like desks with benches and so we'd, it's outrageous really in German lessons especially, though why it was German lessons! We'd pretend that we'd lost a page in a textbook or something, it's dreadful we'd sort of sit next to each other and sort of masturbate each other, it was outrageous really! (I 12)

The recounting of these early memories illustrate the respondents' narration of a gay life story which incorporates and locates significant moments. Importantly these narratives emphasise sexual 'awakening' which occurs without full knowledge of significance. This reference to such early life memories has therefore been seen as a way in which individuals illustrate the claim to 'natural' sexuality (Woodward 2002). For the respondents, discussion of such early-life memories place sexuality beyond their control, undermining discussion of 'choice', and also such stories clarify consistency, give meaning to life experience, and stand in opposition to discrimination, opposition and marginalisation.

157

Plummer (1995) argues that the use of narrative, or 'stories' gives the possibility of the assembly of a coherent identity (Plummer 1995). For Plummer meanings are applied retrospectively, and threads of narrative connect significant events, forming a coherent picture or story of life. These narratives, as the thesis has previously argued, incorporate history, biography and structure. They are situated within the life experiences of the narrator. Taking Anthony's story as an example this issue can be further illustrated. Anthony discusses this mutual masturbation as an early example of his sexuality, however for other boys involved who now self-identify as straight these experiences may be viewed as 'horse-play' with no reference to their current sexualities.

The situated narratives of the respondents' sexualities can be further illustrated with reference to the distancing of the respondents from 'choice'. None of the respondents connected to the possibility of 'choice' in sexuality (see Table 4). In addition, Alan strongly distanced himself from such understandings in interview. He said:

> That's the one word that really annoys me, when people talk about the 'gay choice'! I certainly didn't tick a box and decide that that was the life I was going to lead. (I9)

Due to the respondents' position as Christians and clergy, a major influence on their understanding of sexuality is the institutional stories of sexuality within the Church. The primacy of heterosexuality within Church discourse means that the opening of the possibility of 'change' which may accompany 'choice' becomes risky (Wilcox 2003). The possibility of change equals the possibility of heterosexuality, and as heterosexuality remains the acceptable sexuality within the Church, if there is a possibility to choose one should choose heterosexuality (Whisman 1996). Weeks illustrates how the discourses of Church encourage essentialism. He wrote:

> Others use the erotic to open up sharp dichotomies, between those who can be included in the community of believers, and those who must be forcibly excluded; between those open to salvation, and the sinners who are not. (Weeks 2003: 19)

Essentially, the naming or labelling of heterosexuality as natural, labels homosexuality as unnatural. Opposition to such discourse is likely to be couched in the terms it provides. Therefore defence against Christian opposition to homosexuality is rooted in the Christian discourse of sexuality being 'natural', not in the social constructionist discourse of all being constructed through societal meaning placement, hierarchies of sexuality emerging from such.

Opposition to 'choice' was furthered for some respondents by their experiences of 'Christian counselling' or 'ex-gay' ministries (Ponticelli 1999; Hunt 2003). One respondent discussed his experience in detail, as follows:

> In those days there was a Christian magazine … called 'Buzz', there was an article written by a Christian psychiatrist about being gay. I couldn't believe this! I thought 'this is marvellous, somebody knows about it!' I wrote him a letter and asked if I could make an appointment to see him. He said yes. I can remember distinctly covering up and sitting there and talking like this for about an hour and a half. When I got to the end of it he said to me that I was … I don't know what the descriptive word is, but it was the strongest homosexual he'd ever come across, and he would have to discuss with his supervisor what the next stage was from there. To my amazement I said 'Alright, fine!' It wasn't a thing that worried me, and he said he would be in touch. He never wrote again! But not long after that I then discovered the gay scene in London, and I wasn't alone after all. I was one of thousands, and I was introduced to a gay sauna. I used to toddle off there, and the moment I went through that door everything left me and I was just me. (I 1)

Robert's experience of Christian counselling encouraged him to look elsewhere for acceptance. Finding it in the gay community Robert was able to come to terms with his sexuality, rather than feeling the need to change it. Robert's use of the phrase 'I was just me' further underlines his attachment to essentialism, his sexuality is an innate aspect of who he is, and how he expresses himself. Finding fulfilment through

embracing sexuality further underlines essentialism, and such experience again influences the construction of a sexual identity story.

The respondents' narratives of essential sexual identity were not only influenced by early experience, fulfilling experience and opposition. Many respondents' stories were also imbued with religious or theological weight, emerging from their own religious narratives. As Keith succinctly put it:

People have been given their sexuality as part of their God-givenness. (I14)

The vast majority of questionnaire respondents (79.3% - Table 5) understood their sexuality to be God-given. When viewed cumulatively (respondents ticking one or both of 'inborn' or 'God-given'-see appendix 2 – question 3.8) all but one (96.6% -see Table 5) of the clergy who completed the questionnaire saw their sexuality as being innate, God-given, or both (for many respondents these were essentially one and the same argument).

Table 5: Respondents' Understanding of Sexuality (including cumulative total)

View sexuality as	Inborn	God-given	Inborn and / or God-Given	Choice
Yes %	75.9 (n = 22)	79.3 (n = 23)	96.6 (n = 28)	0

The respondents' claims to the God-given nature of sexuality were inherently essentialist. The respondents saw sexuality as an aspect of God's creation and therefore beyond their control. The importance of this perceived God-given nature was discussed further by some participants in open-ended questionnaire questions. The following quotations illustrate this importance:

It is God-given in the sense that it is not chosen, and therefore is deeply a part of my identity. I am quite certain I am loved by God as I am. (Q15)

160

It's the way I am – Thank God! And, to put it rather too simply, as a Christian I believe God made me. (Q19)

For these respondents the place of God in the creation of their sexualities not only moves responsibility outside of themselves, thereby distancing the possibility of choice, it also provides affirmation. For, as argued in the previous chapter, if God made them gay then it must be a part of his creation, and therefore acceptable in his eyes. The power of such an approach has been seen in terms of integration of identities by Warner (1995), and providing 'unshakable' affirmation (Wilcox 2003). Research on 'affirming' support groups have previously discussed the importance of acceptance of being 'made' by God, referred to by Thumma as the 'creationist argument' (1991).

In 1991 the House of Bishops released a statement which accepted the existence of 'homosexual orientation', along with grudging but by no means complete acceptance of lay gay and lesbian couples (House of Bishops 1991). Added to this in 2005 the House of Bishops pronounced that gay clergy could enter civil partnerships providing they had the support of their bishop and pledged not to have sex (House of Bishops 2005). Although a confusing mishmash of ideas, such pronouncements have been seen as liberalisation, however this liberalisation hangs on the fixity of homosexual orientation, as the 1991 report argues that bisexual believers should marry (House of Bishops 1991), therefore possibility of choice removes such liberalising, revealing at base the continued ascendancy of heterosexuality. Therefore moving away from essentialist argument which appears to have been accepted by Church hierarchy is a move imbued with risk, essentialism allows the clergy to build on progress already seen.

The concept of God-given sexuality then acts dually as a defence and an affirmation. It also potentially becomes powerful as a support for those who feel unsure of the acceptability of their sexuality.

Although the majority of respondents saw themselves as accepting of their sexuality (75.9% - n = 22), some suggested they were less certain, for example Adam in interview said:

> One of the things I've often thought about is ... that nature or nurture thing. I actually think it is probably irrelevant because I do think it is the way I was born, but I even think, in terms of how God sees it, that even if it was the result of conditioning, that's not the fault of the person who has been conditioned. (I 7)

Within Adam's reflection there remains a lack of surety about the legitimacy of his sexuality. He continues to use the language of 'fault', suggesting the need for someone or something to blame. Similarly Matthew discussed how he brings these issues to God:

> I have to sort of say to God, well you know, you made me this way, this is who I am, If I have to answer for it one day that's what I'm happy to do. (I 11)

Although a sense of acceptance of gay sexuality is apparent in the stories of both of these respondents, both continue to also show times where they feel under strain in their integrations. For Adam the belief that God is love aids him in times of doubt (see also Wolkomir's description of 'Accept' support group meetings (Wolkomir 2001)). For Matthew, rather than being fully satisfied that responsibility is removed from him, he instead challenges God. For it was God who he sees as making him gay and therefore, he holds God responsible to some extent for this. Accepting God as creator of sexuality thus allows a sense of acceptance, or perhaps inevitability, even at times of doubt.

For other respondents difficulties with acceptance and incorporation of sexuality arose within specific contexts. This is illustrated in the reflections of Eric:

> I think it goes back to those deep inner feelings that sex is wrong, no matter how much I try to move on from that I still feel buggered by it, or handicapped by it in many ways, and you know feel guilty about my partner, you know? There we are in church together, he is not sitting very far from me, and occasionally he will lead something. I know that sometimes I will have said to the people who have done that, I would say thank you very much that was beautiful. I never feel I can do that, you know? At times if he comes across and gives me the kiss of peace, I sometimes again feel rather embarrassed. (I 2)

Such feelings of 'guilt' or 'embarrassment' illustrate the difficulty of combining sexuality and religious belief that some gay clergy feel. The situated nature of this embarrassment for Eric is particularly obvious, it is within public Christian interaction that he chooses to illustrate this 'guilt'. In this sense acceptance of and integration of sexuality can be seen as situation specific, although Eric sees himself as accepting of his sexuality internally, he remains unsure of the acceptability of publicly showing this closeness to his partner. This relates to Goffman's (1971) work on interaction, although Eric's understanding of his self identity is accepting, within the context of the church building Eric is also aware of the expectations of the congregation, his position as clergy, historical church attitudes towards sexuality, and his own history of feeling sex to be wrong, and definitely not to be referred to in Church. In terms of stories, Eric feels able to tell self the story of his sexuality. However, the social telling of this story through action becomes more difficult due to Eric's lack of surety that affirmation will emerge from the audience in question. Eric is aware of the need to maintain his clergy identity, and the combination of clergy and gay identity is revealed in his narrative as problematic when told in front of a Church audience.

Therefore although essentialist understandings allow for greater acceptance of sexuality among the respondents, these need to be continually viewed in terms of context and situation. For although self-acceptance may be gained, the attitudes of others and influences from outside continue to affect performance of sexuality in a situated sense. This can be seen in Brekhus' study of gay suburbanites, wherein living in the situated location of suburbia respondents were less likely to emphasise their sexualities in their neighbourhoods. Especially the 'centaurs' (see Chapter 1), who would separate their gay identities from their suburban identities geographically (Brekhus 2003). For clergy, life constraint is a massive issue. In many churches public affection, whether straight or gay, is not encouraged and here therefore the variability between self-acceptance of identity and public presentation of identity by Eric can be understood.

As previously mentioned essentialist claims allow the clergy a way in which to counter opposition. There are a number of ways in which essentialism is strategically used to counter opposition. One way in which essentialist argument can be used is in

connection with human rights discourse. Stewart for example discussed his opposition to an African bishop who suggested gay people were possessed in interview:

> I actually think there is something to do with truth and justice and things, and you know he's [African bishop] wrong, there is no other way round it because I know who I am and he can bleat till he's content that I need exorcising of some demon in me but he's just wrong, he's the one with the problem. (I 10)

Stewart uses his understanding of his consistent sexual identity as a way of countering, his use of the statement 'I know who I am' contains the power of connection to essential sexuality. Similar to the political arguments used by Gay and lesbian pressure groups in the 1980's (Whisman 1996). And this can be defended in terms of human rights (Sinfield 1998). Therefore when attacked he can respond forcefully with a coherent argument of acceptability, which connects, to the idea of 'right' and 'wrong' which consistency allows. In essence Stewart's argument is situationally located, he draws upon his own history and understanding, knowledge of previous arguments of justice, and distances from an understanding of being gay in terms of possession through his own cultural experiences and understandings. His is a story which is culturally and historically located (Plummer 1995), as indeed is the story of the African bishop.

Secondly, counter argument is also made possible through theological argument, as discussed in the previous chapter. Essentialist God-given understandings of sexuality allow connection to theological debate, and this is used by a number of respondents to undermine opposing arguments (See Chapter 4).

Thidly, claim to essentialism by the respondents is influenced, by bio-medical research. Harold discussed this in interview saying:

> I heard the other day that there was an African bishop visiting the city, [he] was being pushed quite hard by one of the Anglican clergy [who] couldn't get an answer to the proposition that homosexuality may be determined, it's not something that people choose. He couldn't cope with that, because if it is something that is not chosen, then can you say it is a sin? (DI 4)

The use of these debates (similarly to the use of political argument) is influenced by their previous use. Waites refers to public debates concerning the age of consent for gay men, the repeal of section 28, and gay adoption. In each of these he illustrates that Biomedical evidence was used to emphasise the fixity of sexuality (Waites 2005); similarly research papers on biological evidence of differences between gay and straight men have gained publicity (LeVay 1997, Wilson and Rahmen 2004). Determinism therefore becomes a powerful tool. The above example illustrates not only the power of such rationalistic 'scientific' findings, but also makes use of the contextualised position, and frame of reference of the respondents (and the audience) by strategic use combined with theological argument.

The above discussion has shown that respondents' accessing of essentialist understandings of sexuality are of strategic importance. Essentialist understanding gives access to a consistent life narrative wherein sexuality may be incorporated as an aspect of identity which is consistent and unchangeable. Essentialist understanding also gives access to theological argument which is accessed both as a strategic defence, and attack upon varying perspectives. Also for the respondents, the claim to essentialism connects with human rights discourses, and issues of equal rights and inclusion furthering the power and acceptance of such understanding. Finally the discussion illustrated that claim to essentialism is granted increased secular acceptance through its access to scientific rationalist debates.

However essentialism is most powerfully a personal story of meaning. Essentialism is not necessarily a story of 'truth', rather it functions both strategically and personally for the respondents. Essentialism gains truth as a personal story, not as a truth about a biological sexuality which crosses time, culture or even personal history. Giddens for example argues

> 'Sexuality' today has been discovered, opened up and made accessible to the
> development of varying life-styles. It is something that each of us 'has', or
> cultivates, no longer a natural condition which an individual accepts as a

preordained state of affairs. Somehow, in a way that has to be investigated, sexuality functions as a malleable feature of self, a prime connecting point between body, self-identity and social norms. (Giddens 1992: 15)

Stories of sexual identity therefore, as much as stories of faith become life-projects. They are a set of experiences which require work, experiences which must be put together and given meaning. The discussion above has shown that essentialist understanding is central to the stories of the respondents' sexual identities, however this must be seen as a personal story of what Giddens refers to as 'the connecting point between body, self-identity and social norms', not something beyond such influence. Just as religion was shown to have 'opened-up', the variety of options increasing and expanding in terms of the religious life. Similarly through process of individualisation and detraditionalization such possibilities have expanded in the sexual realm. For Giddens along with rapid individualism comes increasing doubt (1991), accepted traditions become questioned, the individual must put together a meaning system which makes sense of self in the context of doubt. These meanings make sense of the personal rather than providing 'truth' beyond, cultural, historical or even personal boundaries.

Stories of sexual identity are therefore negotiated stories. Though the discussions of the respondents' understanding of their sexuality has illustrated the importance of coherence and consistency. This consistency of sexual identity becomes more fluid in its 'living'. The need to negotiate being gay with being Christian, and being clergy means that stories of sexual identity at times need to be silence. The chapter now goes on to explore how sexual identity, with reference to the respondents' stories of 'closeting', is strategically silenced in order to allow their continued incorporation of Christian, clergy and gay aspects of identity into their stories of self.

Managing Sexuality: The Power of Silence

The management of gay identity is an area of sexuality, which is often presented as a binary. The way an individual manages their sexuality often being conceptualised as being 'in' or 'out' of the closet (Bowers 1973, King & Smith 2004). The history of, and

individuals' understandings of homosexuality as a stigmatised identity (Goffman 1968, Plummer 1975) promote the need for management of identity performance. In terms of mental health and self-acceptance being 'out' has been conceptualised as good, whilst being 'in' conceptualised as bad (Reid & Walker 2004, King & Smith 2004). Though such ideas are simplistic, the language of the closet was used by the respondents when they talked about managing, presenting and living their sexuality. Particularly influential in the respondents' understanding for the need of such management strategies was the expectation or perception of opposition from the Church's hierarchy, their peers, and their congregation.

Acceptable Homosexuality

The partial liberalisation in official Church statements (discussed in Chapter 2) is suggestive of the Church forming new boundaries of 'acceptable homosexuality'. Matthew discussed his understandings of such boundaries as follows:

> Inevitably you sort of feel, well it's fine as long as you are not found out …
> With gay people it's like, 'We have bought you a brand new car, but you can't
> have the keys! You can admire it, but you can't take it out! (I 11)

For respondents like Matthew the dynamic of 'acceptable homosexuality' in the Church is that of a two-way closet, a complex relationship between two parties which involves the control of discussion. Silence concerning actions on one side is matched to silence concerning knowledge on the other. That is, gay clergy silence their sexuality in Church environments, and in turn Church and congregation silence questions, and suspicions of their clergymen. Anthony discussed this in relation to the nomination and resignation of Jeffrey John (discussed in Chapter 1), he said

> As you have seen with Jeffrey John, he is open and honest, so he gets slapped
> down, but then there are other appointments made where people hide their
> sexual orientation and they get promoted. (I 12)

Anthony sees this as a hypocrisy within the church, for not only is Jeffrey John 'honest' about his sexuality, he also is seen to conform to Church standards by living within a celibate relationship. This underlines that the issue for (at least some aspects of) the Church and the reason for its opposition to gay clergy, does not rest simply upon the rights or wrongs of active gay sexuality rather it is the control of dissent. The control of public statements about, or being known to live a life which the Church has outlawed. Alan further illustrated this, he said

> I think the sad thing is the fact that the gay issue has become the woman priest issue of ten years ago, where actually nobody really cares whether women were ordained or not in some ways. What they actually cared (about) was whether you were for it or against it, and if you were against it then you belonged to the right club, and if you were for it then you belonged to another club. (DI 9)

Here again the 'gay issue' is seen by Adam to be one of not rocking the boat, not crossing the boundaries of acceptability. In his discussion of secularisation Chaves argues that the Church's position as moral authority for some people, has become its last bastion of power (Chaves 2001). Therefore controlling that power becomes hugely important to its continued importance. This can be seen to link to Foucault's discussion of the power of discourse, and the influence of boundaries created through language (Foucault 1978). Transgressing, or even questioning the solidity of such boundaries threatens their existence, therefore the 'control' of public talk is essential to their continued existence. For many of the respondents the Church's stance underlined and emphasised a credibility gap between the Church and wider society, this was particularly seen in the difference between Church's acceptance, and societies acceptance of gay and lesbian people (Yip 2005a). Although, the stance officially of the Church has been seen to have partially liberalised, it continues to exclude known actively gay clergy from full incorporation in the Church community. Despite the Church's stance as an inclusive organisation, what Elizabeth Stuart referred to as its 'divine mandate to be queer'. That is, to be inclusive, to minister to the marginalized (Stuart 2006).

Awareness of such attitude within the Church meant that many of the respondents believed they were required to silence their sexualities in order to continue their lives as clergy. Fear of the repercussions of being known, or overstepping the limits of acceptability, meant a conscious management of sexuality was required.

The Collapsible Closet

The binary of being in/out (of the closet) does not accurately represent the complex nature of interactions which occur in identity management. Goffman (1968) discusses the 'daily round' of activities and situations a 'stigmatized individual' enters and passes through. He argues that management strategies differ between situations due to what can be shown, what is expected, and what raises suspicion. Similarly, Plummer's (1995) discussion of story telling emphasises the changing nature of stories of identity dependent on their location of telling. Therefore fixed identities of being 'in' or 'out' of the closet lack descriptive power and analytic sophistication. Management of sexual identity is a dynamic, not fixed phenomenon. In addition, 'coming out' is not a singular event but rather a story that requires constant retelling (Ward and Winstanley 2005). Although, many of the respondents did make use of the language of the closet to describe how they managed their sexual identity, this is best seen in terms of self-location, rather than self-description. To explain, locating of self in the closet was a description of an event, or a life-episode, rather than a description of 'self'.

Drawing from Ward and Winstanley (2003). I argue that silence is a useful aspect of self-management. My assertion is the closet is best understood as a contextualised use of silence. This silence however is not purely the silence of language, it is also the silence of bodily gestures and actions, an extension of Goffman's notion of 'passing' (1968).

Though statistics are perhaps not the best way to illustrate fluidity, the following table provides an interesting starting point for a discussion of situational closeting. In the questionnaire respondents were asked to rate how open they were about their sexuality to different social groups (Appendix 2- Question 3.5), the results are shown in Table 6.

169

Table 6: How open about your sexuality are you with the following people?

	Family	Friends	Congregation	Other Clergy	Bishop
Open	48.3 (n=14)	41.4 (n=12)	10.3 (n=3)	17.2 (n=5)	44.8 (n=13)
Partially Open	27.6 (n=8)	55.2 (n=16)	41.4 (n=12)	44.8 (n=13)	6.9 (n=2)
Closed	24.1 (n=7)	3.4 (n=1)	48.3 (n=14)	37.9 (n=11)	44.8 (n=13)
No Answer	0	0	0	0	3.4 (n=1)

The results shown in Table 6 illustrate the variety of approaches to closeting among the respondents. Respondents' use of the category 'partially open' calls into question the binary of in/out, and the difference in results between social groups calls into question the fixity of such stances, for example being open with family does not necessarily equate with being open to congregation. Also the table illustrates the importance of context in management of sexual identity, for it is in the context of family and friendship that the respondents are most likely to be 'out' or 'partially out', areas which may be most likely to provide affirmation. Whilst the respondents are least likely to be out with congregation or clergy peers, areas where clergy may perceive or expect opposition. The discussions of closeting by the clergy illustrate this contextual use.

A number of respondents self –identified as being 'closeted', for these men silence about their sexuality was often used in their performance of their professional lives. Matthew for example talks about his understandings of the meaning of being 'closeted':

> There is a colossal sort of lack of synchronicity between the official respectable vicar, and, you know, I'm not lust on legs, but I do like to look at people, and so there is a sense in which, and even with some other gay clergy it can be quite difficult as to whether you in fact wish to let them know. (I 11)

For such individuals life may be constructed as involving two distinct parts – the life of the vicar, and the life of the gay man (comparable to the situations discussed in

Goffman's 'daily round'). This separation gives in professional circumstances an interpretive space through which to make connections, and create integration without having to face the constraint of opposition through public integration. Matthew, also describes his silence as a conscious undertaking, dependent on the context of interaction. Goffman discusses such interaction as responsive to the expectations of the others involved in the interaction, and controlling of what is revealed to other parties within interaction, in a sense selective disclosure and concealment (Goffman 1968). Plummer (1995) further defines such interaction showing the place of personal historical context, and strategic control of knowledge. In Matthew's reflections above we see his understandings of his own clerical and sexual identities, his awareness of the expectations of the other parties, and his awareness of the dangers of increased knowledge. The use of silence here is therefore contextualised, conscious, and strategic. Matthew narrative further underlines this dynamic:

> I suppose in a curious way I've come out just enough to my area bishop and my arch-deacon so that they know its not necessarily going safe but they have absolutely no evidence of that. So I'm probably perceived at the moment as relatively inverted commas 'safe'! Because I will be assumed to be going around like a castrated cat basically! (I11)

Matthew's discussion illustrates the control of knowledge discussed by Goffman (1971) Goffman's discussion of identity management emphasises the need to meet expectations in order to go on, to fulfil the role required. Matthew in this sense has constructed his 'professional' identity as a 'castrated cat'- an interesting illustration which emphasises the control of body which he undertakes as a clergyman, and which he feels the Church attempts to enforce. This construction of identity has also involved a negotiation of a two-way silence, wherein Matthew is 'virtually' castrated in Church roles, and hierarchy is silent of their knowledge of the possibility of this changing in order to continue the 'acceptable' status quo (a castration of knowledge).

For some self-identified closeted clergy their silence was understood as being more permanent and less dynamically arranged. Adam's narrative illustrates this:

It's a complete guardedness that your sort of, your not thinking 'Oh I'd better make sure of this', or 'I'd better make sure of that', because you just do it. So in a way it's just something that's subconsciously there or unconsciously there all the time, but it's not necessarily is something that you're consciously thinking about all that much. (DI 5)

However despite Adam's sense of a complete guardedness, this is not constant. He discusses his cell group all of whom are gay or lesbian, he recorded in his diary:

I don't think that I spend much time reflecting on the fact that I am gay, but I do find it relaxing when I am in the company of other people in a similar position to me. Spent the morning talking through issues in our own faith journeys, and in 'working lives' (D 5)

Despite the sense of constant 'unconscious' closeting in Adam's experience of his sexuality, there is a sense of context to silence. When he meets with his cell group, which he sees as a safe space, he reflects openly with them about his experiences and his sexuality. Therefore rather than seeing Adam's silence as a fixed aspect of his identity it is perhaps more accurate to see it as an aspect of an identity template. That is, a pre-organised set of responses and guards, which he is cued into presenting reactively in certain situations. Returning to the work of Goffman, it is possible to see Adam's shift between 'closet' and 'out' in terms of the situations of the 'daily round' particularly in terms of 'forbidden' places, and 'back' places. Forbidden places being where the 'stigmatized' are forbidden 'where exposure means expulsion' (Goffman 1968:102) – for Adam this may be Church. Back places where 'persons of the individual's kind stand exposed and find they need not try to conceal their stigma' (Goffman 1968:102).

