



## WHAT IS MALE HOMOSEXUALITY?

*Miles Groth*



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### ABSTRACT

*The custom of usage introduced during the last third of the 19th that distinguished between heterosexuality and homosexuality solidified a confusion between erotism and sexuality that had been developing for several centuries in the West in Europe and the Anglophone cultures. It also led to a misinterpretation of intimate behavior between males. The psychoanalytic interpretation of male oedipal development was guided by this confusion. A revision of elements of that interpretation is offered here. Phenomenological analysis reveals the discourse about male “homosexuality” to be about erotism, not sexuality. Male homoerotism is shown to be a form of ludic experience that made possible and is supportive of life in community as such and in the family.*

**Keywords:** male homosexuality, homoerotism, male studies, men’s studies, father-son relationship, male identification, gender studies, psychoanalysis, phenomenological method, Oedipus complex, Jocastian complex

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From the point of view of psycho-analysis the exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self-evident fact. *Sigmund Freud (1905).*

Man plays only when he is in the full sense of the word a man, and he is only wholly Man when he is playing. *Friedrich Schiller (1801)*

## INTRODUCTION

In any discipline, we must revise our understanding of an important topic when we suspect that its conceptualization is based on a fundamental misapprehension. I believe this is the case with male homosexuality. The misapprehension is our tendency to view human beings primarily in terms of their genital sexuality. To see human beings primarily as sexual beings (*homo sexualis*) is something quite novel (at the most three centuries old in the Western world), a perspective that was formalized at the end of the 19th century by sexologists and studied extensively through the 20th century by Freud and his followers.

Historically, we have viewed ourselves variously as fundamentally spiritual, ethical, economic, or aesthetic beings. On one account, which I will argue is essential to understanding what we call male homosexuality, we are fundamentally ludic. This was the view of Karl Groos (1901) and Johann Huizinga (1938). For the latter, we are the human being as player—*homo ludens*.

In what follows, I will offer a reconceptualization of intimate emotional and often physical behavior between males. We need to radically refocus our view of such behavior and, more important, the experience underlying it. If we do, certain preconceptions that obscure the meaning of the phenomenon are revealed.

I propose a modification of the psychoanalytic theory of male-male intimate experience and behavior. My method is phenomenological. This means I attempt to suspend presuppositions about the meaning of what we term male homosexuality and allow the phenomenon to speak on its own terms.

This is an essay that many readers will find uncongenial. I write not to discredit previous research, but to stimulate thinking about the complex set of attitudes and wide range of experiences and behavior that collectively go by the name male homosexuality. My view will likely annoy many otherwise sympathetic readers, including those who identify themselves as “gay,” as much as those for whom the topic of homosexuality in general is unsettling.

It will also likely annoy psychoanalysts for it suggests a revision of the theory of male oedipal development (Groth 2017).

To some readers, what I have to say will seem to be based on mere biological reductionism. Although much of what I say foregrounds fundamental biological facts, which I doubt anyone will deny we must consider, it will become quite clear that I do not for a moment believe that biology is destiny. But certainly scholars are not merely interested in having confirmed what they already believe. Do we not all gain from seeing what was previously overlooked?

I doubt that an understanding of what we term male homosexuality will be provided by those working in either the biological or social sciences, or by activists and journalists. A meaningful response to the question will be forthcoming only when we have all asked different questions about what intimate male-male experience means.

Briefly, I argue that male homosexuality is not a form of sexuality at all, since reproduction of the species is not a possible outcome of such behavior. A coherent use of the term 'sexual' must have reproduction as its referent. In boys who eventually eschew sexuality (intercourse) and instead are strongly homoerotic, the latter behavior is not a form of deviant sexuality—since it is not sexuality at all. Boys who later turn away from females as sexual objects are better understood as being presexual. Their experience of other males is not sexual, but rather erotic. Effectively, they have abandoned the male sexual role required by life in community, but not intense intimate experiences with other human beings, which they pursue with other males. Only if we conflate sexuality (reproduction) and erotism can we speak of intimate physical activity between males as a kind of sexual behavior, even if it contributes to the survival of the species by promoting intense, cooperative relationships between human beings on the basis of reciprocal altruism (Trivers, 1971; Kirkpatrick, 2000).

