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Working Lives of Men Aged 60 and Older

When I was 17 ... I got a job as a cadet reporter on the [newspaper] and was a journalist in Toowoomba for about ten years. I got hugely involved in the first World Refugee Year ... Although I had not at 17 started off with any social conscience, somewhere in my 20s I developed one ... and [in the 1960s] became preoccupied with the refugee issue.
(Drake, aged 77, Melbourne)

Introduction

This chapter examines what the 25 men from the old age cohort, aged 60 and older, said about work and their working lives. The jobs the men had over the course of their working lives are explored as are their experiences in the workplace and whether being homosexual had any effect on their jobs or careers. The two chapters that follow examine also what the men from the two younger age cohorts felt about work and their working lives. The two younger age cohorts are the middle cohort comprising men aged 45–60 and the young cohort comprising men aged 45

and under. Together, these three chapters provide a basis for comparing and contrasting generational effects on gay men's experience of work.

Born 1924–1957, the men aged 60 and older reached their social/sexual maturity between the mid 1940s and the late 1970s.¹ According to the definitions used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), this age cohort included men from three generations. In the ABS's nomenclature, anyone born before 1926 belonged to the 'oldest' generation and in this cohort there was one such man. Anyone born 1926–1946, belonged to the 'Lucky' generation and here there were 16 men. And anyone born 1946–1966, belonged to the 'Baby Boomer' generation of whom there were eight.² The bulk of men in the cohort belonged therefore to the lucky generation and the eight youngest to the baby boomers.

Because of their relative old age, many of the men from this cohort can provide a retrospective account of a completed working life, which is different from the narratives the men from the younger age cohorts provide in the next two chapters. Also, the working histories of these men aged 60+ offer a perspective on change—both a changing social world and the changing world of work, about which there is more discussion later in this chapter and the next two chapters.

The work histories of these men included being at work during war-time and in the 'long boom' that followed the end of World War II when western countries experienced an extended period of relative high rates of full-time, male employment. During the long boom, governments rewarded procreating married couples and the nuclear family by way of tax advantages and other subsidies.³ The period coincided also with the outbreak of the Cold War and a decade of acute homophobia when, for example, gay men in Australia, England the USA and other western countries were excluded from working in 'sensitive' occupations, the bureaucracy and media, or were hounded from them if already employed.⁴ At that time and until the advent of the gay liberation movement in the early 1970s, same-sex attracted men were called and referred to one another as 'camp'.⁵ This term is used interchangeably with 'gay', 'homosexual', and 'same-sex attracted' in this chapter.

The era during which these men aged 60 and older developed their careers, that is, the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s included the period that saw the creation of the women's movement, Black power, the anti-War

movement, and the gay liberation and environmental movements. They were young adults, therefore, in a period of marked social change. Their work histories are of particular interest not only because they had to shape them in the context of two quite different periods, the first being a period of relative social repression that followed the end of World War II and the second being a period of marked social change and liberation that occurred in the 1960s but also because they shaped them during the long boom when permanence and security were principal features of work and the workplace.

Most of the men from this cohort were middle class. Seventeen men had incomes ranging from the equivalent in 2009 terms of US\$10,000 to US\$50,000; four from US\$50,000 to US\$70,000; and four from US\$70,000 to US\$200,000 per annum.⁶ In other words, more than two thirds of the men's incomes were spread between low income and low-middle income.

There are two sections to this chapter. The first looks at the work histories of the men aged 60 and older and the second is a case study of three men's experience of being 'out' at work. As mentioned in Chap. 1, historians and sociologists have argued that in the 1950s and 1960s gay men's working lives could be negatively affected by repressive social mores and this lessened as social tolerance increased. In the first section, the men's working lives were examined for any evidence that they were affected by the repressive period that followed the end of World War II or the more tolerant period in the late 1960s and 1970s in the West. Three principal narratives were identified in the men's work histories and they are: 'work as work'; 'care or creativity'; 'social or political change'. Work as work referred to an approach to work that saw it as the accepted transition from childhood (or teenage) to adulthood, which, in the case of most men, meant greater independence as a result of engaging in paid employment. Care or creativity combines two fields of work where gay men have found work.

While occupations included in the care field (counselling, nursing, teaching) have little in common with those in the creative field (acting, architecture, poetry, tapestry weaving), the connection was based on an assumption that these fields were more welcoming to women and gay men, less affected by sexism or homophobia.⁷ Social or political change

referred to work that intentionally or coincidentally contributed to social change or political justice. And like work-as-work, social or political change could just as likely explain the working lives of straight men as those of the men interviewed for this book.

In the second section, the work histories of three men from the all-Australian sample are examined for what they said about how easy or difficult it was for camp men to manage their public self in the workplace. I drew on the all-Australian sample because it was only there that I found men who referred to their sexuality when telling the story of their work life. None of the men did so who belonged to the 60-and-older age cohort from the international, Anglophone sample. The fact that none did underlines another argument in this chapter, which is that the repressive period in which the men came of age and lived their lives as young adults did not permit any open expression or discussion of sexuality, especially from sexual minorities. In relation to the three from the all-Australian sample whose stories are examined below, none was out to workmates when young men. Two came out in later life, the other did not. And their accounts say a great deal about the effect homophobia has had on the working lives of same-sex attracted men in western liberal societies.

Work Narratives

The old cohort comprised 25 men who were aged 61–87. Principal features of this age cohort were as follows. Almost half the cohort had university qualifications and thirteen had secondary school or trade school qualifications. More than half the men were retired at the time of interview and one man was HIV positive.

Their working lives were mostly spent in education or retail and small business. Eight men worked in education, which included school teaching and teaching at universities. The next largest group was a group of seven men who worked in retail or small business. After these, were smaller groups comprising, for example, two men who worked in transport, two men who worked in human services and two men who had clerical jobs.⁸

All the men interviewed for this book were asked the same question: 'Please tell me the story of your working life and what you enjoyed about work'. Almost without fail, the men provided a semi-structured narrative when they answered the question, starting with their first job and ending with their final job or account of the start of retirement. Not every man included in his narrative what he enjoyed about work but was able to do so when prompted. The men provided meaningful work narratives of the type that Richard Sennett argued were typical of working people's lives before the transformation that occurred in the 1990s under new capital and marked the beginning of the period of acute precariousness, which I would argue is now affecting people's working lives more than before.⁹

Analysis of their answers was guided by a desire to understand how the men regarded work, its purpose in their lives, and what they enjoyed about it. Looking for the meaning, purpose and enjoyment in work might seem an odd conjunction but the men's work histories revealed multiple dimensions of work and being a worker. These included, for example, work as identity (teacher, train driver, concrete pourer), emotional/physical investment ('just a job' or 'my life's meaning'), pains and pleasures (dealing with other people, raising consciousnesses).

The analysis yielded three principal narratives regarding work's purpose or value, which were as follows. First, the stories that a group of twelve men related about their working lives suggested a pragmatic, no-nonsense approach to employment. This narrative was known as 'work as work' and represented the approach to work of people who understood work as a transition from school or university to paid employment and became the means of supporting the individual and his/her partner and/or family. Secondly, a group of ten men related stories about care work or creative work where they had made their careers. Care or creativity is the name for this work narrative. In this age cohort, it represented the work histories of men who worked in caring occupations such as nursing or counselling or jobs requiring pastoral care such as teaching at school or university as well as those of men who worked in creative occupations such as in the arts or crafts. Thirdly, three men related how work provided them with an opportunity to improve the lot of other citizens, help bring about social change and greater social

justice. This was the third work narrative. The three work narratives are examined in order.

Work as Work

The work histories of the twelve men examined in this section had one thing in common: how the men saw or understood work. For them, it was simply something they did and had to do. They did not look for or expect to find anything special in their work day or working life and accepted work as a normal fact of life. It does not mean the men would do anything, nor that they did not seek enjoyment. It does mean that they do not identify themselves with their job. And as well, as the discussion shows, the work they did could be meaningful and often was because of the relationships they developed in the workplace.

The men's occupations included bricklayer, electrician, librarian, photographer, psychologist, sales representative and store man, in other words, a combination of working-class and middle-class jobs. Four of the men were from Auckland, four from Melbourne, two from Sydney, one man was from Manchester, and another was from New York. Two were in their 80s, six in their 70s, and four in their 60s.

A breakdown of the group according to how many jobs they had over the course of their working life showed that half the group had many jobs, four men had had one job only, and two men had had a couple of jobs. There are two reasons for using the number of jobs interviewees had over their work histories as a means of distinguishing between the men in this group. First, it is a rough measure of career consistency and secondly, it is a rough measure of the type of work histories camp men and men who were same-sex attracted shaped during World War II and the post-war decades.¹⁰

The term 'career' has middle-class connotations but does not apply only to middle-class workers. For example, a man from this group was a bricklayer all his life, so it could be argued that bricklaying was his career while another man from the group had at least nine different jobs in five different countries before settling on psychology as a means of earning an income in late middle age. The fact that many men from this

age cohort were able to change jobs easily and to shape their working lives around different jobs was more a measure of the economic climate that prevailed when they were young men and middle-aged men than it does about their sexuality. In the next section, the work histories of the men are examined in the following order. First, the six men who had many jobs and secondly, the four men who had one job only and the two men who had a couple of jobs.