In essence the concept of being closeted is unhelpful as an overarching frame in discussing sexual identity management. The concept of silence can be used to more accurately reflect the influences in particular interactions which encourage closeting as an action.

This is further underlined by the experiences of clergy who self-identified as 'out', reasons for such self-identification are illustrated in the following quotations by Anthony and Luke respectively:

> [I've] always been open about my sexuality, when I was ordained the Bishop knew about my sexual orientation, so that hasn't been a problem. Clearly it is a problem for other people, because of the attitudes they have and because I'm open about it. (I12)

> [When you are out] you suddenly find yourself in the papers, and you find you are God's gift to the broadsheets because you are middle-class, middle-ranking – boring as fuck! And you don't live in London! So as soon as anything about the gay issue comes up, the broadsheets are on the phone to us. (I3).

In both of these quotes the idea of being 'open' is reflected through being known publicly. Within the two quotes there is a sense of permanence to such understanding. Societal representation of 'coming out' as a one-off moment (e.g. the 'coming out' episode of American sitcom 'Ellen'), and the use of 'coming out' stories in research present coming out as a significant moment in life which illustrates a wholesale change in the way the individual presents and lives out their sexual identity. It is possible to see such an understanding in the quotations above. However, such narratives are not illustrative of permanence. Management of sexuality still involves an interaction within situation. For example, when asked if he was ever less open, Luke said:

> I think if either of us (himself or his partner) found ourselves in a situation where it simply wouldn't be appropriate, that it would either be so disturbing or upsetting ... I think in that sense we have become much more consciously discreet (I 3)

Also Anthony when asked if his professional role constrained his presentation of his sexual identity answered:

I don't want to set out to sort of shock people and therefore if I get involved in a situation which I think might be a cause for shock, I don't particularly want to do that or to cause offence. So in that sense I think there probably is a discretion if I deal with people who I'm aware this might be shocking to. But again it depends on where you draw the line, because you know I might be more discreet but God! I'm not going to go back into the closet (I 12)

Context is crucial in the way 'out' as well as 'closeted' individuals present their sexualities. Such examples support the conceptualising of 'coming out' as a continuous process (Ward & Winstanley 2005), which is performed or constrained strategically dependent on situation. The context within which an interaction occurs informs selective disclosure of information. Hewitt (2003) refers to this in terms of the stories which can be told:

The self is in part a narrative construction – an object created and modified by what people say about themselves, by the autobiographies they tell and edit in a variety of circumstances in their everyday lives. (Hewitt 2003: 132).

The above discussion has illustrated the contextualised nature of sexual identity presentation and management, however this is perhaps best illustrated when different contexts are experienced in close proximity. Again the use of the diary method enabled the discussion of day-to-day experience. Alan recorded an example of the use of closeting as an action in his diary:

In the evening we went to a housewarming party which was the most bizarre event imaginable as several of my partner's friends were there who I had never met but who were very gay indeed. After a long discussion beforehand we both turned up in jeans and a jacket and I wore my earring, having been given the impression that it was a sort of "friend's of Dorothy's party". However when we arrived it was indeed that, but included several members of the congregation and churchwardens. I felt very strange indeed as I was moving from room to room being 'vicar' in one place and 'gay man' in the other. (D 9)

Alan here explores his changing persona in context. The corridor between rooms acting as a space of transformation, in one room he refers to being a 'vicar', in another being a 'gay man' neither of these are any more or less representations of him than the other, rather they are context specific presentations. Such understanding allows a different definition of styles of managing sexual identity. Herein another binary often emerges, that of compartmentalisation / integration. However, integrity can be different in different contexts, and also even forms of consistent integrity, can be shown to be contextualised and constrained by influences. In order to further illustrate this the chapter now explores the multifaceted uses of the 'closet'.

The Revolving Closet Door

Within the research silence about sexuality was used in a number of ways. These can be explored through the use of four significant reasons for 'shutting the door':

  i. Closing the door for protection of 'self'
  ii. Closing the door for the good of others
  iii. Closing the door for affirmation
  iv. Closing the door for space to be

These subsections together show the closet as a more nuanced and situated strategy than is suggested in much of the previous research. The closet, and the use of silence emerge as both positive and negative in the view of the individual and reflect the negotiated nature of performed identity.

i. Closing the door for protection of 'self'

As mentioned above the closet is often defined as an enforced position, controlled by the fear of the consequences of discovery (Griffith and Hebl 2002). For many of the respondents the need to be silent about their sexuality was enforced by the fear of the consequences of discovery. Matthew and Ian are illustrative of such feelings:

If you are found out, that's the eleventh commandment 'Thou shalt not be found out!' If you are found out of course, then basically you are sent from the church. (I 11)

It's separating the guilt from the shame of being discovered isn't it? The fear of being identified is maybe more powerful than the guilt. The fear is the dominant thing isn't it? It's that fear. (I 8)

Such descriptions of the influence of fear support what previous literature has discussed as the perceived incompatibility (at least publicly) of being gay and Christian (Comstock 1996, Hendershot 2001). The fear discussed is expulsion from Church, the fear of the loss of career, of respect, of home. Adam further explained this fear:

The biggest difficulty is the fact that you have to be very aware of how people perceive you because of potential sort of threats to your career, if people realise that you are gay. So actually that leads you to potentially bigger threat, things like blackmail etcetera. So in a way I think that's the big negative point. (I 5)

These men then feel forced to keep separate from their ministry their sexual identity, and particularly their sexual practices. Ward and Winstanley (2003) refer to silence as a 'symptom of censorship at work' (Ward and Winstanley 2003: 1271). For the respondents above the telling of their story is suppressed by their understanding of Church. Although individually they may see a compatibility between these aspects of their identities, the context in which they live, and their public role in the Church raises fear of being found out, which promotes self-enforced silence. This dynamic is related by Seidman, Meeks and Traschen (1999) who emphasise that choices surrounding coming out are intrinsically linked with social position and the costs and benefits of such a choice. The clergy's narratives above illustrate this dynamic. When costs are perceived to be too great silence is 'enforced'.

ii.   Closing the door for the good of others

As well as the sense of fear of discovery discussed above another major reason encouragement of silence was felt by the clergy was a sense of responsibility. The need to meet expectations encourages silence. Alan explored this in interview:

> If you were ever found out in some way or other it's not yourself that suffers in a way, because you go away and do something else, although it's traumatic at the time. It's what you leave behind, an awful lot of people who might have thought you were ok, dealing with the situation of you doing something that they thought might not be acceptable. (I 9)

This sense of responsibility was also related by other respondents, perhaps the most descriptive example is the following quotation from a questionnaire answer.

> It is important to remember that what I achieve by keeping my sexuality secret is more important than destroying my vocation by being honest to parishioners. (Q1)

The two quotations above underline the feeling of responsibility to congregation that respondents felt. Such statements not only reflect the sociality of closeting as an action, but also say something about integrity. For these individuals integrity has different guises. What would be an aspect of personal integrity, such as being open about their sexuality, must be weighed against what is an aspect of vocational integrity, the feeling of responsibility to, and the need to meet the expectations of their parishioners. Though to some extent this can be seen as a symptom of censorship, for the respondents silence used in this sense was perceived as being to some extent a self-sacrifice, by suppressing their sexuality, they furthered their role as clergy. A related issue in the literature is 'delusion'. Goffman (1971) refers to the use of delusion in interaction as a way of protecting other performers, one example being a doctor prescribing placebos. By, for want of a better word, 'deluding' congregants the clergyman enables them to continue in their Christian faith without having to face the difficulty of having a 'gay vicar'.

Silence here is both affirming and non-affirming, by silencing their sexuality clergy are not able to access possible affirmation by the Church or congregation for their sexuality, but they gain affirmation of their clerical role.

iii.   Closing the door for affirmation

Interestingly for some of the respondents who saw themselves as closeted, such silence can also be seen as a way of gaining affirmation for their sexuality. Although the sense of fear about consequences of being open was a strong factor, many also felt that their silence, and the silence of others was a sign of acceptance. That is, there was a shared secret knowledge between themselves and their congregations, and the continued silence by both sides showed an affirmation of who the clergy were. Though this in a sense relates to 'don't ask, don't tell', individual clergy could find a sense of acceptance through this tacit understanding and tolerance. Stewart's narrative illustrates this:

> Although in one sense I'm not out with that organisation [the Church], in another sense unless you are blind and deaf, I am who I am! (I10)

For Stewart despite his silence about his sexuality he feels it is obvious who he is. In this sense the silence that he receives from his congregation and Church hierarchy concerning his sexuality is if not an affirmation at least a sign that they feel it does not prohibit him from his role. Here again the act of closeting is perceived to be interactive, providing an interpretive space for both parties. This issue is illustrated by a story told by Harold:

> They worked it out, they put two and two together. They told my successor 'We had a gay vicar here and it didn't matter. We all knew but we could never say, and he could never tell us', and that's how it was. (I4)

In essence through their respective silences the clergyman closets his sexuality and at the very least gains knowledge of a conditional tolerance from the silence of the congregation, which can be translated as affirmation. The congregation closets their knowledge of the clergyman's sexuality and gain through his silence space to go on

believing. Such a dynamic allows interpretive space for both parties to make connections and ways to move on without necessarily having to face the stifling effect of discussing the issue head on. Therefore there is the possibility of affirmation, though this is potentially 'non-affirmative' affirmation.

iv.   Closing the door for space to be

The other way in which silence is used is as a chosen way of gaining space from professional expectation. For some of the respondents the feeling that people did not have access to, or knowledge of parts of their lives was something which gave them a freedom. Alan for example discusses his use of silence as a way to separate aspects of his life:

> As I say that is perhaps by choice, because it gives you an easy separation, and perhaps if I sort of stood up and was prepared to take whatever came at me, if I stood up in a pulpit and declared where I was coming from I might loose something. I've worked quite hard at trying to think this through because I do think there is a certain part of my personality that wants to keep it secret if I'm honest, rather than trying to say I want to completely lead my life out in the open. (I 9)

Alan's silence about his sexuality in certain contexts is important for a sense of privacy. Organising his sexuality with selective silence gives access to a way of keeping knowledge from these aspects of his social networks.

Similarly for Adam even if the sense of fear was removed and he felt able to be more vocal about his sexuality it did not necessarily follow that he would be::

> If I was to really analyse it, I might actually be subconsciously glad to be in the position that I'm in, that people can't know. I don't think I'm the sort of person who would ever want to be terribly sort of declaratory about it, but having said that I wouldn't want to feel that I could lose my job if people found out. (I 5)

The important point here is that although Adam wishes to see the removal of 'enforced' silence he does not want to stop strategically using this silence. Silence for Adam is strategically used. Returning to the work of Ward and Winstanley this can be seen as 'Silence as self-protection and resistance' (Ward & Winstanley 2003: 1273). Ward and Winstanley argue that when silence is left behind through speaking out, control is lost. Remaining silent, and choosing to organise social life with use of silence gives control, control over what is known, and control over what can be known. Choosing silence therefore gives power over knowledge of sexuality. Thus, making silence a positive strategy for some.

The discussion above has illustrated 'the closet' as an identity management strategy that is both multi-faceted and dynamic. Closeting has different motivations, and is used and removed according to situation, audience, and the individuals' views of the interactions therein. The multiple reasons for closeting further demonstrate the dynamic nature of closeting as action. It also illustrates that closeting can be important, and positive for the individual, for example allowing affirmation for a different aspect of self-identity, or by placing the power of knowledge and control of interaction firmly in their hands.

Relationships, Sex and Community: Situating Life Experiences

The chapter now moves on to explore how certain aspects of 'gay' life are negotiated in the 'living'. Concentrating on the interconnections of gay, Christian and clergy identities the chapter focuses on relationships, sex and community. Though such concentration presents a simplistic understanding of gay life. The chapter focuses on these issues as centres of interconnection. Through this discussion the chapter illustrates the continued need for negotiation the respondents face in their organisation of their 'gay' lives, and the continued influence of Christian and clergy identity in this organisation.

Relationships

In discussing relationships the chapter will focus on the qualitative data from interviews and diaries. Of the respondents who took part in these stages 3 were in long-term relationships where at least part of the time the respondents lived together in the vicarage. 3 were in more long-distance committed relationships. 6 were single at the time of the research. 1 respondent began a relationship between the first interview and the diary stage, and 1 ended a relationship between the initial interview and the diary. 1 of these respondents was also married.

This section of the chapter is presented in three parts. Firstly the chapter concentrates on singleness. It is here that the constraints of clergy life may be seen most obviously influencing respondents' relationship status. Secondly the chapter will explore long-distance relationships and the reasons for such relationship organisation, before finally exploring the relationships of those who live together more visibly.

i.   Singleness

Two particular issues which arose in the research relating to being single are worthy of attention. Firstly for a number of respondents being single emerged from the constraints of being clergy. Secondly being single brought issues of loneliness and lack of support to the fore.

The difficulties associated with being clergy were discussed by Harold as follows:

> I also think that for somebody in my position, it is quite a lonely position. It would be very difficult given the atmosphere of the church to have a partnership. I moved down here five years ago, and I don't know that many people in this area except through the Church and the congregation, and that huge area of my life has to be kept fairly discreet and under wraps. (DI 4)

The fear of the consequences of being discovered mean Harold feels unable to express his sexuality in a relationship, his sexual identity is constrained by his contextual position in the church. The need to meet expectations of Church as clergy is seen as constraining the ability to meet the expectations that would arise within a relationship. Not only this, but also due to the nature of the clerical role (to be discussed in Chapter 6), Harold makes the majority of his contacts in the local area through Church and congregation. Therefore even if he felt able to have a relationship, his chances of meeting partners are severely restricted due to his position. These difficulties were felt to be peculiar to the clergy by a number of respondents. George for example discussed the following conversation he had with another gay couple:

> I was staying with a friend who is gay and were visiting some friends of his – a gay couple. I ventured the question to one of them, 'Does anybody know your gay?' 'Well of course!'. 'Do your family know?' 'Well yes.' 'Do they know about your relationship then?' 'Oh yes!' 'Do they know you're gay at work?' 'Oh yes, if our company has anything, any social event my partner will come with me, and if he has anything I will go with him.' 'Do your non-gay friends know?' 'Oh yes!' That made me very depressed, very glad for them, but it made me realise that here I was an officer in and an agent of an organisation, that talks about truth, and I'm actually living a lie, or I'm at least being extremely economical with the truth. Where as they are open and nobody gives a damn, nobody calls their integrity as engineers or whatever else anybody else did, into question. Their professional competence is accepted they get on with the job. That they choose to have a relationship with someone of their own sex is irrelevant, as far as that's concerned. (I6)

Being clergy here is seen to have a very specific set of constraints which gay men in other professions are less likely to face. Seidman, Meeks and Traschen's (1999) discussion of the need for an awareness of the different situations in which gay men are, is important here. For the respondents above their social position means they are constrained from entering a relationship, and accessing the support which emerges from that. George discussed this further in interview by relating how this constraint as become more permanent as he has grown older. He said:

When you get into your forties it becomes, you have to take seriously the fact that you are single. When you're in your mid-fifties you have to reconcile yourself to that fact, when you get to the point where I am, part way through my second part of my fifties it makes you rather despondent, especially in a youth driven culture, when you realise that even if, eh , that even if you might long for a close personal intimate relationship, the likelihood of you finding it in a society which is driven by youth and the cult of youth, its less and less likely, it doesn't matter whether you're a priest or not, … but if you are a priest, it is then emphasised even more. (I 6)

George's account underlines that starting a relationship becomes more difficult as you get older. Similar issues were discussed in Heaphy, Yip and Thompson's (2003) work on ageing among lesbians, bisexuals and gay men, they found that older LGB's felt less able to access contacts through the gay scene, and some respondents felt wary of relationships later in life. George also adds another consideration that his professional role makes such an issue even more difficult to address. So in essence although he sees his age as exclusionary this is related to the fact he previously has felt unable to have a relationship due to his work context. Again therefore a number of issues interact, influencing choices, and indeed range of choices available to such respondents. Hewitt (2003) discusses how interaction is limited in such ways dependent upon situation, and similarly Jenkins (2004) refers to the need to be aware of situated identity and the constraints emerging therein.

The second issue emerging through the coexistence of being single and being clergy is the difficulties raised in terms of work expectations, and lack of support:

As a single person in the Church, whether straight or gay, there's the gay thing because you are being guarded all the time, but as a single person there are other issues, there are other sort of practical issues. about getting things sorted out and domestic arrangements and those sorts of things. … I think there is an expectation certainly in parishes that if you are single then you can do more because you haven't got other people to sort of bother about. (DI 5)

The lack of support felt by single clergy was often referred to in a practical manner. For example Anthony said about being single and clergy

> And I think the particular tensions of course if you are living by yourself because if you have got a partner there is always someone else there that can either act as a barrier, you know they can answer the door for you and say, look your not available, or they can take messages for you. If you are by yourself that creates additional problems, and if you are living by yourself at the end of the day and you might have had all sorts of things thrown at you in the day and you have no one to share it with whereas if you are married or you are living with a partner then there is someone there that you can share things with and unburden yourself at the end of the day, or share good things with. (I12)

Such examples underline the different expectations that may be put on a single clergyman by the congregation if there is no obvious family. Lack of perceived 'responsibilities' open the single clergy to be called upon more often. This also leads to a lack of direct support (Fletcher 1990), as Anthony mentions, there is no-one to share things with. In this sense the clergy's position as single raises issues concerning their interactions with their Church, the issue of being constantly available is emphasised as the clergy are seen to have no 'family' responsibilities, they have to deal with issues on their own, and have no 'sounding board' to talk through issues. This gains importance as research on burnout has emphasised the phenomenon as emotional exhaustion linked to excessive emotional pressure (Randall 2004).   Being single also influences the way in which these respondents organised their lives. A number for example talked about having to get a distance from their parishes in order to really have a day off, and indeed being required to look further a field for the support which may otherwise come from a partner. So here again relationship status and professional role interact.

ii.   Living apart

Some of the clergy were in committed relationships but with partners living elsewhere in the country or abroad. These relationships were seen by those involved to provide

support and a feeling of being loved, but for some the safety of distance was also important. The powerful feeling of being loved and supported interacts with the safety of distance to show how the organisation of sexual life can be influenced by professional role and fear of discovery. Robert talks about a previous relationship he had which sums up this dichotomy of need:

> I just wanted an ordinary guy that loved me, and there was no doubt that he loved me, there was no doubt about it at all (laughing). He was super, but and it was a perfect arrangement, every six weeks, we just reached the top up period as it were, then he'd clear off. I'd be happy, then just as I was fizzing down he would appear again, and it was lovely. I could get on with my work and that was that. (I1)

Robert's reminiscences about this relationship talk to his need for balance between work and sexuality in his life. For him this was best organised through defined space. In essence such long-distance relationships appear to fit seamlessly within the organising strategy of compartmentalisation, there is a space for sexuality but it is defined, and the difficulties of integration can be avoided – the relationship can be controlled and kept from congregations and Church authorities. Further, for those who feel a sense of the danger of being found out, such relationships again provide a way of managing such fear. Matthew a married gay clergyman discussed his long-distance gay relationship saying

> It's not easy having a relationship at a distance, but at another level of course nobody suspects, and it's not on the doorstep. So in that sense you can just announce that you are going off to stay with friends, nobody sees anything of it. (I11)

For Matthew then the difficulties attached with a long-distance relationship are balanced by the safety he feels through such relationship organisation. Such an example further underlines the need for organisation and balancing of identity. Although at times he may feel that the distance between himself and his partner is difficult, and that he does not see as much of his partner as he would wish, the benefits

of lower risk of being found out are seen as a positive aspect of the relationship. By compartmentalising his life in this way Matthew not only gains the ability to separate aspects of his life which would cause difficulty, he also gains space away from his workplace. A space to go to in which he can embrace another aspect of his identity.

For some of the clergy in long-distance relationships the distance is more to do with circumstance than choice or preference. Stewart's narrative provides an example of this. Writing in his diary Stewart illustrates the support he gets from his partner and the difficulty of enforced separation:

> Then it's a long drive back home, leaving at about 11.30 ... It seems daft to drive back at this time, and I'd rather have spent the night with my partner (and he would with me) but there is work to do tomorrow (D10)

Stewart's reflections on this occurrence illustrate his attachment to his partner and the sense of love there is between them, however it also illustrates his sense of duty as a clergyman (Christopherson 1994), and the difficulties this can raise when the two things pull in separate directions. Stewart feels required to continue the separation due to his commitment to work, but also feels a sense of disappointment that he cannot be where he wants to be.

Such illustrations show the diversity of influence involved in such long-distance relationships. Reasons for such relationships varying from preference, through to requirement. These relationships are situated, they involve a negotiation of 'best fit'. For such respondents the duties of their role as clergy, and their need for a relationship are best served through separation. However direct comparison to the idea of gay commuters (Brekhus 2003), is problematic, for although often these men travel to their 'gay lives' at times also their 'gay lives' travel to them, there is a separation between Church and gay life but it is fluid as well as being controlled – in essence these life experiences involve continued risk management and negotiation. To return to Goffman. these relationships are performed in different frames (Goffman 1975), each frame has different influences working upon it, and the relationship is organised according to those frames. Living apart is a strategy of relationship organisation which is formed

within constraint, but involves negotiating freedom and space, whether in terms of time boundaries (how long a partner can stay in the vicarage without suspicion), or geographical boundaries (travelling for time together).

iii. Living together

The clergy who lived more permanently with their partners can also be seen to be negotiating with position as clergy. However discussions of relationships focussed primarily on support and love. Stephen illustrated this in his diary when he wrote:

> (My partner) took me to lunch to celebrate my anniversary (at the parish). His love and support for me gives me the strength and courage I have needed to keep going during these years (D7)

Stephen illustrates how important his relationship is to his life, not only in terms of being loved, but also in supporting him in his work. Lack of access to close loving relationships has been seen as a pressure on gay clergy (Wolf 1989, Francis 1990). For Stephen and the other clergy in similar relationships, their partner was an important part of their lives, not only did they live together publicly but also often their partner was a part of the congregation. Stephen again describes such a dynamic saying

> My partner is very much a part of it as well. He is involved at church, he reads and does rotas, and is very much seen as part of the congregation, and they love him. (I 7)

Stephen here shows how the partnership, in his view, gains acceptance in being open, and through the acceptance of his partner as a part of the local church community. Richardson (2004) discusses how monogamous open gay relationships can be seen as easier to accept within society as they reflect dominant heterosexual relationship norms, in essence such relationships are seen as respectable. This shows the influence the form of a relationship can have. Because of living together, the relationship is public, there is a sense of responsibility to the congregation that the church should know who is in the vicarage, and also a sense of responsibility to the partner not to be secretive. A

comparison here can be drawn with research on clergy partners, which has shown the need for inclusion, and space for time together (Darling, Hill and McWey 2004). For the respondents who were in such relationships the relationship often acted as a catalyst for openness to the church about sexuality. This reflects findings within Yip's (1997b) study of gay male Christian couples, in which a number of respondents reflected on being more open after beginning a committed relationship. Similarly, Alan who when keeping the diary had just begun living with a partner talked about how being in a relationship was encouraging him to be more open about his sexuality. He described a church fete:

> [My partner] sold raffle tickets at the fete, and became exceedingly popular with everyone. (D9)

He reflected on this in interview saying

> If you have got a partner then this person appears at things, or is around, and therefore people either have to take it or leave it. (DI 9)

Alan's reflections point to how through choosing to have a relationship there is a connected change in the what is known by the congregation. The nature of having a relationship, for Alan, means it is visible, therefore people will see. In essence Alan is seeing a responsibility to his partner to have a relationship which is meaningful to both of them, and in this keeping him secret would not be an option. This reflects the need to meet both partners' expectations, as discussed by Giddens in terms of the 'pure relationship' (1991; 1992). The nature of his job, living in the vicarage being at work at varying hours makes it more difficult to keep relationships separate. Therefore, although the relationship for Alan meant a change in the way he presented his life to the congregation and the way the congregation saw him, his role also has an effect on the nature of the relationship, the nature of his work meaning a partner is going to be seen. Differing from those professionals who live away from their place of work (Fletcher 1990).

For some having a relationship also changed the way they organised their professional life. The responsibilities they felt to their partner meant that they reorganised the way they worked. Luke discussed this in interview:

> It wasn't really until I met my partner who persuaded me very firmly that days off, because they were days with him, that was the work of the day. If I wanted to be of the protestant work ethic the work of the day was to go and have a day with him. (DI 3)

Again Luke's discussion here emphasises the effect that the feeling of responsibility to a partner can have, Luke felt he had to reorganise his working life to be able to commit time to his partner, in this way again the relationship has an effect on the way the clerical role is played out. Therefore relationships sexual and work-based must be worked out together and through compromise.

Finally the interconnection between relationship and role for the clergy is perhaps most obviously seen in the use of the relationship as a kind of strategy for education in the church. Both Stephen and Luke discussed such occurrences, Stephen discussed an episode where a woman in the congregation was worried about a gay relation, and came to speak to him.