I propose to use the term homoerotism to refer to male-male attraction and intimate interaction. A male's erotic life is distinct from his sexuality and more pervasive. When anal intercourse is an element of male homoerotic behavior it mimics sexuality. My thesis is that male homoerotism is ludic (Huizinga, 1971) and that male-male physical and emotional intimacy is best

understood as a form of play.

## **EROTISM AND SEXUALITY**

A critique of Freud's pansexualism is long past due. Having created a "whole climate of opinion" (Auden) it is seemingly exempt from reconsideration. We no longer recall that it was, after all, only a hypothesis even for Freud himself in his description of childhood (prepubescent) sexuality. His view that the pregenital precursors of genitality (Freud's term for what I refer to as sexuality) are preconditions for healthy adult reproductive behavior is open to question. We must be open to the possibility that erotism is distinct from sexuality, even though they parallel and sometimes are congruent with one another, for example, during extreme oral and anal pleasure and phallic/clitoral pleasure (orgasm).

Erotic behavior manifests as intimacy between two persons, but it does not need to involve the genitals. What distinguishes erotic experience is its playfulness. Some erotic behavior is solitary (autoerotic), but most is interpersonal. By contrast, sexual behavior is always interpersonal and can occur only between a male and a female. Contrary to Bagemihl (1999), I would argue that erotism is absent in other mammals, which like human beings also engage in close physical interactions such as grooming and practice for fighting and hunting. With the advent of reflective consciousness (apperception), language, life in community, and a sense of the numinous in human beings, erotic experience first occurs and important changes take place.

Reproductive behavior in an organized social life requires that the female make a choice from among rival prospective sexual partners, the males who are attracted to her. Her choice of a given male partner implies acceptance of him. This is in contrast to the earlier protohuman sexual interactions in which the male forced himself serially on any female he encountered. In human beings as in other animals, this meant choosing a woman who was reproductively viable (premenopausal), at a suitable moment in her menstrual cycle (detected by smell), and not pregnant (typified by the "hourglass" figure). Guided by smell, other mammals still mate only when the female is receptive. As with protohuman beings, the male chose and imposed himself on the female—any female that happens to be in proximity.

Homoerotism in males can be best understood against the background of the social taboo against the imposition of a male's sexual desire on a female: rape. The "chooser-chosen" dialectic described is inverted with the development of life in society, where the male is the chosen partner. The myth that the male chooses the female is a remnant of our protohuman experience. It is explained as an effect of compensation for having been rejected by the mother of infancy and childhood. The "masculine protest" (Adler, 1956) and male aspirations for power are reactions to the remarkable development of having been put in the position of being the chosen one in sexuality. The precondition of this is rejection by the mother as a female of the little boy's interest. A second major taboo, the taboo against incest, must therefore be in place to make way for the imposition of the taboo against rape.

### **HOMOSOCIALITY, HOMOEROTISM AND "SOME BOYS"**

Complex social life—life in community—inverts the male's status. He is now the chosen sexual partner. But there is an exception to this that is fundamental to the present discussion. At a certain point in childhood some boys do not come to see themselves as the one to be chosen in relationships with females, the first of whom is, of course, his own mother. Most likely because their mothers tacitly give these boys the impression they have successfully chosen their mother as objects of sexual fantasy—and here Freud was certainly correct in postulating oedipal desire in boys *at the level of fantasy*—such boys continue to see themselves as *choosers* in the world not only of the mother-son relationship but eventually in the sexual drama with any female. This, I suggest, is the precondition for the psychological birth of the homoerotic male.

