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Men who 'made it': men's stories of ageing well

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MEN WHO 'MADE IT': MEN'S STORIES OF AGEING WELL

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Abstract

Dominant discourses in much academic literature and society more widely tend to depict men as destructive, both towards themselves and others (Mac an Ghail, 2012). Men are commonly presented as valorising hegemonic constructions of masculinity that are in turn understood as negatively impacting on men's wellbeing. For example, masculine values of self-sufficiency are considered to limit men's capacity to ask for help (Addis and Mahalik, 2003), or to develop more satisfying relationships (Burn and Ward, 2005). However, masculinities are diverse and complex with significant variation found across a range of contexts (Connell, 1995). While a new wave of literature has begun to highlight the positive ways in which men may engage with hegemonic forms of masculinity, there is a lack of understanding of how these positive forms may be experienced in the context of ageing and the life course. Thus the current study seeks to further understandings in this area.

This study focuses on men who self-selected as 'ageing successfully'. 40 older men aged between 50-90, split between Australia and Britain, were recruited using a maximum variation sampling approach. In-depth narrative interviews were carried out and analysed using Thematic Analysis (TA), as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006; 2013). Analytical themes that emerged from men's narratives related to their experiences of struggle, coping, identity construction, and hegemony in the context of ageing and the life course. Successfully navigating their relationship to control over the life course was particularly significant to men's experiences of ageing well.

Thus the findings suggest that older men show awareness around their own wellbeing and are indeed able and willing to find positive ways to act constructively, frequently underpinned by hegemonic forms of masculinity. In the current study men's constructive behaviours were generally experienced through 'legitimate' opportunities, that is, in ways that did not tend to challenge dominant forms of masculinity. Additionally, a minority of men could experience positive wellbeing by resisting hegemony e.g. through expressing a greater identification with and preference for female rather than male friendship during youth. Finally, the cross cultural nature of the current research makes an original contribution by suggesting ways in which Australian and British men's experiences of successful ageing and wellbeing may be influenced by class and cultural issues.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that all the information contained in this thesis is my own work.

Chapter 1

Introduction

1. Background

This section introduces the background to the current study in five separate areas; 1. Dominant discourses of masculinity: destructive for men themselves and for others; 2. Positive masculinity: a new research agenda; 3. Masculinity, ageing, and life course: a neglected area; 4. Notions of success in ageing: a focus on masculinities and beyond biomedicine; and 5. Masculinities across the life course and across cultures.

1.1. Dominant discourses of masculinity: destructive for men and for others

Outside of men's studies, dominant discourses in the academic literature, and in society more widely, tend to view men and masculinity as a destructive force, both towards themselves and others (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 2012). For instance, research has widely documented men's propensity towards 'risk-taking' (Courtenay, 2000), including drug and alcohol abuse (Lash, Copenhaven and Eisler, 1998), dangerous driving or sporting activities (Canaan, 1996), and unsafe sex (Doyal, 2001), carrying implications for health and wellbeing. Moreover, empirical research suggests that men are more reluctant than women to acknowledge and address issues pertaining to wellbeing, or to approach health services, to help cope with illness, such as depression (Moller-Leimkuhlar, 2002). Such perspectives about men tend to be underpinned by the view that hegemonic (or dominant) constructions of masculinity are primarily negative, and that these then influence men's negative behaviours. Hegemonic values including stoicism, competition, and 'toughness' are seen as encouraging men to act in ways seen as detrimental to health and wellbeing (i.e. not asking for help). Thus 'maleness' and masculinity become linked to men's poorer health and wellbeing in comparison to women in many areas, including lower life expectancy and higher rates of morbidity (Gorman and Read, 2011), as well as higher suicide rates (ONS, 2013).

1.2. Positive masculinity: a new research agenda

This "pathologising perspective" (Macdonald, 2006: 457) - viewing men and masculinity in predominantly negative terms - has been critiqued for the simplistic and one-dimensional understandings of masculinity it offers, and for neglecting the multiple ways in which men might enact their gendered identities in different contexts (Oliffe and Creighton, 2010; Sloan, Gough, and Conner, 2010). Moreover, such negative constructions of men and masculinity have little to offer by way of helping orient men towards more positive approaches and attitudes (Obrien, Hunt, and Hart 2009) that are conducive to health and wellbeing. Thus, newer research has started to focus on men who make positive attempts to manage their own wellbeing (e.g. Smith and Robertson, 2008; O'Brien, Hunt and Hart, 2005; Sloan et al., 2010), illustrating the ways in which hegemonic constructions of masculinity can also be positive influences. For example, men may call upon hegemonic values of autonomy and independence to enable abstinence from alcohol (de Visser, Smith, and McDonnell, 2009). Masculine ideals of self-control may be drawn upon to rationalise seeking help for mental health problems (Oliffe, Ogrodniczuk, Bottorff, Johnson, and Hoyak, 2011). Furthermore, engaging in the traditionally masculine realm of sport could also help men to construct positive narratives of recovery in the face of mental illness (Carless, 2008). Men's 'healthy' practices, such as regular exercise, can be enabled through masculine paradigms of action-orientation and autonomy (Sloan et al, 2009). Additionally, though perhaps less often, men may redefine masculinity in ways that are more conducive to wellbeing by resisting hegemony. For example, they may emphasise 'creativity, sensitivity, and intelligence', and their 'difference' as a positive feature of masculinity (Emslie, Ridge, Ziebland, and Hunt, 2006). Nevertheless, despite this (still relatively) new wave of research on men and positive wellbeing, more studies are needed to explore the different contexts in which men may express their identities in ways that are constructive for health and wellbeing (Creighton and Oliffe, 2010; Evans, Frank, Oliffe, and Gregory, 2011).

1.3. Masculinity, ageing, and the life course: a neglected area

While research into men's positive behaviours has helped to move understandings of men and wellbeing forward, past the simple construction of masculinity as 'risk-

factor', and towards more nuanced understandings, the tendency within the literature is to focus on younger men. Indeed, this is reflective of wider masculinities research, in which older men have been neglected (Calasanti, 2004) in favour of younger men (Arber, Davidson, and Ginn, 2003) in an array of areas, such as education (e.g. Mac an Ghaill, 1996; O'Donnell, 2000), crime (e.g. Mcdowell, 2003), or sexuality and the body (Adams and Savran, 2002). Furthermore, studies of ageing have tended to focus on older women (Arber et al, 2003), for instance, in areas such as poverty (e.g. Walker, 1992) and body image (e.g. Chrisler and Ghiz, 1993) more than older men. The life course, that is, "a sequence of socially defined roles that the individual enacts over time" (Geile and Elder, 1998: 22) has also been understudied in relation to masculinity (Evans et al., 2011). As such, little is known about how men 'do' masculinity in the context of ageing, and how wellbeing may be experienced across different life stages for men (Canham, 2009). A sociological life course approach, as adopted by the current study, enables a close focus on significant transitions across different life stages for men, and emphasises the interplay between various life phases, rather than seeing these in isolation (Gunnarrsson, 2009). Some recent empirical research on men and the life course points towards the potential for constructive behaviours as men age. For instance, fatherhood may open up the possibility for reflection, and men may start to adopt more positive health practices (such as stopping or reducing smoking) as part of wider discourses around responsible fatherhood (Greaves, Oliffe, Ponic, Kelly and Bottorff, 2010). Furthermore, fatherhood may encourage reflection on men's relationships with their own fathers, which then impacts on men's own parenting practices and wellbeing (Finn and Henwood, 2009). It has been shown that men may be motivated by the desire to parent 'differently' (from their own fathers) if they had negative experiences in childhood (Miller, 2011; St John, Cameron, and McVeigh, 2005), for example, men may seek to be more involved with their children if their fathers were distant or disengaged (Goodman, 2005).

As men age and begin to face potential challenges to masculinity, through physical difficulties and a loss of control, they may adopt 'healthy' practices to combat their perceived decline and re-establish control, for example, through exercise and diet (Calasanti et al., 2013). Furthermore, such 'healthy' practices could be conceptualised as legitimately masculine by men, as they may help to sustain the

hegemonic demands of working (Marchant, 2013). Thus, men may redefine themselves and their sense of masculinity in the context of significant life events or transitions. Empirical research has also shown how masculinity may be negotiated in the context of ageing; for example, men may compensate for an ageing body by highlighting a growth in wisdom or spirituality (Coles and Vassarotti, 2012). It has also been suggested that competitive values may be channelled into alternative means (Thurnell-read, 2012), or simply become less important as men age (Hockey and James, 2003). Thus, masculinity may be more flexibly and broadly defined in older age, or indeed, offer ways to compensate for perceived losses. Hence, further research is needed to explore men's experiences of ageing, and the relationship between masculinity and wellbeing across the life course (Tannenbaum and Frank, 2011) – the focus of the current study.

1.4.   Notions of success in ageing: a focus on masculinities and beyond biomedicine

As the population is ageing and there are concerns about the inevitable increased burden of chronic disease (e.g. WHO report on Global Health and Ageing, 2011), the current study focuses on men, ageing, wellbeing, and the life course, to examine men's lay narratives of 'successful ageing'. Successful ageing marks a shift away from dominant studies of ageing as decline, towards more positive understandings of ageing. Successful ageing has been studied from various perspectives, including the biomedical, where success is largely equated with longevity (Franklin and Tate, 2008), the absence of disease, and the maintenance of physical and mental functioning (Bowling and Dieppe, 2005). Psychosocial approaches to successful ageing view it as a complex adaptive process (rather than a final ideal state), experienced as a range of losses and gains across the life course (Baltes and Baltes, 1990). However, the need for the investigation of lay views of successful ageing has emerged as a research priority (Bowling and Dieppe, 2005). Lay views are multi-dimensional, and therefore may offer insight into older people's experiences that are missed by current theoretical models of ageing well, uncovering themes relating to financial security for instance, or the importance of the local environment (Bowling, 2006). In particular, more lay views are needed from men

(Callahan and McHorney, 2003; Robertson, 2006; 2007), and from a life course perspective that recognises cumulative effects of life's experiences over time (Gough and Robertson, 2010; Sloan et al; 2010).

1.5. Masculinities across the life course and across cultures

In addition to bringing together masculinity, successful ageing, the life course, and lay narratives, the current study is unique in collecting cross-cultural narratives from Australia and the England. Cultural specificity has been neglected from studies of successful ageing (Hung, Kempen and De Vries, 2010), despite suggestions that including the element of culture is imperative for the development of policy to promote health and wellbeing, perhaps specifically in older Australians (Tan and Ward, 2010). Research relating to British men and women's understandings of successful ageing has also been carried out (e.g. Bowling, 2006), though the current study is the first to compare (male) lay narratives of successful ageing from Australia and England. Furthermore, there is yet to be any empirical research comparing masculinities between the UK and Australia, though it has also been suggested that the relationship between masculinities and health could be usefully compared in cross cultural contexts (Gough and Robertson, 2010). The current study provides originality in these areas.

1.6. Outline of the thesis

The thesis is made up of nine chapters. Following this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical background to the study. Here the overarching theoretical perspective to the study, social constructionism, is discussed. This is followed by a discussion of narratives (as phenomena, rather than as an approach), and biological and social approaches to masculinity. While biological approaches historically tend to see gender as something fixed, social approaches view gender as achieved in a social context. Theories of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987), and 'multiple masculinities' (Connell, 1995) have been particularly influential in social approaches to masculinity, and are adopted by the current study to help make sense of men's narratives. A discussion of biomedical, psychological, and social

approaches to wellbeing follows, before finally reviewing biomedical, psychosocial, and lay approaches to successful ageing.