The men whose work histories comprised many jobs were born between 1927 and 1943. If the oldest from this group had his first job at 16, he would have started work during World War II and the youngest would have done so in the late 1950s. Their working lives began, therefore, during or on the cusp of a significant period of employment and development in Australia, which historian Stuart Macintyre called the 'Golden Age':

There were jobs for all men who wanted them. People lived longer, in greater comfort. They expended less effort to earn a living, had more money for discretionary expenditure, greater choice and increased leisure.¹¹

Two of the men from this group were in their 80s, three were in their 70s and one was in his 60s and they were from Auckland, Melbourne and Sydney.¹² Their experience of 'work as work' is represented here by accounts from two 82-year-olds and a man aged 70.

In 1927, two of the oldest men from the international sample were born, one in Sydney and one in Melbourne. Each had a varied working life with many jobs. Amery, the Sydneysider lived and worked most of his life in Sydney, moving from job to job until in the late 1950s he settled into the state public service of New South Wales, remaining there until retirement in 1988. Herbert lived in Melbourne but spent many years travelling overseas and changing jobs. Another Melbournian with an extremely varied working life was Arran, aged 70, whose life included a lot of what I have called 'love travel', that is, travelling or changing jobs in pursuit of a love interest and which I would argue is something camp men in the 1950s were relatively free to pursue because they were less often bound by ties to mortgage, wife or children.

One other possible reason for the appeal of ‘love travel’ is contained in this interview extract from Reginald, aged 79 who came from Melbourne:

I worked in the advertising department of [a department store] ... I was not terribly happy there because of the feeling that I had that they did not much care for somebody like me. I decided to leave there and I went to work as a food waiter in a hotel.

I would go down to the docks each morning to see if I could get on a ship ... to work my passage. That was something that a lot of us were doing in those days.¹³

It is difficult to know if what Reginald expressed is an example of class unhappiness or sexual unhappiness or both. He did find a boyfriend when he eventually got to London in the 1950s. Since those times when Reginald would go down to the docks looking for a cheap passage to Europe, love travel has become more widespread and affordable and considerably less wrenching, not just for gay men but for whole generations of young Australians seeking self-fulfilment or enlightenment abroad.¹⁴

When asked what he enjoyed about work, Amery said: ‘I think I suffer from the Protestant work ethic. If I am not doing something, I tend to feel guilty’. When he left school, he was not able to go to university—even though he had successfully Matriculated—because his parents were, in his words, ‘not in a position to let me go’.¹⁵ His first job was as a receptionist for a commercial photographer who he later discovered was a starting-price bookmaker.¹⁶ When the police raided the back office with its eight phones and scribblers, his first job came to an end. Through a connection of his father’s, Amery was offered a job as a trainee manager at a large, department store in George Street, Sydney. Shortly after, he decided that he wanted to go to university and joined the New South Wales public service where part-time studies were not regarded as unusual. Amery finished his degree in 1956, the year of the Melbourne Olympics, and transferred to the Registrar of Births and Deaths. He briefly flirted with work in private enterprise as an account secretary but then returned to the public service where he worked until his retirement in 1988. The main feature of his working

life was flexibility. Through good luck or good skills of negotiation, he was able to move between the public and private sectors, chiefly it would seem because of flexible arrangements available to public servants in New South Wales at the time. The post-war decades were the heyday in Australia for employment in the public service when it offered life-long security with a good state-funded pension at the end.¹⁷ Since then, public servants have been subject to casualisation of work in much the same way as employees in the private sector.

Herbert's working life reflected a similar degree of flexibility and movement as Amery's but in Herbert's case it included lots of foreign travel and work abroad inspired at times by love travel. Before his love travel, Herbert worked first as a telegraph messenger for the GPO and then as a clerk with an insurance company, 'gradually moving from job to job' until he found employment with TAA.¹⁸ He then went to England and this is a short account of his love travel:

I met an old lover in London and lived with him in London for a little over two years. Eventually, I came back to Australia. Before I had left to go to London, I had met a Dutchman in Melbourne and he was still single when I came back and we resumed the friendship and that lasted 50 years.

Love travel was inferred from Herbert's account and he was not asked during the interview if he went to London knowing he would meet his old lover there. The relationship that began with the Dutchman on his return for Melbourne did provide travel opportunities but not at first. His Melbourne-based working life resumed when he found a job as a clerk with a lighting company. This was the early 1960s and Herbert had begun buying and selling houses, 'which was terribly easy in those days'. How he raised the capital to begin his property entrepreneurship is not clear and he was not asked to elaborate but what it did provide was money for travel:

We went to Holland to see [partner's] family and that became a pattern from then on. Every few years, we would go to Holland, buy a car and drive around Europe. Life was pretty good.

Dealing in property came to an end when, according to Herbert, he, 'became sick of the new laws that were brought in by the government favouring tenants too much'. His European connections paid off when he found work with an importing company in Carlton, an inner suburb of Melbourne. Travel still figured in his life with his Dutch partner: 'to America and places like that but always drawn back to Holland and Europe'. By this stage in his life, work had become mostly part-time and in credit control which was convenient because he was able, 'to go away for six months and come back and be assured of finding another job in the same field'. In 1987, Herbert retired to live on his investments and never worked again.

Arran was born in the English midlands in 1940 and after a lot of travel and many moves settled in Melbourne where he was interviewed in 2010. He had at least ten different jobs over the course of his working life. Born into a lower-middle-class family, his first job was as a photographer for an advertising agency which was then followed by work as a photographer on board ship for an international cruise company that operated in the Mediterranean. In the early 1960s, he was one of three photographers employed on a cruise ship that sailed to Australia, which was the setting for the start of his history of three decades of love travel:

I met someone in Fremantle. When the ship arrived at Fremantle this young man wanted to come aboard and I thought, 'Well, why not?' so I got him a pass and he came on board and I took him around the ship and then he said, 'How 'bout you come with me and I'll take you for a drink?' I said, 'Fine' and we went off on a motorbike and went to the Cottlesloe pub [in Perth]. We went through Kings Park. It was a very nice introduction to Australia actually.

Arran's relationship with the stranger who took him to the Cottlesloe pub on his motorbike became a significant, turning point in his life, for the young man belonged to a wheat-farming family which owned a 40,000-acre property east of Perth. On being taken to see this, Arran recalled that he thought, 'this has to be the country to live in'. He returned to London and applied to emigrate to Australia: 'A ten-pound Pom I became and was on the first migrant flight from Heathrow to Sydney and that was

in October 1962'.¹⁹ His first job in Australia was with a large photographic studio where he worked as a coordinator: 'these days they would call it a stylist. I designed sets and chose the clothes for the models'. After seven years, he was 'poached by a designer who ran a graphic design company' and worked as the company's account executive. The next stage of his working life was influenced again by love travel. Following his 'would-be lover', he left Australia and went to Cape Town where he worked as a salesman, after which they went to London where Arran got a job in a large department store in Kensington. Next, Arran and his partner returned to Australia via Canada and the USA. On settling in Melbourne, Arran decided to cut ties with his previous work connections and start a new career in gardening. His reasons related to a workplace culture he had no wish to embrace:

This was a time of drugs, in the 1970s, and I thought, 'I cannot cope with advertising ... I don't want to know about it'. I needed to purify myself, so I got a job in a huge indoor plant nursery.

For more than five years he worked in nurseries until he returned to study, completed final years secondary school, got a place in a university and qualified to practise as a mental health worker, which was his occupation at the time of interview.

What do the life histories of Amery and Herbert, both born in 1927, have in common and how do they compare with the life history of Arran born 13 years later in the early years of World War II? Both Amery and Herbert would have been infants at the start of the Depression and teenagers at the start of World War II. Neither mentioned either major world event when retelling the story of his working life, possibly because in each case its beginning coincided with the end of the war and the outbreak of peace. Each man began his working life slightly before the beginning of what historians have called the 'long boom',²⁰ that period in Australian history, and in the history of other countries like Canada and the USA, that ran from 1947 to 1974 and was characterised by full or near-full male employment and rising standards of living. And this helps explain the continuous working lives of the men, something they shared with straight men of their generation.

The peripatetic nature of Arran's life was prefigured in his decision to take a job as a photographer on a cruise ship and I would argue that having neither wife nor partner in England, he was able to indulge his nascent wanderlust and take risks a paterfamilias could not but which other single men and women also enjoyed from the 1960s onward when cruise liners plied the Southampton–Perth route.

The men who had one job or at most a couple of jobs during their working lives were examples of a fairly standard model which existed for male workers during the long boom in the West and which came to an end after the right-wing economic 'reforms' of the 1980s.²¹ Richard Sennett underlined the existential effect on workers of the loss of guaranteed long-term employment in the following:

How can long-term purposes be pursued in a short-term society? How can durable social relations be sustained? How can a human being develop a narrative of identity and life history in a society composed of episodes and fragments? The conditions of the new economy feed instead on experience which drifts in time, from place to place, from job to job.²²

Some evidence of the effect of these changes is in evidence in the next two chapters where the work histories are examined of those who lived through the period of neo-liberal 'reforms' (the middle cohort) and those who were born into the brave new world that they created (the young cohort).