Homoerotic males are in a sense revenants of that era in our evolution before the advent of complex social life with its primary taboos, when males were the adamant and usually ruthless choosers in the reproductive encounter. In other words, *what we see in male homoerotism is the re-emergence of the original male sexual disposition to choose a female at will*, the orientation that is not permissible in large, complex societies, which ironically enough were very likely an invention of males for the protection of women and children.

Assuming the role of the choosing partner requires aligning oneself psychologically during childhood with the female sexual role. This assertion requires considerable elaboration and

adequate justification, which I will attempt to provide in what follows.

In the homoerotic male, we have the paradox of someone who aspires to be both giver and chooser, someone who, like the female, plays the role of chooser in sex but whose performance with his partner is that of the male, the giver in sexual transaction.

Society, first and foremost in the person of the mother, teaches boys that choosing is not an option for them but rather that they must wait to be chosen. Most boys learn to wait. Early phallic strivings are discouraged. A boy must not climb onto his mother's body after a certain age. He must not display his penis to her after a certain age. The boys we are interested in understanding do something different, however. They do not resign themselves to waiting to be chosen. Instead, having successfully chosen their mother, they have no need to seek prospective reproductive partners. Such a boy is an Oedipus whose origins are never revealed to him.

Ordinarily, a boy's father is the first person with whom he can realize his impulse to be the chooser in a relationship. This may be the trade-off in the change to life in community, which as David Gilmore has shown, is coterminous with the appearance of manhood (Gilmore 1990). The relationship is not sexual and mediates the boy's identification with the males of our species, represented in the world of the nuclear family by the boy's father. Matters are somewhat different in cultures where a collective representation of the male (elders) imposes on a boy the rituals that lead to his assuming the status of manhood. In contemporary families where the father is missing—physically or emotionally—the situation is problematic for a boy. In the case of the homoerotic male, such a relationship is foregone, since the boy has had an experience of successful agency in the relationship with his mother whom he has come to believe he chose and was accepted by. Such boys have first experienced being loved and initiating love with the same person. His mother has not discouraged her “little man's” presocial male behavior, indicating to him that the injunctions against the male being the chooser at stake in community life seemingly do not apply in his case.

Why does such a mother allow the sanction against incest to be breached, if only in fantasy? Does she merely fail to discourage her son's fantasies of “sexual” behavior with her or does she

actively (albeit unconsciously) encourage such fantasies and even permit and welcome childish attempts at enacting close physical contact with her, contacts that express more than responding to the boy's need for ongoing security and warmth? Some mothers do both. The latter occurs most commonly when the mother is young and immature or, more often recently, has been physically or emotionally abandoned by her sex partner or husband and is emotionally (and likely sexually) needy. In truth, for homoerotic males, Freud's Oedipus complex is better named the Jocasta complex. Ordinarily, the presence of the boy's father strongly limits his playing out these classic Oedipal fantasies with his mother. A physically absent or emotionally distant father may even encourage such behavior in the mother and indirectly sanction her active engagement with the son's intimations. Here we must appreciate the crucial importance of the son-father relation in homoerotic boys.

There are then two commonly observed situations in the lives of boys who are strongly homoerotic: (1) a mother who is seductively compliant with her son's fantasies or even allows them to become conscious and acted out "playfully" and (2) a father who does not act as a buffer between the boy and his mother by becoming involved in the powerful affectional system of son-father identification. On the one hand, a boy must be afforded the opportunity of a father with whom he is the agent in fulfillment of the process of identification. On the other hand, this must not occur after the boy has first succeeded in being the chooser in his relationship with the "Jocastian" mother. The experience of being the chooser must occur first with the boy's father in the wake of having been loved by his mother. We recall that any infant's response to maternal love is gratitude. At the most we could consider it to be reactive not proactive love.