Chapter 3 is the empirical review, which is made up of three sections. First it reviews the literature on men and wellbeing. The dominant view in the literature is that men are poor at engaging constructively with wellbeing, largely due to hegemonic constructions of masculinity that valorise stoicism, independence, and rationality (among other traits). Yet newer research highlights some of the positive ways men respond to difficult events and experiences such as depression and physical illness, and how they negotiate their sense of masculinity in these contexts. The second section focuses on education and peer relations. It begins by exploring the historical relationship between masculinity and schooling to provide a context for the current study's participants. This is followed by a review of the literature that has explored peer relations between boys, and the significance of the male peer group for early identity construction. Finally, the literature on boy's early sexual relations is reviewed. The third section builds on the second by reviewing the literature on men's relationships across the life course, and links to wellbeing. Here more nuanced accounts of gender construction in the context of the life course are explored, including research on men's homosocial friendships, fatherhood, and grandfatherhood.

Chapter 4 details the methodological procedures of the current study. It is made up of six sections. First, it explains and justifies the methodological framework. This begins by discussing the narrative semi-structured approach to interviewing, and is followed by detailing the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the research. The second section examines ethical issues. The third section details sampling and recruitment information. The fourth section describes the process of data collection, including pre-interview information, developing the interview guide, and the interview process. The fifth section outlines the analytical procedures adopted by the current study based on Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2012; 2013) method. The final section addresses issues of quality assurance, including issues pertaining to reflexivity and the researcher.

Chapter 5 presents the first of four chapters examining the results of the research, and has two main sections. First, it discusses narratives of struggle for men. Men

reflected on early struggles including relationships with their fathers and sexual and romantic relations. Father/son relations were commonly distant, as fathers were often emotionally and physically absent from men's lives, though there were signs in the data that some relationships could improve as men aged. Early sexual and romantic relations, while not problematic for all men, were most often characterised by a lack of opportunity, access and resources, presenting challenges for both homosexual and heterosexual men. Later struggles included 'parting' from a romantic/sexual partner, retirement and unemployment, and embodied experiences of ageing and decline. The second section retains a temporal structure by exploring men's relationship to coping across the life course. It is divided into five sections that reflect the emergent themes. First, men described passive coping in childhood as they lacked the resources to find satisfactory solutions to their difficulties. Second, by adulthood, men popularly drew on popular discourses of 'taking action' to cope with struggle in narrating their stories. Third, 'positivity' was also described by men in relation to coping with difficulties. Fourth, some men described 'going with the flow', though more often men shifted towards this narrative in older age. Finally, this chapter shows how men sustained 'action' narratives into older age. Thus, men's coping with difficulties across the life course tended to be linked to their degree of control.

Chapter 6 explores men's narratives around early identity construction and links to wellbeing. Most of the sample identified as 'outsiders', 'loners', or 'different' in their narratives, away from being 'one of the boys', and often against hegemonic constructions more generally (i.e. interest in sport, drinking, male 'bonding', 'blokishness'), which carried implications for wellbeing. Being a 'loner' or 'different' was reflected on less positively than being an 'outsider', and was often positioned as out of men's control as being 'acquired' through socialisation. For example, men attributed their identities as 'different' or 'loners' to being an only child, or over-feminised in childhood, thus illustrating tension in these men's narratives. Conversely, 'outsiders' described valuing individuality, alternative political views, and self-discovery above being 'one of the boys'; hence, for 'outsiders' not 'fitting in' was actively shaped and positive. Furthermore, 'outsiders' described identity as flexible and adaptive, where they could successfully navigate male peer relations and still retain their individuality. Thus, as men identified as 'outsiders', 'loners', and

'different', and rejected certain hegemonic constructs, they embraced others, such as self-sufficiency. While most men narrated themes of self-sufficiency, some questioned its effectiveness. Furthermore, a minority of men described male 'bonding' or 'camaraderie' as significant to wellbeing, mostly in contrast to self-sufficiency narratives where male friends and support were devalued. However, some narratives displayed a tension between self-sufficiency and seeking friendship and support.

Chapter 7 explores men's experiences of ageing and associated shifts in identity. It comes in two sections. The first section discusses heterosexual men's shifts towards responsibility, reflexivity, and emotional expression when men formed relationships and built families. In contrast to responsibility, for gay men, themes of exploration and self-discovery predominated in their narratives of early romantic and sexual relations. For heterosexual men, fatherhood could encourage reflection on their own distant relationships with fathers and a desire to parent 'differently'. Most men described their parenting practices within hegemonic frameworks, thus encouraging moves towards greater emotional expression and positive wellbeing when men had daughters than sons, as they perceived this as demanding a 'softer touch' to sons. Indeed, fathering sons carried a greater risk of reproducing the hegemonic masculine role as distant and critical. The second section discusses men's shifts towards forming community bonds, and engaging in constructive embodied ways (such as yoga, walking, meditation, and going to the gym, among others) as men coped with difficult transitions, such as retirement, and losing physical function. Engaging in constructive ways of 'working' on the body allowed men to counter the loss of control experienced by men when they started losing physical function. Shifts to community and connectivity helped men to rebuild their identities, particularly after leaving paid work.

Chapter 8 brings together men's narratives of successful ageing, highlighting issues of class and culture. A strong working-class dimension emerged in Australian men's narratives whereby they described the development of 'resilience' as key to successful ageing. Narratives less shaped by financial constraints, even poverty, tended to centre on the development of autonomy and authenticity across the life course, as men overcame struggles and constraints. Narratives of autonomy and authenticity were also cultured, as Australian men narrated developing autonomy

and authenticity proactively. For example, Australian men narrated seeking help in their efforts to 'find themselves', in contrast to British men who described developing authenticity and autonomy as a 'natural' consequence of getting older. More generally Australian men narrated themes of 'action' more frequently than British men. Some interesting cultural differences also emerged in gay men's narratives. England, more specifically London, was viewed as a place of gay liberation for men in their earlier lives, and featured significantly in their 'coming out' processes. Australia, on the other hand, while not described negatively by gay men, did not feature as an emancipatory location in the way that London in particular did.

Chapter 9 provides an over-arching discussion, in which five key findings are highlighted. First, men's coping strategies tended to be structured in relation to age and the life course, and in particular, their sense of control, as men described passive coping in childhood and adolescence, and 'taking action' as adults. Second, as participant's identities developed during school years, most positioned themselves as 'outsiders', 'loners', or 'different' in comparison to male peers, and often against popular constructions of masculinity, such as a preoccupation with sport, drinking, and "blokishness", carrying various implications for wellbeing. The third finding relates to men's embodied experiences. Men in the sample engaged implicitly with notions of embodiment in discussing how their bodies started to 'go wrong' in older age. As men started to understand themselves *as* ageing bodies, they often turned to constructive embodied ways such as walking, or going to the gym to maintain 'action' and control. The fourth finding was that ageing encouraged greater emotional expression for (heterosexual) men, most often through romantic relations and becoming fathers, although fathering sons brought a greater risk of reproducing the hegemonic role than fathering daughters. The fifth finding is that ageing successfully is mediated by sexuality, class, and culture considerations. Following a discussion of the key findings, the chapter turns to discussing some critical reflections on the thesis in relation to sampling, and the interviews. This is followed by a consideration of the implications and recommendations that have arisen from the current study, before a final conclusion is reached.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Review

This chapter reviews the theoretical background to the current study. Four distinct areas are covered in this study: narrative, masculinity, wellbeing, and successful ageing. This chapter will start by discussing the overarching theoretical approach to the study, namely social constructionism. It will then review different approaches to narratives, masculinity, wellbeing, and successful ageing in turn.

2.1. Social constructionism

Broadly speaking, the theoretical approach underpinning this research is social constructionism, which can be defined as an approach that suggests that much of human life exists as it does due to social and interpersonal influences (Gergen, 1985). Social constructionism derives from the field of sociology, though the approach has been adopted by various disciplines and sub-disciplines (including social history and social psychology for example), and approached differently within each (Brickell, 2006). While ways of approaching social constructionism may bear a 'family resemblance' (Burr, 1995), it has also been argued that the field is marked by great variety, disagreements and few common themes (Danziger, 1997). While it is not possible here to explore fully the multiplicity of social constructionism (or social construction*isms*), it is necessary to outline the main characteristics and to give at least some examples of where there may be some divergence or disagreements between approaches. Indeed Nightingale and Cromby (1999) argue that while approaches may be conflicting, this should not obscure the 'broad consensus' that has emerged. Thus social constructionism will be discussed in relation to three key assumptions that Burr (1995) has suggested characterise a position as social constructionist. These include i) a critical stance towards taken for granted knowledge; ii) recognising historical and cultural specificity (of knowledge); and iii). understanding knowledge as sustained by social processes.

Firstly, 'taken for granted knowledge' (also known as 'common sense') can be understood as commonly accepted categories or understandings (Gregen, 1985). For instance, at the centre of common sense ideas around sexuality is the idea of

binary difference between heterosexual and homosexual categories. We take for granted there are two categories, and understand the behaviour and identity that arises from them in stereotypically gendered ways. For example, gay men are typically deemed more effeminate and more promiscuous in their sexual relationships than heterosexual men. Such understandings form part of the very foundations through which we understand the world and relate to each other, and there are profound investments in such enduring traditions (Gregen, 1985). However a social constructionist position invites a challenge to the so called objective basis of conventional knowledge, thus exposing common sense as open to question. Moreover, social constructionism understands knowledge as relative and inextricably linked to activity and purpose (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999; Burr; 1995). We therefore frame knowledge in ways that intimately relate to the activities we do. As Gregen states "descriptions and explanations of the world themselves constitute forms of social action" (1985: 268)

This critical impetus held by social constructionism highlights the direct contrast between social constructionism and positivism. Positivism can be understood as the claim that we can scientifically know and study the world objectively to produce accurate 'truths' (Patton, 2002). Rather than trying to achieve an 'accurate' representation of the world or objective 'truth', social constructionism is interested in the processes through which the world is represented (Gregen, 1985). Examination of this first feature of social constructionism reveals tensions concerning the limits of this approach, or the meaning and scope of 'discourse' as described by Danziger (1997). This contention is commonly known as the 'realism-relativism debate' (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). While realists assert that there is an external world that exists independently of the way we represent it, relativists argue that any external world that exists remains principally inaccessible to us, for nothing exists beyond discourse (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999) While relativists are criticised for dismissing the grounds upon which political action can be mobilised (Gill, 1995) a position too steeped in realism can lose sight of how representations construct the world around us. 'Critical realism' provides a middle ground between these two extremes and therefore is adopted by the current study.

Turning to the second principal area, social constructionism (along with critical realism) recognises that the world we experience is historically and culturally specific, that is what we understand as 'common sense' varies across time and culture. The historical element has been termed 'historicism', and understood as a specific thread of social constructionism in itself (Brickell, 2006). Furthermore, the recognition of cultural diversity has been demonstrated through much anthropological research (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). If we again apply this to our understandings of sexuality, research has shown that what we deem as 'normal' has changed over time, and that this can vary depending of the culture within which it is understood. For example, as discussed by Rubin, Abelove, Barale, and Halperin (1993), in classical Athens sex served to position social actors within a hierarchical structure, as assigned to them by virtue of political standing, rather than to express inward desires and inclinations. The extent of such historical and cultural variation is what counts as contentious here, as some constructionists emphasise significant differences, while others highlight the consistencies that remain across and between cultures and history for example the oppression of women or homosexuality (Nightngale and Cromby, 1999).