Men from this cohort who had one job in their working life had to move location as their job demanded. This included, for example, a man who worked as a librarian in Melbourne for 45 years and moved six times from one suburban library to another; a man who was a bricklayer, also in Melbourne, and for 33 years moved from building site to building site for work; as well as a man who lived in New York and worked as an international trade representative for almost 40 years.²³

Because of the small size of this subset of the old age-cohort, it is not clear if the following feature of these men's working histories can be generalised to a wider population of men, gay or straight from the same generation, but, by comparison with the other men whose

working histories were represented by the work-as-work narrative, most of the men who had had one job or a couple of jobs in their work life provided fairly cursory accounts of why they enjoyed work. In other words, men whose working lives were typical of the time and who had the opportunity to develop the 'narrative of identity' to which Sennett referred related mostly mundane accounts of what they enjoyed about work. The librarian from Melbourne (aged 77) said he enjoyed 'contact with people' and another man from Auckland (aged 75) who worked in office products and commercial stationery said he enjoyed the following about his work:

I did very well in sales and I was winning all their competitions and ... I just did what I loved doing and the outcome was that I made the [sales] figures so I enjoyed that part of it.²⁴

The one exception to this was Parry (aged 63) from New York who had been an international trade representative for most of his working life. His account of what he enjoyed about work was similar to those that some of the men related who had had many jobs. The following is from his interview:

The easy part was travel. The second part was ... cultural learning. Coming from America as a young African-American man, I did not have a lot of understanding of the world in school ... [and] I lucked into these opportunities ... I spent almost 16 years going back and forth between China. I was one of the first Americans in China when Nixon signed the agreement. I was in Hong Kong waiting for the first train load of Americans to go in ... I found travelling expanded my knowledge of not only cultures but our abilities as human beings to get along with each other, understand each other, and of course the diversity of how we handle things differently. My biggest passion is always going into hardware stores in other countries and learning how people handle issues or have solutions to problems that seem so day to day but they have a different take on how a solution gets done.

Parry's account was as rich as those of the men who had many jobs and whose jobs, examined earlier, included travel. It was rich because

it touched on the limitations of an African American's upbringing during and just after World War II. As well, there was his chance presence in China when in 1972 President Richard Nixon signed formal understandings with Chairman Mao Tse-tung, ending decades of China's diplomatic isolation. It was rich also for his stated understanding of how travel increased his acceptance of others, nicely illustrated with his metaphor of tools in foreign hardware stores.

Richard Sennett argues that guaranteed, long-term employment allowed generations of workers to develop narratives of self-identity. The contrast made just now between the relatively rich work narratives of men with many jobs or jobs that included travel when compared with those of the men who had one job only or perhaps two jobs in their life does not contradict Sennett's claim. It provides nuance and exception to the general rule that workers who had a job for life were able to make plans and shape a life more securely than can today's workers who must accept the new work-place norm which comprises short-term contracts and casualised employment.

Care or Creative Work

A group of ten men had careers in which care or creativity were central features. Three men worked in education, two worked in religious organisations, two were involved in crafts for children, as well as a composer, a poet, and a man who was a retail manager. Five of the men were from Melbourne, two were from Sydney, one was from Auckland, one from Manchester and another man was from New York. Four were in their 80s, two were in their 70s, and four in their 60s.²⁵

Since second-wave feminism in the 1960s and feminist scholarship and research that followed in its wake, care work has generally been understood as something women do as a matter of course or because they have no choice and whether or not they are paid for it.²⁶ Given some of the stereotypes that exist about gay men, such as, for example, that they are more inclined to feminine interests or activities than heterosexual men, some readers will not be surprised that some of the men aged 60 and over had work histories that were shaped by a care

narrative. Their work in care occupations did not mean, however, that they were feminine or effeminate, for they were not.

Care was a central feature of the working histories of six men: three of these worked in education, two in religious organisations, and one man was a retail manager. It would be unwise to assume that everyone working in education or religious organisations is motivated by the impulse to care for others because these areas of employment include administrative and policy positions and each is hierarchical with opportunities for ambition and political manoeuvring. The work histories of these five men were characterised, however, by care for their students or congregations as was that of the man who was a manager in the retail sector. Excerpts from their interviews are included here.

The oldest man in the group, 87-year-old Randall, worked for a religious organisation and described what he liked about work as follows: 'I was always interested in people ... and I wanted to work with young people'. A desire to work with young people ran through the work histories of a number of men from this group. Another man from Melbourne, Clancy (aged 81) worked in retail stores all his life and said that when he was manager he, 'enjoyed the company of what I call the juvenile delinquents, the younger members of staff, men and women'. Basil was the other man who worked for a religious organisation. He was 75 and lived in Auckland. Work with a church took him to the Pacific islands, which he said was enjoyable because he, 'just loved being with the people. I had a very close affinity with them'. Two of the remaining men from this group worked in education and both said they enjoyed 'working with people': people of all ages in the case of 62-year-old Hugh and young people in the case of Anselm (aged 61), both of whom were from Melbourne. Hugh said he enjoyed private tuition because he felt too exposed in the classroom: 'I always got on quite well with the students but I found discipline not an easy thing to do. I had to do quite a lot of shouting'. Anselm worked at a university and said: 'the chief satisfaction of my working life was teaching, having the ... privilege to work with younger people'. These men, whose working lives were shaped by care narratives, had teaching or mentoring roles of one sort or another. For some, it was with students at school or university, for one it was as mentor to younger staff members, and for two

men it was in the form of the pastoral care they provided their religious communities. Different settings connected by a similar interest in others and the educational, personal or possibly even spiritual development in those younger than them were the common threads running through their separate work histories.

One possible failing in my interview programme is that I did not ask the men to explain the reason(s) they took the jobs they did when they were telling me the story of their working life. In the case of the men whose work histories were identified as caring, I did not ask them if they purposely sought employment in care work or if care was an aspect that attracted them to the jobs that made up their work history. There are two possible reasons for this. First, the principal reason for the interview when it was held was to inquire as to how age or ageing affected the men's lives and relationships; it was not only to investigate their working life.²⁷ Secondly, the question about their working life was the first I asked them to answer, was an 'ice-breaker' for them and me, and I was not on the lookout for any themes in the work histories they recounted. That came later and underpins one of the main reasons for this book, that is, to examine relatively uncomplicated accounts of men's work histories in order to analyse how they understood their working life and whether it made sense to them and what they enjoyed about work. Now to return to evidence of creative narratives in the work histories in a small group of men aged 60 and over.

Creativity

Creative narratives were evident in the work histories of four men: two who were involved in children's crafts, a composer and a poet. What are 'creative narratives'? They would certainly include narratives of work in fields that are commonly understood to be 'creative', such as, in the case of the four men here, those working in children's crafts, the composer and the poet. There are also the so-called 'creative industries', such as architecture, advertising, music, painting, sculpture and writing, for example.

Excerpts from the work histories of two men in their 80s who worked in children's crafts are representative here of the creative narrative. The men were from Sydney and Melbourne respectively. Godfrey came from a lower-middle-class family and spent most of his working life teaching primary-aged children. As a teenager in post-World War II Sydney, he became involved in the school-of-arts movement, which was associated with the earlier mechanics-institutes movement that had spread from Glasgow to British colonies in the early nineteenth century, arriving in Sydney in the 1830s. One of its guiding principles was to provide education for working men and women and thus help develop an educated artisan class, which its founders believed would lead to a more egalitarian society.²⁸ Godfrey explained how his career began: 'I got terribly interested in working with children in the plastic arts ... and I stayed with that work in community after-school care for 35 years'. Teaching children to work with clay or ceramics sustained him until well into his 50s when he accepted a redundancy payment. In the following, he explained what he enjoyed about his work and why he retired well before retirement age:

I was working with kids from five to 25 ... Some of the children are incredibly creative. They are very stimulating in their creativity, so much so that we kept a lot of their work. We wouldn't let them take it home because adults are often scathing or scoffing at the feeble efforts of children. And children's art work is a very serious matter for children, it's a means of communication. Children don't have language skills but they do have pictorial skill ... Eventually, I got to an age where I felt I was just beginning to repeat myself and I opted for early retirement, redundancy actually was offered, and I took it.

Godfrey drew considerable satisfaction from the creativity he enabled in the children he taught. His protectiveness, which from his account was shared by other teachers, might today appear overbearing or intrusive. But it is an interesting account of the pastoral and emotional care-work some teachers provide and additionally so, because it is rare to hear it revealed in this way or views about parents' effect on children expressed so honestly.

The other man was Hector who was born in 1928 to upper-middle-class parents in Melbourne. His life and the route he took to craft work with children could not have been more different than Godfrey's. Hector's first job was in his father's accounting practice. After a relatively short time there, he moved to a larger, accounting firm in the CBD and, when his father died prematurely, was thrown into the world of international commerce, an enterprise his father had developed during World War II. Marriage followed and, when his father's business affairs were finally wound up, he had funds to satisfy his and his wife's long-time wish, which was to open a toy shop:

Our ambition was to establish a stock of toys, a collection of toys that were of the best quality, that gave the best outcomes for children, that made the best contribution to their play and that were in general positive rather than negative.