As one might expect, the boys I have been describing often report having felt very little rivalry with their fathers, as Freud observed most boys do. More important, such a boy often recalls having had little interest in his father, either as an object of identification or as a rival. Later in life, other males are also seen not as rivals for the interest of females but rather as objects of fascination with whom the boy desires emotional intimacy. He repeats with other males the emotional scenario he has experienced with his father. Other males become possible objects of choice against the backdrop of "successful" incestuous love. Homoerotic interest continues the

unfinished business of identification with the male but not a male whose destiny is to be the chosen in the sexual scenario. Such boys are both chooser and chosen, a situation that sets them up for confusion and frustration in relationships with other males. Most boys go on to assume their role alongside other males as candidates for choice as the sexual partner of a female to whom they are attracted.

Most homoerotic males are aware of attraction to other males before they reach puberty, most by adrenarche around age 10 (McClintock and Herdt, 1996; Herdt, 2000) when a child's attraction to one sex or the other is known to him. The homoerotic male sees females in the role of chooser all around him, but because he succeeded in having chosen and been accepted by his mother he is not motivated to put himself forward to compete with them for choice by a female. The sexual scenario is irrelevant to him. Instead, his emotional life becomes organized around *erotic* experience. The only choices of a body with which to be intimate that remain for such a boy are the boy's own body or another male's body. A female's sexual behavior toward him will be incompatible with his view of himself as the chooser in such relations. For this reason, he is either oblivious to the sexual interest girls show him or he ignores it. On the other hand, the easy *social* compatibility of homoerotic males with women is based on their shared existential status of being the chooser in interpersonal relations.

In the psychology of homoerotic males the notion of sexual choice is an oxymoron. Homoerotic males are, strictly speaking, not sexual beings at all. Better expressed, they remain presexual. In terms of how life in community has developed, they are an anachronism but they are remarkable in giving us a glimpse of ur-maleness, that is, maleness before the arrangement of relations between male and female human beings was structured by life in community with its norms and taboos. Their *erotic* lives, however, are very rich.

### **THE PARADOX OF HOMOEROTIC RELATIONSHIPS**

How shall we understand the intense emotional and often physical relationships some males have with each other that take the place of sexual relationships?



Little attention was given to homoerotic experience until Freud and his follows, especially Sandor Ferenczi (1980 [1912]). The homosexual was invented only in the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but the homoerotic male has been known at least since the biblical story of David and Jonathan. Nearby, but a world apart from the scientific study of sexuality in Europe in urban centers, were the everyday intimate experiences between men. In the States, as recently as the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century American men behaved toward each other in physically and emotionally very physically intimate ways (Deitscher, 2001; Katz, 2001). “Male adhesiveness” (Rotundo, 1989; Lynch, 1995; Deitscher, 2001; O’Donnell and O’Rourke, 2003) was as essential feature of men’s everyday emotional lives. Then quite suddenly intense male friendships were explored by medical psychologists and sexologists in terms of the newly invented contrast between homosexuality and heterosexuality (Laqueur, 1990; Katz, 1995; Terry, 1999; Ibson 2002). “Here is [male] adhesiveness” (Lynch, 1985). The common, uncomplicated and average expectable contacts of an affectionate and playful nature between men were subjected to the suspicious gaze of science and pathologized. They were now a form of aberrant (hetero)sexuality, what I will term pseudosexuality. Many of these relationships may have included mutual masturbation of the sort one still commonly sees among young teenage boys but they remained pseudosexual. Perhaps the most eloquent accounts of such intimate male relationships are to be found in the novels of Herman Melville (1819-1891) and the poetry of Walt Whitman (1819-1892). These relationships dominated by adhesiveness were, however, of a very different sort than those between the post-Freudian homoerotic male

### **THE PARADOXES OF MALE HOMOEROTISM**

There are at least two paradoxes at the heart of male homoerotic (presexual or pseudosexual) experience. Taken together, they help us understand male homoerotism. First, each partner in a male homoerotic partnership has something to give (the ejaculate) but neither can receive in a biologically meaningful sense what the other has to offer. Where there is genital play an encounter occurs between two phalluses attached to their respective bodies, where the phallus has become a symbolic equivalent of the male’s body as a whole. The act allows for enacting the giving of the male sexual gift. Hence the great importance to many homoerotic males of the phallus. But the act is pseudosexual. For both partners the experience must be

recurrently frustrating. This is likely one of the sources of the compulsive (often termed promiscuous) quality of male homoerotic activity.