Lastly, by problematising various forms of common sense knowledge and emphasising how understandings may differ across time and culture, the possibility of exploring the processes by which individuals come to perceive what is 'real' is opened up. Social constructionists therefore argue that how we experience the world and ourselves is a product of these social processes (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). Constructivists are interested in studying the multiple realities constructed by people, and the implications of those constructions for their lives and relationships with others (Patton, 2002). The importance of language in constructing these processes must be emphasised, for languages are shared activities rather than something possessed by individuals and thus are constituents of shared social practices and processes (Gregen, 1985). As Nightingale and Cromby (1999) argue, languages are the dominant carriers of categories and meanings, but again there is debate as to whether there is a 'real' world beyond the text, let alone what we can know of this world.

Further criticisms of social constructionism concern issues of embodiment, materiality and power (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). The materiality of the body, that is its functional, physiological, hormonal, and anatomical aspects, is often denied or omitted in social constructionism, in favour of looking at the ways in which discourses and cultural practices are written on and through the body (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). But subjectivity is itself embodied, while at the same time produced through interactions and material possibilities (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). Brickell also suggests criticisms of social constructionist approaches include that they "deny social reality, pay insufficient attention to inequality, and cannot account for the causes of gendered and sexual subjectivities" (Brickell, 2006: 89). However, while certain strands of social constructionism, namely ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism, may arguably offer limited analysis of structural inequality and material power, for other strands such as materialist feminism with its links to Marxism and radical feminism, these issues stand more prominently at the fore (Brickell, 2006).

While this research has adopted the social constructionist approach, social constructionism is far from a monolithic theory, indeed it is a field marked by a great variety of positions. While it is not possible to outline the range of positions here, social constructionist understandings of gender can be grouped into four main paradigms: historicism, materialist feminism, and symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology (which can be grouped together due to their overlap in meaning) (see Brickell, 2006). Symbolic interactionism and ethnomethodology help guide this current study and are jointly concerned with the construction and deployment of meaning, and the accomplishment of self in everyday life through processes of social interaction (Brickell, 2006). Ethnomethodology will be discussed in more detail in section 2.2.2 on constructionist approaches to masculinity.

The next section will review the literature around narratives before turning to theories of masculinity.

2.2. Narratives

Competing definitions of the term 'narrative' exist, and it is used in a variety of ways by different disciplines (Phoenix, Smith and Sparks, 2010). It has been suggested the most inclusive definition comes from Polkinghorne (1988) who states a narrative is that which "refers to any spoken or written presentation" of meaning (McCance, McKenna and Boore, 2001: 352). The word narrative stems from the Latin verb *narrare*, meaning 'to tell', and shares the same Latin root (*gna)* with the word knowledge (Tuffield and Shadbolt, 2005). It is also often used synonymously with story (Reissman, 2008). Hinchman and Hinchman (1997: xvi) define narratives as "discourses with a clear sequential order that connects events in a meaningful way for a definite audience and thus offers insights about the world and/or people's experiences of it".

Personal and cultural experiences are very often organised in story form, with key actors and events (Mattingly and Lawlor, 2000). As stories, narratives can facilitate a chronological ordering of events, and can encourage us to separate past from present, thereby offering opportunities of reassessing, and even rewriting our sense of self (Murray and Chamberlain, 1999). Moreover they can position us with a view to shaping our future (Ezzy; 2000). Narratives can impose order, thereby giving coherence to (possibly chaotic) distinctive personal and social events (Kleinman, 1988). As argued by Langellier (2001: 700) personal narratives help "people make sense of experience, claim identities and 'get a life'". This dominant way of looking at stories, as biographical narrative, has been described as a 'big story' approach where stories are elicited to consist of life changing episodes or describe lives as a whole (Phoenix et al., 2010), also identified as 'grand narratives' (Georgakopoulou, 2006). In addition, some researchers have more recently noted the importance of looking to 'small stories', defined as the stories told about "very mundane things and everyday occurrences" (Phoenix et al., 2010: 222).

It is important to recognise the collaborative creation of meaning between teller and listener within narratives as events are chosen, arranged, linked and interpreted as meaningful from one to another (Reissman, 2004). As highlighted by Murray (2000: 345) publicly declaring one's story is not simply "a giving witness, but a search for validation". While the idea behind telling a narrative may be to reconstruct events as

directly as possible (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000), or in other words as close to 'truth' as we understand it, narratives should not be thought of as 'true' accounts of experience, but rather interpretations of the past shaped by present interests and circumstances (Flick, 2006). As such 'narrative truth' may be "closely linked, loosely similar or far removed from 'historical truth'"(Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber, 1998 in Patton, 2002: 551). This should not be seen to impinge upon their use (for which they have been criticised), rather their very use lies herein - narratives provide insight into how meaning, and hence identity is constructed, and how order is imposed (Reissman, 1993), reflecting "factors which influence behaviour" (Bates, 2004: 17).

As narratives are positioned within a wider sociocultural context, they tell us about social structures and processes, not just subjective realities (Gray, Fitch, Fergus and Mykhalovskiy, 2002), forging connections between the individual and social world (Reissman, 2004). Furthermore as Murray states we may be the "narrator of our story but not [the] author of our life" (2000; 345), highlighting the limits of individual agency. In addition to narratives being socially shaped they are also embodied. When we tell stories about our experiences we tell them about our bodies, as well as out of and through our bodies (Frank, 1991).

When narratives are told they both create and are created by the storyteller (Murray in Chamberlain, 1999). As narratives are gendered as well as mediated by age (Alea, Bluck, and Semegon, 2004) when people tell personal narratives they are also telling stories about gendered identity, age and so on. In effect we 'speak our identities' (Mishler, 1999:19) which are both constrained and enabled through our many social locations and identities, for example gender and ethnicity. As narratives are inscribed on the body they may potentially lead us to understanding the processes by which this inscription takes place, as well as the experiences of living in ageing bodies (Phoenix et al., 2010). Narratives are significant within studies of ageing (or gerontology). Indeed, it has been argued that the dominant Western narrative of ageing as decline can potentially be displaced by 'counter-narratives' that may allow more positive self-body relationships to emerge (Phoenix et al., 2010).

This research explores male lay narratives of successful ageing and wellbeing, how people see themselves as ageing successfully. Lay narratives are especially useful in accessing personal experience so often lacking in biomedical approaches and theoretical models of ageing (Bell, 2000) which emphasise categories such as the absence or avoidance of risk and disease for example (Bowling, 2006). Lay models are controversial in this area of study as there is no real agreement about how to define successful ageing across disciplines (Bowling, 2006).

2.3. Masculinity

As this study is underpinned by social constructionism, it necessarily works with a social constructionist view of gender. Specifically, theories of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and 'multiple masculinities' (Connell, 1995) have been significant to the current study and the way the data has been theorised. However, before discussing social constructionist ideas and their relevance to this study, traditional biological and psychological approaches to gender will be discussed. This will be followed by looking at social constructionist ideas, including the idea of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987), and 'multiple masculinities' (Connell, 1995). Butler's (1990) theory of performativity will also be explored briefly as an extension of West and Zimmerman's (1987) ideas.

2.3.1. Biological/psychological approaches

Prior to constructionist theories of gender (or what Whitehead (2002) terms second-wave sociology of masculinity), biological and psychological theories predominated. From the eighteenth century medical science posited that gendered behaviour was a matter of biology, thereby laying the groundwork for the 'naturalisation' of gender categories (Haywood and Ghaill, 2003). Medical science constructed a binary system of gender whereby women and men were taken to be one another's opposite in most things. This dominant system of sexual dimorphism however, was not always the case. Prior to the mid - eighteenth century science tended to perceive men and women as two versions of one sex; that is women were seen as lesser men, with the

clitoris and uterus as reduced or inverted versions of the penis and scrotum (Laqueur, 1990). As Laqueur points out, this one-sex model meant differences between men and women were less clear or indeed less important. Moreover, such changes in the construction of sex and gender highlight the historicity of our understandings.

Biological approaches to gender gave rise to 'sex difference' research as a means of explaining masculinity and femininity.   Loosely between 1890 and 1990 a proliferation of research developed, focusing on the differences between men and women across a range of areas including mental abilities, emotions, attitudes, personality traits, and interests (Connell, 1995). More specifically, behaviours and characteristics including reaction to frustration, timidity, verbal and spatial skills, creativity, risk-taking, dependency (among many others) have all been enthusiastically compared across the sexes using a wide range of scales, inventories and questionnaires (Burr, 1998). Such ideas originated from perceived physical differences (Edley and Wetherell, 1995), and crystallised into the concept of 'sex roles' by the mid-twentieth century (Hearn, 2006). In the light of constructionist approaches sex role theory is considered reductionist and often politically motivated. Nonetheless, in one of the few attempts to review the mass of research findings Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) found support for emphasising small, but consistent differences between men and women in only four areas: verbal ability, visual-spatial ability, mathematical ability and aggressiveness. In conclusion they emphasised that sex differences have been systematically exaggerated and similarities minimised (Segal, 1990). Secondly they argued that differences among men or among women as a group may be as great as between the sexes (Burr, 1998). More recent research into sex differences by Halpern (2011) suggests that males make up a disproportionate number of those in the extremely low ability end of verbal abilities, and men are found overwhelmingly among those with stutters, dyslexia, and low IQ, while women excel at general and mixed verbal ability tests. Halpern (2011) also found that men excel at maths in comparison with women, as well as visual-spatial abilities (spatial perception, mental rotation, generation and maintenance of visual images), but like Macoby and Jackson (1974) agreed there are more (cognitive) similarities than differences between the sexes.

The notion of psychological differences, as emphasised within sex difference research, begs the question: how do we account for such differences? The 'nature-nurture' debate has focused on whether biological mechanisms such as genes and hormones determine behaviour or whether environmental influences play a more significant role (Segal, 1990). Biological approaches to gender differences have focused upon hormonal, genetic and evolutionary factors. For instance, it has been argued that hormones produce gendered differences in brain development, resulting in men's brains showing a greater degree of specialisation (Burr, 1998). As Edley and Wetherell (1995) argue, attempts to prove men's brains were more powerful served to justify their dominant position in society, rather than merely trying to discover the 'natural' order of things. Genetic and evolutionary arguments (known as sociobiology) that posit natural selection produces aggressiveness in men and nurturance in women, fit neatly into the argument that women should be relegated to the personal sphere as the primary agents responsible for mothering (Edley and Wetherell, 1995). The biological, and hence natural, has come to represent both a positive aesthetic and a moral value; as Burr states, "what is natural is also right" (1998: 33). While it is now largely agreed that such arguments are deterministic and reductionist, any analysis of human behaviour and experience that makes no reference to the materiality of physical embodiment is also lacking (Burr, 1998).

Sex role theory found some resonance with psychoanalytic approaches to theorising gender, particularly in respect to notions of an 'authentic' or 'real' self-existing beneath our behaviours (Whitehead, 2002). According to Connell (1995), the first modern account of masculinity can be traced back to Freud and his psychoanalytic theories in the late nineteenth century. Along with with medicine, psychoanalysis has frequently been rooted in its attempts at normalisation and social control, despite its radical potential (Connell, 1995). Unlike biological theories that suggest for example that boys have a built-in predisposition to behave in masculine ways, Freud understood masculinity as constructed through a 3-step psychological and social-psychological process, thus highlighting some themes of nurture over nature, though still underpinned by an understanding of irreducible physical difference (Hearn, 2006). Through the 'oedipus complex', the gendering of the active and the passive, and the impact of the superego, as theorised by Freud (1961), masculine identity emerges. While it is not within the remit of this study to explore each of these

individually, such processes involved emotional attachments with others (specifically parents) during conflictual periods of growth (Hearn, 2006). As Connell (1995: 20) argues, while Freud passed down an essential tool, the lack of structuring social relations into his analysis constitutes a "radical incompleteness".