> I said, well look at (partner's name) and me, and she said well we don't know, we are never sure, but we know you are all right. It was that sort of way in, and she's fine with it. (I 7)

Stephen here is using the example of his own relationship to help others. The relationship provides a way of engaging. Importantly this needs to be seen as a relationship which could be viewed as acceptable (Richardson 2000). So again here influences and constraints are at work. Luke also discussed the way in which his relationship could be an example to others:

> People began to see, they saw in the model of the relationship that my partner and I had, a sense of strength, and a kind of honesty and decency …and it has

189

helped them I think deal with their sons and daughters that go and live with their partners of whatever sex. (I 3)

Again the way in which sexuality is lived and presented is important for Luke. This is not to say that the reality of the partnership is different, but rather there are boundaries of acceptability which constrain the openness and type of relationship he is willing to present.

In essence the above discussion further illustrates the connected nature of identity. In negotiating the continuation of the relationship many influences are present. Giddens (1992) frames late modern relationships in terms of 'pure relationships' he argues that relationships are continually negotiated and exist only for as long as both partners feel their needs are met. Although this frame of negotiation is useful, and can be seen within the above discussion, for the clergy negotiation involved much more than just a partnership. Relationships were negotiated with reference to spoken and perceived needs of the partner, constraints of Church life, individual moral understanding of sexual and indeed relationship morality, and respondents' own desires and needs. To be sure relationships are negotiated in terms of intimacy and mutual satisfaction, however for the above respondents negotiation continues to occur with reference beyond these boundaries to constraints, moral frameworks, and respectability. Relationship identity then remains situated identity (Hewitt 2003). For though influenced by the late modern cultural story of intimacy, freedom, and new expressions of love, the relationship occurs within the parish (in the vicarage), in the view of congregation, under the supervision of Church structure, and with reference to the individual participants' own moral histories.

Sex

Though the physicality of gay identity was not a primary issue in the research design, the issue was discussed with a number of respondents. Also from questionnaire data it was possible to see the importance of sex for gay identity in the lives of the respondents. For example, 96.5% (n=28) of respondents reported for them a celibate life would not be a full life, and similarly 86.2% (n=25) of respondents argued that an

190

active sexuality was an important part of their identity. Sex is again a meeting-ground of identity, body and society. In discussing sex in relation to the respondents the chapter illustrates how sex is organised, presented and given meaning by the respondents. For purposes of analysis I have separated the discussions of sex into 'relationship sex', and 'brief encounters'.

i.   Relationship sex

For respondents in relationships sex was mentioned in some of their diaries, but in an almost throwaway style. Luke's diary illustrates:

> Sex reared its ugly head in the middle of the night. All very pleasant though to be humping to the accompaniment of the world service! (D3)

Luke presents sex here as hardly worth mentioning, the accompaniment given as much discussion as the act itself. This is perhaps hardly surprising, sex for the couple is in Luke's view a private matter:

> Lots of people want to come and interview and say, well what do you do (in bed), and that's the one bit, my private life is my private life. (I 3)

For Luke the physical side of his sexuality is private, although it may be an aspect of his life which gives meaning. It is primarily a signifier of his sexuality, not something he wishes to discuss, or open to others. Both Yalda (1999), and Richardson (2004) have discussed the problems of separating the physical from the orientation in terms of sexuality. They argue such separation allows the tacit acceptance of orientation which continues to discriminate against the reality of gay life. 'Being' gay is acceptable, but discussing or making reference to what that involves is a step to far. For the respondents, however, the separation of the physical from sexual orientation allows the possibility to find interpretive space – distancing sex from public discussions of relationships gives the clergy space to negotiate and to access their gay lives within and around boundaries of acceptability. Despite the issues raised, this use of separation by Luke can be seen as a strategic, and affirming action.

When Stephen mentioned sex with his partner in his diary he questioned the Church's position:

> We ate and had some wine, then some T.V. (David Starkey on the Monarchy
> and Buzzcocks) before bed and some sex. Rare to have a quiet 'domestic'
> evening together. Shame to think that this is what the Church of England finds
> so threatening. Little or no evidence that anyone in the parish finds us difficult.
> (D7)

Stephen though only casually mentioning sex does so in the context of a 'domestic evening' he presents the picture of a loving couple doing what loving couples do. As such this enables a questioning of the stance of the Church of England. Framed in such normality, opposition becomes less credible. Richardson discusses the idea of sexual citizenship, she argues that legitimising gay sexuality through integration does not question institutionalised heteronormativity, but it does give space for inclusion. She argues that the 'other' in terms of sexuality can be seen to move from the 'other' sexuality, to the 'other' forms of practice of sex and sexuality (Richardson 2004). Such claims to normality then have a powerful legitimising strategic use. Emphasising normality and gaining 'social' acceptance of that 'norm' provides manoeuvrability, and means of acceptance. In terms of the respondents, 'sex-lives' which emphasise 'traditional' monogamy may be more likely to gain acceptance from congregants, therefore through negotiation with self's, partner's and congregants' expectations space for relationship, and indeed sexual expression could be found.

The above examples of relationship sex underline the interrelation between sexuality and professional role, in terms of the need for acceptance. However they also underline respondents' access to the concept of 'boundarying' of public and private. This boundarying is seen in the literature as dangerous, as it accepts heteronormative understandings of morality and society (Currans 2004, Waites 2005), however the life circumstances of the respondents means the freedoms provided by such understandings outweigh the constraints. Claims to normality of the relationship both in orientation and in private sex gives a power to the respondents through which acceptance can be

negotiated. That is through a negotiation of the freedoms accessible through late modern understandings of sexual relationships, and the constraints of Christian moral frameworks the respondents may feel able to create a space between queering the straight and straightening the queer in which they can find space to be.

ii. Brief encounters

In considering sex which occurs beyond or outside of committed relationships it is necessary to see this as a diverse category. Although the majority of clergy (58.6% n=17) felt sex outside of a relationship was less Christian than in a relationship, of these respondents none said they were not sexually active (although sexually active included masturbation, and internet/phone partners). For the respondents sex outside of a relationship included anonymous sex, 'one-night stands' and exploring possible relationships. The act of having sex, of being active sexually has been discussed as an important aspect of gay sexuality. Blasius refers to this as erotics and argues that erotics are the base signifiers of sexuality. To be gay requires some kind of access to erotics, having sex is essentially politically important to gay identity, for gay identity is a sexual identity which exists when practised, when 'known' (Blasius 1994). In essence to be non-heterosexual in a culture of heteronormativity the individual must be aware of the ability to be other than heterosexual. Through erotics – sex, pornography, access to 'gay' places – the individual learns the limits of their sexual desires, and through stories – biographical or fictional the individual connects their desires with the desires of others (see Blasius 1994). Although above Luke is shown to use public silence as a strategic tool of acceptability, in terms of individual meaning erotic practice is important. Eric discussed his early sexual experiences with fondness, in this he said

> It was just sort of wonderful to sort of feel, not only somebody else's body next
> to mine, but also to sort of, for a few of these it wasn't just a sort of one night
> stand as it were, it was actually, it was a deepening of a friendship. (I2)

Sex for Eric was imbued with meaning, it had a significance to him which was greater than a physical act. This links directly with the literature, much has been written on alternative forms of sexual relationship, particularly within this has been shown a

centring of friendship (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001) as defining social relationship, rather than traditional understandings of family, and monogamous marriage (discussed in Chapter 2). Similarly queer theology has decentred the family, arguing that the centrality of family in Christianity is a creation of Church which did not exist in the teaching of Jesus (A number of theological discussions of this issue can be found in Jordan, Sweeney , and Mellott 2006), further this friendship has been connected to sex (Bardella 2001), as a form of expression of love in friendship. For the respondents sex outside of relationships was seen to be meaningful. As Eric suggests early encounters were imbued with meaning for both the encounter and the self.

However discussion of this subject raised difficulties for respondents. Some felt it was difficult to discuss their sexual experiences, they would skirt around the subject, raise their eyebrows or smile, or talk about evenings they 'didn't return home'. There could be many reasons for such silence, possibly they felt embarrassed discussing such subjects, possibly they felt I was crossing a boundary they were not comfortable with crossing. George for example when I asked where he met sexual partners said:

> I'll say where I don't meet partners, sort of a negative way of answering (Michael: OK). I do not use public toilets, I do not use public open spaces, I do not meet people in cars. Does that answer? (I 6)

Herein George reframes the question distancing himself from practices he sees as unacceptable, again legitimising his own practice. Returning to the work of Richardson, the reframing of inclusivity requires the continued exclusion of that which is different (Richardson 2004). George's discussion also points to another possibility that some respondents may have thought that discussing such activity openly may be dangerous in such research in terms of the picture painted to the reader, or were perhaps afraid of being recognised and the consequences of such recognition (the importance of this issue was discussed in Chapter 3). However what was said does allow an exploration of management of sex, and the influences upon this.

Some of the respondents discussed their use of gay saunas and similar meeting places for anonymous sex. Harold for example said:

I started going to saunas, and I felt no guilt about it, where I was living there was a couple where it was possible to go pretty anonymously … What terrifies me about that scene now is the sexually transmitted diseases that are now on the march, I just think it's too dangerous. (I4)

It is interesting that for Harold who discussed his fear of his sexuality being known, reason for stopping using the 'scene' for sex was unrelated to this, rather he emphasises the dangers of the 'scene' itself. There was actually a freedom for many respondents in the anonymity of the gay scene, it does not require openness, and on a very basic level respondents are unlikely to meet any congregation members there.

However some respondents in discussing their sex lives illustrated the interconnection with their Christian personal moralities, Adam for example said

But I wouldn't want to say that that's the ideal, I wouldn't say those sorts of casual pickups are the ideal way of doing things, but it's just the way things are. (I 5)

There is a fascinating tension here in Adam's discussion, for his lack of surety about the acceptability of such meetings is intimately connected to his understanding of Christian morality, however the opposition from the church to his sexuality means that his professional role as a religious leader makes these pickups attractive. So again here illustrated is the multifaceted nature of lifestyle management, in managing his sex life Adam is also balancing a tension between his feelings as a Christian, his desires as a gay man, and his role as a clergyman.

A similar discussion was provided by Anthony's narrative, wherein he illustrated the difficulties negotiating his sexuality and his belief system. He understood the sex he had as part of a search for a partner:

195

I suppose as part of discovering if there is somebody out there. The relationships I have, there is occasionally a sexual element to them, as sort of a friendship, but I think that's part of the search really, for someone to share my life with, and I guess from a strict Christian point of view one would probably say that was wrong, as one may of straight couples who are sleeping together outside a committed relationship. (I12)

Anthony's discussion above underlines the interaction of identities, beliefs and desires discussed above, his sexual life is something, which he struggles to marry with his Christian beliefs. Even in discussing sex he emphasises that there is meaning in the sex he has. For Anthony it is in attempting to obtain a sexual life he does feel is compatible with his belief that sex occurs. So even in this statement Anthony is interpreting, and making connections, and struggling with the interconnection of influences he feels.

Sex the ability to have it, and the access to it have been identified in the literature on gay clergy as an issue relating to stress (Wolf 1989; Fletcher 1990; Stuart 1993). The discussion above illustrates this to be the case for many of the respondents in this study also. However, what has also been shown is that the organisation and management of sex again involves negotiation of professional role, Christian morality, and sexual desire. Within the various experiences of sex above there can be seen to be huge acts of perceived rebellion as clergy, and huge acts of perceived Christian love. Goffman (1968) refers to in-group alignments among stigmatised individuals, wherein these individuals when within the structural boundaries of interactions of those who share their stigma are able to more fully 'act out' their stigmatising identity. For a number of the respondents above being gay as clergy is stigmatised therefore within sexual encounters these men feel more able to be gay and to connect with their gay identity. Sex is a central definer of being gay, and therefore through sex the individuals connect with an identity they may at other times feel distanced or constrained from. Though in this sense for some of the respondents sex is seen as separated from other aspects of experience, this separation is itself an illustration of the need for action to be negotiated in line with the interconnections which influence.

As the above discussion has noted, the gay 'scene' plays a role in the respondents' living of their gay lives. The final section of this chapter explores the role of the gay 'community' including the 'scene' and how this not only gives space to the respondents to live out their gay lives, but also how this aspect of influence affects and moulds the respondents' lives.

Community

From the research there were three major ways in which the interaction of sexuality with community could be seen to be important, these were the 'gay scene', 'the gay community' and 'geographical location'. The interaction of sexuality with such contexts further explores the varied influencers on the respondents' lives.

i. Gay scene

The 'scene' has been argued to be a hugely important space for non-heterosexual individuals (Holt & Griffin 2003) it provides support in terms of coming out and gaining understanding, it is a place of shared understanding, and is seen as a safe space for the expression of sexual identity. A number of respondents' experiences link to this understanding of the scene. Alan discussed going to Saunas as a place where he could be free of pressures:

> I would go to those sorts of places on my day off, once again to get a definite non-God fix in the sense that you know perhaps it is somewhere that you shouldn't be. (D I 9)

Similarly, Luke attended a sauna to connect with other gay men. However, not always successfully:

> Escaped in the early afternoon to the gay sauna in (city)– deserted! Only me and a Jacuzzi for 2 hours. I was so bored I left and went shopping and then waited 45 minutes for a bus. (D3)

197

The above quotations connect the gay scene with a means of escape. Not just an escape from pressures to be clergy, but an escape from pressures not to be gay. Therefore such narratives relate directly with Goffman's (1968) discussion of in-group alignment, as these respondents feel more able to connect with practice and behaviour which may otherwise be hidden. Also such narratives talk to Giddens' (1991) discussion of authenticity, wherein in order to maintain an authentic sense of self the individual must be able to display this self socially. The gay scene provides space to do this, however it is separated from other aspects of life, 'boundaried' in order to allow continuation not only of gay life, but also clergy life.

However similarly to the question raised in the previous chapter as to whether the Church is failing in its call to be queer, perhaps the same accusation can be levelled at the gay scene. Luke sums up succinctly the reason why many of the respondents felt unable to be involved in the scene. He said

> Actually being part of the gay scene? I'm over 25, I've got more than a 28-inch waist, and I'm bald. So NO! (I 3)

Due to their age, and the perceived image based nature of the gay scene a number of the respondents felt unable to call themselves a part of the scene. Anthony and George also discussed this:

> Not as much as I used to be, one of the reasons is that it tends to be a pretty youthful scene, as one gets older you become aware that discos and bars don't tend to be part of your lifestyle as much. (I12)

> I mean even though this place is a place is a pretty big place. It would be a pretty young scene. It is very difficult to meet, you know the kind of person you might wish to meet, somebody roughly your own age, somebody roughly the same sort of interests, not necessarily a churchman but, you know. (I6)

Holliday (1999) talks about the pressures of the scene and the fact that such pressures mean a sense of conformity among those involved. This has been particularly seen in terms of the youth-orientated nature of the scene. Heaphy, Yip and Thompson for example have discussed how the scene is exclusive of older gays, lesbians and bi-sexuals (Heaphy, Yip and Thompson 2004).

However, although such exclusion was widely felt among the respondents, many also found areas of the gay scene in which they could find space. Luke although not feeling a part of the scene said:

> There is a pub we go to in the city, which is full of grumpy old poofs. (I 3)

Robert's also discussed a similar place:

> And the same happens even today when, if I go up to town I go to a gay pub for older men, and the moment I push that door open I shed myself of everything that is work and I am just Robert. All I do is go and buy a drink at the bar and I go and stand, all the men are standing round looking at one another, and it's not the effect of standing round looking at one another, it's just the actual effect that your there and they are there, and they know exactly what your talking about. I love that. (I 1)

Robert shows he has found a place where he can let down his guard. He feels able to express his gay identity without fear, the pub in a sense becomes a physical exterior closet, wherein Robert can openly show and celebrate aspects of his identity which are otherwise constrained. This pub is a physical illustration of the contextual or collapsible closet, it is moved in and out of, it allows space for the user to define themselves and understand interconnections without showing them to the outside world. Therefore the gay scene can be an important resource for individuals, although perhaps again the gay scene, and gay bars are actually enforcing marginality in the way Whisman suggests, as they are an aspect of 'gay ethnicity' (Whisman 1996). The discussions of respondents of finding 'place' within the gay seen connect with

discussions of social capital (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001), and specifically Blasius' discussion of gay identity formed through living and experiencing. Finding access to social resources, such as the pubs mentioned above, which 'speak' to the individuals stories of self, provide not only an affirmation, or a support, but an access to self. As Robert discusses he is 'just Robert'.

The comparisons between exclusion by Church and scene are interesting. Within both individuals feel simultaneously a sense of belonging and a sense of exclusion, each can be seen as having their conditions of entry, and expectations (Holliday 1999), and members of each can be seen to exclude the respondents for an aspect of their identity (sexuality or age). Therefore on the 'scene', similarly to in the Church, respondents are required to negotiate identity and indeed negotiate acceptance. The gay scene then is again a place of identity negotiation in which the respondents must be aware of themselves and the expectations upon them. As Plummer (1995) suggests individuals are freed to tell different identity stories depending on the audience. Within the situation of the gay scene respondents may be more able to make connection to their gay identity, and share that story in a way which is not possible elsewhere, but this is perhaps at the cost of other aspects of their stories.

ii.   The gay community

Though scene is important, it is necessary to look beyond the scene at other social connections the respondents may access and use. Particularly relevant to the respondents in this study were social clubs and societies (both Christian and secular), and friendship networks. These connections again relate to the concept of social capital and were seen as resources and networks in which support could be gained and access to gay life could be secured. A number of respondents discussed being members of social clubs, including interest groups and dining clubs. One example of these is related by Harold:

> There was a very good dining club and I joined that and once a month you met
> in a restaurant in the centre of the city and just had a very good meal, and there
> was a core membership of about 50 or 60 of whom between 25 and 30 would

manage most nights, you probably manage 8 out of 12, something like that and that was a super place to meet people, and the local LGCM branch I also met a good lot of people there (I4)

Harold discusses how through being involved in a large dining club he was able to meet a number of people, and that this was in a social setting which though gay was based around a 'very, very good meal' and through encouraging such social interaction the dining club was to do with meeting people and making connections, far removed from the 'anonymous' sex of much of the 'scene'. Harold also related the importance of the LGCM for him, not only as a source of support, but also as a place to meet others. Gay Christian groups were important for a number of respondents. Ian also discussed these saying:

> I look back now and sometimes think I had come to terms with my sexuality in a far more positive way you see through those different groups, and it was the time of the forming of LGCM and there was support and networking, and in London there was a secret (terribly secret) support group you had to be introduced to, and that was good (I8)

Gareth also discussed the importance of such groups:

> And then I started going to LGCM and that was the start of the voyage of me really accepting and being happier with what God had created in me, after years of not looking or positively fighting. (I13)

Access to specifically gay networks such as these were important for a number of the respondents. The ability to be open about sexuality in arenas which were not primarily sexual allowed the respondents a sense of integration. Such groups also opened up social networks for the respondents, which included the ability to make friends and meet partners in affirming situations. Weeks (1996) has argued that the story of community provides a service to lesbian and gay people, providing a sense of connection, a way to construct networks, and an ability to give voice to identity. The quotations above illustrate how for respondents this was seen to be the case.

Individuals found space to accept themselves, and further connections. Though based around sexuality community provides a support which is beyond meeting partners or connecting sexually. It is a way of finding support, friendship and acceptance (Blasius 1994)

The above quotations also show a need for negotiation of community, the narratives of both Gareth and Ian emphasise the importance of 'gay Christian' community groups. Finding space and place therefore requires acceptance of a number of aspects of identity, and for some of the respondents the secular nature of the gay community meant acceptance may be difficult to find in secular community groups. A small number of respondents raised this issue, which is illustrated in the following discussion by Stewart

> There was a reasonably young man in the club whose parents were
> fundamentalist Christians, so when he heard a vicar had joined he was very,
> very anti! Now that he has met me he has suddenly thought –gosh, perhaps the
> Christian faith isn't what my parents have said it is. So in that sense it's sort of
> missionary activity. But yeah, I think it makes it more difficult. It's something
> you avoid talking about, you know? If you meet someone in a club or a bar 'Oh
> what do you do?' 'Oh, I'm a vicar!' You know? (I 10)

Though Stewart discusses how acceptance was found, he remains wary of discussing his profession within secular gay settings. As O'Brien points out 'Good queers are not religious' (O'Brien 2004:181). Acceptance therefore, though accessed by the respondents in both scene and community involvements requires an acceptance of religiosity and profession, which may not be forthcoming. Therefore, as Stewart suggests, discussion of career may be closeted. In order to find acceptance.

The other point which emerges from the above discussion, is what Chapter 2 referred to as 'faith communities of choice'. For many respondents, involvement in gay Christian community groups allowed acceptance and access to stories of others, in this sense respondents were able to connect and gain knowledge of others who were struggling or had struggled with similar issues of identity integration. It was in these groups, rather

than in traditional Church settings that individuals were able to connect in a meaningful way with their beliefs, and interconnect those beliefs with their lived experiences as gay men. The traditions of belief are negotiated and innovated in line with community connections and knowledge of the stories of others.

iii.   Geographical location

Geographical location is another issue of access which was raised by the clergy. As Jenkins suggests being gay in London is very different from being gay in rural Norfolk (Jenkins 2004). For some respondents living in rural areas meant they felt isolated, and were not able to access gay life to any great extent, or access support groups. Such issues highlighted a sense of loneliness, and a distancing from their gay identities. The following quotes from Adam and Harold illustrate this:

> I have thought of moving, just simply, not to be more anonymous, but simply to be nearer greater numbers of other gay people, that sort of thing. But my family are in this area and it's as simple as that (I 5)

> The nearest branch (of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement) meets in the city at inconvenient hours, I have not been at one meeting. The meeting starts early evening on a weekday, it's no use if you live over 30 miles away. So there is no such support out here. (I 4)

These examples highlight the problems of access which some of the clergy felt. Within these the concept of social capital (Weeks, Heaphy and Donovan 2001; Yip 2005a) relates closely, due to their geographical location Alan and Harold feel that they do not have access to aspects of gay life which would be of value to them. Their responsibility to their jobs, and family holds them within an area and essentially their sexual lifestyle is constrained due to this context (Bell and Valentine 1995). For a number of respondents location did not just affect access to gay contact, but to contact in general. Keith's narrative illustrates:

With an aging congregation here I don't really have anybody gay or straight who is of my age with my interests … I feel pretty much alone (I 14)

The rural position many of the clergy find themselves in, combined with the working hours of the clergy, and the social context of 'an ageing congregation', meant that a number of the clergy felt isolated and identified with a sense of loneliness. For some this also led to a loss of connection to gay identity. Robert's narrative illustrates:

Until coming here I've always had a gang had gone out with or I've always had a gay element about it which has satisfied that part of my life there is no gay element here and therefore there is less of me and more of work and it does make you dull if you can't be you. Sometimes (I wonder) whether to run the risk and be more of me with one or two of the men in the congregation … it was getting me down [at the time of writing the diary] (DI 1)

Robert further illustrates the difficulty of location, within this he shows the influence of his role in the sense of loneliness he feels, due to the fact he feels constrained from being more 'himself' with the congregation. The isolation from his own sexual identity then raises huge issues for Robert, and highlights again the interaction of professional and sexual identity.

The discussion above highlights the difference that geographical location can make to experience of gay identity, the difficulties have been explored previously in the literature, in terms of isolation, and finding support (Bell and Valentine 1995), though literature has also compared rural and urban experience emphasising difficulty is not limited to rural areas (Weston 1998). What has been shown is that location provides another issue which requires negotiation within interaction. Hewitt (2003) for example discusses limits individuals face in their contact with others, he argues that our situated nature means we are limited in terms of contacts available in life. For the above respondents this moves beyond contacts to also include organisations and outlets. Geographical position therefore again exists as an issue of influence on identity, its management and its performance. Though access to 'virtual' contact is discussed in the literature (for example McKenna and Bargh 1998), this resource was not often

discussed by rural clergy as something they accessed, therefore geographical position was a constraint which emphasised isolation.

The above discussion of 'lived' gay identity emphasises again the need for negotiation in the lives of the respondents. This need for negotiation influenced relationship statuses, understanding and organisation of sex, and access to community resource. Stories of sexual identity are therefore influenced by clergy and Christian identity not just in terms of understanding or management, but also in the way in which sexuality is lived.

Summary

In exploring the respondents' narratives of sexual identity, this chapter has illustrated the centrality of negotiation, and the multiple influences acting upon stories of sexual identity.

The respondents' accessing of essentialist discourse gave a sense of coherency and meaning to their life-stories. Incorporation of sexuality and religious belief was seen to be possible through an understanding of sexuality as created, and given by God. Access of essentialist stories also provided powerful attack and defence strategies, particularly in negotiations with religious authority structures, through use of theological, political and bio-medical stories of essential sexuality. Although, essentialism has fallen out of favour in current social theory, the experiences of the respondents illustrate its continued place as a powerful personal meaning story. The stories of essentialism accessed by the respondents also illustrated the interconnected nature of such stories. They were influenced by personal belief (accessing 'creationist' argument), personal biography (through discussion of early memory), and Church stance (its growing acceptance of orientation).

In terms of management of sexual identity the chapter has shown that constant identity labels or styles of management hinder rather than help the discussion of gay identity. Exploring closeting as an action rather than a 'fixed' position allows a more nuanced

exploration of management of sexual identity. This approach to closeting illustrated diverse influence, and the negotiation of 'personal' and 'professional' integrity. It also connected to Goffman's 1971 discussion of identity presentation, and the 'normality' of changeable expressions of self, illustrating that sexual identity is dynamic and changeable dependent upon situation.