Second, male homoeroticism precludes love between the partners. If you have remained with me as a reader up to this point, note that I define love as the unconditional devotion to another human being. The model for this is the mother-infant relation. It is uni-directional (mother to infant). Mature loving is possible only in (hetero)sexual relationships, where it is, again, unidirectional—from female to male. Males may allow themselves be loved, but they are not capable of love as defined (unconditional). This is not to say that men cannot learn to *simulate* such devotion and many men do, especially in the context of marriage and the raising of children. As we will see, such simulation parallels the simulation of (hetero)sexuality in homoerotic male relationships.

Homoerotic yearnings can be satisfied only at the level of playfulness. Before continuing, I must add that while there cannot be love between two males, friendship (*philia*) can and does more than compensate for what is missing and often “surpasses the love of a woman” (Old Testament, II Samuel: 26).

In addition to being unable to bear a child and know the feeling of unconditional devotion to another human being, a male’s inability to love is a feature of the male infant’s highly charged relationship with his mother. In his discussion of men who batter women, Jukes (1993) argues that short of drastically changing the way we socialize males or altering human biology, men’s extreme ambivalence towards females will not change. Jukes’s view is based on Melanie Klein’s revision of classic Freudian psychoanalytic theory (Hopper, 1991; see Groth, 2000, for a review of Jukes). Briefly summarized, Klein’s view is that an infant male’s perception that his mother is in the position to allow his death causes a psychological splitting of the mother into a pair of opposites, incompatible imagos (versions): an all-good mother (to whom he is strongly attracted because he believes she will save him from every danger and keep him alive) and an all-bad mother (whom he fears and hates because she is capable of bringing about his physical and psychological annihilation). A boy’s subsequent feelings of primal hate toward his mother are repudiated as unacceptable and incompatible with his attachment to, dependency on, and feelings of gratitude

towards as all good, but they remain in the boy's psyche, "encapsulated" (Hopper, 1991) in a sequestered, isolated part of the boy's unconscious. They may break through at any moment as rage, especially when a male feels his existence is threatened. They are released as unexpected violence against females. The most important example of this leads to breaching the taboo against rape.

Reference to Jukes is also germane to the present discussion because he suggests that, ultimately, the anodyne to male ambivalence toward females (which will continue to characterize men's attitudes towards women as long as boys are reared by their mothers) will come from a concerted effort by males to change the way they relate to *other males* and subsequently to their sons if they should father children. Knowing that his role as a male includes competing with other males for a female's choice of him as sexual partner, much effort will have to be made to overcome socially programmed rivalry and competitiveness between males even when it is balanced by male adhesiveness.

With Jukes's observation in mind it seems obvious that expressed homoeroticism expressed between males would lead to less competitive behavior between men and encourage the inhibition of violence against women that seems to be elicited when sexual rivalry between men is most intense.

But to return to the main argument. While love is out of the question in homoerotic relations, males are nevertheless clearly capable of powerful interest in each other in homosocial relationships, expressed as friendship and homoeroticism.

If habitual searching is *de rigueur* for (hetero)sexual males, it should also be true for homoerotic males. And it is, but with this crucial difference: in the latter, each of the males is out to choose his other, not to be chosen by him. Hence, the paradox and frustration of such relationships is that we have two choosers and none who is willing to be the chosen one.

If homoerotic experience between males is not about sex or love, what is it about? I have suggested that it is best understood as erotic in the broad sense (pursuing intimacy), but it is erotism of a special sort: ludic erotism. Having tried to avoid the Scylla of psychopathology and

the Charybdis of masculinist ideology, I am not promoting male homoeroticism, since because it is in any case universal, it has no need for promotion or encouragement, but only permission. As we navigate out of the mainstream of Freudian pansexualism into what I take to be the post-gender era, realizing that male homoeroticism is not a form of sexuality will make it less forbidding to men.