Approaches drawing on sex roles have tended to be developed closely with theories of socialisation, thus representing the 'nurture' side of the nature/nurture debate. As defined by Burr socialisation refers to "the process by which people come to adopt behaviours deemed appropriate in their culture" (1998: 38). As such sex roles theorists argue that rather than behaviour being innate in any way, men and women, or boys and girls (as more often theorised), are conditioned into appropriate roles of behaviour (Haywood and Ghail, 2003). A significant amount of research in this area (mainly from the 1960s and 70s) suggests that gender socialisation begins at birth, as we tend to treat boys and girls differently in subtle and often unconscious ways (Burr, 1998). Furthermore, by witnessing the potential rewards available when performing gender-appropriate behaviour children adopt this behaviour for themselves (Burr, 1998). Many theorists have noted that there are more restricted boundaries for boys in the area of sex appropriate behaviour (e.g. Fagot, 1977; Feinman, 1981), in that a girl behaving in accordance with masculine characteristics (e.g. self-sufficiency) is seen as less problematic than a boy behaving in ways that are deemed feminine (e.g. dependently), thus highlighting the lower value often attached to traditionally feminine attributes and the unacceptability of 'effeminate' men.

Within a sex role approach the level of masculinity males possess through socialisation is measured "objectively" through attitude tests for example, by using an index of gender norms (Haywood and Ghail, 2003), rather than questioned without being questioned?. The measurement of masculinity in this way renders some men as having too much masculinity, namely black and white working class males. Conversely, effeminate and gay men are seen as lacking in masculinity, most often explained through poor role models, deficient levels of testosterone, or overpowering mothers according to Haywood and Ghail, (2003). They contend that while sex role theories may go beyond biology to describe how gender may be acquired, it is still a discourse that acts to naturalise and 'fix' gender relations as polarised, erasing or

minimising the significance of the social in the making of men and women. However, at the same time as sex difference research proliferated, a number of significant cross-cultural comparisons moved theorising forward a step by emphasising the importance of the cultural, thereby problematising the universalism of biological theories. For example, Mead's (1963) research in New Guinea in the 1930s found that among Mudungumor men and women, both groups developed as aggressive and ruthless, lacking in any maternal characteristics. Thus neither men nor women profited from any difference between the sexes (Mead, 1963). By contrast, another tribe studied by Mead, the Tchambuli, were found to reverse Western gender norms with women displaying dominant and impersonal characteristics, and men being emotionally dependant (Mead, 1963). Culture therefore emerged as a variable through which diverse behaviours among men could emerge.

Another approach to explaining how gender is acquired (rather than innate) is through the notion of gender roles. Stemming from Goffman's role theory the concept of the dramaturgical metaphor explains gender socialisation (Burr, 1998). Goffman's dramaturgical analysis stems from his idea that we use common techniques to control the impressions others have of us, much like actors on a stage; thus he names this 'stage craft' and 'stage management' (Goffman, 1959: 26). While criticised for its implication that social behaviour is superficial or contrived, Burr (1998) argues that this is to miss the complexity of what it means to take on a role. Indeed this does not necessarily mean adopting a fake exterior, but rather delving into oneself to find an aspect of one's own subjectivity which can be utilised in the production of the character they must perform.

As already highlighted both sex role theory and psychoanalytic theory emphasise a 'normal' masculine personality as relatively fixed and unified, emerging from successful oedipal resolution and successful 'sex-role' learning (Hollway and Jefferson, 2005). Furthermore, within both theories gender identity is seen as an attribute of the individual (Haywood and Ghail, 2003). As Burr (1998) notes, psychology has defined itself as the study of individuals, out of which emerges a reluctance to consider the role of social context in the production of behaviour and experience. Furthermore, what is missing from these theories is the notion of agency, that is how we as individuals have a capacity to act in the social world.

Running alongside critiques of sex role theory emerging in the 1970s, theories of patriarchy were also developing (Hearn, 2006). Literally meaning 'rule of the father' feminists adopted the term patriarchy to help explain male domination, and the systems by which they were oppressed. The term was used strategically to highlight men's collective dominance of women in both the private and public spheres (Cosslett, Easton, and Summerfield, 1996). Following critiques that the concept of patriarchy was too monolithic, ahistorical, biologically determined, and dismissive of women's agency and resistance, Sylvia Walby (1989: 214) redefined patriarchy as "a system of social structures, and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women". Here patriarchy was conceptualised as the systematic structural differences in the position of men in relation to women, and could be applied to various social structures (shaped by history, culture, politics), rather than inherent within all arenas of society as earlier understandings tended to imply. These critiques of both sex role theory and the concept of patriarchy provided the conceptual and political context for a theory of masculinities to emerge (Hearn, 2006), to which we now turn in the following section on constructionist approaches to masculinity.

2.3.2. Constructionist approaches

Social constructionist understandings of gender are themselves diverse (Brickell, 2006). In contrast to biological and psychological approaches that view gender as fixed and unified, constructionist approaches necessarily view gender as achieved through and by people and their context (Moynihan, 1998). Two key ideas dominate the constructionist paradigm, namely the idea of 'doing gender' (West and Zimmerman, 1987) and that of 'multiple masculinities' (Connell, 1995), both of which are adopted by this study. The concept of 'doing gender' stemmed from Garfinkle's (1954) theory of ethnomethodology. Ethnomethodology can be understood as the study of the everyday methods we use to create social order (Garfinkel, 2002). It is the study of how individuals interact to create shared meanings and make the world understandable (Gregen,1985). Within such an approach to 'do gender' means to engage in continual interactional processes which invoke and construct the patriarchal masculine/feminine binary. Here gender is understood as an everyday

achievement, a process, and something that is 'done' (West and Zimmerman, 1987). As an achievement gender is enacted in accordance with what are culturally perceived as the 'correct' signifiers of masculinity and femininity. Gender stereotypes therefore provide the basis of how we do gender, but this is not the only way gender can be done. From this perspective masculinity is less about identity (as a stable characteristic of individual men) and more about complex social relations (Gray et al., 2002). While individuals may do gender, it is situated doing, emerging from social situations and not a static attribute as it appears in biological and psychological approaches (West and Zimmerman, 1987). The 'doing' of masculinity means that rather than a role or script implied by socialisation theories (those that emphasise learned behaviour), masculinity is an ongoing achievement, made and remade on an everyday basis, and central to the organisation of all interaction.

These ideas were further developed by Butler (1990) in her theory of performativity. For Butler (1990: 112) performativity is "the discursive mode by which ontological effects are installed". Thus gendered categories are brought into being performatively through repetition or citation of gender norms (Brickell, 2005). Gender therefore does not express a self, but rather is an enactment of power already established by prior conventional authority or 'regulatory regimes'. As such action constructs identity, identity is not constructed through action. No interior or foundational self exists, but rather *effects* of identity are produced through repetitive acts (Nayak and Kehily, 2006). Through the materialization of norms, norms that are indeterminate, performativity is an inherently unstable process, containing the possibility of resistance. As such performativity paradoxically refers to both this fragility as well as the resilient consistency of identity, as well as to the possibilities of subversion (McKinlay, 2010). For Butler the body is bound up with performativity as a medium through which the discursive signs of gender are given corporeal significance (Nayak and Kehily, 2006). While Butler's ideas stem from a constructionist paradigm that sees gender as a process, they break free from this approach and into the realm of post-structuralism through treating gender as a free-floating signifier (Moyniham, 1998). Indeed for social constructionists while unstable gender is "a real ontological category, a true foundation of being" (Nayak and Kehily, 2006: 463) that is achieved in our social interactions. Post-structuralist thought on the other hand, while closely connected to social constructionism, goes further in

saying that subjects are never truly constituted as they are constantly being reproduced through repetitive acts (Jackson, 2004).

The main problem articulated in respect to Butler's approach concerns the notion of agency. The way agency is conceptualised within Butler's work can only be described as abstract. *Possibilities* of resistance are opened up through recognizing the indeterminacy of gender norms and signification, but a theory of agency cannot be offered (Kogler, 1999; McNay, 2003). Furthermore, if subjectivity is produced through force or coercion or coercive forces as Butler suggests, this leaves open questions as to how there can be a conscious agent who can resist gender norms.

The second concept adopted by this study is the idea of 'multiple masculinities' introduced by Connell (1995). The concept emerged from social constructionism, and emphasised how masculinity is produced in everyday life, providing a way to conceptualise the social organisation of gender. Connell's theory shifted the focus away from a singular, one-dimensional view of masculinity to a recognition of its multiplicity. For Connell different kinds of masculinity, as constructed through everyday practices and relationships, compete for power and normative status, while that which dominates as 'the ideal' in any local context is described as 'hegemonic' (Ridge et al., 2011). The concept of hegemony was originally coined by Gramsci in his analysis of the maintenance of class relations and struggle for power, but was appropriated by Connell and applied to gender relations in 1982, in reports from a field study on Australian high schools (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as the 'configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy...' (1995: 77).

In addition to domination of women, sustaining a hegemonic position means subordinating marginalised men who do not live up to the same cultural ideal. For Connell, the most significant case of domination and subordination in contemporary Western society is that between heterosexual and homosexual men. Beyond cultural stigmitisation, homosexual men are subordinated by straight men through an array of material practices including political and cultural exclusion, cultural abuse, legal violence, street violence, economic discrimination and personal boycotts. Of course men do not actually have to be gay to experience such subordination, for gayness "is

whatever is expelled from hegemonic masculinity" and "easily assimilated to femininity" (1995: 78), therefore men deemed effeminate may also be subject to such subordination. The concept of hegemonic masculinity therefore provides a relational construction of masculinities as a hierarchical system of power. Combined with the concept of 'doing gender', Connell's approach can bridge the gap between what Brickell (2006) describes as the largely micro-focus on social relationships that ethnomethodology and symbolic interactionism adopt, to strengthen the limited account of power and structural inequality they offer.

Hegemonic forms of masculinity are contextual, and must therefore be renegotiated in different circumstances encountered by men (Courtenay, 2000), carrying implications for different ethnicities, classes, cultures, age groups and so on. As Connell says: "'Hegemonic masculinity' is not a fixed character type…it is rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable" (1995: 76). While most men aspire to hegemonic masculinity - and the majority gain from it according to Connell (1995) - most struggle to achieve it. Indeed, there are also other ways of doing masculinity and being masculine beside hegemonic masculinity, as men are diverse and draw on an array of discourses to make sense of the world and their position within it in remarkably different ways (Gray et al., 2002). For example, men may emphasise the importance of sensitivity in place of hegemonic ideals (Emslie et al., 2006) or fashion 'alternative' masculinities based on mutual support (Gray et al., 2002) or care and non-violence (Hoang, Quach and Tran, 2013). In support of the contextuality of hegemonic masculinity this research is theoretically guided by a commitment to focus on the social context of men's experiences in relation to wellbeing, repeatedly called for in recent years (see Robertson, 2007; Broom and Tovey, 2009; Sloan, Gough and Conner, 2009; Gough and Robertson, 2010; Creighton and Oliffe, 2010). For instance, social context may refer to the 'micro-communities' men may be part of such as sporting groups (Creighton and Oliffe, 2010), or identity positions such as ethnicity, age and social background (Broom and Tovey, 2009). A consideration of social context may provide insight into the potentially contradictory terrain of hegemonic masculinity, for instance why men may adopt hegemonic beliefs and practices in some situations and contexts and not others.