Like Godfrey, Hector and his wife enjoyed facilitating children's play and creativity. Their toy shop was established in the 1960s and was still in business when Hector had his interview. Its longevity being explained partly by his enthusiasm for the toys he made and sold and the loyalty of their customers:

I still am [a toy seller] and I still share the original criteria I [used to] apply to the toys that we sell ... Some of our customers are into the second and nearly the third generation. Those who were child customers in the 1960s are now the parents and grandparents of my customers today. We are much loved and admired by those who value us.

Hector and his wife had a daughter shortly after their shop opened and then about three decades later he began a relationship with his male partner, which was in its 25th year at the time of interview. When asked what he enjoyed about his work, Hector said: 'I'm not interested in money; it is the toys that keep me interested and the people and the kids. That's why I keep doing it'. And he had no plans of retiring: 'I don't like the idea of retirement if you're fit enough to work'.

Social or Political Change

A relatively small group of three men found work meaningful for the social or political change they believed it involved or the change they believed they could effect through it. Two of them were in their 70s and the third in his 60s. They were from London and Sydney and worked as journalist, judge, and HIV-AIDS activist.²⁹ The men worked in areas where they respectively believed they could advance social change, extend human rights, and improve services for men living with HIV-AIDS. Their work histories are examined in order.

The man who said the appeal of his work was that it helped him contribute to social change was Drake, a 77-year-old from Sydney. Formerly married with two children, he and his male partner had been together for more than 30 years. He worked in journalism all his life beginning in print journalism and moving on to radio and television journalism. The social issues that caught his attention when he was a young man and married included world poverty, refugees and mental health, which coincidentally are still major issues requiring international contributions. When asked whether he experienced resistance to his reforming work, he replied that he had and then added by way of personal context:

My refugee work with the Australian Council of Churches [meant] I became more and more politically radicalized ... At the age of 18, I was President of ... [a rural] branch of the Young Liberals and my wife was the President of the women's branch of the National Party ... [but] by the time both of us were in our early 30s, we were marching in the streets in favour of women's liberation and anti-Vietnam, the whole works. I had become radicalized and I had broadened my vision of what was wrong with the world and I had become involved in overseas development issues, in world poverty issues.

Like many young, university-educated Australians in the late 1960s, Drake came from a conservative background and was influenced by the powerful rhetoric and drama of social reform that was in the air at the time. His political shift and his wife's were significant, hers possibly

more so than his because in the 1960s the National Party was a deeply conservative party representing farming and mining interests, its members not inclined to support women's liberation and certainly not gay liberation. In Australia, it was not until the early 2000s that politicians from that side of politics began to speak in favour of gay people's rights and that was mostly in the context of the marriage-equality programme.³⁰ Spokes-people from the conservative side of Australian politics, including conservative members of the Australian Labor Party, were eloquently silent during the years of the HIV-AIDS epidemic.

The second man from this group was Christian. He was 72, lived in Sydney, and had a partner of more than 40 years. A retired, eminent judge, he said that he had enjoyed working in the law because, 'it was an intellectual as well as an emotional challenge'. He explained in more detail what he meant by intellectual and emotional challenge:

It is a life that presents you with countless puzzles and your responsibility is to try to solve the puzzles; not according to your own whims but according to some rules and principles about law and justice. Some people love to begin their day doing a cross-word puzzle. I had the great pleasure of spending my whole life doing puzzles.

Christian is known internationally and in Australia as a man of influence who frequently lends his support to helping reduce opprobrium or persecution that people living with HIV-AIDS experience in the developing world and other matters concerning the rights of LGBTI people. When asked whether concern for human rights had been an important feature of his working life, he replied:

I hope human rights are important to all judges. They may not express it in terms of universal human rights but our legal system is based upon notions of basic rights and basic civic responsibilities, duties, and privileges. Of course, I was interested in human rights. Human rights permeate the law and my job, where possible, was to try to give effect to human rights in the legal decisions that I made.

For this man, retirement did not bring with it any lessening of his daily workload. 'I was banished into the nether-world of retirement in 2009. Since then, I have been involved in large numbers of international committees, twelve honorary professorships, lots of mediation, arbitration, speeches, conferences, book reviews, and so on.'

The third man from this group of three was 62-year-old Arthur who lived in London and spent part of each year in India. South Asian by birth, he had devoted most of his working life advocating in South Asia for people living with HIV-AIDS (PLWHA).³¹ After finishing a university degree in science, he briefly worked in a science-related area and then became a meditation teacher. But it was the situation of South Asian men in the face of HIV AIDS that propelled his career. When asked why he moved into this area of advocacy and activism, he replied:

I got angry. Some friends died [of AIDS] from lack of services, stupidity. I operate from a passionate anger ... I know quite a few friends in Australia ... We shared common discussions over the last 20 years ... We all operate from that anger that why should we be the ones who are denied services.

Arthur lobbied governments and international organisations to raise funds to pay for education and awareness campaigns for men who had sex with men (msm) in South Asian countries. The problem for these countries was according to Arthur not so much to accept the presence of HIV-AIDS but that msm existed:

You look at all the AIDS countries in South Asia. India was becoming more aware that there were these population groups [msm] but they didn't signify them in any specific way, [which was] partly to do with the law, the invisibility of the issue, and partly to do with shame. 'We are such good countries. We should not have horrible people like these here.' For Bangladesh and Pakistan there were issues around religion and Nepal was focusing on injecting drug users. India was focusing on female sex workers. Afghanistan of course nothing was going on but fighting. And Sri Lanka, because the prevalence was so low ... didn't think it was an issue.

Arthur devoted himself also to writing papers for international conferences and educational pamphlets for clinics on the ground where South Asian men with the disease or who were at risk could receive treatment and information about how the virus spread. The anger that sparked his involvement in helping to prevent the spread of HIV-AIDS in South Asia arose from a deep frustration with the shame that prevented people from accepting msm in their midst, the slowness of South Asian governments also to accept that HIV-AIDS was real, and the stupidity of cumbersome bureaucracies that frustrated the sort of change he believed necessary to save lives.

In the next major section, the focus turns to the experiences of three men who spoke in their interviews of the effect sexuality had on their working lives. The fact of being able to choose whether or not to come out at work is a relatively recent phenomenon, following as it does in the wake of the gradual, increasing acceptance of gay men and lesbians since the 1970s. What is worth remembering here, however, is that the working lives the men recounted occurred in the 1950s and 1960s when general social attitudes to gay people were still relatively oppressive.

Being 'Out' at Work

Together with other non-heterosexuals, gay men must decide whether they want to 'come out' to their work colleagues or fellow workers. This sets them apart from the rest of the population. And how their fellow workers treat them if they come out can affect their career. While gay men and lesbians are now more likely to have a relatively easier time coming out than previous generations,³² the act of coming out is still not always straightforward. Gay people can spend their life coming out time and again, as circumstances require. In her work on sexual orientation and the self, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explained how she had to come out each semester to new classes of university students.³³ And Gilbert Herdt wrote the following about the effect coming out can have on an individual's career:

Gays who come out risk losing their jobs or their income—the result of the diminished social status of the employer or the family and the loss of face or privilege in the community that ‘homosexuals’ unwittingly transfer to their significant others in a homophobic society. Such losses of socio-economic status and class standing pose a formidable barrier to coming out.³⁴

Things have changed since Herdt wrote which was at about the time when the triple-therapy treatment was being trialled and HIV-AIDS was still an unmanageable disease. I would argue that since then (mid 1990s) the disease has receded as a major stigmatising factor in the lives of gay people. Also, while what Herdt wrote could still describe the effect of coming out on gay men living in small towns and provincial cities across Australia and North America and other masculinist societies, the lives of other gay men who worked, for example, in professions in major cities such as Hong Kong, London and Sydney were not being affected in this way.

As mentioned in Chap. 1, the primary data used for this book were almost entirely from the ‘international sample’ of 82 gay men who were aged 18–87 when interviewed in 2009–2011. A second data set was occasionally used, comprising interviews with 80 Australian gay men aged 20–79 who were interviewed 2001–2003 and known as the ‘all-Australian sample’. This section draws on data from the all-Australian sample. Men from both data sets were not asked about being ‘out’ in the workplace but three men from the old cohort of the all-Australian sample did raise the matter and spoke about their sexuality and the extent to which it affected their working life.³⁵

The fact that they referred to their homosexuality in relation to their work history suggested it had been an issue for them or for others in the workplace and their accounts included detailed, personal information about how they or their workmates handled it.³⁶ The three men whose accounts are discussed here are Oscar, aged 65, Geoffrey, aged 69, and Harold, aged 74.³⁷ Oscar was a factory manager, Geoffrey worked in entertainment, and Harold in education. After a brief sketch of some principal features of the socio-political context of the post-war decades in Australia, the men’s accounts are discussed in order.