## MAN PLAY

It is now time to look more closely at the ludic quality of male homoeroticism. According to Huizinga (1971), *homo ludens* is more fundamental than even *homo faber* (man the maker), who is collectively said to be responsible for having built the monuments to humanity that we see around us, from pyramids to computers. In our post-industrial period, however, *homo ludens* has become more visible again. Not that he disappeared—he was, however, suppressed.

Playing has been characterized both as a form of experience intermediate between work (the world of *homo faber*) and leisure (time for reflection) and recreation (time for diversion), and as rehearsal for work (as seen in animal play, which is practice for important survival skills such as hunting and fighting predators or rivals). Ludic behavior first means handling everything within reach. It is in this sense fundamentally linked with curiosity. For males, it is first evident in abundance in boys. While much of a boy's playfulness is vigorous (rough-and-tumble play), it can also be gentle. Following puberty, playfulness becomes part of (hetero)sexuality as foreplay. In homoerotic males, however, playfulness becomes an end in itself and is the primary characteristic of the relationship.

Many homoerotic males are satisfied with exploring the other male's body in tactile contact, especially in athletics. Some homoerotic men simulate the sexual act, but I believe it is a mistake to assume that all or even most homoerotic males simulate (hetero)sexuality, especially in the form of anal sex. Such males, however, have been the most visible subgroup of homoerotic males because they are readily comparable to males and females who engage in sexual behavior. The active ("top") partner in these relationships that mimic (hetero)sexuality are probably also the central figure in the unconscious fantasies of men who are homophobic in both senses: afraid of men and afraid of anal penetration by another male

Just as there are as many embodiments of masculinity as there are males, there are endless varieties of male homoerotic experience and behavior. Everything depends on the fantasy underlying the play. In this sense, the original conception of homosexuality as a paraphilia was correct<sup>1</sup>.

For most homoerotic males, masturbation is the culminating form of pleasure-producing behavior. This is the legacy of male anatomy and phallic masculinity. However, as males discover the possibilities of pleasure elsewhere in their bodies, masturbatory behavior will be supplemented and enriched by other forms of physical contact.

Homoerotic behavior is a variation on the theme of autoerotic experience. The functions of masturbation in homoerotic relationships are both the release of tension and the production of pleasurable feeling. As in (hetero)sexual intercourse, there is the unique male gift (ejaculate). Like autoerotic behavior, mutual masturbation is primarily narcissistic; that is to say, it is not focused on the other but carried out for primarily for one's own pleasure, even masturbation is in tandem rather than serial. Like "exercise play," masturbation is a kind of behavior functional pleasure ("for its own sake") and not directed to another end such as the satisfaction of one's partner. Masturbation is linked to a primary fantasy that is repeatedly imagined while masturbating or being masturbated.

I am not at all suggesting that because male homoerotism is essentially ludic, homoerotic males are immature or developmentally arrested. As we now know quite well, most homoerotic males are as socially and emotionally competent and responsible as most other males. The point I wish to make is only that homoerotism is a form of play, not (hetero)sexuality. To repeat, from the perspective of earlier childhood development it is presexual and from the perspective of (hetero)sexuality, it is pseudosexual. Nor am I suggesting that homoerotic experience is less gratifying than sexuality. In fact, it may be more pleasurable, just as masturbation is known to be more pleasurable than sexual intercourse for both males and females nearly all the time (Kinsey et

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1 A paraphilia is scenario in which "tragedy is turned into triumph." Although dozens have been named and classified, each paraphilia is unique to its experiential provenance in the individual (Money 1990).

al., 1948; Hite 1987; Reinisch et al, 1991).

Homoerotism has the same quality as autoerotism. In the end, it is, as Meister Eckhart said of the rose, “without why”: “It blooms in that it blooms.” That is it. It does not need to mean anything else. It is there “at its own pleasure,” as Rumi says of the soul. It has no consequences (pregnancy, progeny). By contrast, even when it is carried out as recreation, (hetero)sexual behavior always has a serious underlying agenda—possible pregnancy and reproduction, no matter how advanced the contraceptive technology.