The final section of the chapter on respondents' discussions of 'living out' their sexualities illustrated the continued need for negotiation. The continued influence of position as clergy was shown in terms of relationship organisation, and Christian belief stories were influential in the management of sex. Finally, access to gay 'networks' offered respondents validation of identity, and space to be, however such access again continued to be negotiated with pressures and constraints of clergy life.

The thesis now moves to focus on clerical identity, and the negotiations present in the 'living' of this identity in the respondents' narratives.

CHAPTER 6: NEGOTIATING CLERICAL IDENTITY

This final fieldwork chapter continues the central themes of negotiation and dynamism in the creation, management and presentation of identity stories.

Chapter 2 discussed that many clergy studies focus on the priesthood as a profession, something that someone does, rather than something that someone is. In line with this discussions in Chapters 4 and 5 often discussed the clerical role as something which constrains, and was distanced from by respondents when discussing aspects of their personal life stories. However, in variation to this the clergy also discussed their vocations as an aspect of who they were, and part of their life experience through which they gained meaning and feelings of self-worth.

In exploring this tension this chapter discusses the clerical role as an identity. With reference to the narratives of the respondents the chapter will illustrate that both 'vocation' and 'call' incorporate 'being' clergy into the life experiences of these men.

Working from the discussions and experiences of the respondents, the chapter argues that the 'clergy role' incorporates both 'vocational' and 'professional' aspects. The chapter explores the negotiation of these aspects, focussing on the understanding present in a number of respondents' narratives, that, 'vocational' comes from God, the professional emerges from Church.

Moving forward with this distinction the chapter explores particular areas wherein clergy identity must be negotiated. Negotiation, both in terms of self (for example in integrating sexuality with vocation), and in terms of society (for example negotiating position in the parish and changing societal attitudes to clergy). In doing so the chapter further illustrates the complex nature of negotiations of 'profession' and 'vocation'.

This discussion will illustrate that the management and presentation of clergy identity is dynamic, situation specific, and negotiated. As a primarily social role (Percy 2006), the clergy must find space to fulfil their individual understandings of vocation within the context of a society that has varied expectations of them, professionally.

Calling and Vocation: The Priesthood as Aspect of Identity

In Chapter 2 it was shown that much of the literature on priesthood and ministry focuses on the roles and functions of the religious professional. However the priesthood can be seen as more than a profession. For the respondents in this study their connection to priesthood was more than just something they did, it was a way in which they identified themselves. This sense of identifying as clergy is illustrated by Stewart who when asked about whether he had thought of leaving the ministry said:

> I couldn't not be a priest, because I believe that's just almost as intrinsically who I am as my sexuality. (I 10)

Similarly for George, being a priest transcends the boundaries of 'job'. In answer to the questionnaire question (Appendix 2 - 2.13) 'Are you 'glad to be a priest''? He wrote:

> Yes I am. I find great fulfilment in my life as a priest. Though there are times of frustration and sadness I cannot imagine being anything other than a priest. It is not a job. It's a way of life! (Q6)

For both Stewart and George the priesthood was something which defined them, defined the way they lived, and defined their outlook on life. In this sense priesthood moves beyond the boundaries of 'profession', it is bound up in self-identity.

Whether or not respondents' narratives expressed such identification with 'being' clergy, their understandings of what they as clergy should do went beyond profession. Luke's eloquent description of the purpose of clergy illustrates this:

> I believe, that God calls us and gives us this money so that we can sit and be. We can put our ear to the ground of the community, we can circulate, we can be the yeast in the dough (I 3)

As well as expressing an understanding of priesthood which emphasises 'being', Luke refers to the peculiar employment status of the clergy in the Church of England. The

money Luke refers to as being 'given' to him is the stipend. Rather than wages or a salary parish priests are given a stipend which can best be understood as an allowance. Luke's description removes this allowance from attachment to a job, or a set of responsibilities, rather he refers to his call to be. George also referred to this stipend saying that by being given the stipend he was being asked to attempt to live and be 'Christ-like'. The role of the clergy in such descriptions is intrinsically linked to the person who is the clergyman.

Further to this for a number, although not all of the respondents, the importance of their clergy status outweighed other aspects of their identities. This is illustrated by Robert who discussed ministry as follows:

> You see, I don't think a man's ministry is governed by his sexuality. I think sexuality is very inferior to what a priest is all about. (DI 1)

For Robert his ministry outweighs even the influence of his sexuality in his understanding of who he is, or should be. Status as priest then is something intrinsic to the individual. Robert's phrase 'what a priest is all about' even replaces individual, man or person with 'priest' as the descriptive term, one becomes 'a priest'.

A final issue raised in the data concerning attachment to being priest, was essentialist understanding of priesthood. This was expressed well in Alan's response to the questionnaire question *'Are you 'glad to be a priest''?* Alan wrote

> I remember standing at my first mass – Lifting the host for the first time and feeling that this was what I was born to do. (Q 9)

Although similar in emphasise to Stewart's discussion, Alan makes even more clear a sense of 'being a priest' through the phrase 'this was what I was born to do'. For many of the respondents there was an attachment to the clergy role, which was similar to the narratives of both Alan and Stewart, that they are 'essentially' clergy.

All of the above narratives illustrate the connection to clergy identity that the respondents felt. Being clergy involves using the talents, the desires, and the abilities that are within the individual, using one's own ability to act within a community. Mason (Mason: M: 2002) discussed the intrinsic linking of person to role in the clergy by discussing the 'saturation' of religious legitimations within clergy's professional and personal roles. This is reflected in Robert's discussion, for he sees his clerical role as a definer of who he is, it is central to his life and therefore his understandings of himself are related to his status as a clergyman. In, essence the stories of 'being' clergy told by the respondents are intrinsically linked to stories of self identity, and inform and shape negotiation of other life aspects.

With this understanding of connection to clerical identity in mind the chapter moves on to discuss what, for the vast majority of respondents, was the defining reason for their attachment to clergy identity – the call. Following this the chapter explores respondents' understandings of what they are called to do, before moving on to discuss the various aspects of clerical role.

Called to Be

Returning to the four-stage understanding of call put forward by Niebuhr (1956 *c.f.* Towler and Coxon 1979), the stage which was most important in the clergy's narratives was the *secret call*. This call fundamentally and intrinsically relates choice of life-path to connection with God. For the respondents the experience of call occurred in a range of ways.

Anthony discusses his coming to understand his calling with reference to a particular event:

> I guess the nearest I've ever had to a Saul on the road to Damascus experience was going back to digs one-day. I remember it with all the blossom trees out and everything else, and just thinking 'This is what you want me to do isn't it God?' And ever since that moment I've been convinced that whatever else God is asking of me he is asking me to be a priest. (I 12)

Anthony's experience of call is profoundly related to God. His experience among the blossom trees was not solely an internal conviction, but rather it was a sense of connection to God and God's wishes. A similar experience of a definable moment of call was also described by Robert:

> [It was] very clearly one Sunday morning in church when I least expected it. I knew in my heart of hearts at that moment this is what the calling was. (I 1)

Though Robert's narrative refers internally to a conviction, this conviction is related to God, and God's call. The call in both Robert and Anthony's discussions is both something which can be owned by the individual, a realisation; a conviction that they know what they are to do. But it is also something entirely beyond them, out of their control. It is an aspect of their experience, which they cannot fight because it is God's will. Therein making the call to vocation an essential experience, unchangeable and of God's creation. Comparing this to discussions in chapters 4 and 5 raises important similarities between religious, sexual and clerical identity. God is central to feeling religious acceptance; to accepting self as gay; and here, to accepting vocation. Each of these issues are centrally related to current understanding and acceptance of self, and each are experienced through God's acceptance of the respondents as they are. This is extremely powerful affirmation, as it is beyond external question, the affirmation occurs between self and the infallible divine.

A variation on this experience was related in some respondents' stories of call, which involved a more gradual development of the call. For these respondents the language of call, if used, is something which is placed retrospectively. However a similar internal / external nature can be seen to the stories. Luke's discussion is illustrative:

> It began to dawn, it began to be a possibility along with a whole other range of possibilities [which emerge] when you get to your middle teens, about what shall I do with my life. And it was a possibility, and it was one that just stayed. … It was a sense of curiosity around which, in hindsight, I began to realise I was

circulating round and round this all the time. So it emerged, rather like my sexuality, it emerged as something that for me was perfectly natural. (I 3)

Within the above story Luke describes a sense of something, which emerged naturally, like his sexuality. The use of such language again emphasises a sense of finding an already given vocation. Similar experience was discussed in questionnaire data when respondents were asked to elaborate on their 'call' (Appendix 2 – question 2.1):

No particular events, just a growing realisation that this was what I wanted to do / be (Q7)

My call was a nagging 'feeling' that ordination was what I was called to. (Q5)

This emergence of something within also reflects a sense of essentialism, and further, the role of God as creator, of 'call'. The above quotations show that emergence of vocation is not necessarily confined to a definable 'moment'. Rather, for these respondents through gradual realisation an individual comes to accept what is understood to be an aspect of who they are, created by God. Although God was understood to be central to such realisation it is important to recognise the role of other influences in acceptance of vocation. Answers to the same questionnaire question show that literature and the influence of others were important for some respondents as well, flagging up similarity to respondents' experience of religious affirmation of sexuality (discussed in Chapter 4):

God called me. – Partly through reading i.e. Trevor Huddleston's 'Naught for your Comfort' [1985]. (Q8)

Growing conviction after completing engineering degree. Huddlestone's 'Naught for your Comfort' significant. Theological studies confirmed sense of vocation. (Q14)

Sense of inward call. Suggestion and encouragement of my parish priest (Q20)

A priest who took a personal interest in me and helped me through thick and thin. Other similar people as well. (Q24)

The call to ministry came through a mixture of growing personal conviction, the words of others, and the sense that I would not settle in any other job until I had tested this feeling through the Church's process of discernment in interview and training (Q29)

These examples illustrate how although 'inward' call was important, for some respondents this was required to be supported. The life 'innovation' which is 'call' required support through accepted channels of experience whether literature, other priests, or Church structures. Weeks (1995) discusses the importance of social validation of identity. The narratives above express how this need for validation is found in stories of call.

Further, this need for validation illustrates that acceptance of call is something which is struggled with, some of the respondents related how they battled with 'call'.

I was working as a teacher, I was running around the games field and all the God stuff came back. So when I was dealing with vocation I wasn't really thinking about the sexuality issue. I was battling more with God's interference in my life. I had just got my career sorted out! (I 11)

I was nagged by God from the age of 9 and though I followed another career for eight years in the end I went to a selection conference and the rest is history. (Q6)

Samuel-like call at 5yrs of age. Tried to avoid call when I left School and went into secular ministry (social work) for 12 yrs before purposefully following the call to priesthood. (Q25)

Called to ministry at age of 18 resisted call successfully till 50 yrs of age. (Q19)

These narratives of call, further the notion that being called, is beyond the control of the individual. For Matthew (I11), George (Q6) and the others, although they took their lives in different directions, call followed – 'nagged', and was finally accepted. These examples raise the question of whether call can be ignored – and answer with a resounding 'No'. Central to this is the situated nature of call in the respondents' experiences. The respondents' understandings of Christianity, and the discourses of 'call' and 'God' within this, mean God's will must be followed. Though call can theoretically be ignored, this involves ignoring the Almighty and his purpose for the individual.

The narratives of call discussed above reflect an understanding on the part of the respondents that the attraction of the ministry emerges from a connection to God and a conviction that the call comes from God. The call has received little attention in empirical studies on the clergy, however as shown above the importance of the call for many clergy is difficult to overstate. The sense of calling to the ministry emphasises meaning to life, and reflects a perceived close connection to God (Christopherson 1994). Recognition of the call and acceptance of its emergence from God has been seen as one of the major strategies that forwarded women towards the possibility of ordination in the Church (Stringer 2004). The role of God in the call means that the clergy through their vocation are not purely responsible to the Church or to the parish, but they have a responsibility to God to undertake the work which he has called them to. The feeling of being called by God then separates a sense of vocation from individual choice about lifestyle or career. It emphasises the need for the individual to go down the path of ordination because that is God's purpose for them, whatever the Church thinks of their sexuality.

In addition, there are a number of similarities with respondents' discussions of their sexualities (discussed in Chapter 5). The essential understanding of vocation reflects the respondents' understandings of their sexuality as unchangeable, and indeed being created by God. The emergent nature of vocation discussed here by Luke further adds to this, and his understanding that the emergence of vocation is 'natural' further

compounds the similarities between stories of vocational emergence, and the emergence of sexuality. Also, Matthew's discussion of the difficulties raised by realizing vocation further emphasises the unchangeable nature of vocation. Relating to discussions in Chapter 5 of individuals battling against sexual feelings and desires. Further to this, not only do such similarities emphasise the essential nature of the call, but also they may be seen to legitimise sexual stories. For if the experiences of individuals' stories of their vocations – consisting of a sense of surprise, powerlessness and recognition - are recognised by the Church, then stories of emerging sexuality which have similar form can be seen to gain legitimacy.

Having discussed the nature of call, the chapter now goes on to explore the understandings respondents have of the vocation they are called to undertake. This discussion is necessary as it informs and shapes the attitudes of the clergy to their clerical role.

In line with Luke's understanding of vocation as 'being the yeast in the dough', the majority of respondents described their vocation in terms of over-arching principles rather than set responsibilities. Matthew for example discussed his understanding saying:

> My aim in the parish is to see people grow spiritually, now you have to accept that they may not all grow in the same direction or through the same tradition, but if you can enable them to grow, a priest in that sense should be an enabling person. (I 11)

Matthew's understanding is illustrative of a number of the respondents' accounts. In discussing their understanding of vocation and the role of the clergy, the respondents did not discuss a list of functions, nor a definable list of goals. Rather issues like enabling, and loving were discussed. In the eyes of the respondents vocation is to do with a moral, an understanding. Stephen reflected on how this overarching view was important in the parish:

Anglican parochial clergy have an extraordinary role in community life, because we have an usually agenda-less existence. We usually settle somewhere in the middle of the community. (DI 7)

Stephen's discussion emphasises the inclusiveness of the clergy, the need to be accepting and incorporating and to be a part of the community. It is the principal of vocation which gains importance rather than any idea of particularity. The clergyman is to be a clergyman, what that translates to is dependent on the community and the context, but the principals of vocation transcend these.

Finally for some respondents the actual personhood of the priest was seen to be of less importance than the ability to hold and perform vocation. This was illustrated in Robert's discussion of the role of the clergy.

It's to do with prayer life, spirituality, realisation of the kingdom of God in the life of the parish, and we don't care whether it's a man or a woman, gay, lesbian, whatever it is. If that person is in tune with God and able to realize what God wants, within that parish. They are worth their weight in gold. Whether they've got a wooden leg, whether they've got one eye, whether they go to bed with a different man every night has no bearing on the realizing of the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God in that place, and if there is clear evidence in this man or woman's life that God is so important to them that they can realize God's presence in the parish that is the all important fact. (DI 1)

Again Robert's discussion is of principles, the sort of attitude and approach a clergy person should have. His discussion further separates the particularities of lifestyle from the vocation to serve God. Vocation is not to do with whether the individual and their lifestyle fits with the Church' beliefs about who they should be and what they should do, rather, vocation is primarily about connection to God and the ability to do the work of God.

The above examples of respondents' attitudes to and understandings of vocation illustrate a sense of attachment to and ownership of that vocation. The respondents'

ability to be what they are called to be is defined by their ability to meet the principles of vocation, and their connection to God. Not by particularities of being a 'good Christian' which may be put forward by Church. The sense of vocation goes further than just an awareness of the importance of the work the individual does, rather it is an identifying with this work and seeing it as an aspect of what the individual should do through a conviction that the person is 'fulfilling the divine will' (Towler and Coxon 1979: 58). In terms of a narrative of vocational identity then, the start of this narrative can be seen as the call from God, but the call is continued through experience and attachment to vocation. Vocation is identified with as a continuation of the call. It gives meaning to the individual clergyman. It emphasises the importance of their role through its connection to the will of God. It grants a sense of authority within the life of the Church. Further, it stands as a strategy of defence against opposition from the Church, due to the acceptance of the clergy's vocation through their experience of call, and the legitimising of that call in their ordination.

However, in practice being a clergyman is more than holding, or identifying with a sense of vocation. Being a clergyman is primarily a social role and as such is undertaken within the context of the local and wider Church community. Therefore although the clergy identify as clergy through their vocation what they identify with does not necessarily directly relate to the roles and expectations the clergy are meant to meet in the day to day. Though there may be a need to identify with aspects of such professional aspects of role as well. The chapter now turns to discuss this issue.

Being Clergy in Practice

As highlighted in the introduction to the chapter, the respondents' conceptions of 'being clergy as 'vocation' are in tension with conceptions of being clergy as 'profession'. The vocational discussion highlights personal connection, access to meaning, and affirmation. Whilst profession relates to stress (Fletcher 1990), dissatisfaction (Hoge, Shields and Griffin 1995), and constraint of individual identity (as discussed in chapters 4 and 5). In order to understand the concept of being clergy it is therefore, necessary to attempt to relate the self-identified vocation with the practice of being a parish priest.

This section attempts to explain the distinction between vocational and professional, before illustrating the respondents' attachment to, and distancing from particular aspects of role in the everyday.

In the questionnaire the respondents were asked whether or not particular concepts were a part of their clerical role (Appendix 2 – Question 2.2). The results can be seen in Table 7:

Table 7: Are these concepts part of your clerical role?

	Yes	No	No Answer
Leader	72.4% (n=21)	24.1% (n=7)	3.4% (n=1)
Servant of God	93.1% (n=27)	3.4% (n=1)	3.4% (n=1)
Servant of congregation	72.4% (n=21)	24.1% (n=7)	3.4% (n=1)
Christian Example	41.4% (n=12)	55.2% (n=16)	3.4% (n=1)
Manager	44.8% (n=13)	51.7% (n=15)	3.4% (n=1)
Confessor	62.1% (n=18)	31.0 % (n=9)	3.4% (n=1)
Counsellor	55.2% (n=16)	41.4% (n=12)	3.4% (n=1)

The results from this table show that the clergy see their roles as diverse, all of the possibilities were seen by some of the clergy as a part of their role. However concepts of the clergy being a 'religious leader', and 'servant to God' and 'servant of congregation' were felt most strongly. These issues clearly relate to a sense of vocation, being called to be a leader of worship, to further the work of God, and to meet the spiritual needs of a community (Edwards 1998). The issues which are less often identified can be seen as apart from this sense of vocation – specifically 'Christian example' and 'manager'. One questionnaire affirmed 'manager' as an aspect of role, however the respondent wrote 'SADLY!' beside this. Also, by distancing themselves from being an example there is less of a focus on the clergy's lifestyle, and a sense of equality of faith between clergy and lay believers, reflective of concepts of 'the ministry

of the laity' which emphasises co-operative understandings of ministry in the Church (Greenwood 1994).

The results from this question show a sense of attachment of respondents to their sense of vocation which is carried into their role as clergy. Although extra responsibilities may arise from the expectations of others, the organisation of the church, or changes in society's commitment to religion these added aspects are not necessarily connected to understanding of self, in the same way more vocational aspects are.

Respondents were also asked to rate in order of importance five aspects of role (Appendix 2 – Question 2.3). For reasons of clarity rankings 1 and 2 have been combined as important, and 4 and 5 as not important, rankings of 3 have been removed. The results are shown in Table 8:

Table 8: Respondents' Ratings of Importance of Aspects of Role

	Pastoral work	Worship leader	Christian example	Teacher	Social authority figure
Important	79.3% (n=23)	69.0% (n=20)	24.1% (n=7)	31.0%(n=9)	6.9% (n=2)
Not important	3.4% (n=1)	17.2% (n=5)	55.2% (n=16)	10.3% (n=3)	79.3% (n=23)

The results in Table 8 suggest a notable difference in attachment to aspects of role. The roles of 'pastoral worker' and 'worship leader' are by far the most identified with by the clergy as an important part of their work. Roles of 'Christian example', and 'social authority figure' are seen as less important by the majority of the respondents, suggesting a distancing from such understandings of the clerical role. The results from the research can be compared with the findings of previous research. Fletcher (1990) found that two issues which were of significance in terms of occurrences of both depression and anxiety in the Anglican clergy were 'having to satisfy the expectations of others', and 'having to be nice to people'. Such issues relate to lay perceptions of

clergy as different, expected to be an 'example' and an 'authority'. Fletcher's work underlines that, though the clergy may distance themselves from such expectations, they continue to feel such expectations are placed upon them as clergy. Within the research this is discussed in terms of a separation of the clerical role into 'vocational' and 'professional' dimensions

The distinction between the vocational and the professional emerged through the respondents' narratives. Two examples of this are provided below:

> For me it is important to distinguish 'being a priest' and 'being a clergyman'. The job can be quite irksome, but my sacramental role as a priest is not. I am not trying to play with words but I have often considered giving up my 'role' as a 'clergyman' with church / congregation / admin etc. but would never seek to stop exercising a priestly ministry (Q 5).

> I choose to obey what I feel comes from God rather than from man. (Q 20)

Though typologising the distinction in different ways both of these respondents refer to a distinct separation, which can be conceptualised as vocational and professional. The 'vocational' relates to what the individual feels they were called to do, and thereby what comes from God. The 'professional' - what is seen as additions to this from Church or congregation. Although to some extent such discussion of the distinction in clergy roles may seem simplistic. This simple distinction allows clergy to feel affirmed and useful by and in the eyes of God in a career which does not necessarily provide definable results (Hoge , Shields and Soroka 1993; Zondag 2004). The distinction also allows times of stress and dissatisfaction (Fletcher 1990; Hoge, Shields and Griffin 1995) to be removed from their relationship with God and therefore their vocation. Importantly the distinction also allows for the Church's expectations about sexuality and behaviour to be distanced from vocation.

In the questionnaire the clergy were asked what aspects of their role gave them satisfaction, and which aspects made life difficult or caused dissatisfaction (Appendix 2

– Questions 2.6 and 2.7). The answers given were qualitative, however consistencies emerged and have been quantified. The most often cited issues are reported in Table 9:

Table 9: Aspects of Role Viewed Positively and Negatively by Respondents

Positive	Percentage of respondents	Negative	Percentage of respondents
Pastoral care duties	62.1% (n=18)	Administration	37.0 (n=10)
Bringing God's message	48.3% (n=14)	Placed on pedestal	24.1%(n=7)
Teaching	20.7% (n=6)	Being under surveillance	24.1% (n=7)
Leading worship	17.2% (n=5)	Expected to conform	20.7% (n=6)

The results in Table 9 quantify the distinction raised earlier in reference to the clergy's identification with aspects of role. If vocation is linked to a sense of connection to God and a responsibility to spread God's word and enable others to connect with God, then the sources of satisfaction raised by the respondents can be seen as linking directly with this. Pastoral care, provides spiritual care and support to people facing difficulty (Edwards 1998). Bringing God's message referred to undertaking work in the parish both within and outside of the congregation, to bring the Church and its message into people's lives. Such work reflects new understandings of parish, and clergy role (Percy 2004). Teaching through preaching and making Christianity accessible (Fletcher 1990) also allow the to clergy obtain satisfaction. Finally, leading worship, including the sacramental role is seen as central to who the clergy are (Webster 1998).

Distinct from this, issues of dissatisfaction, are seen as additional pressures emerging from structural necessities in parish life, or excessive expectations from others. Pressures of administration emerge from the day to day running and organization of the parish (Towler and Coxon 1979). Being placed on a pedestal emerges from a hierarchical view of the priesthood being above the laity which many of the

respondents, and increasingly Church itself is moving away from (Greenwood 1994). Being under surveillance, similarly relates to congregational expectations of the priest, and their right of access to and knowledge of his life (Wolf 1989). Finally, expectation to conform again is related to expectations of others and what the 'good clergyman' should be and do (Fletcher 1990).

The separation between vocational and professional expectations and duties for the respondents, as shown above, is drawn through a separation of what they understand is being asked of them by God, and what is asked of them by Church and congregation. This distinction does not remove professional pressures. Rather, the respondents accepted that these were an aspect of being clergy. However they are distinct from identification of self with vocation, as such allowing interpretive space for the clergy to understand being gay and clergy. The chapter goes on to explore this division with reference to respondents' discussions of the issues raised in table 6. 'Pastoral Work' and 'Role as Worship Leader' are discussed as vocation, 'Administration' and 'Congregational Expectations' are discussed as aspects of profession. In doing so the chapter concentrates on diary entries which allow an understanding of how this distinction is seen and reflected upon in daily life.

i. 'Pastoral work' as vocational

The importance of pastoral work was discussed by a number of respondents. Stephen recorded his activities in his diary and reflected upon the importance of pastoral work for him.

> A long conversation with a woman moving house this week, and another with as man awaiting an op. A long conversation with someone whose child has begun to cut themselves. Nothing especially of note, but the sort of parochial things I enjoy as most of them involve me in the life of the village. Though they may seem trivial, [they] somehow make up a pattern over the years. I continue to see my place in the village as a privilege and seem to have access to anyone and their homes. How to know if visits and conversations do any good? But people

often share their deep feelings about their lives and the events they are caught up in, and I may be the only 'neutral' person they can talk to. (D7)

Harold also discussed the importance of pastoral work in relation to a particular episode:

One phone call to report death, caller was very grateful to me for aiding reconciliation. Its what its all about! (D4)

Harold's narrative concerned two people who had not spoken for many years. His involvement brought about reconciliation before the death of one of the people.