The theory of hegemonic masculinity has been criticised. Many of the criticisms of hegemonic masculinity (including Connell's own) have also been identified, evaluated and responded to by Connell and Messerschmitt (2005. One criticism asserted by Peterson (1998) among others is that the underlying concept of masculinity is flawed, that it essentialises men and simplifies what is a contradictory reality. Connell and Messerschmitt (2005) respond to this by highlighting the multiplicity of ways researchers have used the concept, arguing that within the magnitude of work that has flourished aided by the concept of hegemonic masculinity researchers may have applied it in ways that essentialise men, but that the concept itself is not essentialist. For instance, Halberstram's (1998) work explores how hegemonic masculinity can be associated with the female body. Another criticism by Martin (1998) that is addressed by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) points to ambiguities in the usage of the concept; sometimes it seems to refer to fixed character traits and identities and at other times it appears to represent historical and cultural variability. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) agree that the concept is ambiguous, but argue that ambiguity may itself be a mechanism of hegemony. They argue hegemonic models are often fantasies and ideals and do not necessarily correspond with the lives of actual men, but instead provide "models for relations with women and solutions to problems of gender relations" (Connell and Messerchsmidt, 2005; 838). A third criticism asserts that the model of multiple masculinities is overly structural, but Connell and Messerschmidt reply to this by emphasising the original psychoanalytical underpinnings to the concept of hegemonic masculinities (Ridge et al., 2011). While additional challenges have been made to Connell's framework it continues to help structure much recent work in the field (see Emslie et al., 2006; Robertson, 2007; Tannenbaum and Frank, 2010), advancing research around masculinities and related areas.

To summarise, understandings of masculinity have developed from biological/psychological approaches that tend to 'naturalise' gender through binary constructions of men and women. Such understandings became further entrenched through 'sex differences' research, crystallising into sex role theory by the mid-twentieth century, shaping the way masculinity has been viewed in popular discourse ever since. Along with sex role theory, theories of socialisation have developed in

close alignment, both of which argue gender is something acquired by the individual, thus underestimating the importance of social context.

Social constructionist theories, while not monolithic, instead argue that gender is achieved by individuals in a social context. Theories of 'doing gender' and 'multiple masculinities' have been most influential. Through 'doing gender' masculinity is understood as achieved relationally through everyday interactions, thus highlighting the importance of shared meanings and individual agency in the construction of gender. 'Multiple masculinities' recognise the plurality of masculinity, and provide a way to theorise how gender is socially organised through power relations. This study adopts a social constructionist approach to masculinity, and is framed/under-pinned by theories of 'doing gender' and 'multiple masculinities', in which men are understood as individual agents operating within a social context.

2.4. Successful ageing

Like wellbeing, successful ageing is a multidimensional concept developed through different research approaches, making a definition problematic. Nonetheless, Gibson (1995: 297) provides a comprehensive understanding, suggesting successful ageing "refers to reaching one's potential and arriving at a level of physical, social and psychological well-being in old age that is pleasing to both self and others". According to Franklin and Tate (2008) the phrase 'successful ageing' was first utilised by Havinghurst in 1961, defined as "adding life to the years" and "getting satisfaction from life" (in Bearon, 1996: 1). However the popularity of the concept has since grown exponentially, and common agreement about how to define or measure it still remains elusive (Lupien and Wan, 2004; Pruchno, Wilson-Genderson, Rose, and Cartwright, 2010). Villar (2012) argues that it is one of a number of concepts concerned with 'ageing well', such as 'healthy ageing', 'productive ageing', or 'competent ageing' (often used interchangeably), but that 'successful ageing' has generated the most research and influence. Studies of successful ageing have originated from different research frameworks, mostly classified as either biomedical or psychosocial (Villar, 2012), though some have attempted to combine the two (e.g. Doyle, McKee, and Sheriff, 2012). Some researchers may talk of biological or

cognitive models of successful ageing (e.g. Lupien and Wan, 2004), though these tend to overlap with the previous approaches. A minority of researchers may also separate social and psychological models into more distinctive approaches (see Bowling and Iliffe, 2011), though such models are much more often combined in successful ageing research. Additionally, lay views (how people view themselves) are being increasingly recognised as vital to the study of successful ageing (Bowling and Dieppe, 2005). Returning to the quandary of defining successful ageing, Franklin and Tate (2008) suggest that the difficulty in defining successful ageing results from the lack of precise definitions of ageing. For instance, they argue ageing has often been conflated with biological processes of dysfunctional change, or 'senescence'. Thus, it has been suggested that ageing as disease and ageing as a normative process need to be distinguished to avoid distorted views of age-related decline (Rowe and Khan, 1987; Schulz and Heckhausen, 1997).

Nevertheless, more certain than its current definition, or how to measure it, is its role within the move away from studies of ageing dominated by discourses of negativity and pathology, across a number of disciplines (biology, sociology, psychology) at least since the 1920s according to Lupien and Wan (2004). Rather than focusing on the losses involved in ageing, research over the last 25 years (supported by the concept of successful ageing) highlights the gains, and potential of later life. It is these transformations in social theories of ageing that have conceptually popularised successful ageing, enabling it to evolve into a multifaceted construct and theoretical basis for investigation (Franklin and Tate, 2008). Moreover, concurrent to its increasing popularity theoretically, changing patterns of illness in older age (partly due to interventions reducing disability and health risks) have made successful ageing a more realistic possibility (Bowling and Dieppe, 2005). It is clearly also a more pertinent issue due to an ageing population. Indeed, the UN reports that across human history the world has never seen as aged a population as exists globally today, and that this is set to increase even more rapidly over the twenty first century (World Population Ageing 1950-2050 United Nations). A review of biomedical approaches to successful ageing will follow, after which psychosocial approaches and lay views will be discussed.

2.4.1. Biomedical approaches

The concept of successful ageing only became popularised over the last 25 years as paradigms of ageing have shifted from a focus on losses to gains. It is generally agreed that Rowe and Khan's seminal paper 'Human ageing: unusual and successful ageing' (1987) marked this shift (Franklin and Tate, 2008; Villar, 2012). Rowe and Khan's paper also heavily contributed to the increasing popularity of 'successful ageing' as an area of research; indeed it was a "driving force" of the concept (Villar, 2012: 1089) and still remains the prevailing model according to Depp and Jeste (2009). Rowe and Khan's model was based on a biomedical approach, which can be defined through its emphasis on longevity (Franklin and Tate, 2008), the absence of disease, and the maintenance of physical and mental functioning (Bowling and Dieppe, 2005). Bowling and Lliffe (2011) note however that some biomedical approaches can be broader, including engagement in social activities. In their paper Rowe and Khan make the important distinction between ageing and illness, arguing that previous research had conflated the two, by attributing effects that were a product of illness to the ageing process. They highlighted the importance of "extrinsic factors" (such as. diet and exercise) in relation to ageing, and developed a distinction between "pathological", "usual", and "successful" ageing (Rowe and Khan, 1987). "Pathological ageing" was characterised by the presence of severe illness or disability, "usual ageing" described cases where extrinsic factors heighten the risks of ageing, while "successful ageing" described cases where extrinsic factors had a neutral or positive effect on ageing. Fundamentally Rowe and Kahn argued that research should focus on 'successful agers' rather than 'usual agers', in order to help develop positive strategies that may encourage transitions from 'usual' to 'successful ageing' (Rowe and Khan, 1987). In a later paper Rowe and Khan (1998) posited that to be a 'successful ager' three criteria had to be present, ordered hierarchically. Most importantly low risk of disease or disease-related disability was emphasised, followed by a high functional level, and thirdly, active engagement with life. Thus they argued that maintaining good physical and mental health facilitates action in other arenas. Originally Rowe and Khan defined successful ageing solely in relation to the first criterion, but following the MacAurthur Study of Successful Ageing (a 10 year project from 1987-97 intended to develop a new conceptual basis for a

"new gerontology") the model was broadened to include the other two criteria (Marini and Stebnicki, 2012).

While Rowe and Khan's approach helped initiate a sea change in the field of ageing, it has since faced a number of criticisms and proved problematic, most comprehensively outlined by Villar (2012). Firstly, by privileging exclusively desirable outcomes in the constitution of successful ageing, such standards of success may prove out of reach for many groups of people (including the disabled), or quite simply not be what everyone aspires to. Indeed as the importance of lay views are being increasingly recognised (Franklin and Tate, 2008), deterministic/universal models based on objective criteria are losing credence. As Bowling and Dieppe (2005) note, reports suggest that while half of elderly people can be categorised as having aged successfully in terms of their own criteria, fewer than a fifth can be categorised this way within Rowe and Khan's model. Thus it seems sacrilegious to develop models or policy that do not relate to older people's subjective experiences and to construct the majority of those experiences as outside the remit of ageing successfully, against Rowe and Khan's (1987) original intentions of proposing a standard of ageing well (Villar, 2012). Additionally, Villar argues that as a (leading) biomedical model it lacks psychological and sociological relevance. For instance, while engagement with life (based on behaviour) is one of the criteria for ageing successfully, it is given least significance (coming third in the hierarchy), and becomes meaningless if other criteria are not fulfilled. Relatedly, there is also no acknowledgement of social or cultural context to provide a framework for individual ageing.

2.4.2. Psychosocial approaches

Beyond the biomedical model other models have been developed, namely psychosocial models according to Bowling and Dieppe (2005). Psychosocial models can be seen as interdisciplinary, combining psychological, sociological, and biomedical frameworks. Reviews of psychosocial models of successful ageing contend that they broaden out the concept to include elements of life satisfaction, psychological resources or reserve, including personal growth, or "reaching one's potential…" (Gibson in Torres, 1999: 36), and social functioning and participation, as opposed to the physical and cognitive functioning that dominates biomedical

approaches(Franklin and Tate, 2008; Bowling and Dieppe, 2005). It is within psychosocial frameworks that successful ageing most overlaps with the concept of wellbeing (as opposed to related concepts such as 'quality of life') as it has encapsulated both hedonic and eudaemonic perspectives within its construction (Ryan and Deci, 2001). As Villar (2012) describes, psychosocial models move away from seeing successful ageing as the attainment of desirable outcomes or a final ideal state – as for Rowe and Khan (1987) – towards viewing successful ageing as a more complex process. These understandings overcome many of the limitations of the biomedical model and have generally been proposed by 'life span theories'. As Villar (2012) explains, stemming from social and behavioural sciences such theories go beyond distinguishing between diseased and normal ageing to take account of the losses and gains that occur across the lifespan and contextualise ageing within these wider processes. As ageing tends to lend itself towards loss, particularly in later years, ageing successfully within this framework becomes more about maximising the likelihood of attaining new gains to maintain a satisfactory state (maintenance), and minimising possible losses and their damaging effects by initiating adaptive processes (loss regulation). Such an approach highlights notions of growth rather than universal criteria, allowing different life trajectories to be conceptualised as successful as long as there is a balance between losses and gains. The most influential of these theories has been the 'selection, optimisation and compensation' (SOC) model spearheaded by Baltes and Baltes (1990). Thus, Baltes and Baltes (1990) argue through selection (focusing on certain goals while ignoring others), optimisation (acquiring or improving the necessary resources to attain higher levels of functioning) and compensation (maintaining functioning at a certain level when other resources have been lost), individuals can actively exert influence on their developmental course and attain their desired goals.