## CONCLUSIONS

There are advantages to characterizing male homoerotic experience as ludic rather than sexual. Above all, it relieves males whose experiential valence is homoerotic from any association with notions of sexual deviance or psychopathology. Although thanks to that famous vote, in 1973, of psychiatrists to depathologize homoerotic experience (“homosexuality”) (Stoller, 1973) and its deletion from the paraphilias for the *DSM-III* (1980), its ghost lingered in the *DSM-IV-TR* (2000) in the category of “gender identity disorders” and haunts the Gender Dysphoria diagnosis of *DSM-5* (2013).

As an existential therapist who has practiced since 1985, I can report that even though homoerotic males are in general not feared and loathed as they once were, clients who are self-identified as “gay” consult me with problems that are no different than any “straight” male’s problems, but often enough because they are still dealing with the label “homosexual” they are less able to enjoy their experiences with other men. Seeing male homoerotic experience as ludic moves the meaning of such experience and behavior entirely out of the realm of medical psychology. This is certainly an advantage of seeing homoerotism as ludic.

A further advantage is that it allows us to see males (and females) with not solely in other than primarily (hetero)sexual (reproductive) terms. The pansexualist worldview has put women in the impossible situation of having to be everything to her sexual partner—not only mate, but also surrogate mother, sister, confidante, best friend and mother of the partners’ children. No woman can be all of these and still be herself. The easy participation of men in erotic relationships with

other men including homoerotic play and friendship should liberate men to enjoy erotic as well as (hetero)sexual relations. And just as men can learn to love as women do, perhaps women can learn to play as men do.

## QUESTIONS

This essay has reconsidered the meaning of male homosexuality and found it to be problematic. I have suggested that it is not a form of sexuality at all, but rather an expression of ludic experience in human life. The discussion has depended on defining sexuality as a strictly reproductive phenomenon, allowing for a broader field of experience that I have termed the erotic. Within the range of erotism are male homoerotic relationships (that is, so-called homosexuality) and friendships. Some of their unique qualities have been named.

Many questions remain, however, following this fresh look at what we have come to know as male behaviour. I close with a selection of the most pressing of them:

What might be the evolutionary purpose of the return of “presocial” male behavior (homoerotism)? Are homoerotic males only a revenant of an earlier form of the human male, *or* do they also represent a further stage in the evolution of human nature, including another kind of man? What do homoerotic experiences and the relationships based on them teach us about the way males related before the emergence of life in community?

Is male homoerotic behavior an adaptation that provides the prototype for a kind of masculinity that prevents certain forms of socially unacceptable behavior such as rape from entering into society more frequently than it does? Could the way homoerotic males relate to each other serve as a model for a revised way for all males to relate to “the second sex,” to other males, and to children?

Why do some fathers not act as a buffer between a son and his mother? Why do they allow or encourage a son to enact fantasies that they themselves have repressed? Do some fathers indirectly (unconsciously) encourage such behavior between a son and his mother, perhaps to defuse tendencies (described by Jukes) toward aggressive behavior toward her that might be on the verge of emerging in his behavior? Was such a father’s own homoerotism suppressed but is

now being permitted vicarious expression in his son's behavior? Why do some boys whose fathers have been emotionally distant or actually absent not become homoerotic male, while others do?

What is the meaning of a male's fascination with the body of another male? How shall we account for the wide range of behaviors based on this fascination? What are the aesthetic principles of male desire for other males "without why"?

What are the implications of recognizing and welcoming the erotic dimension of males' lives in addition to the (hetero)sexual?

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## AUTHOR PROFILE



**Miles Groth** is Professor of Psychology at Wagner College, in New York. He is the author of five books and many book reviews and articles in peer-reviewed journals. A therapist in private practice for more than forty years, he has lectured on existential therapy in the States, Australia and Canada. Dr Groth is editor of *New Male Studies: An International Journal*.

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