Both of the quotations above illustrate the sense that parish work brings an important service to the community, as a representative of the Church and God the vicar brings a connection to the spiritual and a support and connection to something beyond the difficulties being faced. Satisfaction from pastoral work has been discussed in the literature (Towler and Coxon 1979; Louden and Francis 2003). It is provides a service to the congregation. It also provides a service to the clergy themselves. Both Harold and Stephen discuss the feeling of satisfaction that is brought by pastoral work. The meeting of and talking with someone in need provides a sense of importance to work, and also through helping the individual provides a sense of having done something worthwhile in a role with a lack of definable results (Zondag 2004).

Within the interactions of pastoral work the clergy receive affirmation for the importance of their role, recognition of their success in carrying out the role, and acceptance within community. By identifying with such aspects of the clerical role the clergy experience a sense of worthiness which moves beyond worthiness of the role of the clergy to worthiness of the individual who performs the role. Further, although the pastoral care role primarily relates to ensuring the spiritual well being of the parish (Bishop 1952), because spiritual well-being does not exist in isolation from the rest of life the clergy also are approached when parishioners experience other difficulties. Therefore the clergy become a resource for the local community to turn to, and the clergy in turn receive affirmation of their value through being of help in such situations.

ii. 'Role as worship leader' as vocational

Role as worship leader in terms of teaching, and celebrating Eucharist was another area where respondents saw real importance in their vocational undertakings. Stewart discussed the importance of worship when he recorded a Sunday service in his diary:

> Parish Mass - As usual I am wound up tightly like a coiled spring – The Mass is so important – unique, in fact – and I want everyone to be serious about it. Altar servers, sidespersons etc are all late – which doesn't reassure me about their seriousness… But the Mass goes well.
>
> Colleague changed his sermon as per some of my suggestions. But as usual it's too essay-like – not conversational enough; a sermon if written has to be text for speaking, not to be read. (D10)

Stewart's narrative illustrates his understanding of the centrality of leading worship. He is directly doing the work of God, and enabling others to experience God through his actions. His discussion of his colleagues sermon further illustrates the importance of teaching, and connecting with peoples lives. The importance of worship was also related in Stephen's diary. He wrote:

> To church to pray and reflect for about an hour before the service. It is the time when I pray for the congregation and their families, and gather together the thoughts / reading that has gone into my sermon preparation. (D7)

At interview Stephen explained that this period of reflection was important for him, in order to be able to preach and teach well. He also pointed out that although he had been preaching for a number of years, his sleep continued to be disturbed on nights before services.

The narratives discussed above relate the importance of the worship service for these respondents. Both leading worship and teaching can be seen as vocational in the sense that they can be seen as directly furthering the work of God by undertaking publicly

acts of worship. By identifying with such roles the clergy gain status in the community of the local church, they also gain a sense of being worthwhile through providing a service wanted by congregation. Again therefore undertaking and identifying with such vocational roles provides access to affirmation (Hoge, Shields and Soroka 1993), Stephen, Robert, and Alan all recorded in their diaries that services had been followed by 'appreciative comments'. Issues of vocational identity then are identified with as a continuation of the narrative of call and vocation, vocational aspects of job contextualise and affirm understandings of vocation. They also provide a sense of acceptance and worthiness. Which is underlined in interactions with congregants. This contrasts with the respondents' feelings towards issues regarded as aspects of profession.

iii. 'Administration' as professional

Administrational responsibilities are one of the issues that clergy saw as part of their profession rather than an aspect of vocation. For many admin was something that got in the way of them spending time on what they felt was important. This is illustrated in Harold's diary:

> Had hoped to work on the parish magazine in the second half of the morning – but letters, emails, phone calls etc. meant I only got 30 mins on it. (D 4)

In interview Harold discussed the importance of the parish magazine as a way of communicating with the parish, his input into the magazine was seen as allowing him access to the community, and to bring the life of the Church into the community, an aspect of his vocation. However having to deal with administrative issues holds him back from completing this. Similarly Luke in his diary mentioned that he was 'drowning in paper' (D 3). In the follow-up' interview he spoke more about his attitude to administration saying

> I think it may have something to do with that I am far less interested in that bit of doing things, or even being efficient about it. There are things that sort of grab my attention rather more than dealing with paper. (DI 3)

The above discussion reflects the attitudes of many of the respondents that administration was something they had to do. The quotes illustrate a distancing of such responsibilities from the clergy's understanding of what they should be doing. However despite this distancing administration remains a time consuming aspect of the life of clergy (Kuhne and Donaldson 1995; Hill 2002). The research of Lauer (1973) found that in the view of congregation the administration role of the clergy was held to be of great importance. This emphasises a tension within the clerical role itself. The tension occurs through the continuing pressure to undertake both vocational and professional roles, and is further buttressed by the fact that as a social role the clerical role is given meaning and importance both by the clergy themselves, and by their congregation. Therefore the clergy must assuage the expectations the congregation have of the clergyman and undertake the responsibilities that emerge professionally as well as vocationally.

The clergy must negotiate a 'living out' of the clerical role which both fulfils their desire to undertake vocational responsibilities and also meets the expectations placed upon them as professionals. Hewitt (2003) discusses how social roles are formed through interaction, they must take account of both the individuals understanding of their responsibilities and the expectation of others, therefore the role itself is lived out through a process of negotiation. In the example above the clerical role is constructed through such negotiation and the clergy are required to find a balance between professional and vocational aspects thereof.

iv. 'Congregational expectations' as professional

The other aspects of being clergy that the respondents see negatively refer to their position in the community, conceptualised in Table 3 as being 'put on a pedestal', being 'under surveillance', and being 'expected to conform'. These issues relate to the expectations people have of the clergy as examples of Christian living. Anthony illustrates this issue as follows:

[I dislike] the false respect that people sort of give you, because you are the priest … I sometimes think that when people put you on a pillar they see you more as a functionary than as a person. (I 12)

Alan discussed the response 'clergy uniform' receives in his diary. He wrote:

Find wandering around shops really interesting, people treat you very differently if you are 'dressed as a Vicar' so days off are often much better. It's not hostility just embarrassment as to what to say. A man doffed his cap to me last week, couldn't make my mind up if I was flattered or found it really odd that I should be given such respect. Wonder what he'd think if I told him who I really was? (D9)

He also related an episode in which the difficulties of surveillance were raised:

Woman rang to tell me she needed to know who lived in the Vicarage, for admin purposes. I guessed she was trying to create trouble so rang the people concerned myself and found she was lying and just interfering. Decided at first to ring her and tell her so but thought better of it.
Felt as if I should tell her in one way but was very annoyed as to the fact she was being so interfering, rang a friend of mine whose a rural dean just to check the position. He said 'tell her to fuck off the nosey old cow'. Felt much better after that. (D9)

Adam raised the issue of 'being expected to conform' in terms of him being expected to conform to the attitudes of his congregation:

Problems with parishioners protesting about the confirmation candidate who they don't think is 'bright enough' it is difficult to get it across that one's spiritual journey is not necessarily completely linked with intellectual capacity. (D5)

Anthony also discussed pressure to conform. Being 'out' Anthony is involved with pride. In his diary he recorded:

> Had lunch with an evangelical colleague – was ok – didn't get too intense but started talking about Pride and how involved I might be. He has fears how this might affect our ministry group. (D12)

These examples illustrate the expectations felt by the clergy. Rather than being an aspect of vocation wherein the clergyman through their own lives illustrates a way of Christian living, which, as Kosek (2000) suggests, gives an authenticity to the clergy. Such expectations as Anthony notes, are of the clergy as 'functionary'. This removes the humanity of the clergy, viewing them as a role, rather than an individual endeavouring to carry out a role.

As Matthew suggests, even controlling natural emotion can be required in order to fulfil expectations:

> The rector's lot is not a happy one. And in the midst of it all I have to go about being so nice, nice, nice. (D11)

And elaborated on this in interview saying:

> Niceness is a very big problem in the Church, and I think actually it can, that clergy image, can really work you down a great deal, because nobody is nice all the time! Certainly a lot of your parishioners aren't and they have no compunction about being nasty if the mood takes them, but yet the difficulty about the clergy is they are not really allowed to hit back (DI 11)

Fletcher in his study of Anglican parochial clergy found that 'Having to be nice to people' had a significant relationship to both stress and anxiety in the clergy (Fletcher 1990). This is reflected in the feelings of respondents like Matthew who feel constrained from expressing themselves due to professional duty. This control of interaction, and the role of reflexivity in the presentation of self is also discussed by

228

Strauss (1977) who describes politeness as a way of hiding or glossing over aspects of identity, to meet expectation.

In essence such expectations rather than relating to the clergyman and his understanding of how his life should reflect Christianity, refer to a more idealised understanding of the clergy role. To some extent in endeavouring to meet these expectations the clergy are not focussing on a vocational wish to illustrate Christian living, but rather on a professional expectation to reflect an idealised understanding of clergy (Percy 2006). Goffman (1972) discusses the importance of an individual undertaking a role to meet the pre-requisite expectations of someone in such role.

> It is important to note that in performing a role the individual must see to it that the impressions of him that are conveyed in the situation are compatible with role-appropriate personal qualities effectively imputed to him: a judge is supposed to be deliberate and sober; a pilot, in a cockpit to be cool; a book-keeper to be accurate and neat in his work. (Goffman 1972: 77)

From this perspective, the clergy can be seen to be being required to meet such expectations professionally. To resemble expectations of the clergy is a professional responsibility. Further distancing from such expectations is not enough, for, as discussed above, to continue as clergy, in order to take on the vocational role, the individual must satisfactorily illustrate their 'clergyness'. This issue of expectation further illustrates the tension between vocational and professional identity, and the need for negotiation. For in order to make clear their distancing from such ideas of being clergy, the individual must first be recognised as clergy, which as Goffman implies, requires conforming to such expectations.

The discussion so far, has shown the clergy role itself is an experience of constant tension. This tension emerges through an understanding of vocation - a self-told story of identification, that interacts with others stories of understandings and expectations of the clergy. The individual in undertaking the role of clergy faces the need to gain social acceptance of their role (Hewitt 2003), for in order to continue to explore and perform vocational identity the individual's claim to this identity must be recognised by the

other players within interactions. To be accepted the individual must then meet to an acceptable degree the expectations upon them in order to negotiate space to follow vocation, in the above examples 'conforming to role', 'undertaking professional responsibilities' (management, administration). This is not a singular occurrence but rather a constant need for negotiation which must be undertaken in repeated interaction (Goffman 1971).

The chapter now turns to explore how vocation and profession are presented and managed in relation to specific issues the clergy face undertaking their role in late-modern Western society. The discussion of these issues will illustrate how the distinct vocational and professional aspects of the clergy role are managed and negotiated in tandem with other required negotiations.

Issues in Being Clergy

The chapter will now explore three distinct areas in which the respondents experienced tension and the need for negotiation in undertaking clerical role. These are

      (i)   Positioning self in community and Church

      (ii)   Negotiating limits and boundaries

      (iii)   Negotiating societal attitudes to clergy

In exploring each of these issues the chapter attempts to further show the processes of tension and negotiation which are at work in the respondents' living out of their vocation, and indeed their profession.

Positioning Self in the Community and Church

Within the parish the clergy inhabit a unique position wherein they must negotiate their incorporation within, and their distance from parish community. Within the research

data this negotiation can be seen clearly through a sense of need to be a part of the community in order to fully provide the ministry the respondents feel called to, whilst also needing to be apart from the community in order to fulfil other aspects of this ministry. The following examples illustrate the need for the clergy to be incorporated within the community. Anthony refers to a 'ministry of presence' which is central to his understanding of 'being' clergy

> [It] is because of the ministry of presence that we have, it is still true today I think. I know when I've worked on council estates, at the end of the day the doctor, the police, the social workers, the health people, they all go off to their homes. The one 'professional' who stays around is the priest or minister, who actually lives and works among his or her people. They don't shoot off to their posh houses in the suburbs, and I think that does give the Church a real credibility. (I 12)

The need for incorporation within the community was also discussed by respondents in terms of having to be involved in community events they otherwise may have shied away from. An example of this was mentioned in Adam's diary wherein he discussed his involvement in a local pantomime, the rehearsals for which he described as 'a bit tedious' (D 5). In interview Adam elaborated upon why he was involved

> If I hadn't been the local priest, the vicar, I'd have probably said no! So it's an interesting example really, because it's where something that's not directly related to your church work, but you feel that it's not going to do the Church's cause any good if you say no to it. So I said yes to it, it took up an inordinate amount of time, was totally exhausting, and the strange thing is that it did go really well but once you get involved in something in the parish, there's no getting away from it. (DI 5)

Developing upon the conception of ministry as being 'the yeast in the dough', the above quotations illustrate the importance of , and the need to work at gaining access to the community. This ministry of presence is recognised in the literature, and specifically is seen to be important in the Church of England because of the responsibility the parish

priest has to 'the spiritual, and to an extent the physical welfare of all who live within the bounds of their parishes' (Edwards 1998). Similarly, Percy (2004) (though arguing that parish boundaries are less obvious than previously, and clergy authority is diminishing) notes that there continues to be an attachment to such work by the clergy.

Adam's example of being involved in the community pantomime was just one example of the types of responsibilities undertaken by the clergy in the community, others included judging public speaking contests, being school governor, and being involved in regeneration work. Through such undertakings the clergy make the Church tangible, they show that the Church is interested in and involved in community issues (Greenwood 1994, Percy 2004). As such the clergy illustrate the importance of fulfilling the professional role in order to be able to continue vocation, both in terms of a ministry of presence, and in terms of raising the profile of the church locally.

Despite this need for incorporation, the need for distance from the community was equally strongly felt. Respondents discussed, for example, whether or not they felt able to form close friendships within the local community. Although some respondents did feel this was possible the majority felt it crossed a difficult boundary. This is illustrated by Luke:

> I think it is very difficult for any minister to make friends with the congregation, because there you cross a very strange boundary. How can you be professional with someone with whom you are a very close friend? ... I think it's one of the great things for any minister, you have to preserve a certain sense of neutrality. (I3)

The sense of responsibility to provide a 'professional' service to the community - to be neutral, and accessible to the community - meant that respondents such as Luke required the maintenance of distance. An example of why this is the case was given by Alan, who explains how this was emphasised to him through experience:

> I think if you are at a funeral the last thing that they want you to do is to empathise with them to such an extent that you're actually sharing in their grief.

I think your role is to control, and to assist in the grief process, because you've got to be the person there that's strongest. It was quite interesting because when I went to a friend's funeral. The whole occasion was incredibly emotional. I was really impressed by the priest because he removed himself very much from the situation and did a very professional funeral, and I thought, that's absolutely brilliant, because that's exactly what I want him to do. (I 9)

Within the literature there can be seen to be a number of reasons for the need for distance, Gordon-Taylor (2001a) discusses a similar issue to that raised in the quotations above, arguing that clergy are approached in a professional context to provide a service, and therefore distance must be maintained. Fletcher's (1990) study of stress in the ministry emphasised that distance was important for the health of the clergy themselves. The importance of being able to get away, and having a friendship circle which is apart from the community in which they worked was noted.

Negotiating position within the community, in this sense, involves a tension which is different to the tension between professional and vocational, as there are both professional and vocational duties that require being part of and apart from the community. This negotiation, understood in terms of interaction reflects the necessity of clergy being aware of expectations, and consequences of actions. For example, in terms of forming friendships within the congregation. Although the relationship may be positive for clergy and friend, there is a requirement to be aware of the wider consequence. Straus (1977) discusses the concept of supplementary actors, individuals who may not be directly involved in interaction, but are involved in the consequences. For clergy such supplementary actors may be congregants who do not share such a close bond with their clergy, and may feel distanced from church life because of this. At the same time members may expect to know the clergy and be privy to their lives, wherein the need for negotiation of closeness emerges distinctly. Therefore the clergy face a situation of constant negotiation both in terms of closeness to and involvement in the lives of the congregants, and also providing emotional care and support in a way that is empathetic, but also distanced.

233

Within the study, another area where clergy were aware of a negotiation of place was in terms of their relations with the institutional Church of England. Church was seen in some ways by respondents as a positive institution with which they identified. However in most respects the respondents distanced themselves from the Church as they saw the institution as negatively affecting their ministry. In terms of the positive nature of the Church in general the respondents were positive about membership because it granted them access to people. This is best illustrated by Robert who said:

> Now I love being part of the established Church. Someone once said it was the best boat to fish from, and I believe that is right. It gives opportunities to get into people's houses, hearts and homes on an official basis. And thank God for that. (DI 1)

The nature of the 'established Church' gives access, and therefore allows individuals to carry out their vocation.. The clerical role gives freedom of movement, an accepted, even expected way into people's lives (Bishop 1952). Respondents also expressed that despite dissatisfaction with the Church of England it remained the denomination which best suited their beliefs and theology. Therefore in order to fulfil their vocation they continued to identify with the Church.

Such attachment to the Church in some ways can be seen as the use of the denomination as a resource. In negotiating continued ability to perform vocational role the Church is adhered to because of the access it grants. Herein the symbolism of Church, and being a representative of the Church, is used in terms of where it can aid access. Goffman (1959) discusses regions - the boundaries of situation in which interaction occurs. The above illustration of the established Church allowing access to people's homes can be seen as an example of performance in such regions. Entering people's homes for example meeting the expectations of one who is a representative of the Church may allow access. That is, matching performance to region allows continuation of meaningful interaction. One aspect of this is clergy 'uniform'. In interview I asked Alan whether uniform was important in carrying out his role:

I mean there is a certain security in it in the sense that people don't question your presence at anything, and you can walk into anywhere, even hospitals and things and people will talk to you because it's the uniform there. (DI 9).

The above discussion of accessing and identifying with Church, illustrates the necessity of the interaction between profession and vocation. Professional identification with Church, and fulfilment of professional duty allows continuation of and fulfilment of vocation. Therefore in order to be able to undertake vocation the individual must be meeting the expectations of the Church. It is through the professional that space for the vocational emerges.

Despite this all of the respondents distanced themselves from Church in their narratives. This was most plainly seen when Luke stated:

I have no problems with God or being a priest, it's the Church of England that I get more and more doubtful about (I 3)

Luke here is distancing the Church not only from himself and his self-identity, but also from his role as a clergyman, which traditionally is intrinsically connected to Church structure. The symbolic distancing Luke's narrative entails, grants space to continue as clergy, despite distancing from Church.

There were a number of reasons put forward for dissatisfaction and distancing from Church. One of these was raised by a number of participants and is illustrated by Alan, who wrote in his diary:

Spent most of the day at the desk doing stuff for the building project. I enjoy it because it makes me feel part of the real world, where the Church isn't. (I 9)

What such respondents suggest is that the Church is out of touch with the needs and wants of current society, much of the research on new forms of religiosity reflect this opinion, and seeking out new forms of belief is a consequence of this (Stark and Bainbridge 1987; Heelas and Woodhead 2005).

Other reasons for dissatisfaction could also be seen, including the feeling that the church is not taking action when needed:

> You sit at a meeting and all they want to talk about is money. You realise that why they aren't raising it [money] is because they are talking about it, you know? If they became excited about it a bit more, or just enjoyed it, then some of the people might actually feel their pockets released. Or take them out for a drink or something, or have a nice party and realise Christianity is something to be enjoyed, not endured. (I 2)

Eric's narrative emphasises a gap between Church and society, he sees the Church as having become too institutionalised and inward-looking, thereby failing to do the work of God. Returning to the concept of 'region', if in certain circumstances, or regions the Church is viewed with distaste, then access to such regions is made more difficult by connection to the Church. The stories of vocation and faith the respondents wish to spread, may be hampered if 'audience' views the Church negatively. By symbolically distancing themselves from the Church the respondents find a freedom to connect and have their stories heard by aspects of society which may otherwise be closed to them. This distancing from Church is an example of 'role distance' (Goffman 1972), the use of, or distancing from aspects of role is dependent on circumstance and need within a particular interaction.

In terms of the clergy, meeting with a recently bereaved widow to discuss funeral arrangements may be a situation in which Church role is amplified. The clergyman is there as representative of the Church to provide spiritual support, and professionally organise funeral arrangements. On the other hand, having a conversation about God with a non-churchgoing parishioner in a pub, the clergyman may distance himself from Church, emphasising connection to the worldly, and spirituality outside the church building, remaining clergy, but distanced from 'staid' expectations.

The discussion of Church above is an example of the separation and negotiation of professional and vocational aspects of being clergy. This must be situated within the

previous discussion (Chapter 4) of the separation between Church and God. 'Being' clergy for respondents requires an association with Church, Church is after all the payer of stipend. However it is the work of God which is of primary importance to the respondents. This being, the work of an affirming God, rather than an unaffirming Church.

Negotiation of Limits and Boundaries

The negotiation of profession and vocation was also illustrated in terms of the creation and management of boundaries. The central issue in the data concerning this is need for negotiation was a mismatch between levels of expectation about the clergyman's duties. Two questions within the questionnaire explored this issue. Firstly 55.2% (n=16) of the respondents believed the congregation were not aware of the difficulties faced by the clergy (Appendix 2 – Question 2.4), and secondly 65.5% of respondents believed congregations' expectations were either excessive or sometimes excessive (Appendix 2-Question 2.5). This was further shown in a number of interviews where clergy discussed the expectations of the congregation. The following quotations from Alan, Eric, and George are representative:

> I learned very quickly that the only sympathy that they would have with you was at your requiem mass. I mean there were just certain people, and even then it would be your own fault that you had died because you had overworked and you should have taken care of yourself … and I thought 'you are never going to be satisfied with this, so I am just going to be difficult'. And when I came here I was determined that I was going to be difficult to preserve my own sanity really, and if that makes me unpopular then I'm prepared to live with it. (I 9)

> There is indeed part of that [clerical identity] which is indeed a servant, but some think you are the dogsbody, that you are the piece of shit to be kicked around or whatever. [They think] 'I can virtually come and just dump everything on you, and not take any responsibility myself for anything'. (I 2)

People want you, they want you to model Christ, but they want you to model it as though you were a doormat, so providing you are quite clear in your own mind, which isn't always easy to do, but if you can be clear in your own mind the difference between loving and indulging, you can survive. (I 6)

The above narratives illustrate the mismatch of expectations between clergy and congregation. Earlier in the chapter respondents were shown to identify with an understanding of their role as servant of congregation, this is not questioned here. Rather, mismatches occur because interpretations of what such a role mean are diverse. Expectations of congregation and excessive workload, often appear as reasons for stress and dissatisfaction in the literature (Fletcher 1990; Hoge, Shields and Griffin 1995; Louden and Francis 2003). Although the clergy may have a clear sense of what they feel should be expected of them, in context this must be worked out with reference to the expectations of others. The clergy face the need to negotiate between their own expectations and their perceived understandings of the expectations of others. This negotiation must assuage their own needs, and the needs of the congregation, creating a workable boundary between what George (I6) refers to as 'loving' and 'indulging'. In order to find 'fit' the clergy may be required to incorporate certain 'professional' expectations into their stories of clergy identity in order to be able to continue their vocations.

To protect this negotiated balance clergy have to employ strategies to keep continued expectations in check, for respondents in the current study these strategies could include making sure days off are away taken away from the parish (Adam), and having their partner answer phone calls on days off (Luke). Such strategies have not been discussed in previous literature due to this literatures focus on the clerical role itself, rather than individuals lived experiences of it. For the respondents getting away from the expectations of parochial life was important, and linked to this, a number of respondents discussed how having contact with non-Christians was refreshing. The following quotations from Robert and Alan illustrate this

> My non-practicing friends have been refreshing to me, because they have not been institutionalised or moulded with the judgements that often institutional people have … my unbelieving friends are meat and drink in those things. (I 1)

> One man was not a churchgoer at all, and so treated me as a normal person, which was refreshing. (D9)

Both Robert and Alan use the word 'refreshing' when referring to their contacts with non-Christians. Despite their strong feeling of being clergy these men also feel 'refreshed' to step outside the role. This is not necessarily a contradiction as such, rather it is an illustration of coping with the necessary negotiations they have to undertake. Such strategies underline the separation between those aspects of the job they identify with, and those aspects which they feel are pushed upon them. Defining a space where they can be something else allowed respondents to feel a sense of escape. This constructing of a separated space brings the concept of closeting into the professional role.

By defining the 'ends' of being a clergyman the role is 'boundaried' to particular contexts and is possible to distance oneself from. This form of closeting is seen to varying degrees in the respondents' stories, but is obvious in the following quote from Stewart's diary

> First we call into a country pub which we have frequented for many years, and where the owners know us both well (though not our occupations) (D10)

Stewart is in a committed relationship with another clergyman. His relating of this situation shows a separation from his professional role, a purposeful closeting of it. Such situated closeting of the professional role allows the clergy to get away from the treatment they see as going hand in hand with their profession, escaping the reaction that they see people having to their job title. It also recognises the fluid nature of identity which can be seen in the lives of the respondents. Being silent about their profession does not mean they are not 'being' themselves either when they are known to be clergy or are not known to be clergy. Rather, this is an example of the situated

239

nature of identity and the flexibility or changeability of it. In essence, identity is not confined to the individual, it comes into being in a social world, and the requirements of different interactions require different actions by self.