However, for Villar (2012) process-based models still imply limitations due to a lack of content and direction, demanding the need for specification to give life or meaning to these processes. He argues that it is necessary to take into account a set of normative criteria when assessing success, to avoid what has been termed 'the ageing paradox'. This is the idea that older people who experience objective negative life conditions (such as severe illness) still tend to assess their own wellbeing in unexpectedly positive terms. It therefore seems to problematically imply

that older people age in very similar ways, despite varying circumstances. Villar suggests a theory of generativity to be applied to complement life span theories. Generativity, first introduced by Erikson in 1963, posits that the development of the life course is divided into eight stages, with generativity being the seventh stage (Erikson, 1963). According to Erikson, generativity is "primarily the concern in establishing and guiding the next generation (1963: 267). Thus generativity occurs when an adult has resolved earlier developmental issues of adulthood, such as consolidating a sense of who they are, and thus ready to make a commitment to the larger sphere of society as a whole (McAdams and De St Aubin, 1992). Generativity therefore identifies motivations, goals and behaviours that may have meaning for some older people, acting to ground abstract life span theories of successful ageing at a social level, where context is emphasised (Villar, 2012). For instance, being generative means enhancing and maintaining the contexts within which the individual participates (such as families and communities) or strengthening social networks and institutions (Villar, 2012). Thus employing such a framework may help guide the adaptive process underpinning successful ageing.

Before ending this section it may be worth briefly considering sociological frameworks of successful ageing specifically as part of psychosocial approaches, as these associate successful ageing with the construction of continuing meaning and maintenance across the life course (Coleman, Ivani-Chalian, and Robinson, 1998). The sociological notion of the life course emerged in the late 1960s and early '70s as essential to the study of ageing (Dannefer, 2010). The current study takes a life course approach and understands the life course as the idea that "the course of one's life…is mainly shaped by social institutions and sociocultural values as well as by decisions and unexpected events" (Jens in Ritzer, 2007: online resource). Thus, the current research is interested in highlighting the interplay of structure and agency in participants' narratives, and rejecting any ideas of 'natural' processes of ageing.

2.4.3. Lay views

While lay views are yet to be incorporated within theoretical models of successful ageing there is a notable shift towards prioritising lay views. This is vital if policies promoting successful ageing are to have any social significance (Bowling, 2006).

Studies examining lay views have been emerging in recent years (Von Faber, Bootsma-van der Wiel, van Exel, 2001; Knight and Ricciardelli, 2003; Tate, Lah, and Cuddy, 2003; Phelan, Anderson, and Lacroix 2004; Bowling and Dieppe, 2005; Lin 2006; Bowling, 2006, 2008; Reichstadt, Sengupta and Depp, 2010). Lay views accord more closely with psychosocial models of successful ageing than with biomedical models, particularly those that include income and environmental quality (Bowling and Iliffe, 2011). According to Bowling and Dieppe (2005) lay definitions that are not adequately captured by theoretical models include accomplishments, enjoyment of diet, financial security, neighbourhood, physical appearance, productivity and contribution to life, sense of humour, sense of purpose, and spirituality. Since then work by Hsu (2006) of elders in Taiwan found family support to be important, including living with family and receiving emotional care. Later work by Reichstadt et al. (2010) also adds to this, as they found older adults viewed successful aging as a balance between self-acceptance and self-contentedness on one hand, and engagement with life and self-growth in later life on the other. The concept of wisdom also emerged as a major contributor to successful ageing in Reichstadt et al's (2010) work. The current study has collected male lay narratives of successful ageing and wellbeing to see how identity is constructed in this context.

To summarise, the study of successful ageing has initiated much change in the field of ageing, marking a shift from a negative to a positive focus in theories and concepts of ageing. Approaches to successful ageing have developed beyond the dominant biomedical model, outlined by Rowe and Khan (1987), to include psychosocial elements, and fundamentally the recognition of successful ageing as an adaptive process rather than just desirable outcomes. However limitations have also been identified with this approach, namely that it lacks content and direction (Villar, 2012). Lay views are increasingly being recognised as significant if we are to construct more inclusive policy guidelines that actually relate to older people's experiences. This study adopts a narrative approach to exploring men's own stories of successful ageing and wellbeing. More research concerned with cross-cultural comparisons of lay views of successful ageing has been encouraged (Hung, Kempen, and De Vries, 2010). This is also reflected in this study by collecting lay narratives of successful ageing from both Australia and the UK.

2.5. Wellbeing

As a multifaceted concept, developed through research via different approaches, wellbeing cannot be defined simply. Bowling states that wellbeing has "no agreed definitions, other than that it is a 'good thing'" (2010: 2). Understandings of wellbeing have developed within and across disciplines including economics, psychology, health studies, sociology, anthropology and biomedicine, though there is increasing interest in more integrated approaches (de Chavez, Backett-Milburn, Parry and Platt, 2005). This study explores men's lay experiences and understandings of wellbeing. It is informed by social and psychological frameworks of wellbeing, thus seeking a multidisciplinary approach. A review of biomedical, psychological and social frameworks of wellbeing is outlined below, before outlining the approach taken in this thesis.

2.5.1. Biomedical approaches

According to de Chavez et al (2005) within biomedical paradigms the concept 'wellbeing' has tended to be used synonymously with the notion of 'physical health'. Thus the definition of wellbeing tends to be assumed in biomedical literature, lacking any real exploration or problematisation. As highlighted by Schickler (2005), the meaning of both health and wellbeing are contested concepts. Originally formulated in 1948, the World Health Organisation (WHO) continues to define health as 'a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, and not merely the absence of disease and infirmary', despite intensifying criticism (Saracci 1997; Larson, 1999; Huber, Knottnerus, van der Horst, Jadad, Kromhout, Leonard, Lorig, Loureiro, van der Meer, Schnabel, Smith, van Weel, and Smid, 2011). For instance, it has been argued that the all-encompassing use of the word 'complete' contributes, albeit unintentionally, to the increasing medicalisation of society (Huber et al., 2011). Furthermore, as Huber et al (2011) argue, changing patterns of ageing and disease (in particular the rise of chronic illness) may in fact render the definition counterproductive, for it constructs the majority of us as unhealthy most of the time. Instead they propose to shift the emphasis towards the capacity to adapt and self-manage when faced with social, physical and emotional challenges, given that with decreasing mortality rates, and other changes in society, people increasingly live

with chronic illness (Huber et al., 2011). Nevertheless, the WHO's definition is one of four models of health according to Larson (1999), the others being 'the medical model', 'the environmental model' and 'the wellness model'. The medical model sees the human body much like that of a car - dysfunction constituting a 'breakdown' and signalling the need for health professionals to 'fix' the body. Much emphasis is also placed on prevention within this model (Carvalho, Berger, Bernard, and Munoz, 2007). The environmental model is concerned with adaption to one's environment, and constructs health as a joint responsibility between health professionals and people themselves (Larson, 1999). Finally, the wellness model seeks a more holistic view of health than does the medical model, but tends to place the responsibility for good health in the hands of the individual rather than society (Myers, Sweeney and Witmer, 2000).

2.5.2. Psychological approaches

As de Chavez et al (2005) explain, psychological literature has tended to validate wellbeing in terms of negative effects, or in other words, the absence of positive effects. However more recent trends have shifted towards searching for positive indicators and establishing understandings of wellbeing in wider and more holistic contexts, in line with the 'positive psychology' movement (Seligman, 2002b). 'Positive psychology' can be defined as "an umbrella term for the study of positive emotions, positive character traits, and enabling institutions" (Seligman, Steen, Park, and Peterson, 2005: 410). Positive psychologists argue that through their work they offer a "more complete and balanced understanding of human experience" (Seligman et al., 2005: 410).

This shift towards positive indicators has been evidenced through quality of life research (Qol), and the growing recognition of the subjective in understandings of Qol, that is how people make sense of their own lives (de Chavez et al, 2005). As Barcaccia, Esposito, Matarese et al (2013) point out, Qol itself is a multidisciplinary concept developed through different fields rendering its definition elusive and ambiguous. Nevertheless, they argue that above anything else it is the importance of subjectivity that emerges as a key aspect. Qol research gave rise to the concept of subjective well being (SWB). As an area of general scientific interest rather than a

single specific construct, SWB can be understood as a broad arena including "people's emotional responses, domain satisfactions, and global judgements of life satisfaction" (Deiner, Suh, Lucas and Smith, 1999: 277). SWB revolves around a hedonistic philosophy by largely focusing on subjective pleasure attainment and happiness, and thus the goal of much research is to maximise happiness (Carlisle, Henderson, and Hanlon, 2009). This shift towards the subjective has further implications for the measurement of wellbeing, demanding a move away from universal or predetermined indicators towards listening to individual accounts, including thoughts, feelings, and experiences (de Chavez et al, 2005). Moreover, definitions of wellbeing and QoI as predominantly stemming from the assumptions of professionals rather than from subjective accounts has invited much criticism, in particular that wider contexts such as social and environmental factors have been neglected in the field of psychology (de Chavez et al, 2005).

In addition to SWB psychologists have also identified psychological wellbeing (PWB). Understandings here revolve around a second philosophy, that of eudiamonism (Ryan and Deci, 2001). Eudaemonic philosophies are more complex, distinctly emphasising notions of growth through self-actualisation, the responsibility of socially shared goals (Fave and Massimini in Huppert and Wittington, 2005), and relations with others (Ryff and Singer 2006; Ryan and Deci, 2001). Thus in addition to experiencing positive emotions, eudaumonic approaches prioritise how a person functions within the context of their society (Huppert et al., 2005). Hedonistic approaches (or SWB) are tied to the individual while eudaemonic approaches include the collective and objective realms, or in other words external reality.

2.5.3. Social approaches

Social approaches to wellbeing emerge from a range of fields including sociology, economics and politics. They also overlap with psychological approaches. Looking at sociological approaches first, it is clear there has been a somewhat reductive and fraught relationship between sociology and understandings of SWB. As sociology is underpinned by social constructionism SWB tends to be conceived of as a social construction that is historically and culturally variable and shaped by collective notions of what the good life entails; indeed SWB is a "reflected appraisal" seen

through the eyes of others. (Veenhoven, 2008: 3). This connects with the idea of social comparison theory, that is self-evaluation by individuals through measuring their attributes against other people's (Festinger, 1954). Sociologists often argue that the bigger the discrepancy between what one has and what one feels one should have (often conceived of in terms of what others have) the lower one's sense of SWB will be, for instance being 'single' rather than having a romantic partner (Davies and Strong, 1977). However, social comparison theory is not applicable in all aspects of life, and neglects embodiment. For example, objective thriving such as good physical health and longevity raise levels of SWB, and therefore challenge the sociological implication that wellbeing is simply a making of the mind (Veenhoven, 2008). Social comparison theory also connects to issues of social inequality, commonly defined as "differential access to scarce resources", which is of primary concern to sociologists (Veenhoven, 2008: 9). Veenhoven contends that SWB is more strongly related to socioemotional resources, that is ties with friends, families and clubs, than socioeconomic. Indeed, it has been found that there is no correlation between the degree of income inequality in nations and average SWB (Berg and Veenhoven, 2010).

As a discipline concerned primarily with social behaviour, sociologists are more interested in what people do than how they feel, thus sociological literature on wellbeing is less concerned with the subjective, individual and emotional realms (as is, SWB) than with looking at action and collectivity (Veenhoven, 2008). Furthermore, a less reductive sociology of wellbeing is interested in the link between the individual and collective (de Chavez et al., 2005). For instance, it has been found that individual levels of SWB are higher in cultures with better social and political conditions, including a good material standard of living, and a democratic and well governed political system (Veenhoven, 2008). However individualism, that is the idea that people actively constitute themselves and construct their own identities (Giddens, 2001), characterises most of the literature on wellbeing (Ganesh and McAllum, 2010). Individualism fuels most consumer (Sointu, 2005) and media driven (Crawshore, 2007) discourses on wellbeing, often marginalising structural or social factors which may shape (and be shaped by) individual actions (Sloan et al., 2009).