Interviewed in 2002, the men would have come of age (turned 21) in 1952, 1954 and 1957 respectively. They grew up in post-war Australia and were young adults at the beginning of and throughout the Cold War, a period of acute homophobia and social repression.³⁸ The Australian novelist George Johnston described the effect that this period had on Australian social and political attitudes and beliefs:

The waves of strikes and stoppages and the general restless tumult in the land were attributed by a great many Australians, seeking simplest solution to dilemmas altogether too baffling, to the evil threat of Communism. In Europe the Cold War was developing in bitterness and intensity ... In Australia, it was a time of prevalent suspicion, and almost any non conformity was suspect; these were a people disillusioned and disturbed and somebody had to be blamed for what was going wrong: it was a time of irresponsible accusations and superficial examinations on the part of some, and on the part of more a weary ostrich-wish just to bury the head in the sand.³⁹

Canadian historian Angus McLaren noted these developments affecting gay men in North America during the Cold War: more than 4000 homosexuals were discharged from the US military in the last three years of the 1940s; following the beginnings of the McCarthy-inspired 'witch trials', the US military and public service began to purge from their ranks people regarded as 'security risks', which naturally included homosexuals; and in 1952 the American Psychiatric Association determined homosexuality to be a 'sociopathic personality disorder'.

McLaren argued that allies of the USA undertook similar surveillance and arrests of homosexuals also for reasons of 'national security'. In Canada, for example, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police began collecting information on suspected gay men such that by 1960 they had files on more than 9000. In West Germany, almost 40,000 men were found guilty of homosexual offences between the mid 1950s and mid 1960s,⁴⁰ while in the UK, homosexual offences rose by 500% in the 1950s.⁴¹ Australia was no different and the Cold War saw increased surveillance and arrests of gay men for 'unnatural offences'.⁴² 'In almost

every Western country the 1950s and 1960s ... [were] a period in which gay subcultures were forced to become more rigorously clandestine than in the 1920s and 1930s. Repression became much more intense that it had been before the war.⁴³ In his argument regarding 'deviant careers', US sociologist Howard Becker argued that if a person breaks an important rule, s/he will be seen as different from other people, as someone who, 'will not act as a moral human being and therefore might break other important rules'.⁴⁴ Just such a logic would help explain why homosexuals were subject to intense scrutiny of intelligence agencies during the Cold War.

The three men were interviewed in the early 2000s when the meaning of the act of 'coming out' was understood to make a public declaration of one's gayness, to declare that one was not heterosexual. While this section is headed 'Being "out" at work', in their answers the three men spoke about how being homosexual or camp affected their workplace relationships, often referring to whether or not they were out at work.

At 65 years of age, Oscar was the youngest of the three men whose stories are considered here. He had been married and waited until after his wife's death to come out and as the following excerpt shows, he felt no compulsion to end the marriage and come out and believed that he would still be married if she had not died.

I was married for 22 years and very happily married and I would still be married if my wife was still alive. But towards the end of those 22 years, I did realise that I was attracted to men. I had a few experiences with men here and there. All with married men I might add. And then when my wife died I 'came out'.

His coming out was neither easy or a pleasant experience for in declaring his homosexuality he lost many friends:

I did lose quite a number of friends. Some of 20 years standing. Pretty difficult because we'd all been through a lot of things together. Because I was married for 22 years and they were friends of mine, of my wife and myself, and so it was pretty traumatic. They stopped sending Christmas

cards: no communication. Two of my best friends haven't spoken to me for 16 years.

Oscar's experience while not necessarily typical does say a great deal about the personal risks men from his age cohort took in coming out. The pain of his friends' rejection might have been the reason he remained closeted at work and came out to no one. In the following extract, Oscar explained his role and responsibilities:

I ran at one stage eleven factories in Australia. I still work for the same company part time ... I was 24 when I joined the industry. I enjoy the challenge of getting the same final product ... to end up with the same product from year to year.

When I observed in our interview that the industry he worked for was traditional and conservative, Oscar replied:

Very! It's a very conservative industry ... Basically nobody 'comes out' ... Because that's the end of their career or they find it very difficult to move up the ladder of achievements, despite the fact they might be absolutely brilliant. It is a very conservative industry. Most of them are typical 'poofa' bashers. I do not discuss my sex at work, but they have worked it out. They did not understand when there were three of us living together for seven years. None of my friends understood that.

Oscar's home life developed an unusual quality when a younger man he met when travelling asked to continue their intimate relationship and Oscar's long-term partner agreed to the three of them sharing their house. The younger man moved in and Oscar maintained separate relations with each partner under the same roof. Neither friends nor workmates understood his relationship when it comprised three men, which is not surprising given its uncommon nature. And his workmates knew he was gay without being told:

Quite a lot of the guys I work with I have not officially 'come out' to, but *they know*. And they just take me for who I am. I do not try anything on

with any of them of course and ... I am friends with quite a few of them away from the office. It has made not a lot of difference to their acceptance of me. It was difficult for me to accept to 'come out' ... because I had led a very happy 22 years in the 'straight' world. However, we did know a lot of gay people because my wife was in theatre and she knew lots of gay men.

Oscar's life was a success by any measure. He earned and kept the respect of a work force he managed in an extremely conservative manufacturing industry. He had an 18-year gay relationship after a heterosexual marriage of 22 years and transformed that relationship so a third man could live with him and his long-term partner. And he survived some very painful rejection when he came out after the death of his wife.

At the same time, these extracts from Oscar's working history reveal a great deal about the issues involved in coming out at work for men from his generation. He came out to some friends and had heartache as a result but at work he relied on a lot of people 'just knowing', that is, on picking up some 'vibe' or feeling that he was not quite like them (the 'normals').

When Geoffrey (aged 69) was young, camp men like him had to be discreet about their private life if not completely closeted at work. As they and their sexual practices and relations were illegal, so much more was at risk if they were exposed. As mentioned in the introduction to this section, the late 1940s and 1950s (when Geoffrey was in his 20s) were a time of heightened surveillance of camp men's social/sexual activities and arrests and humiliation if caught were common. This is in contrast with the 2010s where gay men in most liberal western societies can rely on protection from legislation that forbids discrimination in the workplace on the basis of a person's sexual orientation.⁴⁵ It is not possible to know, however, how many gay men still live their lives as did Geoffrey and are closeted at work.

Same-sex attracted men who are or were married or in a heterosexual relationship might need to be discreet about their private life—until they break with their heterosexual past and come out. There would

be other gay men who would be discreet about their homosexuality at work as a form of protection against bullying in the workplace—for example, in workplaces where the dominant *mores* are strongly heterosexual, it would be sensible for a gay man to keep secret his social/sexual life. Writing about the homophobia they observed in working-class masculinities in Australia in the 1980s, Connell, Davis and Dowsett wrote: ‘An ideology of masculinity [existed] in which physical prowess and social power are fused with aggressive heterosexuality. “Poofers” are culturally supposed to be contemptibly inadequate, feminised men.’⁴⁶

Writing at about the time Oscar was still married and Geoffrey was living in Sydney and coming of age, US sociologist Howard Becker argued that any person who was characterised as deviant in 1950s society was cut off from participation in more conventional groups. In relation to the marginalisation camp men experienced at the time: ‘being homosexual may not affect one’s ability to do office work, but to be known as a homosexual in an office may make it impossible to continue working there’.⁴⁷ And I would argue this was largely the case because of the repressive effect the Cold War had on the social/sexual *mores* of the USA and its allies that were described above. If the gay person’s manner were not out of the ordinary, however, and he passed for a ‘normal’ male, there were other areas of life that drew attention to his difference and, according to Becker, could jeopardise his continued employment. Becker argued that certain workplaces ‘pre-suppose a certain kind of family life’.

Same-sex attracted men therefore faced difficulties where ‘the assumption of normal sexual interests and propensities for marriage is made without question’. Becker argued that while the expectation of marriage created problems for the heterosexual male—the single man stood out from the crowd of married men, in other words—it was more so for the homosexual male: ‘The necessity of marrying often creates difficult enough problems for the normal male, and places the homosexual in an almost impossible situation’.⁴⁸ Becker was writing more than 40 years ago. Some of his claims still apply, especially in regard to the degree of intolerance gay men can experience in some workplaces, anti-discrimination laws notwithstanding.

In Australia, for example, dominant males in some workplaces, such as the building, forestry and manufacturing industries can continue to enforce fairly rigid, traditional views of maleness and masculinity, which do not accept homosexuality or alternative versions of masculinity.⁴⁹ In a recent case in Melbourne, a former police officer killed himself as a result of the homophobic bullying he received from other police officers. The circumstances of his death and the bullying he received from older men at work suggest that, despite equal opportunity legislation which makes it an offence to discriminate against a person on the basis of his/her sexuality, some workplaces are in the 2010s still unsafe for gay men.⁵⁰ That homophobia is still oppressive to some gay men supports an argument Dennis Altman made more than 30 years ago, which is that it 'mutates' to adapt to different expressions of homosexuality as more men come out and being gay becomes less of an issue. His argument was that homophobia never truly goes away but continues to shadow and diminish gay men. 'It is, however, an argument against the liberal belief that greater knowledge necessarily leads to greater acceptance.'⁵¹

One more recent case concerned a contestant on a British television programme, *Celebrity Big Brother*, who said, when asked, that he would stand with his back 'against a brick wall' if he had to share the *Big Brother* House with a gay contestant.⁵² This occurred in early January 2016. For decades, gay men have had to listen to this sort of crude, low-level homophobia, which is annoying because it assumes we are sexually interested in straight men and only in non-consensual, anal sex. It speaks volumes also about the sexual insecurities of all males.⁵³ The controversy the contestant's opinion created was discussed in *The Guardian* and is an example of what Altman meant when he argued that homophobia shadows every move or advance gay men make. In the past, gay men overheard such comments in private, possibly at work, possibly in changing rooms of gymnasiums or sports clubs and were shamed by them or read equally base jokes on walls of toilets, train stations or buses. Now, a homophobic quip is nationally broadcast on British television and neither challenged on screen nor erased by editors from the pre-recorded programme.⁵⁴

When introducing his account of his working life, Geoffrey said that men from his generation who had long-term relationships spent most of their adult lives being ‘illegal’. Geoffrey and his partner had been together for 40 years. I asked him if he were using the term ‘illegal’ literally. He explained that they had been illegal because their relationship covered a time when it was illegal to have sex with a man. When he described his workplace, he said how he was treated and why he believed he was respected:

You went to work and if you behaved yourself, nobody worried about you. You probably had people there who thought, ‘Oh, this old poof,’ but, as long as you did your work, no one worried ... I worked in maintenance and nobody ever said, ‘You old poof’ because I did my job and that was it. They respected me because I could do my job. People like us worked in the artistic side of things and, as long as everybody did their job, no one worried. It is like hairdressers. There’s hardly a hairdresser that wasn’t a queen and they had the confidence of their clients.