Goffman's (1972) work on self-identity explores such an understanding of identity, seeing identity as being situated and dependent upon one's performance, and others' understandings and reactions. Being different people in different situations is common to all (1972), not necessarily a sign of an unhealthy, or unnaturally fractured identity. Goffman suggests that in general the understandings and negotiations which happen within a situation can be seen to be limited to the situation and the participants of that situation, with the individual reflexively controlling what is presented. Closeting, or silence about a particular aspect of identity is a means of controlling interaction. It allows the control of knowledge sharing and to some extent therefore the control of others reactions. This in turn allowing protection of self-constructed boundaries of identity such as those around professional identity illustrated above.

The discussion above illustrates that tension, in terms of high level of expectation is an issue for clergy they have to negotiate. This negotiation involves constantly balancing personal and congregational needs. By controlling interaction, and indeed the possibility of interaction the clergy create strategies to attempt to manage the tension, however this reflects a constant awareness of vocation and professional responsibilities, and a shaping of their performance through the social context in which they are performed.

Negotiating Societal Attitudes to Clergy

Another area of identity negotiation for the clergy in the parish relates to changes in wider society and changes in levels of belief, including the decline in acceptance of religious authority (Chaves 2003). For the respondents this was seen in terms of the way they were treated, especially by people outside of their congregation. Luke's diary described a situation in which he saw this change in attitude:

240

> Wedding interview in church. Couple want everything and more. Felt like a functionary. Maybe that's what they think I am. Got it sorted, but had to bite my tongue. (D5)

Luke's feeling of being a functionary reasserts what has been referred to as the crisis of identity for clergy (Kung 1972); that is, the confusion over what a priest is (Gordon-Taylor 2001b). Luke's example can be seen even to question the validity of this identity, by seeing him not as an authority presiding over a religious ceremony, but rather as a functionary in the aesthetic creation of a wedding day (the church setting being removed from its religious significance in the eyes of the couple). In this way Luke's clergy identity is questioned. Such questioning not only affects the social status of such claimed identity, but also affects the claimant and their relation to that identity (Honneth 2001). Therefore changes in respect given to the clergy may further question what the clerical identity is, affecting the way in which the clergy see this identity, and indeed their purpose.

The general appeal of the Church is also generally viewed to be declining. Two measurements which have been used to illustrate this are (i)the decline in the number of ordained clergy, and (ii) the decline in Church membership (Bruce 2001). Many of the respondents were very much aware of a decline in membership numbers. Alan reflected on his feelings about this in his diary:

> I try to hold on to the fact that I really believe the Church should exist, even if it isn't flourishing at the moment, and maybe it's our job in this generation simply to ensure its survival. (D9)

Such changes in society then not only affect the numbers of people in Church but also question the role of the clergy, and therefore clerical identity. Alan above uses the phrase 'I try to hold on to the fact', this use of language illustrates the difficulties raised for clergy on both a professional and personal level. There is a need to find a reason for their existence, and lack of social recognition makes this more difficult.

241

Previous discussions of identity have argued that there is a need for social acceptance or validation of presented identity (Goffman 1971, Woodward 2002). The above example from Luke, and Alan's need to hold onto his understanding of the importance of the clerical role symbolise a difficulty which is raised through a lack of social validation. When one's understanding of the value of one's role is not reflected in the views of others, the continued attachment to such understandings becomes problematic. As Kung (1972) and Towler (1968) suggest the ordained ministry face a crisis of identity: as the service they offer becomes less requested the meaning provided by such action diminishes. This has been seen to lead clergy to be involved in social action in order to find meaning (Percy 2004).

Other respondents' experiences show that such changes not only make understanding purpose more difficult, but also makes the everyday performance of the clergy role more difficult. Harold discussed this in interview, he said

> On a Sunday morning we are rarely below 110 communicants, so compared to other places we are doing all right, but apart from a core there are a lot who are in Church say 3 out of 5 Sundays, or 2, or 1 out of 5. It's never the same congregation two weeks running, which means it is very difficult to have any continuity … You spend so much of your time, not dealing with sin and the problems people have, though God knows there is enough of that, but actually just trying to rally the troops and to overcome indifference, and it just saps your energy. (I 4)

Similarly Ian discussed the lack of commitment of worshippers he said

> I think it's partly that we live in different times. It's the frustration that, we are in the second year of a two year course (in the Church) at the minute, and people are just not able to commit themselves to the regularity of attendance … people just don't come along. (DI 8)

For the clergy the problem is not just declining numbers but changes in the commitment level of those who do attend. Davie (1994) suggests that such changes are related to the way in which people see religion. She argues that religion can be seen to be a leisure pursuit and as such is in competition with other Sunday activities such as television and visiting garden centres. Such increase in 'believing without belonging' has led to Christianity being distanced from regular Church attendance, that it doesn't need commitment to the organisational. These changes have led some to see the Church as being similar to a voluntary organisation (Butler and Herman 1999), therefore a decline in the number, or even the commitment of volunteers makes clerical life more difficult, simply because the volunteers are not there. This issue was explored by the respondents and is illustrated in the reflections of Harold:

> This is often the problem in the Church of England, because the vicar is the only paid employee in the community, if you can't get a volunteer to do something, and the something is pretty critical, it either ends up on the vicar's desk, or it doesn't get done at all. (D I 4)

Harold shows that both lack of structure, and also lessening commitment by parishioners sees more work landing on his desk. Again the lack of commitment is illustrative of the voluntary nature of belonging to the institution. Involvement in parish activity therefore is not as automatic as the respondents feel it once was. Along with this the clergy's position as sole paid member of the institution increases their separation as professional, with duties and responsibilities to ensure the continuation of the parish. Indeed, with the increasing consumerisation of life (Bauman 2000, Lyon 2000), buying into religion is buying the clergy, therefore if the individual pays, the clergy should deliver.

This increased dependency of remaining congregation was discussed by the respondents. Adam and Stephen's narratives illustrate this:

> I've been phoned on my day off to be told that there is a leak in the Church hall and should they get a plumber! … Well I mean, for me to have to say yes to that! (DI 5)

The way in which the Church seems to have made people dependent, people who are very bright, very intelligent, good jobs, will walk in through the Church door and say, tell me what to do, and cease to be adults. I find that very hard, and irritating. (I 7)

The dependency these quotations refer to adds to the clergy workloads at a time when declining congregations mean there are less lay people to share the work of the church already. The variety of needs expressed in the quotations not only adds to the workloads of the respondents but causes negative reaction. The professional aspect of the clerical role becomes more important here. The clergy are required to keep things together, to continue the day to day running of the Church, which as Harold mentioned above can keep him from dealing with sin, and people's needs. As Butler and Herman suggest, 'effective' ministers must be strong managers, planners and delegators, as well as shepherds, inspirers and servants (Butler and Herman 1999).

Despite the need to meet such professional expectation, this is still seen as (at best) a secondary aspect of their role. However their vocation strengthens willingness to undertake such roles because they feel a responsibility to aid survival of Church and continue to minister to their parish. Consequently in order to 'live' their vocation the clergy may have to emphasise and prioritise their professional rather than vocational role. This increasingly complicated negotiation of the vocational and the professional in turn may lead to a growing dissatisfaction with role.

Interestingly at the same time as such change in commitment levels of congregants questions the importance of the vocational role of clergy, attempts by groups within the Church to halt this change can also be seen to question the importance of the clergy's vocational role. This can be seen in the concentration on, and encouragement of 'the ministry of the laity' (Greenwood 1994:2), which encourages a collaborative approach between clergy and laity in terms of ministry, emphasising the role which the laity can have in furthering the work of the Church. In some circles this extends even as far as discussion of the possibility of lay people presiding over the sacrament (Gordon-Taylor 2001b). The respondents being dissatisfied with excessive dependency in their

congregation emphasise the importance of such collaboration, even if not going so far as lay presidency at the sacrament. However such actions by the church mean the importance of the identity 'clergyman' is disappearing from both sides, more people not giving importance to the role, and those who do remain in the Church being given more responsibilities similar to those of the clergy.

The previous discussion has explored the tensions and negotiations which emerge in terms of the interactions of 'professional' and 'vocational' aspects of ministry. In finding place within the parish the respondents discussed the vocational and personal need to be involved in and part of this community. At the same time professionally they required a sense of distance. This discussion also complicates the negotiations, as in practice, in order to fully carry out vocation professional distance was required – for example, in terms of funerals. Positioning in terms of institution also emphasised the need for negotiation between 'professional' and 'vocational'. The role of the Church remains important for the respondents. However, meeting the 'professional' aspects of an institutional clerical role was balanced with a vocational role which emphasised life, and the work of God, rather than the work of the Church. In order to carry on, therefore, both aspects of role were recognised as important by respondents.

Negotiation of boundaries was shown to be necessary for clergy. Again 'vocation' and 'profession' were central. Negotiation of boundaries was a way of controlling the expectations which were placed upon the clergy by congregants. However this negotiation again was required to take place within the knowledge that expectations had to be met to some extent. Therefore the 'professional' and the 'vocational' were held in balance through the use of specific strategies. The discussion illustrated that although the distinction of 'vocation' and profession' was 'real' to the respondents, these concepts were interdependent in practice.

Finally negotiating 'societal attitudes' further complicated the relationship between 'profession' and 'vocation'. Perceived decline in respect, and decline in Church membership meant clergy were aware of their changing position. The discussion flagged up what some of the consequences of this changing position could be and reflected upon an increasing dependency upon the clergy by believers who remained.

Such dependency brought about a situation in which clergy felt they had to prioritise the 'professional' despite their ambivalent role towards it. For by fulfilling the professional they kept the one-man-'show on the road'. A position which could be seen as the need to fulfil 'professional' job requirements, in order to indulge in their 'vocational' hobby.

Respondent stories of clergy identity are therefore dynamic. Social contexts, Church pressures, and self-understanding are negotiated and presented in complex and varied ways in the construction of stories of clerical identity. Though it is the vocational where clergy self understanding of clergy identity lies, in practice the interconnection of professional and vocational role means vocation depends on the acceptance of and presentation of a clerical role which incorporates the professional – admittedly to a varying extent.

The final section of this chapter will explore how this complexly negotiated story of clergy is further complicated by sexuality.

Incorporating Sexual Identity

Perceived ability to incorporate sexual identity within the clerical role was diverse between respondents. For some, congregations were affirming and partners were recognised, others experienced some form of hostility, and for others sexuality was constrained in silence.

Eric was 'outed' whilst serving a congregation. He talked about his experience saying

> One family in particular have said, you know, 'You deserve to be stoned to death!' That was pretty hard really. (I 2)

Eric was one of two respondents who had been 'outed'. For both respondents their 'outing' brought both affirmation and hostility. Forced openness about sexuality meant that these respondents were placed in a position where members of congregation

questioned their 'acceptability' as clergy. Due to these members' understandings of acceptability being different to those of the clergy themselves.

As well as outright hostility other difficulties are raised by 'expected' hostility. Fear of the consequences of being known kept a number of respondents silent, and Harold illustrated the difficulties this causes when I asked him what life was like as a gay clergyman. He said

'Dishonest, secretive, and lonely.' (I 4)

Actual experiences of negativity, and fear of possible negativity act as powerful constraints of sexual identity for a number of respondents. To illustrate four answers to the questionnaire question '*Has your professional life affected your sexuality?*' (Appendix 2 – question 4.17) are presented below:

Yes, I have been far more restrained and cautious regarding my social life. (Q8)

Maybe I am more discreet than I would otherwise be (Q12)

It has probably influenced the degree to which I have been 'open'/ up-front about my sexuality. (Q10)

Yes, I am very careful in what I say and do. My sexuality is repressed. (Q24)

The awareness that knowledge of their sexuality within the parish could be damaging is seen in the literature to constrain the way gay clergy live out their clergy identities (Wolf 1989, Fletcher 1990, Comstock 1996). Fear of consequence is further compounded by professional responsibility wherein individuals feel required to protect congregations from the stress of dealing with a 'gay vicar' (this issue of professional responsibility was discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 with reference to the closet and management of sexual identity). The incorporation of sexuality within the clerical role is therefore another issue of tension through which identity is negotiated.

This tension causes a need for awareness at all times of what is being told, and what is being perceived. Goffman (1968) argues that in disguising an aspect of identity the individual is required to be constantly aware in situations others may treat as 'uncalculated and unattended' (Goffman 1968: 110). This need to be constantly on edge, and wary of the consequences of action, led, for some respondents, to a need for constrain on issues of sexuality which went beyond the personal. This is illustrated by the experience of Adam:

> I've had a lesbian couple who have said they are going to register their civil registration, and could I conduct some sort of blessing. Well Church rules say I shouldn't, and the odd thing is I think I need to stick to Church rules. Although I have friends and colleagues who wouldn't! That would be straight colleagues and friends who wouldn't, you know? … I think it would really put me in the spotlight, I mean I'll find some way around it for them, but I wont do it myself, because I don't want to get myself in hot water and start getting the finger pointed at me with people saying 'Oh its because of what he is', you know? (DI 5)

Here the structures of professional role, combined with the need for secrecy about sexuality towards the congregation mean that Adam feels unable to undertake a 'pro-gay' act within the Church for fear of the reflection this may have on him. The pressure to conceal gay identity felt by respondents may not only affect their incorporation of their sexual identity within their clergy life, but also may further distance them from identification with their clergy role, due to pressure to act in a way that is in opposition to what they may feel is the 'right' thing to do. That is, pressure to conform to professional expectations distances the individuals from 'authentic' (Giddens 1991) stories of self.

For other respondents their sexuality was largely accepted in their parish. This acceptance allowed the respondents to incorporate their sexuality more fully into their professional life, for some this meant an ability to provide support to congregation members who were struggling with issues of sexuality. An issue which these

respondents saw as a particular consequence of their 'gay' ministry. Stephen recorded an incident in his diary which illustrates this:

> He is one of several people in the village to talk to me about their gay sons, never mentioning it, but I think assuming/ knowing that I am gay too. All of them seem very supportive/ affirming of their sons. I hope therefore it is not too fanciful to assume they are saying something about me too. (D 7)

The example of Stephen and others like him shows the distinctive role that gay clergy can have, being able to provide a ministry to people regarding issues that other clergy may not be able to undertake to the same extent (Anonymous 1998). Also these clergy are able to more fully incorporate their sexuality with their ministry allowing them to question existing stereotypes and understandings within church life (Anonymous 1998). However even within such acceptance the clergy continue to deal with the tensions of how much can be said, and how they should present themselves. Within, the experience of Stephen there remains the language of 'hope' , and 'assuming', the incorporation of sexual identity again is not full, rather it is controlled, and manoeuvred around both by the individual and the congregation.

Within the example above discussion of sexuality remains controlled, and is accessed only to an acceptable degree. Therefore the constant awareness of boundaries remains in such examples. In essence negotiation of sexual identity's incorporation within clerical role is negotiated both in terms of silence, and partial openness. The tension of possible consequence is a constant influence which is worked around. In this way sexuality further complicates position in parish. The respondents' sexualities are an issue which must be, for many, kept distinct, and separate from the parish. Therefore an important area of these men's lives is kept wholly distant from parish. Though individualised stories of sexual identity allow these men to access 'being' gay personally, the constraints of tradition and expectation continue.

Issues of sexuality also affect the respondents' relationships with the institutional Church, because of its stance on homosexuality. Experiences of opposition from the Church, and the inability to agree with aspects of the Church's teaching encourages the

respondents to exist on the margins, in effect forces them to be on the margins. Harold reflected on his feelings about this when I interviewed him the second time (this interview occurred soon after the publication of the 'Windsor Report' – discussed in Chapter 2):

> I do sometimes wonder, do I want to give my life and career in the service of an institution which I actually feel is doing wrong? It's not just that Church is neutral on the issue, I think the Church's attitudes are harmful. (DI 4)

For Harold and other respondents the increased attention that sexuality has received from the Church, and the vocal opposition which exists within, meant respondents not only wished to distance themselves, but also felt they were being distanced by the Church. Standing on the margins for the respondents was not just a choice but was in a sense enforced by the climate of the Church (Bates 2004). Previous research on gay Christians has identified that opposition from the Church has encouraged some gay believers to leave the Church to 'keep their faith' (Yip 2000). Moving away from the institution of Church allows gay Christians to embrace their sexuality and also connect personally with their spirituality. For the respondents such a move is more difficult due to their position as clergy. Although respondents could leave the ministry, their sense of vocation holds them within the institution. The marginal position the respondents feel they have further affects the negotiation of place with Church. Identification to Church is distanced from, focussing instead on their call, through which they experience affirmation, and acceptance by their local congregation, if this is forthcoming.

The veiled support which some respondents did gain from institutional Church did not help matters. Anthony for example discussed his relationship with Church hierarchy:

> I find myself in situations with bishops who say 'Look, we support you, totally behind your ministry, we support you fully, but we can't say so publicly, because, you know, we have got the pressure from the evangelicals' … So on one level I know the bishop is fully supportive of my ministry, values my ministry, but somehow that support is cut away when the bishop wont stand up publicly and say so. (I 12)

A similar experience was felt by Harold who said:

> I think you have got quite a lot of bishops who in private would be very
> supportive, but in public could not afford to be seen to be so. (I 4)

In this way the respondents not only feel on the edge of the church but also may feel
that they are balancing precariously on it. So long as their sexuality remains under
wraps, or does not become an issue, they are tolerated. However, public discussion of
sexuality is controlled. A number of the clergy are here again constrained by the
Church, and the Church's attitude towards their sexuality, due to the fear of the
consequences of public knowledge (Comstock 1996). The clergy's living out of their
clerical role needs to be negotiated in line with this. Although the clergy may
understand they are called by God as gay men. While the Church continues to question
the validity of homosexuality many of the clergy feel unable to fully incorporate this
aspect of their identity into their ministry (Heskins 2005). The institutional Church is
then controlling the way in which clerical identity is expressed, by encouraging silence
among gay clergy concerning their sexuality. In essence, the publicly told stories of
respondents' identities are influenced by the discourses of Church hierarchy.
Professionally this public story is required in order to gain acceptance. However
beneath such public stories self-told stories of vocation remain, incorporating and
affirming the role and influence of sexuality in ministry.

Although the respondents were diverse in terms of how open about their sexuality they
were to Church and congregation, all of the respondents shared a sense of belief that
their sexuality was a positive influence on their ministry whether it was known or not.
Their sexuality was seen to allow them a more empathetic stance, which Edwards refers
to as the gift of gay priests (1989). The respondents understand their own experience of
being gay and the discrimination and opposition they have faced as allowing them a
more understanding approach to others and a more inclusive understanding of the
Church. This is similar to the discussions of Christianity in Chapter 4. The influence of
personal experience goes beyond purely fighting for gay issues but for many also
included making a stance against poverty, supporting the remarriage of divorced

couples and supporting the incorporation of women into Church leadership. Ian for example discussed this in interview:

> Over the years I can see that a lot of my ministry has been very much fringe ministry … I tend to be into mental health and alternative lifestyles, and I was involved in the move for the ordination of women, and that's motivated because of your experience of being marginalized, you can empathise with other minority groups. (I 8)

Further to this Anthony also sees his understanding of his vocation as being interlinked with his experience of being gay. He discussed this saying:

> My ministry has always been based I think on a very strong desire to stand up for justice in the wider world, and I think part of that … has been reinforced by my experience as a gay man, and a gay priest. (I 12)

The above quotes illustrate the views of the majority of the respondents. All saw their particular take on ministry as being on the fringes and that this was influenced by their experiences as gay men. This is linked directly with their stories of vocation as aiding others in their spiritual lives. As previously discussed the clergy's stories of call included being called as gay men. Therefore their sexuality *should* influence the way they undertake their ministry whether open or closeted. In this sense stories of vocational identity are intertwined with personal identity, and separate from the publicly told professional stories discussed previously.

Literature on Gay Christians has explored connection to a ministry of justice (Wilcox 2002), this relates to an understanding of Jesus as a visionary, who through his ministry connected with the marginal, and the outcast (Yip 2005a). The above stance of the respondents reflects this, such ministry emphasises inclusiveness, the openness of Christianity, and centres on love and acceptance. Vocation in this sense connects belief stories with clergy stories. The respondents see their role as clergy to be to live out their understanding of Christianity. Therefore such ministry accepts and celebrates diversity rather than sidelining and marginalizing it. Attachment to such understandings

not only aids negotiation of personal incorporation of sexuality and religious belief, but also through the teaching, and ministering of inclusion, the clergy directly or indirectly make a stance on and further the issue of acceptance of gay and lesbian believers.

The above discussion of interconnection of sexuality and ministry has shown that the negotiated nature of clergy identity already discussed in the chapter, must also take into account sexuality. Being gay, for many of the respondents, meant being in danger. Therefore negotiation of place required a particular separation from both parish and Church. This need for distance meant a further feeling of separation from institution which was exacerbated by the 'secret' acceptance institutional figures showed to some respondents.

However this 'enforced' marginality was translated in a positive way by many respondents because they were able to provide a ministry to the marginalized, which as the discussion showed could be seen as 'Christ-like'. Though sexuality further complicates negotiation of clerical identity, it also imbues it with a sense of humanity. For in considering their ministry styles many respondents discussed that their ministry was a reflection of their histories and experiences. In telling their stories of clergy identity, therefore, the respondents illustrated a real sense of the connection between biography, structure and history which rested at the centre of the creation of these stories. Further, the separation of 'professional' and 'vocational' provided space for the incorporation of vocation and sexuality in personal identity stories. The 'boundarying' of public stories made space for this integration.

Summary

The central argument of this chapter has been that respondents identify with their clergy identities, and these identities are a continually negotiated.

Clergy identity was shown in the first section of the chapter to be related to a strong internal conviction of call, experienced through relationship with God. In translating the call into vocation the respondents centred on over-arching principals which

emphasised inclusivity. These principles highlighted a reflexive understanding of vocation which was influenced by connection to God, and connection to personal faith stories. The chapter then illustrated the tension that existed between respondents' narratives of vocation, and their narratives of priesthood as constraining profession.

The chapter then moved on to clarify the distinction between the 'vocational' and the 'professional' with reference to quantitative and qualitative data. The chapter then explored this distinction by discussing in detail a number of aspects of the clergy role with reference to the diaries kept by respondents. In doing so the chapter emphasised that the distinction between 'vocation' and 'profession' could be seen, not only theoretically, but in the clergy's narrations of their day-to-day experiences.

Following this discussion the chapter explored three particular issues which the respondents faced in their clergy lives. These discussions served not only to illustrate the negotiations of 'vocational' and 'professional', but also to further complicate this negotiation.

In discussing the need for clergy to find space in parish and Church the chapter illustrated that the vocational and professional serve the needs of each other. For example in order to undertake the 'vocational' funeral service, clergy are required to keep a 'professional' distance.

The discussion of the respondents' negotiations of boundaries also illustrated the interconnection of 'vocation' and 'profession'. For boundaries were required to be negotiated in the light of congregational expectations. The chapter illustrated that such negotiation required the acceptance of a certain amount of professional expectations in order to find space for vocation.

The third area discussed further complicated the distinction. Through a discussion of the clergy's experiences relating to social attitudes, the chapter illustrated that acceptance and incorporation of the professional was becoming increasingly important. Therefore for some respondents attending to professional expectations became their primary task. Vocation, though more 'identified' with, in terms of the respondents'

personal stories of clergy identity became secondary. This discussion illustrated the interactional nature of clerical identity and the influence of social pressures upon it.

Finally, the chapter explored how the incorporation of sexuality and ministry further complicated the respondents' negotiations. Sexuality was shown to require a distancing of the clergy from both their parish and Church. However in doing so the respondents discussed the ability to 'minister to the marginalized', a ministry which for many fitted and celebrated their understandings of vocation - discussed at the beginning of the chapter.

As this was the final of three fieldwork chapters the thesis now moves on to conclude the discussion. The following chapter pulls out a number of important issues from the previous discussions and explores in greater depth the issues and implications of each. The chapter will also discuss the implications of the study for the Church.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS CHAPTER

With reference to the narratives of gay clergy the thesis has argued that identity stories are dynamic, negotiated and multi-faceted. The process of this negotiation being seen in terms of the interaction between the 'traditional' and the 'innovative'.
This chapter explores the findings of the previous three chapters contribute to identity theory; the study of sexuality; the study of Christianity and the clergy; and speak to the Church of England.

The chapter will first discuss the theoretical issues which arise from the study, then will discuss some practical implications and makes a number of recommendations to the Church. Then finally a number of recommendations are made for further research.

Four theoretical themes are discussed. Firstly, the chapter will illustrate how the 'critical humanist' approach undertaken in the thesis grants an ability to explore identity in terms of its situated nature, allowing a greater understanding of the continued influence of structures and traditions in identity stories. This will be illustrated by using 'tapestry' as a metaphor for understanding identity creation, management and presentation.

Secondly, the chapter turns to discussing essentialism in sexuality stories. The chapter argues for the 'reclaiming' of essentialism, not as a 'truth', or a worldwide constant, rather as an immensely important aspect of individual sexual identity stories.

Thirdly, the chapter discusses identity integration. Focussing on social integration of identity, the chapter argues that identity integration must be viewed critically in terms of individual location.