Social capital and its links with wellbeing have become a burgeoning area of interest to social theorists, though the strength of such links have tended to depend on how

social capital has been defined and what countries have been under study (Yip, Subramanian, Mitchell, Lee, Wang and Kawachi, 2007). According to Yip et al (2007) there are two main approaches to drawing on social capital as a concept: a 'network view' which emphasises an individual's access to resources such as social support, and a 'communitarian view' emphasising (collective) social cohesion, for instance,through high levels of trust within a community. Yip et al (2007) argue that social capital can operate on both levels and should be understood as consisting of both structural and cognitive dimensions. As such, social capital can be understood as participation in formal associations (structural), trust in others, and reciprocity between individuals (cognitive). While results of the links between social capital and wellbeing have been said to be inconclusive (Yip et al,. 2007), many studies have highlighted connections, though of varying degrees, in relation to higher levels of SWB (Hurtado, Kawachi, and Sudarsky, 2011; Hooghe and Vanhoutte, 2011), social support and PWB (Nieminem et al., 2010), and employment and wellbeing (Winklemann, 2009) to name just a few. Yip et al's (2007) study itself, set in rural China, found strong support for connections between levels of wellbeing and trust, and less support for ties between wellbeing and organisational membership.

Political factors are also important in shaping levels of SWB, though this has not been explored extensively. Nevertheless it has been argued that in industrial democracies there are strong links between the level of welfare state development and life satisfaction (Radcliff, 2001). Furthermore, Radcliff suggests that social democratic and labour parties specifically result in higher levels of wellbeing for the populations they govern. Frey and Stutzer (2002) suggest that the extent to which citizens can participate in politics and the degree of government decentralisation is a key factor influencing the happiness of a people. Inglehart and Klingeman (2000) highlight how cross national variation in SWB is strongly connected to a society's level of economic development. However they note that the shift from poverty to prosperity does not have a linear effect on human happiness but rather the correlation weakens as one moves up the economic scale. Furthermore they highlight the importance of democracy, civil liberty and freedom, given societies that experienced communist rule show relatively low levels of SWB.

As has been demonstrated, wellbeing is a multi-faceted concept, conceptualised diversely by a range of perspectives. This review has explored biomedical,

psychological, and social approaches to wellbeing. Biomedical approaches tend to understand wellbeing as synonymous with 'physical health', though different models of 'health' exist. Psychological approaches to wellbeing tend to characterise it through the presence of positive qualities such as SWB and PWB. Finally, social approaches emphasise theories of social capital and political factors, as well as the link between the individual and the collective in the constitution of wellbeing. This research combines psychological and social approaches to wellbeing to explore both individual narratives of SWB and how wellbeing itself may be constituted through the interplay of individual and structural factors.

2.6. Positioning the study

Theoretically this study combines Connell's (1995) structural framework of multiple masculinities with an understanding of gender as an accomplishment and outcome of human agency as outlined by West and Zimmerman (1987). By doing so participants are not only understood as diverse and produced through practice, but also as agentic beings making meaningful choices within the continually shifting confines of context and culture. While understanding men as 'doing' masculinity helps centralise masculinity and agency, out of Connell's framework emerges the significance of structure and context, including associated identities such as class, age and culture, which help to account for the complex ways men's experiences may relate to their choices. Constructionist paradigms allow for understandings of masculinity as dynamic and adaptive, and as such they help to theorise ways in which men can act constructively with regard to wellbeing, helping to move beyond the dominant focus on links between masculinity and poor wellbeing (Obrien, Hunt, and Hart, 2009). This study takes the (still relatively novel) approach of focusing on older men who describe reflecting and acting constructively in regard to personal wellbeing. Furthermore, the constructionist paradigm helps to theorise how men 'do' and experience their masculinity in the context of ageing, and how hegemony may be redefined in this context. Older men's experiences of ageing and wellbeing in particular have been underexplored in favour of women and younger men, thus, further research is needed to help understand some of the factors shaping men's choices as they age.

This study also explores male lay narratives from a life course perspective and approach, focusing on the links between social context and men's agency. There is a theoretical and methodological demand to explore lay men's experiences to capture the multi-faceted meaning of successful ageing and wellbeing (Callahan and McHorney, 2003; Bowling, 2006; Robertson, 2006; 2007), and from a life course perspective that recognises cumulative effects of life's experiences over time (Gough and Robertson, 2010; Sloan et al; 2009). Additionally, cultural specificity is lacking in research on successful ageing (Hung et al., 2010), though is imperative for the development of policy to promote health and wellbeing in older people, perhaps Australians in particular (Tan and Ward, 2010). The current study makes an original contribution to knowledge through the cross cultural element, as no studies so far have compared male narratives of wellbeing and successful ageing from Australia and the UK.

2.7. Summary

This chapter began by introducing social constructionism as the overarching theoretical approach to the current study. It then went on to discuss ways that narratives have been understood and approached through 'big' and 'small' stories. The collaborative creation of meaning was highlighted, as narratives are not only told by someone but also for someone, thus both teller and listener work together in the making of a narrative.

Following this, theories of masculinity (and gender more widely) were discussed, including biological and psychological approaches that tend to view gender as fixed, either through biology or acquired through socialisation. The chapter then turned to discussing constructionist frameworks that view gender as a process achieved or produced in interaction with others. Here West and Zimmerman's (1987) theory of 'doing gender' was significant, highlighting the role of interaction and individual agency in the construction of gender. In addition, Connell's (1995) theory of 'multiple masculinities' was influential, whereby a range of masculinities are understood to exist in relation to a hegemonic, culturally dominant form in any given context. Theories of 'doing gender' and 'multiple masculinities' have been utilised in making sense of men's narratives from the current study.

The chapter then introduced the concept of wellbeing and reviewed biomedical, psychological, and social approaches. Biomedical approaches have understood wellbeing as synonymous with health, though a range of models of health also exist. Psychological approaches have tended to understand wellbeing as the absence of negative effects, but more recently have moved towards positive indicators, such as SWB. Lastly, social approaches were explored. While social approaches may overlap with psychological, social theorists are more interested in action and collectivity than subjectivity. Thus the relationship between wellbeing, social capital, and political factors is explored within social approaches. This study works within both psychological and social frameworks of wellbeing to help theorise participants' understandings of wellbeing.

The chapter then reviewed approaches to successful ageing. Biomedical, psychosocial and lay views were discussed. Biomedical approaches were revealed as reductive, inadequately capturing the complexity of everyday experiences of ageing. Psychosocial models of successful ageing developed to include understandings of ageing as an adaptive process, though limitations with this approach were also discussed. Lastly, lay views were introduced as significant, though they have not yet been incorporated well into models of ageing. Lay views prioritise how people give meaning to their own experiences of ageing, uncovering definitions not fully captured within theoretical models. Thus moving towards prioritising lay views is vital if policies are to have any significance to people's everyday experiences of ageing, and to this end, this study has collected lay views of successful ageing and wellbeing. Finally, this chapter positioned the study as taking a constructionist approach to lay male narratives from a life course perspective.

Chapter 3

Empirical review

This chapter consists of three sections. The first lays the groundwork in orienting the reader towards the central premise of the current study: that some men are capable of acting constructively in relation to their wellbeing. Reviewing the literature on men and wellbeing reveals the dominant discourse to be that men are poor at acting constructively. However more recent research has highlighted some of the positive ways men respond to difficult events and experiences (such as depression, illness) and how they negotiate their masculinity in these contexts.

The second section focuses on education and peer relations. School is a key setting for the fashioning of masculinity and this section begins by exploring the historical relationship between masculinity and schooling to provide a context for different aged men's schooling experiences. This is followed by looking at peer relations between boys, and then at their early sexual relations.

The third section builds on the second by looking at men's relationships across the life course and how these are linked to wellbeing. Here more nuanced accounts of gender construction at distinct biographical moments in men's lives are explored. While the theoretical review sought to explain gender and masculinity through theories of 'doing' gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987), recent calls have argued for greater attention to be paid to the dismantling or 'undoing' of gender in specific contexts (Deutsch, 2007; Risman, 2009), and beyond the level of individual agency (Fox, 2009). Social and cultural changes have opened up opportunities for the reshaping of men's relationships in ways that may have constrained previous generations. While hegemony can be enduring, new forms of masculinity may also be emerging within men's relationships. Men's relationships with their fathers, friends, and sexual partners have all been found to impact significantly on wellbeing in different ways across the life course (Robertson 2007). Men's experiences as fathers and grandfathers are also significant, marking changes in their masculine identities.

3.1. Men and wellbeing

In the last twenty years research has elucidated ways in which masculinity mediates men's wellbeing (Creighton and Oliffe, 2010). Most commonly, studies have suggested links between men's poor wellbeing and dominant characteristics of masculinity, be it associations with 'risk-taking' (Courtenay, 1999; 2000), 'self-destructive' behaviour (Moller-Leimkuhler, 2002), or a reluctance to seek help (Smith, Braunack-Mayer and Willert, 2006). Indeed, compared to women men have lower life expectancy and higher mortality rates (Gorman and Read, 2011). They also have poorer social networks, particularly if they are widowed or unmarried (Davidson and Meadows, 2010). The idea that men are more likely to delay help-seeking than women is hotly debated. Farrimond (2011) has argued that statistically men make less use of health services, yet MacIntyre, Ford, and Hunt (1999) suggest that apart from mental health problems, where men are less likely to seek help, men and women are as likely as each other to consult their doctors when suffering from common conditions. Indeed, Smith and Robertson (2008) suggest men tend to be most interested in their physical (pragmatic) health. Rather than exclusively focusing on the negative relationship between masculinity and wellbeing, a more recent body of literature has emerged highlighting men's constructive behaviour, including help seeking, in relation to their health and wellbeing (Sloan, Gough and Conner, 2009; Hoang, Quach and Tran. 2013; Feo and Lecouter, 2013; Lomas, Cartwright, Edginton and Ridge, 2013). For example Sloan et al (2009) analysed the narratives of men engaged in 'healthy practices' (such as regular exercise, no/low alcohol intake) to see how masculinity was constructed in this context. They found men adopted a variety of accounts to justify healthy practices in terms of action-orientation, sporting targets, appearance concerns and being autonomous.

Researchers have found that masculinity can play a central role in the construction of more helpful narratives for men. Such research shows that men can draw on hegemonic ideals which are positive, for example responsibility and care for family (Ribeiro, Paul and Nogueira, 2007; Bennett, 2007), and counter hegemonic ideals that are negative such as destructive or 'risky' behaviour (de Visser, Smith and McDonnell, 2009). Countering hegemonic ideals can involve resistance and moulding alternative masculinities, for example based on emotional sensitivity (Emslie et al., 2006). Additionally, and more often perhaps, countering hegemony

may involve reinterpreting hegemony. For example de Visser et al (2009) found that among men who resisted alcohol, some were able to construct their abstinence as signalling strength and independence. Hegemonic masculinity therefore need not be tied to poor wellbeing; indeed such a suggestion is now understood as 'overly simplistic' (Oliffe and Creighton, 2010) and even 'facile' (Sloan et al., 2009: 799). Gender must be understood as a complex performance, and men may have ways of acting constructively in relation to their wellbeing – even when they are influenced by hegemony hegemonic ideals or values. The following review highlights recent research around men and wellbeing in relation to health, emotions, caring, mental health and help-seeking. This new wave of research highlights men's constructive behaviours and offers more nuanced accounts of men's relationships to wellbeing, showing how masculinity can be negotiated in different contexts.