Geoffrey’s workmates might have suspected that he was camp but according to his account no one called him an ‘old poof’ because he did his job well and the same disjunction that exists today could have existed then, which is that until and unless a gay person comes out and directly states he is camp or gay or same-sex attracted, many people will continue to believe he is straight. To what extent his behaviour was a form of ‘passing’ is debatable. His behaviour at work was unlikely to constitute ‘passing’ in its fullest sense for the reason that Geoffrey provided: there were people in the workplace who knew and probably saw him as, ‘this old poof’ but, and his qualification is important, ‘as long as you did your work, no one worried’. In the world Geoffrey described, it makes sense that he and people like him were more likely to avoid negative attention if they ‘went to work and behaved’ themselves. This belief and account of workplace behaviour is similar—but for different reasons—to the practices that Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb found in the workplace that they observed in the 1970s in the USA where, for example, it was risky to stand out from the crowd comprising one’s fellow workers. In *The Hidden Injuries of Class*, Sennett and Cobb wrote:

If he [the factory worker] demonstrates his ability to the full, he stands out as an individual, not merely losing the affection of his comrades but, by becoming an example of the unusual person who is hard-working, putting them in the shade. His sensitivity to the prospect of shaming others leads him to hold himself back. But holding himself back, he makes himself feel weak. Holding himself back, in order that others not be shamed, he comes to feel he is doing something wrong. He is neither fraternal nor individualistic; he tries to be both, and feels that if only he were a more competent person, he could solve the dilemma.⁵⁵

Because of their sexuality, gay men are less likely to be subject to the same tension between individualistic and fraternal drives that Sennett and Cobb identified as a source of weakness for the (heterosexual) factory worker. It is likely, however, that camp men like Geoffrey were aware of the dynamics, which in Australian and British contexts would have been understood as the requirements of mate-ship.

Their sexuality and what they represented meant that camp men could not share the fraternal bonds of heterosexual masculinity. And I would argue that in many workplaces in the 2010s an embargo of the sort still exists. It did not mean that Geoffrey and camp men like him were unaware of its rules or demands and that, because of their outsider status and intimate knowledge of men, it could be argued that as homosexual workers they had and men like them continue to have a very acute understanding of masculinities' practices, possibly more so than do straight men. Camp men in the 1960s were not affected by the same concerns and in the same way as were the factory workers that Sennett and Cobb observed but according to Becker they faced other difficulties in the workplace: 'in some male work groups where heterosexual prowess is required to retain esteem in the group, the homosexual has obvious difficulties'.⁵⁶ Geoffrey's effeminate mannerisms or camp-style—high voice, expressive lips and eye brows, hand on hip when speaking—most likely prevented him from passing as a heterosexual man but they gave him the advantage of fitting a common stereotype of what a camp man in Australia (and England and New Zealand) was then meant to be. He might have been mocked but as he said, 'they respected me because I could do my job'.

Historians and anthropologists have argued that effeminacy is and has often been seen as the principal revealing sign of sexual deviance in men. Charges of effeminacy are used by heterosexual men as a means of regulating the expression of masculinity: 'Some responsibility is also borne by the further (incorrect) assumption that any male involved in a homosexual relationship is effeminate and that effeminacy entails timidity'.⁵⁷ Geoffrey believed that, for as long as he did his job well and competently, he would not attract any negative attention from the straight men with whom he worked. And this approach, he said, applied to the other camp men who worked where he worked. Revealingly, he said: 'You went to work and you behaved yourself'. His meaning is not clear but it is reasonable to assume that by 'behave yourself' Geoffrey meant that he and his workmates who were camp made sure that they were good employees, if not ideal workers, that they were not disruptive, that they did not cut corners, that they were regarded by their employers as 'good boys' for a lot was at risk. US historian, George Chauncey described the level of persecution homosexual men experienced in the 1950s as follows:

Fifty years ago ... homosexuals were not just ridiculed and scorned. They were systematically denied their civil rights: their right to free assembly, to patronize public accommodations, to free speech, to a free press, to a form of intimacy of their own choosing. And they confronted a degree of policing and harassment that is almost unimaginable to us today.

The oldest men from this group of three, Harold (aged 74) was single and living in a country town in New South Wales when I interviewed him. His experience of being a camp man in the workplace was varied and complicated. As a boy and young man, his role in his extended family was as primary carer for his aunts, uncles, mother and brother. He boasted that he had worked hard all his life and that his father worked throughout the Depression—relatively uncommon when so many men were out of work for periods then—and that his mother took in work at home:

Dad had a labourer's job. He worked 16 hours each day. But in addition we grew every vegetable ... We never saw that we did without. We had a car when nobody else did.

Like many from his generation and class, his attitude to work formed as a young boy during the 1930s Depression and in some ways is an Antipodean's echo of Thatcher-ite domestic principles: 'I learned the lessons that you don't buy anything until you can afford it, you live under your income, you put a bit away for a rainy day, and you work hard'. Again, like many people from his generation, he grew up with a strong belief in the importance of financial independence, which guided later decisions. He had a sense of needing to be secure and, in his own words, to 'own a roof over my head and be financial enough to take care of myself for as long as I possibly can. I have enjoyed the achievement', and that the quest for financial independence motivated him in his career: 'It was always the satisfaction of achieving something that made work enjoyable for me.'

The strong work ethic he gained from his family and growing up in the Depression Harold applied to his first job after university: 'I did a science degree, followed by an education degree, and I went secondary teaching in 1952. I loved my teaching experience and I was posted to the country'. He was careful to keep his sexuality a secret and became a popular, respected teacher. He had a promising career as the principal of a small country primary school until on a trip to the state capital two police officers arrested him at a gay beat. He recalled that, 'one of the policemen was very sympathetic and one was very aggressive. I was terribly concerned ... I had to come to [capital city] for the court case the day before speech night at my last week in the school'. Harold's friends hired an expensive barrister for him and the magistrate found him guilty of loitering with intent and put him on a good behaviour bond for 12 months. He then moved to the capital city with his partner and they bought a house. It seemed his career had been saved until one of the arresting policemen appeared at his front door.

Two years later, one of the policemen knocked on my door and told me that he had had 'to pull a few strings' to make sure that nothing was reported to the education department. He said that I would have to be very careful in future. At that stage I decided to get out of teaching. It forced my hand. I was sorry about that because I did enjoy my teaching.

Harold immediately resigned from the education department because he feared the policeman intended to blackmail him and then moved interstate with his mother to live in two units that he bought for them. He was 34. He successfully applied for a position in the public service and stayed in the same job until he retired at 65. When at work in the public service, Harold adopted an extremely strict approach to camp colleagues and refused to allow any talk of sexual identity:

I had gay people working for me and they did not get any favours from me and they knew that. We did not even talk about it ... We were there as people working. And I would not have tolerated that.

It is not clear whether Harold's court experience caused him to adopt this severe attitude towards other camp men who worked for him. It would be understandable if it did but, on the other hand, his approach when teaching had been 'totally professional', in his view, and he had never been or wanted to be 'out' at work, so it might have been a continuation of his own very strict self-regulation, which he relaxed at a beat to considerable cost.

The saddest aspect of Harold's story is that police blackmail of gay men was not unusual at the time and resulted in the blighting of many promising careers like his.⁵⁸ In the USA, for example, police were permitted until 1980 to use wire taps to collect evidence against people suspected of engaging in sodomy.⁵⁹ Blackmailing gay men mostly came to an end in most liberal democracies when homosexuality was decriminalised between the 1970s and 2000s.⁶⁰

Conclusion

Sexuality and its effect on the working lives of an age cohort of gay men aged 60 and older was the focus of this chapter. Discussion of the men's working lives drew on interviews from the international sample and the discussion concerning being out at work from the all-Australian sample. At the start of the chapter I stated my intention of searching for evidence that the socially repressive era (1940s, 1950s) had on the men's working lives or the effect on them of the period of relative tolerance that began in the late 1950s. On the whole, there was relatively little evidence in the men's stories that the repressive period affected their working lives or that the period of greater tolerance did so either. The exceptions to this general finding were found in the work histories of the three men who specifically spoke about sexuality and work.