Fourthly, the chapter discusses the 'turn to life' shown in the personal faith stories of the respondents. The chapter argues these faith narratives, illustrate an increasing privatisation of faith stories. The chapter will explore the implications of this for the sociological study of religion.

The chapter then turns to addressing the Church. Within this discussion the Church is called to 'listen' to the stories of the respondents, both in terms of their stories as gay clergy, and indeed what their stories say about the clergy as a whole. A number of recommendations are made to the Church.

The chapter concludes with a summary and recommendations for future research

Tapestries of Identity.

Throughout the thesis issues of interaction and negotiation have been consistently explored. Following the work of Plummer (1995, 2001, 2003) these negotiations have been discussed as stories of identity. These stories are written by individuals, in order to make sense of, and position 'self' in relation to a world of multiple and rapidly changing influences and possibilities – the props, the community and the significant others (Plummer 1995). The thesis has illustrated that the stories told by the respondents have multiple dimensions. Most importantly however they are multi-layered. Two examples of this are (i) empathetic ministry, (ii) closeting of emotion. When empathetic ministry is 'lived' it is lived in terms of a caring for others, an understanding of pain, and a vocation to aid. However, beneath the surface the (often) silenced story of being gay, experiencing marginalisation, and knowing from experience is also being told. This 'undercover story' shapes and moulds that which is publicly told. Similarly the closeting of emotion talked about by respondents in terms of disguising anger at congregants involves a similar dynamic. The story told may be of the nice vicar, helping and teaching, while the silenced story of anger at having to say the same thing again and again remains untold, but shapes the publicly told story.

Indeed the stories told in the research itself were multi-layered. The answers to questions were publicly told, their workings out-silent. Discussions respondents may have had with self in forming answers, such as, 'Can I tell him that?', 'Is this relevant?', 'Why is he wearing that awful shirt?' remained untold. To some extent Goffman's analogies of theatre (1971), film (1975), and games (1972) help to illustrate this. The separation between front-stage and backstage, on-screen and off-screen, making and

consideration of move help to illustrate a structured context in which interaction take place. For example, the interaction between clergyman and parishioner in a pastoral visit has the onscreen presence of discussion of events and needs by the parishioner, the listening to such and reaction by the clergy. Off-screen however a back-story influences this interaction. The parishioners' knowledge and experience of the clergy, their expectation of the role of the clergy, their previous experience of spiritual support from the clergy playing a role in their approach and their framing of their place in the interaction. Similarly the clergyman's understanding of what is expected of him, his prior knowledge of interaction with the parishioner and his experiences of being involved in previous professional interactions with similar boundaries (be this a funeral visit, a wedding or baptism preparation visit, visiting of an ill parishioner). This back-story is not re-enacted fully within the interaction but is reflexively ordered (Giddens 1991), and influences the actions and reactions which occur.

However, Goffman's back-story does not go far enough, in terms of the multi-layered stories discussed above. Yes, the hidden story informs the told one. But more than that the hidden story is the told one, just told in different language, covered in a socially correct way. To illustrate this I propose tapestry as a workable analogy for the discussion of such multi-layered stories of self-identity.

Picture if you will the framed tapestry, hung against the flock wallpaper, above the second of the three flying ducks. Beneath the glass the intricate combinations of stitch and colour spell out 'Home sweet home.' Through patience, effort, and perhaps with reference to a pattern, a number of coloured threads have been stitched to form the 'story' of the house. The satisfaction of the artist is shown through its framing, and prominent location. There for all (who gain access to the room) to see, is the beautifully stitched illustration of a happy home. This illustration publicly declares its message both to visitors and the artist themselves. It is a public display of happiness, and a reminder to the artist of both their happiness in the home, and their wish to display this.

Now, removing the tapestry from its frame and viewing the back of the tapestry (hidden from visitor, and not constantly referenced by artist) a mess of interlocking thread, knots, frayed edges, and perhaps even a spot of blood from a pricked finger can be seen.

The legend of 'Home sweet home.' is hidden from view. The red thread that from the front appears only as a full stop is seen to run throughout the tapestry. The variety of colours of threads which sit so neatly side by side from the front, cross, and knot behind. Small holes and indentations can be seen where unsatisfactory threads have been unpicked, and the neatly formed front of the tapestry is seen to be held in place by the mess, and tangle of the back. As mentioned, for the visitor this messy back is hidden from view. For the artist, the finished, neat, self-created story can be viewed. Or, the artist may want to reference the hard work, that went into the story. As artist they have access to either.

Throughout life we add to and take away from a tapestry of self-identity. As Giddens (1991) argues, we are constantly involved in the reflexive project of self, creating and modifying personal biography. Through interaction we gain threads of experience with which we interact, bringing them to the front of our life tapestries. These threads may become an aspect of how we see ourselves, thereby becoming more visible, more often present in the front of our tapestries, alternatively they may be forced quickly through to the back, to be hidden, tied of, or even picked out entirely. However they are treated, each experience leaves its mark, it is these marks which are missing from many conceptualisations of identity.

As experiences multiply they become ordered, aspects of identity are sorted and managed, each influencing the picture we form. This sorting occurs at the back, hidden from view, and an ordered picture emerges. Within this picture continuous threads can be seen, influencing where others may go. As the picture emerges experience is sorted with reference to what has gone before.

The narratives of the respondents illustrate the usefulness of this analogy. Firstly, in terms of hidden or silenced story. Taking empathetic ministry as an example, the picture of empathetic clergyman is publicly shown. However, running through this, under it, and tied up amongst it is the story of the clergyman's sexuality. The position of the threads of this story, influence where the threads of the 'empathetic' ministry story can fit, thereby shaping its story. The knowledge of the construction of this is

private, and for the artist only – unless they choose to share it. However in showing the story that has been influenced affirmation is gained for what has given it shape.

Secondly, specific negotiations can be seen more clearly through this analogy. The complex negotiation of 'vocation' and 'profession', in terms of clergy identity was shown in the thesis to involve distinguishable sets of responsibilities, however at base each concept required the other. In the 'front' region therefore both profession and vocation exist separately, with vocation perhaps interwoven into faith and sexuality to a greater extent than profession. However the back of the tapestry shows that these threads are in fact enmeshed in the construction of clergy identity, to the extent that attempts to unpick one will see the other unravel.

Thirdly, in terms of the 'big picture', respondents narrated a definite sense of self-knowledge and an attachment to a cohesive and coherent understanding of self and self-history. The metaphor of tapestries illustrates the constructions of such stories. Plummer (1995) discusses that stories are told retrospectively, connecting and making sense of events through life. The construction of picture in the tapestry allows narrative threads, and connections to be illustrated, and meanings connected.

Fourthly, the use of tapestry allows for an understanding of the relation between self-told, and presented story. The discussion of hidden stories above is one aspect of this. However taking on Goffman's (1975) wording, it is also how the picture is 'framed'. The full picture is never shown, not even the full 'front' region. Rather what is deemed to be relevant, what aids interaction, is framed, while the rest is framed off.

The analogy of tapestries therefore can illustrate the massive amount of tensions, negotiations, and management strategies we incorporate. It also allows for an understanding of the inter-relation, and the influencing and constraining effect both our traditional and innovative choices have upon our continued freedom to choose. For example, central to discussions of Christian, gay, and clergy identity discussions has been the role of God. As the concept of God is woven into the personal tapestry, it takes up space, and requires certain shape. Therefore as the individual weaves into their personal narrative a framework of sexual morality (for example), this will be shaped

through the constraint and influence of the God concept which is already present in the picture.

The use of tapestry as an analogy for identity therefore allows the co-existence of the traditional and the innovational in our self-identity pictures. Taking this forward such an approach makes space for both an understanding of essentialism, and a changing presentation of sexuality as evidenced in the 'closeting' of the respondents. The chapter now explores how this essentialism had positive effect for respondents. Not only in terms of sexuality, but also religion and vocation.

Reclaiming Essentialism

Essentialist, or creationist understanding of sexuality was identified with by the vast majority of respondents. Sexuality was seen as natural, something one was born with, and importantly, came from God. Essentialism was shown to be an organising feature of position, experience, opposition to Church, and public stories.

Despite arguments within the social sciences which have rung the death knell of essentialism. Respondents continued to feel a strong attachment to essentialism in their understanding of their sexual identity. This emerged through personal experience with respondents emphasising early memories of sexual feelings, a sense of confusion about what they were experiencing at this time, and a belief that they were unable to be any other way. Essentialism therefore played an important role for the clergy, it provided a sense of consistency, a narrative running throughout their experiences in which sexuality was both continuously present, and beyond change.

Essential sexuality also provided a means of connection. That is, a way of connecting experience of being gay with experience of Christianity. Changes in Church attitudes towards homosexuality saw an acceptance of homosexuality as orientation, unlikely to change (House of Bishops 1991), this acceptance by the Church led to a requirement of an awareness of the needs of gay believers. This partial acceptance of homosexual orientation therefore led to a controlled and wary acceptance, though by no means

encouragement of, monogamous same-sex sexual relationships among lay believers. Essentialism was therefore seen by the respondents as being a way of connecting with Church as well as connecting with their own beliefs. Similarly essential understandings were for the respondents, bound up in political arguments for acceptance. As discussed earlier essentialist argument has been included in political arguments for equal rights, and even recently in terms of argument for the repeal of 'clause 28'. Such experience of essentialist argument gives weight to the claim of a natural sexual identity created by God, and frames opposition to inclusivity as discrimination.

Essentialist understanding for the respondents was also tied up with an understanding of God as creator and designer of homosexuality. Through their theology essentialism gained weight as an aspect of God's creation. Being gay was beyond the control of the respondent, and the creative power was instead placed in the hands of God. For some respondents as the research has shown, this removed feelings of guilt over a sexuality which some continued to find difficult to incorporate. For others the role of God, more politically, emphasised arguments for inclusion and acceptance, particularly within Church context. As Christian believers the argument of 'being made by God' was a powerful, and, as Wilcox suggests, 'unshakable' affirmation.

Essentialism was also seen within the research in terms of the call to vocation. Feeling of being called, the belief that the individual was to undertake a vocation, though seen as something which was chosen, it was a choice that was difficult not to make. Within the research this feeling of call was seen to continue into vocation. In essence the identification with vocation was beyond the control of the individual, because it was God's call that led them to vocation it was not something for them to either accept or deny. Similarly religious belief was tied up within connection to God. Believing was an aspect of identity which through experience of God was impossible to leave behind (despite opposition). Essential understanding of vocation and religion, in the face of difficulties in work, and opposition from aspects of the Church. Encouraged the individual to continue to feel that they were doing what they should be doing, and that they received affirmation from God through their sense of call, vocation and personal experiences.

Understanding of an essential basis for aspects of identity provides continuity. In the face of having to organise social life within context where particular aspects of identity are constrained, or which the individual feels need to be hidden, essentialism provides a connection, and a feeling of consistent identity. Also the understanding of God's role in vocation and belief, legitimises sexuality, as stories of these identities are comparable. Giddens (1991) refers to the importance of 'authentic' identity, that is, identities which anchor, and locate the individual. Essentialism, for the respondents provides a sense of authenticity within their experiences. To explain the importance of an essentialist understanding of identity we can return to the analogy of tapestry. The thread of sexuality appears often in the front of self-identity, however even when it is required to move behind it continues to hold in place other things, and continues to interact with other threads of identity through the individual's understanding of its presence even when it cannot be shown. Despite its hidden status, it is felt to remain central to stories of self.

Therefore, for the respondents essentialism is seen as more than just a minoritizing strategy which appeals for acceptance, it is a way of understanding location, and a reference point for interaction. It provides meaning in the organisation of life, and a continuous thread in the messiness of identity management. However essentialism is also limiting. To be sure arguments of its minoritizing properties can be seen (Sinfield 1998. Seidman 1993), however in addition to this essentialism suggests by its very nature something unchangeable, continuous but also complete. Essentialist argument therefore in its management calls for consistent performance, it relates specifically with typologised linear models of identity acceptance (Cass 1984) which do not reflect the reality of the lives of the clergy. Once accepted essential identity is, it does not evolve. One criticism of the essentialist model for example is its universalising of gay experience, that is, if there is an objectifiable gayness, then this should manifest in a similar fashion across cultures, and across time (Weeks 2003). However, although respondents did use essentialism as a political strategy, and referred to themselves as members of a minority group, this was not the primary importance of essentialism.. It was the knowledge of self, and sense of God's acceptance of self as is, which was central. Essentialism allowed story of sexuality to locate the gay individual within the story of God's love and acceptance, as discussed by Wilcox (2002). This use of

essentialism can be seen as a 'Turn to life' within the respondents' sexual understandings, their essentialist belief was related to personal experience, personal history, personal relationship with God. Though told through and influenced by societal structures, meanings and pressures, it was in the personal that essentialism was meaningful. Further, when turned to the social, sexual stories were related to acceptance, justice, and freedom. The respondents' sexual stories were thus related both to 'this life' and 'my life'.

The essentialist understandings of the clergy also illustrated the negotiation between the traditional, and the innovational. The clergy took account of a number of traditional areas of influence – Church tradition (and its opposition); scientific tradition (and its biological findings), gay tradition (and the political struggles of pro-gay groups). In negotiating with such traditions the clergy innovated they reflexively considered their own stories of experience, they accessed experiences of God (separated from Church), and they referenced other peoples experiences as influences. Personal stories of essentialism emerged through such negotiations, illustrating respondents as free to explore the choices of late-modernity, but continued to be constrained in sharing these responses publicly. Therefore, by exploring sexual identity through the lens of 'critical humanism' it has been shown to be necessary to 'reclaim' essentialism in the study of sexuality. Essentialism is a personal story of meaning and plays a continuingly important role in the life projects of respondents and indeed in the situated lives of many other LGBs.

The Risks of Public Identity Integration

Identity integration is seen as a healthy, positive aspect of being. Studies on gay identity (predominantly secular) have emphasised the need for identity integration. For example, Griffith and Hebl (2002) argue that integrating gay and work identity, by coming out at work leads to greater job satisfaction. A number of respondents illustrated a desire to integrate gay, Christian and clergy identities in line with such argument in their public lives. However, we live in a risk society (Giddens 1991, Beck 1992), our actions must be undertaken with reference to such risks. The risks of

identity integration were to some extent seen by the clergy – they risked job, house, and reputation. However another area of risk must be recognised. To illustrate, moving one step back, lurking beneath findings such as Griffith and Hebl's lies the social story of 'integration good, separation bad'. To be a good citizen one must be open and share experience with others.

In essence my argument is that such publicly told identity integration, though experienced as a positive for many, may not be experienced in the same way for all. For in integrating identity, for example gay and work identity, the individual finds that the structures which encouraged them to hide are replaced by late modern structures which encourage openness. Leading to a situation wherein, as Ward and Winstanley (2003) suggest, there may be a loss of control over knowledge. Of course this is not to suggest that organisations, companies or institutions should stand in the way of the possibility of individual's openness about their sexuality. The freedom to speak without fear, when chosen, is obviously a positive and affirming thing. However identity integration, and openness about intimate life can be seen to have become idolised. There is within society a pressure to talk about sexual history, desires, fantasy figures, partners, and relationship difficulties (Plummer 1995, Furedi 2003). Sharing is healthy, keeping private is not. This societal insatiability for knowledge of intimate life can be seen in the extreme through 'outing' both by gay pressure groups, and the media. Such enforced coming out, or identity integration reflecting the sense of the right to know intimate stories.

Similarly identity integration risks identity compromise, which can have consequences both publicly and personally. Using the example of gay and Christian identities, this issue can be illustrated. Both Thumma (1991), and Wolkomir (2001) in their studies of support groups for gay Christians discussed the strategy of the support group to question the participant's evangelical identity, in order to find space to negotiate the meanings of texts from the bible which were seen to be prohibitive of gay identity. Through re-conceptualising evangelical identity, the men were thus given space to integrate being gay, and being Christian. However this is a distancing from previous 'evangelical' identity. Within this an aspect of compromise can be seen, although Thumma argues this is not a 'radical compromise' (1991: 345), as previous

understandings are negotiated in order to allow integration. When moving to a social presentation of identity this identity work requires the participants to renegotiate social connection with other evangelicals, and indeed with other gay men. If the identity of 'gay evangelical' is presented there is a risk that such a presentation enforces outsider status upon the individual. Thereby, the creation, and importantly, presentation of a 'gay evangelical' identity, risks being neither fully 'gay', nor 'evangelical'. As the thesis argued, such incorporation of identity may build boundaries rather than bridges. Boundarying the 'gay Christian', for example, from both Christian and gay communities, rather than bridging the gap between them. In essence, individuals may be both 'queering the straight', and 'straightening the queer'. Richardson discusses this in terms of integrating sexual identity within structures of morality and citizenship, which are seen as heteronormative. She writes

> The new story of the 'normal lesbian/gay', I would argue, has the potential to produce both new forms of social cohesion and to 'cause trouble' through creating new social divisions: between lesbians and gay men, between heterosexuals and across the heterosexual/homosexual divide. (Richardson 2004:403).

Integration, particularly in terms of its social performance does not reflect a total integration of identities as they are – 'gay' and 'Christian', rather it relates to a negotiation and compromise in order to create an identity 'Gay Christian' which is seen to be usable across situations. Whether this usability is true is questionable, for the 'risk' of being seen as not fully 'gay' or 'Christian' remains. Further whether the required compromises will fully represent the individual 'self' are not clear.

The 'Turn to Life' by Gay Clergy

The personal faith and clergy stories told by the respondents in the thesis were explored as a 'turn to life' Woodhead (2001), and illustrated both a 'turn to my life' and 'a turn to this life'. The discussion of these stories illustrated that their construction involved

266

conception of God, understanding of Christianity, denominational affiliation, the stories of others, theological exploration and personal experience.

Through the combination of these issues the clergy constructed a faith system which granted an affirmation unavailable from institutional Church, reflecting the findings of Wagner (1981), and Wolf (1989). The clergy's discussion of their positioning with and against the Church institution (Chapter 6), further illustrated their understanding of need for personal faith, not only for themselves, but for others. Importantly these negotiations by the respondents did not only reference the personal and/or the organisational, but also accessed 'social conversations about transcendent meaning' (Besecke 2005) in the construction of their faith narratives.

This three-way negotiation showed the clergy (i) Continue to place importance upon the Church, and their position within it. However it is arguable that this is used more as a 'cultural resource' (Lyon 2000) which is reflexively engaged with, rather than as a permanent home for faith. (ii) Place importance upon the experiences and stories of others. These were shown to influence theological understanding, acceptance of vocation, acceptance of sexuality, and ministry style. Such social conversations included theological writings, stories of friends, and stories of parishioners. Again these stories were reflexively engaged with, and the stories which influence are likely to be only a small percentage of the stories told, they are the 'successful' rather than the 'failed' stories (Plummer 1995). (iii) Personal biography, and personal experience shaped access to, acceptance of, and negotiation with social and organisational stories of faith (Yip 2002).

It is in this negotiation between tradition and innovation that the clergy can be seen as truly late-modern believers. They negotiate traditional structure and role with innovational personal belief. Further, as late-modern clergy they aid others, who choose access to Anglican structures to negotiate and find meaning for themselves.

Such evidence of the 'turn to life', I believe, raises important issues for the sociological study of religion, or perhaps more accurately, the sociological study of faith systems/ structures/ stories. The respondents in this study illustrate the need for negotiation in

faith. This can be further illustrated in Woodhead's discussion of 'conservative Christianity', wherein she illustrates that evidence for the 'turn to life' can be found in the theology of Pope John Paul II including his attention to discourses of 'democracy and human rights' (Woodhead 2001: 115). Woodhead also argues that increasing emphasis on subjectivity can be seen in conservative evangelical Christianity, arguing recent studies of such Evangelicalism illustrate:

> powerful descriptions of forms of religion in which experience, egalitarianism, and this-worldly development continue to eclipse older emphases on sacrifice and denial in this life in preparation for a more real life to come. (Woodhead 2001: 117)

Such discussion illustrates the centrality of negotiation, not only in more 'liberal' Christianity, but also within conservative thought.

At the other extreme the 'post-modern', 'individualised' spirituality of 'New Age' has been shown to in fact encompass structure, for example 'a socially sanctioned obligation of personal authenticity' (Aupers and Houtman 2006: 218), and central or connecting themes have been discussed (Heelas 1996). Therefore again within such faith/ belief negotiation of tradition and innovation can be seen.

My assertion, therefore, is that the distinction between 'spirituality' and 'religion', or 'individualised' and 'organised' belief, is less defined than it may appear. Therefore there is a need for a more 'critical humanist' approach to the study of faith systems and stories which emphasises the negotiation of 'tradition' and 'innovation' in the construction and management of personal stories of faith. The respondents' discussions of their own faith stories stand as examples of negotiated faith which incorporates the personal, the social, and the organisational in its construction and development.

Asking the Church to Listen

The chapter now presents a discussion of some of the more 'practical' findings of the thesis. Though the question of the acceptability of gay clergy has never been the focus of the thesis, my 'liberal' stance may be obvious. However, the focus was on the experiences of gay clergy who already live and work within the Church, and what can be learnt from their stories. This chapter now explores if lessons can be learned, by the Church, from the respondents.

Committed, Caring, Thoughtful and Gay

Two questions which may concern the Church are explored in the thesis. Firstly, 'Can gay men fulfil the role of the clergy?' The answer appears to be a resounding 'yes' – they can and they do. A second question 'Can being gay aid ministry?' in the view of the respondents at least, was again answered in the affirmative. This subsection offers four reasons why.

Firstly, the respondents were committed to their role. They identified with being clergy and had a strong belief that God called them to the work. Even in the face of opposition, and disillusionment with the Church, the clergy continued to be affirmed by their vocation, and committed to continuing within it.

Sense of vocation remains strong in the respondents' narratives. Their willingness to serve, their commitment to congregation, and their determination to continuation in the role were repeatedly discussed in connection to vocation. Of course this commitment was at times separated from the Church, as an institution. However commitment to God and sense of vocation was strong.

Secondly, the clergy were caring. Despite stresses and strains, the clergy continued to feel connected to their community, attempting to care for and to make a difference both within and outside of the parish. The clergy were aware of the importance of their

269

responsibilities within the parish and connected this with their sense of 'self' (Christopherson 1994). Such care was both focussed on the welfare of the parish, and also on the ability to make connections for parishioners with God.

Thirdly, the respondents illustrated their thoughtful approach to ministry, this was illustrated in terms of thought about what was best for the congregation, what was needed by the congregation from the Sunday worship, and how best to reach out to the community. As George was quoted as saying earlier, there is a need for consideration of the fine line between 'loving' and 'indulging', and thoughtfulness concerning need was seen as an issue of importance by the clergy. Further to this, the need for awareness of sexuality, and negotiation of identity in presentation of self as clergy meant that clergy had to remain thoughtful in situations where others may not have been so aware, reminiscent of Goffman's (1968) discussion of stigmatised identity. This thoughtfulness, stood in the way of presentation of clergy role becoming habit. Similarly negotiations of 'gay' and 'clergy' self-identity have been discussed throughout the thesis, these mean thoughtfulness is not purely concerned with protecting self, but also thoughtfulness about the meaning of the clergy role, vocation, and indeed, the role of sexuality and its influence (including the need for awareness of innovations in theology).

Fourthly, the respondents felt their position as gay men added to their role as clergy. For some more hidden gay men the influence of their sexuality was felt to be in their connection with those who are marginalized. As well as this some saw their position as clergy continue into their 'private' lives, being able to bring the message of the Church, and stand as an example of the possibility of living as both gay and Christian.

For other respondents, particularly those who were more open with congregation about their sexuality, their lives as gay men were seen to add to their ministry in other ways as well. Specifically, in terms of supporting congregation members who were struggling with issues of sexuality themselves, or who were struggling to come to terms with the knowledge of gay relations. In addition, a number of clergy felt that they were able to

be, an example to their congregation, through which the congregation may become more accepting, more inclusive, which the respondents viewed as a positive influence.

Each of these issues were seen by respondents as illustrations of their ability to undertake the role of clergy, and further to undertake it well. Above and beyond discussions of the acceptability of gay and lesbian clergy, such stories illustrate the value of the role current gay clergy perform within the Church. Such stories should not be missing from current debates. Of course, such stories do not necessarily answer the question of whether or not gay clergy should be affirmed and welcomed by the Church. However, the respondents' stories also spoke to this question, as the chapter goes on to show.

Should Gay Men and Lesbians be Clergy?

The current crisis in the Anglican Church stems from one question. Bound up in debates about theology and tradition, the central question remains 'Should gay men and lesbians be clergy?'

This one question threatens the very fabric of the Anglican Communion. In an attempt to quell debate the Church has called for a time of 'listening', which was reasserted in the '*Windsor Report*' (The Lambeth Commission on the Communion 2004). However, the question now to ask is 'Listen to what'? Many of the respondents in this study continued to express fear of the consequences of speaking out. The wording of Church documents does not subdue this fear, as '*Issues in Human Sexuality*' (House of Bishops 1991) for example, emphasised that though debate could occur, action was prohibited. Therefore the debate which can occur must do so without reference to action.

Theoretical and theological debate can only go so far. The current study, though primarily academic, allows a platform through which gay clergy's stories can be told. These stories, as illustrated above, emphasise the clergy's current working within the Church, and their care and commitment to the welfare of its members.

The respondents' own understandings that they should be clergy is unlikely to bring about a revolution in Church thinking. However areas of the respondents' stories can add to, and should be incorporated, in the current debate. Again four reasons for this are presented below.