All three men were aware of the masculine requirements of their time and the assumptions that other men held about manliness and the male in the workplace. Two were keenly aware and remained closeted. The third man was less concerned because he worked in entertainment, a field where gays and lesbians have long found employment and been accepted. He was not out as it would be understood in the 2010s and, while he did not hide his sexuality, he was quietly proud that, even though they might have thought it, none of his workmates called him an 'old poof'. There were also three other examples of the effects of socially repressive views or values on men's working lives. The first concerned the story one man told of visiting the docks each day in the hope of being able to find passage out of Australia. He eventually did go overseas where he found a boyfriend. From his interview, it was difficult to establish if his desire to escape Australia in the 1950s was a case of sexual oppression, class oppression or both. A second man recounted the story of a relatively happy heterosexual marriage he had before exploring relationships with other camp men. He never divorced and at the time

of interview still shared a social life with his wife, his partner and his daughter. Many gay men and women from his generation married in order to pass as straight and, while this was a distinctive possibility in his case, he said nothing definitively in his interview to confirm it. The third man worked most of his adult life to improve the life of people living with HIV-AIDS in South Asia and to counter the administrative and political apathy there that he believed prevented people being properly educated about the risk of HIV-AIDS. South Asian by birth and a resident of London, his working life was less affected by the changing levels of social tolerance in the West than by the long-standing repression of sexual difference in countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India and Sri Lanka.

In the work-as-work narrative the men's jobs included working-class and middle-class jobs such as bricklayer, electrician, psychologist and store-man. Principal features of their careers included first, those who had many different jobs, changing often, and second, others who had one job only or at most a couple across the course of their working lives. In other words, there was evidence of some men being able to move around, try different jobs and other men conforming to the dominant work narrative of the long boom, which for men was having a job for life.⁶¹ It could be argued then that, on the whole, their working lives were no different from those that straight men had from the same generation.

The care-or-creative narrative comprised jobs men had that were in teaching, religion, and arts and crafts, all of which, according to Pierre Bourdieu, were where women were most often to be found at work, were occupations where, because of men's domination of 'public space and field of power', women concentrated: 'those quasi-extensions of the domestic space, the welfare services ... and education ... [and] domains of symbolic production (the literary, artistic or journalistic fields)'.⁶² And, as Donald Johnson's research showed, gay men in Washington were attracted to feminised occupations in the post-war decades, roughly about the time men from this cohort also were employed. In other words, there is evidence of men from this cohort finding work in occupations that attracted large numbers of women, that is, feminised rather than feminine occupations. One of the primary reasons for this

being, as mentioned, their desire to avoid workplaces affected by homophobia or sexism.

The social-or-political-change narrative represented jobs a small number of men had in journalism, law and AIDS activism. It is possible that their choices were influenced by their experience of personal discrimination because of their sexuality but, because none made a clear statement to the effect, it can only be inferred that they like others who are outsiders have a stronger appreciation of the need for social change or justice and tend to congregate in jobs with reformist agendas or contribute however possible through their everyday jobs. Finally, there was evidence of the care and the social and political change narratives intersecting in two ways. First, because education assists social change, the men who taught, here included in the caring narrative, were also working in a job that assisted social or political change. Second, the man who devoted his life to raising awareness in South Asia of HIV-AIDS and lobbying governments to educate people at risk was involved in both a caring occupation and in promotion of social or political change. Because of gay men's involvement in caring for their own in the HIV-AIDS epidemic and because their sexual identity was conflated with the illness, care work of gay men became political in the 1980s and 1990s. The work they did promoted marked social and political change, the effects of which are still being felt. There is increasing evidence in the work narratives of the men from younger cohorts—discussed in the next two chapters—of the care narrative intersecting with the social and political change narrative and chiefly because any care work in the HIV-AIDS field had a socio-political effect.

Notes

1. See Chap. 1 for 21 as marker for adulthood.
2. See Australian Bureau of Statistics (2006) 'From Generation to generation' in *A Picture of the Nation* (Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics): [http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/FCB1A3CF0893DAE4CA25754C0013D844/\\$F](http://www.ausstats.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/subscriber.nsf/0/FCB1A3CF0893DAE4CA25754C0013D844/$F)

- [ile/20700_generation.pdf](#). Accessed 4 January 2017 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006).
3. For more on the long boom in the context of twentieth-century Australia, see S. Macintyre (2003) *A Concise History of Australia* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press), pp. 196–235. In Australia, this was the second ‘long boom’. The term was first used to describe the period 1860–1890 when the Australian colonies experienced sustained economic growth as a result of the gold rushes of the 1850s; see R. McGhee (1967) ‘The Long Boom, 1860–1890’ in J. Griffin (ed.) *Essays in Economic History of Australia 1788–1939* (Brisbane: Jacaranda Press), pp. 135–185. For more on state benefits provided to married couples in Australia, see J. Murphy (2000) *Imagining the Fifties: Private Sentiment and Political Culture in Menzies’ Australia* (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd), pp. 84–89 (Macintyre 2003; McGhee 1967; Murphy 2000).
 4. A. McLaren (2002) *Sexual Blackmail: A Modern History* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press), pp. 250–254 (McLaren 2002).
 5. See P. Robinson (2008) *The Changing World of Gay Men* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 8–11, 18–28 (Robinson 2008b).
 6. Before their interview, each man was asked to provide an approximate value of his income expressed in US dollars. I provided them with a rough scale beginning at US\$10,000, then US\$30,000, US\$50,000, US\$70,000, US\$100,000, US\$130,000. In November 2016, these income steps were worth US\$11,193 (US\$10,000); US\$33,581 (US\$30,000); US\$55,969 (US\$55,000); US\$78,356 (US\$70,000); US\$111,938 (US\$100,000); US\$145,519 (US\$130,000); source: Historical Currency Conversions, <https://futureboy.us/fsp/dollar.fsp>. Accessed 22 November 2016.
 7. David Johnson shows that in Washington in the 1950s certain types of jobs were understood to be the sort that ‘fairies’ would take or were only for fairies and argues that gay men sought feminised jobs such as clerical or stenographical ones: D.K. Johnson (2004) *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press), pp. 43–46 (Johnson 2004).
 8. See Appendix A.

9. R. Sennett (1998) *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company), pp. 98–99 (Sennett 1998).
10. Note on terminology: ‘camp’ was the term that many pre-liberation men who were same-sex attracted used for each other. Over time and in the wake of the gay liberation movement, it was replaced by the word, ‘gay’, after which other formulations were created that reflected changing understandings of sex, love, intimacy between men, such as ‘same-sex attracted’, ‘men who have sex with men’ (msm). For more on terminologies for gay men and same-sex attracted males, see E. White (1980) ‘The political vocabulary of homosexuality’ in B.R.S. Fone (ed.) (1998) *The Columbia Anthology of Gay Literature: Readings from Western Antiquity to the Present Day* (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 777–785 and P. Robinson (2013) *Gay Men’s Relationships Across the Life Course* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 3–34 (White 1980; Robinson 2013).
11. Macintyre *A Concise History*, p. 196.
12. Amery (82) Sydney; Herbert (82) Melbourne; Lucas (75) Auckland; Jeffrey (72) Auckland; Arran (70) Melbourne; Sean (67) Auckland.
13. A man from the all-Australian sample.
14. More in the next chapter.
15. Until the late 1960s, Matriculation was the name in Victoria and other Australian states of the certificate awarded to students who successfully completed their final year of secondary school. The term originally referred to examinations that students were required to pass in order to qualify for a place at university. At Oxford University, for example, students are still required to matriculate in order to mark their admission to the university, see: <http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/new/matriculation>. Accessed 8 December 2015.
16. A starting-price bookmaker or ‘SP bookie’ provided illegal bets on horse races. The odds offered were those published at the start of the day and did not shorten if the number of bets rose before the horse race or greyhound race. The service SP bookies offered greatly increased with the advent of radio and private telephones. The following definition was used in an investigation of the Criminal Justice Commission, Queensland: ‘The acceptance of *unlawful* wagers by a person on his own behalf or on the behalf of another, at an agreed rate, on any

- sporting event or other event or contingency' (emphasis in the original), see Criminal Justice Commission, Queensland (1990) 'SP Bookmaking and other Aspects of Criminal Activity in the Racing Industry: An Issues Paper' (Toowong, Qld: Research & Coordination Division, Criminal Justice Commission), p. 8 (Criminal Justice Commission, Queensland 1990).
17. N. Brown (2015) 'Government, Law and Citizenship' in A. Bashford and S. Macintyre (eds) *The Cambridge History of Australia Vol 2: The Commonwealth of Australia* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press), p. 418 (Brown 2015).
 18. GPO is the acronym for the General Post Office or the principal sorting office and offices of the postal service in Australia, which was originally located in the state capital. In Herbert's case, the Melbourne GPO was located on the corner of Bourke Street and Elizabeth Street, Melbourne. The building still stands but is now a shopping emporium and offices. TAA was the acronym for Trans Australian Airways, a government-owned aircraft company that operated domestic air services in Australia from 1946 to 1994, see: <http://aviationcollection.org/TAA/taa.htm>. Accessed 5 May 2016.
 19. 'Pom' is the abbreviated form of 'pommy', a term given to newly arrived settlers in the Australian colonies and which carried over after Federation as a term for English or British people in general. It is still used today. There are a number of explanations for its derivation including as an abbreviation of pomegranate, signifying the red-cheeked face of the newly arrived English in Australia and as rhyming slang for immigrant. Regarding pommy's derivation from pomegranate and pomegranate as rhyming slang for immigrant, see B. Moore (ed.) (1997) *Australian Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press), p. 1041 (Moore 1997).
 20. As mentioned, this was the second long boom in Australia.
 21. U. Beck (1992) *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, trans. M. Ritter (London: Sage Publications), p. 142 (Beck 1992).
 22. Sennett *The Corrosion of Character*, pp. 26–27.
 23. Ambrose (77) Melbourne; Baden (65) Melbourne; Parry (63) New York.
 24. Basil (75) Auckland.
 25. Randall (87) Melbourne; Clancy (81) Melbourne; Godfrey (81) Sydney; Hector (81) Melbourne; Basil (75) Auckland; Colin (72)

- New York; Fergus (63) Manchester; Alec (62) Sydney; Hugh (62) Melbourne; Anselm (61) Melbourne.
26. A. Hochschild (2003, 1983) *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press) (Hochschild 2003, 1983).
 27. See Chap. 1 for background.
 28. For more on school-of-arts movement in Sydney, see http://dictionaryofsydney.org/entry/the_school_of_arts_movement. Accessed 11 December 2015.
 29. Drake (77) Sydney; Christian (72) Sydney; Arthur (62) London.
 30. Conservative MP from Queensland, Warren Entsch has a history of supporting gay people and marriage equality; see, for example, M. Knott (2015) 'Meet Warren Entsch, Queensland's unlikely but vocal LGBTI champion', *The Age* (Melbourne: Fairfax Media Ltd) (Knott 2015).
 31. The acronym, PLWHA (people living with HIV-AIDS) is used in this book even though in some contexts it has been superceded by PLHIV (people living with HIV).
 32. For discussion of changing meaning of coming out, see Robinson *Changing World*, pp. 26–28, 43–46, 62–66.
 33. E.K. Sedgwick (1990) *Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press) (Sedgwick 1990).
 34. G. Herdt (1997) *Same Sex, Different Cultures: Exploring Gay and Lesbian Lives* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press), p. 159 (Herdt 1997).
 35. See, for example, report showing prejudice in Russia against working with gay people: A. Day (2013) 'Russia: 51% of population would not want a gay neighbour or work colleague', *Pink News*, 11 Sep 2013: <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2013/09/11/russia-51-of-population-would-not-under-any-circumstances-want-a-gay-neighbour-or-work-colleague/>. Accessed 11 January 2016 (Day 2013).
 36. Another small group of men referred to the effect their sexuality had on their working lives and they were New Zealanders from the middle cohort of the international sample. Their stories are discussed in Chap. 3.
 37. Excerpts from interviews with Geoffrey and Harold were used in a previous publication on their experiences of homophobia: P. Robinson

- (2008) 'Older gay men's recollections of anti-homosexual prejudice in Australia' in S. Robinson (ed.) *Homophobia: an Australian History* (Sydney: Federation Press), pp. 218–235 (Robinson 2008a).
38. For more on this period and its effects on camp men in Australia, England and other US allies, see Robinson *The Changing World*, pp. 21–25 (Robinson 2008b).
39. G. Johnston (1969) *Clean Straw for Nothing* (London: Collins), pp. 87–88 (Johnston 1969).
40. While the situation in West Germany in the 1950s was oppressive for gay men, it was considerably better than what it had been under the Nazis where men convicted of homosexuality were sent to concentration camps and members of the SS found guilty of homosexual activity were executed. See R. Lautmann (1981) 'The Pink Triangle: The Persecution of Homosexual Males in Concentration Camps in Nazi Germany' in S. J. Licata and R. P. Petersen (eds) *Historical Perspectives on Homosexuality* (New York: The Haworth Press and Stein and Day), p. 141 (Lautmann 1981).
41. A. McLaren (1999) *Twentieth Century Sexuality: A History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd), pp. 162–163 (McLaren 1999).
42. F. Bongiorno (2012) *The Sex Lives of Australians: A History* (Melbourne: Black Inc.), pp. 232–233; K. Holmes and S. Pinto (2015) 'Gender and Sexuality' in Bashford and Macintyre *The Cambridge History of Australia Vol 2*, p. 323 (Bongiorno 2012; Holmes and Pinto 2015).
43. D. Eribon (2004) *Insult and the Making of the Gay Self*, trans. M. Lucey (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), pp. 22–23 (Eribon 2004).
44. H.S. Becker (1963) *Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: The Free Press), p. 34 (Becker 1963).
45. Regarding legal protections provided in Australian jurisdictions, see Australian Human Rights Commission (2015) *Resilient Individuals: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity & Intersex Rights: National Consultation Report 2015* (Sydney: Australian Human Rights Commission), pp. 71–77 (Australian Human Rights Commission 2015).
46. R.W. Connell, M.H. Davis and G.W. Dowsett (1993) 'A Bastard of a Life: Homosexual Desire and Practice among Men in Working-class Milieux' in *The Australian and New Zealand Journal of Sociology*, vol. 29, no. 1, pp. 118–119 (Connell et al. 1993).
47. Becker *Outsiders*, p. 34.

48. Becker *Outsiders*, pp. 35–36.
49. In an article published by *The Age* in 2010, a journalist retold a mother's story of how her two children took their own lives because of male bullies in the work-place: H. Westerman (2010) 'In Harm's Way', *The Age* (Melbourne: Fairfax Media Ltd.) (Westerman 2010).
50. 'He'd still be alive if he'd never joined the police', *The Age*, 10 December 2015 (*The Age* 2015).
51. D. Altman (1982) *The Homosexualization of America, the Americanization of the Homosexual* (New York: St Martin's Press), p. 22 (Altman 1982).
52. For link between fear of anal sex, poor sex education for teenagers, and risk of HIV-AIDS, see P. Robinson (2016) 'Marriage equality', *Nexus* (Melbourne: The Australian Sociological Association): <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.3/431298>. Accessed 31 December 2016 (Robinson 2016).
53. *The Wire* (Home Box Office, 2005) is a US television series set in Baltimore in the early 2000s where most of the action concerns the activities of police officers recording telephone conversations between members of gangs dealing illicit drugs on housing projects and occasionally apprehending them. Members of the drug gangs are mostly in their late teens, early 20s and unemployed. Police officers refer to anyone who is a nuisance as an 'arse-hole'. Anal sex is frequently implied or referred to by the police officers, rarely by members of the drug gangs. An example of its use included the following exchange between two heterosexual police officers: Younger, black, police officer to middle-aged, white, police officer: 'You look fresh today'. Middle-aged, white, police officer: 'I got laid last night'. Younger, black, police officer, laughing: 'Oh yeah? Your arse hole still hurting?' (First season, 2004, episode 6, 26.20–26.25). This is contemporary police drama where masculinity is represented by dominant, traditional, heterosexual values. The fear of anal sex by its repeated reference is noteworthy. Whether it is related to increased visibility and acceptance gay men is moot. See: <http://www.hbo.com/the-wire>. Accessed 16 January 2017.
54. C. Foufas (2016) 'Homophobia is not entertainment. Channel 5 should be ashamed', *The Guardian*: <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jan/08/homophobia-winston-mckenzie-celebrity-big-brother-channel-5-tyson-fury>. Accessed 9 January 2016 (Foufas 2016).

55. R. Sennett and J. Cobb (1973) *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (New York: Alfred Knopf), p. 104 (Sennett and Cobb 1973).
56. Becker *Outsiders*, p. 36.
57. K.J. Dover (1978) *Greek Homosexuality* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd). See also J. Boswell (1990) 'Sexual and Ethical Categories in Premodern Europe' in D.P. McWhirter, S.A. Sanders and J.M. Reinisch (eds.) *Homosexuality/Heterosexuality: Concepts of Sexual Orientation* (New York: Oxford University Press), pp. 15–31; McLaren *Twentieth Century Sexuality*, p. 187; A. Bérubé (1991) *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Penguin Books), p. 156 (Dover 1978; Boswell 1990; Bérubé 1991).
58. For examination of post-war blackmail in England and the USA, see McLaren *Sexual Blackmail*, pp. 220–238.
59. McLaren *Sexual Blackmail*, p. 245.
60. For more on blackmail and entrapment by police forces in the United States, see, for example, J. Rechy (1977) *The Sexual Outlaw: A Documentary* (New York: Grove Press Inc), pp. 98–103 (Rechy 1977). There is no reason to believe police behaviours that Rechy documented were different in other countries (Rechy 1977).
61. P. Bourdieu (2003) *Firing Back: Against the Tyranny of the Market 2*, trans. L. Wacquant (New York: The New Press), p. 29 (Bourdieu 2003); Macintyre *Concise History*, p. 196 (Bourdieu 2003).
62. P. Bourdieu (2001) *Masculine Domination*, trans. R. Nice (Cambridge: Polity), pp. 93–94 (Bourdieu 2001).

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