Firstly, the respondents' experiences of call relate a believed connection to God. Their ordination, illustrates the Churches acceptance of the quality of this call. These stories of call therefore should be explored and considered by the institutional church in the continued debate.

Secondly, though not particularly adding to theological discussion of prohibitive texts, the respondents' experiences illustrate a questioning of the 'plain word' approach. Recognition of this approach as interpretation opens the door to discussion of existing and emerging interpretations. Personal approaches to such texts should therefore be listened to, and incorporated within debate.

Thirdly, through attention to the respondents' stories of their sexual morality, Church debates must be informed by the fact that these frameworks are, more often than not, theologically grounded, and are influenced by individual stories of belief. Therefore way must be found to incorporate stories of action within the current debate.

Finally, the acceptance a number of respondents have found in their local Church community, and the importance of the work undertaken by gay men within the Church was shown in the respondents' stories. Again, these issues should inform debate, including discussions of specific ways in which the ministry of non-heterosexuals may add to the work of the Church.

In addition to these issues the stories of the clergy serve as a reminder of the inclusive and diverse tradition of Anglicanism. In terms of the 'gay issue' this has been raised before (Jones 2005; Tanner 2006). The importance of this aspect of the communion was seen by respondents, but it was also seen as disappearing. Bates (2004) has discussed that the current crisis revolves around the struggle for power in the Church. He argues that the 'evangelical wing' of the Church has singled out the 'gay issue' as

one over which it can assert its power. Gay clergy being the focus of an issue within which the Church has lost sight of its previous celebration of diversity.

Where the Church can go from here is difficult to imagine. A split appears to be becoming more likely (Yip and Keenan 2004), as individual churches withhold quotas, and factions of the world Church distance themselves from the leadership of Canterbury. Perhaps it is within such a split that a reconnection with Church can be found. However, despite their distancing from the Church the respondents emphasised their continued identification with the Church and their wish for it to continue. Wherever the Church goes from here, it is hoped that continued debates will make reference to the stories the respondents told. Or find a way in which the respondents can safely and freely speak for themselves, perhaps through an invitation for anonymous letters, or a carefully managed series of interviews. Importantly a repetition of events at Lambeth 1998, where a presentation by gay and lesbian clergy was cancelled (Heskins 2005) must be avoided. This thesis evidences that gay clergy are willing to tell their stories, the Church must find a way to access these stories in a way which removes fear and threat.

The Changing Clergy – Recommendations for the Church

There were two specific issues raised by the respondents which talk to the experiences of clergy (regardless of sexuality) in late modernity. These were (i) negotiation of personal and professional belief, and (ii) negotiation of vocation and profession.

Distance between personal and professional spirituality, for the respondents did not purely arise with relation to the incorporation of gay sexuality. Issues of theological understanding were similarly present, as were understandings of role as enabler of others. This distance therefore cannot be seen as peculiar to gay clergy. The gap between professional and personal spirituality must be recognised by the Church.

The negotiation of vocational and professional, is again an issue which may affect the clergy, regardless of sexuality. The vocational, with which the clergy most identified

was seen to come from God, and be to do with fulfilling God's call. The professional on the other hand was seen to emerge from the Church, and from congregation. The negotiation between these aspects of role was messy, and was seen to bring about a situation of excessive expectations, and an idealised view of what the clergyman should be. Despite the defined hierarchical nature of the Church of England the role of the parish priest remains difficult to define, due to the lack of structured obligation, and job description. This for some respondents leads to a difficulty in setting boundaries. Individuals feel required to meet expectations of the congregation, to be involved in the majority of Church activities, and to take responsibility for areas of Church life where positions are unfilled. It is tempting to suggest therefore that the Church should supply greater structure, should give set goals and targets. However in doing so the very usefulness of the lack of structure is lost. As a number of respondents were shown to believe in the thesis, this lack of structure was useful in terms of vocational understanding, and the need to be the 'yeast in the dough'. Clergy had to be both active and reactive in the parish, and through unstructured vocational work many achieved greatest role satisfaction. Therefore in order to suggest possible action by the Church to aid the clergy it is important to find ways of supporting and affirming the vocational role, whilst providing support for the professional role.

I make three recommendations for actions which would help the Church to meet the needs of its clergy on these issues:

    (i)   Space for expression and exploration of faith should be made available to clergy. Clergy should be further encouraged to make use of available retreats and sabbaticals.

    (ii)   The introduction of compulsory life-long learning. Providing training for clergy which is reactive to changing pressures of the clerical role, and allows a more effective approach to professional requirements leaving more space for vocational work.

    (iii)   The introduction of a confidential counselling service. This service should be outsourced from the Church providing access to independent

counselling for the clergy. Such a resource would allow clergy support and advice, both for themselves in dealing with their workloads. It would also provide 'expert' guidance on what supports and services are available for parishioners. Outsourcing this service from the Church itself means clergy may feel more able to talk through personal issues which for reasons of fear may be hidden from Church authority.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are many areas where further research will be useful. A number of recommendations for future research are provided below.

1. Studies of gay clergy of any denomination remain few. It is hoped that studies of gay clergy from various denominations will continue to emerge in the research literature, and that larger numbers of clergy will be willing to take part in the studies.

2. There is a need for a study of lesbian clergy, of any denomination. Lesbian clergy face discrimination both in terms of gender and sexuality within aspects of Church. A study which explores these issues would greatly add to the study of non-heterosexual clergy.

3. There is a need for studies of congregation members of churches with gay clergy. In order to fully understand the role of, and acceptance of gay clergy currently within·the Church it is necessary to explore congregational reaction to them. Obviously such research is likely to be limited to congregations with 'out' gay clergy, which may stand in the way of gaining a 'full' understanding. However any such study would provide a valuable addition to existing work.

4. There is an increasing literature on clergy wives, husbands, and children, however the experiences of the partners of gay clergy remain understudied. In accessing the partners of both 'out' and 'closeted' clergy such research would provide valuable information

related to the study of gay clergy, clergy relationships, sex and secrecy, and gay relationships.

5. The research has illustrated the need for further studies on the clergy, not in terms of the functions of the clergy, nor the levels of stress or anxiety emerging from the role. Rather there is need for further study of clergy in relation to call, connection to Church, the importance of vocation, and the negotiation of public and personal faith stories.

6. This study has illustrated the negotiated nature of sexual morality. This underlines the need for further study of stories of morality within the membership of organised religion. Particularly of interest would be a study of young believers morality stories.

7. This study has illustrated the value of diary research in sociological study. It is hoped that this method will become more widely used in future study.

Summary

This chapter has concluded the current study by exploring the implications of a number of the research findings.

The chapter illustrated that identity creation, management and presentation are multi-layered processes, which incorporated negotiations between threads of identity narrative. In illustrating this the analogy of tapestry was put forward, and used to further explain the negotiations involved in areas highlighted by the research data. In doing so it was illustrated that the analogy of tapestry can be employed in discussing the minutiae, the 'big picture' and the flexibility of identity work.

Following this the chapter discussed three of the central findings of the thesis' discussion of respondents' identity stories. It was shown that essentialism requires continued attention in the social sciences. For it is central to individuals' understandings of self.

Secondly, respondents' desires for public 'identity integration' were discussed in relation to the risks such projects may have. Of course identity integration is positive for many, and to be encouraged for those who wish to undertake such a project. The chapter highlighted that despite the positive nature of social identity integration, risk remains great. This risk was seen in two ways. Firstly, in terms of encouraging an attitude of 'integration good, separation bad'. Secondly, the process of identity integration, may for some, require identity compromise. This compromise distancing the individual from all of the identities they are endeavouring to incorporate.

With reference to the studies findings concerning religious stories, the chapter illustrated the increasing tension between tradition and innovation in the religious world. The chapter argued that such increase blurred the boundaries between 'religion' and 'spirituality'. Through this it is hoped more studies will concentrate on 'faith stories'.

The chapter concluded with a discussion of issues relating to Church. This discussion presented findings from the research which were directly applicable to Church debate concerning gay clergy. Within this discussion the chapter emphasised the need for the Church to find ways to listen to gay clergy stories. It is also hoped that the Church will listen to the recommendations this thesis has made for the benefit of all of its clergy.

The thesis has illustrated the dynamic negotiations which are undertaken by gay clergy in their identity work. In doing so the thesis has allowed increased knowledge of the lives and experiences of gay male clergy in the Church of England. Further, the findings of the study have added to knowledge, and had implications for the study of identity, the study of sexuality and the study of religion. Due to the lack of previous literature this thesis has been required to be largely exploratory in nature. It is hoped further research will follow, building on the findings of this study.
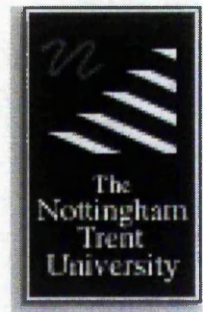
A Study Of The Lives of Gay Male Anglican Clergy

Request for Participants

Hi, I'm Michael Keenan and I am currently based at Nottingham Trent University studying for a PhD. This leaflet is designed as a short introduction to the purpose of my research and as a request for participants.

Gay clergy stand at the apex of what is seen as a conflict between personal religiosity and personal sexuality by many, negotiating their lives in terms of beliefs and sexuality, and, doing this as a figurehead or example within the Church. Today gay clergy in the Anglican Church are very much in the news, and the question of non-heterosexuality in the clergy is fast becoming one of the most important moral questions for the church itself.
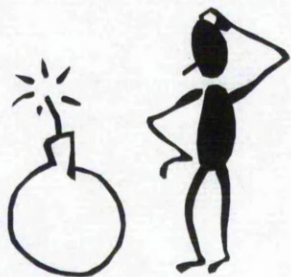
However, despite the importance of this question there remains little empirical research into the lives of gay clergymen. This research aims to access the stories of gay clergymen in order to examine how the three aspects of their life – spirituality, sexuality and professional identity are negotiated in day to day life. In doing this it is hoped to provide an academic investigation into the role, or position of the clergy today, as well as providing accounts from ministers themselves about issues in their lives at a time when misunderstanding and sensationalism about the lives of gay clergy is rife.

This is an invitation for gay male parochial clergy within the Church of England (more accurately leaders of congregations) both out and hidden, single and in relationships, celibate and sexually active to take part in this research.

Do you have a story to tell? Would you be interested in becoming part of this research? If you are interested in taking part please do not hesitate to contact me (details provided overleaf).

Please be aware that your confidentiality is important and that all personal details will be anonymised in all dissemination of the work, which will include my final PhD thesis as well as possible research papers and conference presentations. I will be the sole person with access to the original evidence provided.

The Research

The research uses a slimming down approach and therefore involvement beyond stage 1 depends on selection and your willingness to take part.

Stage 1 - Questionnaire: You will be sent a questionnaire. This will cover aspects of your life such as sexuality, religiosity, professional life, sex, morality, theology, God, relationships and the church.

Stage 2 – Interview: If you are willing you will be interviewed. This will be based upon information gained from questionnaires and will last around 1-2 hours.

Stage 3 – Diary keeping: You will be asked to keep a diary for two weeks. This will record personal reflections on events you see as significant.

Stage 4 – Interview: Diary-Keepers will be asked to participate in a second interview. Focusing on issues emerging from diary entries.

Would you like more information? Would you like to take part? My contact details are provided overleaf. I really hope to hear from you and will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Thank you for reading I hope to hear from you. If you are not interested or able to take part please consider passing this leaflet on.

Michael Keenan

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<u>Reply Slip</u>

Yes
 I would like to receive more information/ I would like to take part

Name: _____

Address: _____

             _____

             _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Please return to above address or email/phone using above details.
                    *This leaflet was originally sent as one double-sided A4 sheet

Questionnaire on the lives of Gay men in the Anglican Clergy

Thank you for volunteering to take part in this research. This questionnaire is designed to collect information on your personal, professional and religious lives. The information collected will be analysed and used as part of my PhD study, as well as presented to a range of outlets (e.g. gay, lesbian and bisexual organisations, academics and other interested parties).

In the questionnaire you are asked to express your opinion by selecting appropriate boxes, agreeing or disagreeing with statements and also writing more lengthy answers to questions. Although you are encouraged to stick to the structure of the questionnaire as much as possible, if you feel what you wish to say is not covered please feel free to answer in a more appropriate way. Also if you feel unable to answer any questions please leave them out.

Due to the complexity of the issues being investigated the questionnaire is quite lengthy. Please feel free to take your time and come back to the questionnaire as many times as you feel necessary.

There are some numbered sheets at the end of the questionnaire for answering the corresponding questions. There are also some blank sheets for notes / feedback / or to continue answering questions, if you do this please write the question number at the beginning.

Be assured that all information you supply will be anonymised and I will be the only person with access to this. Please be as open as possible in the answers you supply.

As detailed in the leaflet you received there are further stages to this research. Please complete the form enclosed stating whether or not you would be willing to take further part in the research.

A postage paid envelope has also been included for the return of the form and questionnaire.

I am extremely grateful for your important contribution to this research. Thank you very much for your effort, time and energy.

Michael Keenan

Section 1 – Personal Beliefs

This section of the questionnaire is designed to explore how you perceive your personal beliefs and what they mean to you

1.1 Do you define your belief system as Christian?	**Yes [ ] No [ ]** If yes, go to question 1.3
1.2 If no, how do you define your belief system?	_____ *please go to question 1.7*
1.3 How long have you seen yourself as Christian (in years)?	_____
1.4 Can you Briefly describe the events that led to your acceptance of Christ?	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
1.5 What does being a Christian mean to you (check as many as apply)?	**Belief in God** [ ] **Christ as Saviour** [ ] **Morally upright life** [ ] **Spreading the gospel** [ ] **Individual fulfilment** [ ]
1.6 Is there anything else you see as important to a Christian life?	_____ _____ _____
1.7 Do you find your belief system empowering?	**Yes [ ] No [ ] Not Sure [ ]**
1.8 Do you see your religiousness as predominantly	**Personal [ ] Social [ ] Not Sure[ ]**
1.9 How do you see your religious beliefs relating to the rest of your personal life (please indicate along where along the line you feel you most fit)?	**Completely** → **Usually fit** → **Usually** **Inter-related** **Separate** [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ] [ ]
1.10 Are you a member of any Christian organisations (including Gay Christian organisations)?	**Yes [ ] (Go to question 1.11)** **No [ ] (Go to question 2.12)**

1.11 If yes, which Organisations, and how long have you been involved?	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____
1.12 If no, is there any reason for this?	_____ _____ _____
1.13 Are you glad to be a Christian	**Please answer on Sheet provided at the end of this Questionnaire**

Section 2 – Professional Role

This section of the questionnaire is designed to explore your attitudes and opinions on and towards your role as clergyman

2.1 Why did you become a member of the clergy, can you explain your call. (are there events you would view as significant)?	_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
2.2 How do you view your role as clergyman (please check all that apply)?	Leader [ ] Servant of God [ ] Servant of Congregation [ ] Example [ ] Manager [ ] Confessor [ ] Counsellor [ ] Other (please indicate) _____
2.3 Please place these aspects of your role in order of importance (1 being most important, 5 being least important)	Pastoral work [ ] Worship Leader [ ] Christian example [ ] Teacher [ ] Social authority figure [ ]
2.4 Do you feel your congregation do not understand the difficulties involved in being a clergyman?	Yes [ ] No [ ]

2.5 Do you feel your congregants expectations of you as a clergyman are excessive?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

2.6 What aspects of your professional role do you enjoy, or feel have positive impact on your life (Feel free to use examples from above, or anything from personal experience.)?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2.7 What aspects of your professional role do you dislike, or feel have a negative impact on your life?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2.8 Have you considered leaving the priesthood?

Never	[ ]
Once	[ ]
Occasionally	[ ]
Often	[ ]

2.8b If Yes, Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2.9 Where do you gain professional support from?

Church Hierarchy	[ ]
Peers	[ ]
Clergy Groups	[ ]
Partner / Friends	[ ]
Other (please specify)	_____

2.10 Are you a member of any clergy groups / organisations?	Yes [ ] (Go to question 2.11) No [ ] (Go to question 2.12)
2.11 If Yes, which and for how long?	1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ 5_____
2.12 If No, is there a reason for this?	_____ _____ _____
2.13 Are you glad to be a priest?	**Please answer on sheet at the end of this questionnaire**

Section 3 – Sexuality

This section of the questionnaire is designed to explore how you view your sexuality

3.1 At what age were you first aware of your gayness /homosexuality?	_____
3.2 How long have you accepted your gayness / homosexuality?	_____
3.3 How would you describe your feelings towards your gayness / homosexuality?	**Accepting** *(completely at ease)* [ ] **Tolerant** *(not ideal. I put up with it)* [ ] **Negative** *(would change if possible)* [ ]
3.4 Does this differ to how you felt previously?	_____ _____ _____ _____
3.5 How do you view homosexuality?	**It is morally equal to heterosexuality** [ ] **It is a God-given sexuality second to heterosexuality** [ ] **It is sinful** [ ]

286

3.5 *Are you open about your homosexuality with the following?*

	Yes	Partially	No
Your family	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Your friends	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Your congregation	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Your diocesan peers (fellow clergy)	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Your bishop	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

3.6. Are you sexually active (tick as many as appropriate)?

Yes, commited relationship [ ]
Yes, casually [ ]
Yes, alone [ ]
Yes, internet/ phone partners [ ]
No [ ]
Other / Not sure _____

3.7 Would you, or do you find a celibate life fulfilling?

Yes [ ]   No [ ]

3.8 Would you say your homosexuality is .....

Inborn [ ]
God-given [ ]
Chosen [ ]
Unsure [ ]

Please elaborate

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3.9 Are you a member of any secular gay or LGBT groups and societies?

Yes   [ ] (Go to question 3.9)
No   [ ] (Go to question 3.10)

3.10 If yes, which and for how long?

1_____
2_____
3_____
4_____
5_____
(Go to Question 3.11)

3.11 If no, is there a reason for this?

_____
_____
_____

3.12 Are you 'glad to be gay'?

Please answer on sheet at end of questionnaire

Section 4 – Church and Sexuality

This section explores the relationship you have found between the church and sexuality. Many questions ask you to describe your experiences, please be as candid as possible

	Agree	Disagree	Don't know
4.1 Please indicate how you feel about the following statements **Christianity is homophobic**	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
The Church of England is homophobic	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

4.2 If you agree with either of the above statements, or feel aspects of the church are unaffirming towards your sexuality please explain why you choose to remain in a position of authority in the church.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.3 What do you feel is the impact of your homosexuality on your faith?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.4 What do you feel is the impact of your faith on your homosexuality?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.5 Outside of your role as clergyman (before ordination or in other congregations) have you in the past had positive experiences around issues of your sexuality within the church (please elaborate)?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.6 Outside of your role as clergyman have you in the past had <u>negative</u> experiences around issues of your sexuality within the church (please elaborate)?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.7 Does your congregation know about your homosexuality?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

4.8 If no, do you purposefully hide this? Why?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.9 Have you taken a stance regarding homosexuality(ie taught, preached), if so what was this?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.10 In your opinion does this stance agree with the opinions of the majority of your congregation?

Yes   [ ]
No   [ ]
not applicable   [ ]

4.11 Within your church do you know of any episodes of negativity regarding peoples sexuality? If so please elaborate

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.12 Within your church do you know of any episodes of positivity regarding peoples sexuality? If so please elaborate

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.13 Do you feel your opinions on sexual morality are given due consideration by your congregation?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

4.13b If no, is this because of your sexuality?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

4.14 If your diocesan colleagues and authorities know about your homosexuality what are their opinions on this?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.15 If your diocesan colleagues and authorities do not know about your homosexuality what do you imagine their opinions to be?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.16 Has your sexuality affected your professional commitments?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4.17 Has your professional life affected your sexuality?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Section 5 – Attitude Survey

The following section is designed to explore your opinion on certain statements, please consider each statement and answer from your personal standpoint.

Theology	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Certain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
God is a living being	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
God is within	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
God is a gendered being	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
God is love	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
God is judging	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
God is vengeful	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
God is outside of us	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
At least partially – God is gay	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Scripture is the word of God made manifest	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
The bible is a guide which we must interpret	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Christians have a responsibility to stand as an example to others	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Christianity is the only true way of knowing God	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Jesus was born of a virgin mother	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
The resurrection was physical	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Sex	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Certain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Sex is good	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Sex is fun	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Certain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Sex should be part of a committed relationship	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Sex is a bond	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Sex outside a relationship is acceptable	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Sex is a purely physical phenomenon	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
An active sexuality is an important part of my identity	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
For me a celibate life is not a full one	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Christianity, church and sexuality	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Certain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Heterosexual marriage is the ideal Christian relationship	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Heterosexuality and homosexuality are equally moral sexualities	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Sexual morality is a matter of individual choice	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Genital acts attract excessive interest from religious authorities	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
The church is ignorant to the reality of non-heterosexuality	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Gay males are particularly singled out for persecution in the church	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Certain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Requests from hierarchy for gay and lesbian believers to lead a celibate life are wrong	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
The opinions and rules of the church are not necessarily those of Christianity	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
God created homosexuality	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Abortion is incompatible with Christian life	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
'Sexual experimentation' is incompatible with Christian life	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Pornography is exploitative of both male and female bodies	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Body and body-centred desires are part of my spiritual self	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Traditional understandings of biblical teaching on homosexuality are inaccurate	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Sex within a committed relationship is more Christian than that which is not	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Homosexuality can be cured	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Profession	Strongly agree	Agree	Not Certain	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Lack of job description positively affects my work	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Never-ending nature of work negatively affects my life	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
I am constantly under surveillance from the congregation	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
There is a lack of support for clergymen	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
I get on well with my diocesan peers	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
I get on well with church hierarchy	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
My work does not affect my relationships	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
My sexuality does not affect my work	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Being gay makes being a clergyman more difficult	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Being a clergyman makes being gay more difficult	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
I can be myself carrying out my professional roles	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
My Christianity helps me in my role as clergyman	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
I am a gay clergyman	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
My personal and professional moralities match	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

Section 6 – Personal Details

This section is designed to gain some more information about your current situation, please answer the questions as accurately as possible.

6.1 Are you Married?	Yes [ ] No [ ]
6.2 If no, have you ever been married?	Yes [ ] No [ ]
6.3 Have you any children?	Yes [ ] No [ ]
6.4 If yes, how many?	_____
6.5 Are you in a relationship?	**Heterosexual** [ ] **Same-sex** [ ] **Both** [ ] **None** [ ]
Is your relationship sexually open?	Yes [ ] No [ ]
6.6 Do you live with your partner?	Yes [ ] No [ ]
If more than one partner which do you live with?	_____
6.7 If Yes is this within clerical accommodation?	Yes [ ] No [ ]
6.8 How do you define your sexuality?	**Gay** [ ] **Homosexual** [ ] **Prefer not to label my sexuality** [ ] **Other** _____
6.9 Please state your age in years	_____
6.10 Please indicate which of the following best describes your ethnic origin	**White** [ ] **Mixed** [ ] **Asian or Asian British** [ ] **Black or Black British** [ ] **Chinese** [ ] **Other**_____

6.11 Highest Academic Qualification (not including clerical training)	GCSE/ O'Level [ ] A Level [ ] Diploma [ ] First Degree [ ] Master's Degree [ ] Doctorate [ ] Other _____ [ ]
6.12 What is your annual income? (to the nearest £1000)	_____
6.13 What is your professional title?	_____
6.14 Length of time as head of congregation(in years)	_____
6.15 Approximate numerical size of current congregation	_____
6.16 Please state city/ town/ or area	_____
6.17 Does your church have UPA status?	Yes [ ] No [ ]

Congratulations, you have reached the end! Thank you so much for your efforts, I hope you have found the process of filling in the questionnaire interesting.
Thanks again

Michael.

Appendix 3

Diary Guidelines

Thank you so much for agreeing to keep this diary. To help you complete it these are some suggestions for what should be recorded and how. This is a reflexive diary and so the major aim of the diary is to capture your thoughts and considerations about the day, rather than recording what you were doing every minute.

I understand that strictly limiting the days to keep the diary may mean that there are events, moments and incidents which you would like to discuss that occur outside the two weeks. However when we meet for the interview there will be space to discuss these.

There is no maximum or minimum amount time to be spent completing this diary, rather it will depend upon the events of the day and how long you wish to spend doing it. The diary is left plain to allow you to complete it in whatever way seems best to you.

When filling out the diary please write the date at the top of a new page for each day, and please only use one side of the paper (don't worry you are not expected to fill the book!).

Events to be recorded are not limited to your working life, but also events outside of this. The diary is designed to be a space for your thoughts and reflections (both positive and negative) and will hopefully capture both events which occur, in terms of your day to day live, and your reflections thereon.

Possible designs
1. Give a brief description of the events of the day, then continuing to discuss certain events, or feelings which occurred more reflectively.

2. Concentrating on the major events you wish to, you may prefer to write a more chronological report of the day.

Possible subjects to cover

Meetings (positive or negative) with congregation, hierarchy or others, days off (what did you do), time with friends or partners, sex, going out, time with family, professional commitments, time alone? Prayer, and anything else you feel is significant.

In discussing these events please consider what they meant to you, did they make you reflect on your professional, religious or sexual life?

Please only record what you are comfortable recording. I am available by phone or email if you have any questions or would like more guidance during the two weeks.

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