3.1.1. Health

Men are commonly depicted as behaving badly with regard to their health. For instance, men are seen as more likely to engage in health destructive behaviours (such as alcohol and drug misuse, reckless driving and unsafe sex) potentially causing illness, injury or death (NHS Information Centre, 2011). It has been reported that young men are more likely to have poorer diets (Courtenay, McCreary and Merighi, 2002) and make use of primary health services less than women (Farrimond, 2011), though more recent reports suggest this may be age-dependant (Wang et al, 2013). Men have higher rates of premature mortality and shorter life expectancy at birth than women across Europe (White, Mckee, de Souza, de Visser, Hogston, Madsen, and Raine, 2013). Thus being male is in fact the largest single demographic risk factor for early mortality in developed countries (Kruger and Nesse, 2004). Before age 50, for every 10 women who die prematurely 16 men die prematurely (Kruger and Nesse, 2004). Such statistics have largely been explained through men's allegiance to hegemonic norms (Courtenay, 2000), despite the variety of forms masculine identities might take, though arguments have been made around men's propensity for poorer health outcomes due to their genetic fragility (Kraemer, 2000).

While there is plentiful evidence of men's poor health behaviours and outcomes, more recent research has shown that some men are indeed capable of taking care of their health. For instance, in their interviews with men engaged in 'healthy practices', Sloan et al. (2009) identified a variety of accounts used by men to construct their health-promoting practices. They found that while men saw talking or thinking about their health practices as feminine, health promoting practices could be justified in line with legitimately masculine traits such as being autonomous, action-oriented and achieving sporting targets. Indeed, the associations between masculinity and sport position physical exercise as one of the preferred forms of health promoting behaviour for men (Sloan et al, 2009). Potentially undermining hegemonic norms, men could also use concerns over appearance as a way to account for their 'healthy' behaviours. In Marchant's (2013) research on ageing self-employed tradesmen, one of the strategies some men adopted to 'keep going' in their working lives was by attending to their physical health proactively, including aerobic exercise and yoga. Thus sustaining the ability to work may also offset any associations men make between proactive approaches to health and less valued forms of masculinity.

Research has also been carried out in relation to men's alcohol consumption, which has been theorised as an important element of masculinity, with some men drinking to excess as a way of proving their masculinity? (Harnett, Thom, Herring and Kelly, 2000). However de Visser and Smith's (2007) research has shown that men do not necessarily equate drinking with masculine identity. Some men in their study did not valorise drinking, instead presenting alternative determinants of masculinity, such as individuality, rationality, and integrity, as more significant. Moreover, not all men who made an association between drinking and masculine identity drank and some were able to find alternative ways of expressing their masculine selves, effectively 'trading masculine competence' to compensate for their 'non-masculine' relationship to drinking (de Visser, Smith, and McDonnell, 2009). Such research shows masculinity to be dynamic and flexible, with men able to reinterpret traditional norms in ways more helpful to them than had previously been highlighted.

3.1.2. Emotions

Men are also commonly constructed as leading impoverished emotional lives and as inhibited when it comes to talking about certain emotions, like fear. It has been suggested that traditionally masculine behaviour permits certain emotions like anger, but involves concealing emotions that might imply vulnerability or dependency (Seidler, 1997). Men's struggles with emotions have been linked to their difficulties with seeking help (Robertson and Fitzgerald, 1992), and associations with emotions as belonging to the feminine realm, and thus by extension devaluing femininity (O'Neil, 1981). It has also been linked to culture, namely the Western philosophical separation of the mind from the body that associates men with 'instrumental reason', thinking and doing (Lloyd, 2002; Robertson, 2007), and stoicism (Jansz, 2000), and women with the body and emotions. However, gender differences regarding emotions such as the frequency of crying for instance have been found to be relatively small in some non-Western countries, though women still reported crying more often and more easily than men (Vingerhoets and Becht, 1996).

Despite the predominance of literature presenting men as emotionally restricted, more recent research has shown that some men are very capable of sharing and reflecting on their emotions, in specific circumstances. For instance, Bennett (2007) found that for older widowed men, emotional expression was permitted in private but not in public. While men allowed themselves to be emotional, masculinity was preserved through utilising a language of control, rationality, responsibility and success. Walton, Coyle and Lyons (2004) also found that within 'rule-governed contexts' including football, death and nightlife settings such as 'nightclubs', anger, joy, and grief were all permissible emotions. Researchers too have highlighted other potentially feminising circumstances such as depression (Emslie et al., 2006) and experiences of sexual abuse (Grossman, Sorsoli and Kia-Keating, 2006) where men have shown abilities to reflect and talk about their feelings when safe to do so. It has been suggested that men may find it acceptable to share emotions with girlfriends (Courtenay, 2000) or daughters (Bennett, 2007), but less so with other men. Yet recent work on male friendship and bonding challenges this, highlighting strong themes of emotionality between men. Thurnell-Read (2012) found that in the context of men's 'stag tours' significant bonds between men were evident. Work by

Galasinski (2004) on middle aged and older men also conflicts with challenges the idea that men are emotionally restricted, finding that they can talk about emotions both indirectly and openly. When faced with unemployment (among other difficult experiences), Galasinki (2004) found men and women use the same discursive practices in expressing feelings of helplessness, suggesting there may be circumstances where emotional expression is similar regardless of gender.

While most studies show men redefining masculinity within a broader framework of hegemonic masculinity (for example through notions of responsibility), a few studies have shown that men can enact masculinities that are less consistent with hegemonic ideals, fashioning 'alternative' masculinities in their place. For instance, in their analysis of interaction on a men's telephone relationship-counselling service, Feo and LeCouteur (2013) found that men challenged the common assumption that they are poor at engaging with and expressing emotions, as they commonly sought a space within which to report narratives of 'relationship trouble', rather than simply seeking advice. This challenged the orientation of the helpline service, which tended to direct men towards practical advice and solution focused outcomes, in line with dominant discourses in men's help-seeking literature. Thus their research exposes how men may challenge assumptions in the literature about hegemonic ideals when it comes to emotional expression and moreover how men may have unmet needs for talking about difficulties. Gray et al (2002) found that in the context of prostate cancer men could become excited about the opportunities for mutual support, and undermine hegemonic characteristics of competitiveness and stoicism displayed by other men in support groups.

3.1.3. Caring

The act of caring has frequently been depicted as belonging to the emotional and hence 'feminine' realm (Macaulay and Berkowitz, 1970; Noddings, 1984) and thus undermines claims to hegemonic masculinity. The feminist movement gave rise to many perspectives on caring, ranging from viewing caring as a burden from which women should free themselves to re-embracing caring following its devaluation by patriarchy (MacDougal, 1997). Much less has been written about men and caring, given the strong associations with 'women's work'. However, recent literature

stresses the importance of not discounting men's care. Men can be emotionally engaged in their care for others, despite this potentially violating some masculine norms. Hoang, Quach and Tran's (2013) research on the *Responsible Men Club* - a creative initiative working with Vietnamese men who perpetrate violence against women - demonstrated men's ability and willingness to build alternative, non-violent, and caring masculinities. The authors conceptualised men's experiences with the Club as a process of empowerment through removing their 'masks', and reconstructing themselves as 'new men'. Their research highlights the role of the normative family structure in helping men recreate positive masculine roles within new frameworks, of self-confidence and responsibility for example. Through Hoang et al's (2013) research it is possible to see how through embracing some hegemonic norms, men may be able to challenge others that are less helpful or positive. Indeed supporting and being responsible for one's family has been identified as a defining feature of manhood across cultures (Barker, 2005).

Research by Riberiro, Paul, and Nogueira (2007) showed that caring for a spouse was central to some older men's definitions of being a husband, and hence of masculinity. As well as showing care for children and spouses, men's care can extend to ageing parents (Cambell and Carroll, 2007). Increasing numbers of men are also joining caring professions, such as nursing, with research citing 'the desire to care' as central to men's reasons for entering (MacDougall, 1997). It has also been argued that men and women may have different ways of expressing care and intimacy. For instance, men's intimacy may be 'action' rather than 'communication' oriented, which is commonly understood as a characteristic of women (Seidler, 1994), so men may demonstrate their care through the act of working and supporting their families, rather than through verbal communication. As Guttman (1997) has argued men are 'engendered and engendering', and therfore more attention must be paid to their gendered experiences.

3.1.4. Mental Health

The WHO define mental health as "a state of wellbeing in which the individual realises his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work

productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2013). Mental health has been defined in various ways, for instance, as adherence to cultural norms, or as an ideal that is rarely achievable (Gross and Munoz, 1995). Different models of understanding mental health have developed over time from biological to psychological/cognitive and to a 'psychosocial stressors' perspective. While biological approaches tend to highlight brain dysfunction (Dolan, Bench and Brown, 1994), and cognitive/psychological perspectives focus on dysfunctional mental processes and behavioural interventions (Craighead, Craighead and Kazdin, 1994), a 'psychosocial stressors' perspective encompasses both social and psychological factors. A 'psychosocial stressors' approach argues that stressful life events (such as stigma related rejection and discrimination) can have a damaging impact on mental health (Thoits, 2013; Meyer, 1995). It has been suggested that gender (among other variables) can mediate the degree of stress or trauma experienced, thereby impacting on mental health outcomes (Rozenfield and Mouzan, 2013). For instance, it has been found that men may suffer slightly more traumatic experiences than women across the life course (Breslau, 2002), while socio-economic indicators strongly suggest women suffer greater material deprivation than men, leading to social disadvantage (Rogers and Pilgrim, 2010).

Research has widely documented that women experience higher rates of mental disorder than men, particularly internalising disorders such as depression and anxiety (Nolen-Hoeksema, 2001). The US comorbidity survey replication has reported that over the course of the life time 46 million women suffer from depression compared with 28 million men, and that 54 million women will endure some form of anxiety, compared with 36 million men (Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, Koretz, Merikangas, and Wang, 2003). The same study looked at externalising ways of coping, finding that 8 million men versus 1.5 million women experience antisocial personality disorder, and 54 million men versus 29 million women experience substance abuse problems. (Kessler et al., 2003), As such, it has been suggested that men may experience and express their depression and distress in different ways to women (Addis and Mahalik, 2003; Ridge et al., 2011). However, such differences in the expression of distress have also been challenged. For example, Nazroo, Edwards, and Brown's (1998) research suggested that if anything, women may be more likely to experience and express anger about a life event than men.

Research into mental health has tended to establish mental ill-health as a women's problem through directing most research towards women (Rogers and Pilgrim, 2010). Diagnostic criteria for measuring depression for example, may lean towards favouring women's tendency to internalise difficult emotions rather than externalising (e.g. through alcohol or drug abuse) which is favoured by men (Kilmartin, 2005). It was reported by the ONS in 2011 that 66% of all alcohol related deaths in the UK were among men. It is entirely possible that coping through avoidance (such as through substance abuse) has been connected to men's difficulties in managing emotions (Addis, 2008). Furthermore 79% of drug related deaths occur in men (Mind, 2009). Men and women may experience mental health problems roughly equally, but men are less likely to be diagnosed and treated for it (Wilkins, 2010). Men comprise three-quarters of all suicides (ONS, 2013), suggesting they may have different ways of experiencing and expressing distress. Although women may also cope through avoidance like men, it has been found they tend to lean towards rumination (Aldao, Nolen-Hoeksema, and Schweizer, 2010).

Research has shown that mental health difficulties can also be 'dealt' with in constructive and pro-active ways by men. It has been argued that mental health difficulties, particularly depression, can be 'feminising' for men (Warren, 1983). However research has found that reconstructing a valid sense of self and masculine identity is important in aiding recovery from depression (Emslie et al., 2006). Carless (2008) explored the place of sport and exercise in more positive and meaningful narratives for men in the face of mental illness, finding such practices were associated with notions of achievement and action, thereby helping to establish more positive notions of self and identity. Thus, the traditionally masculine realm of sport can bring about opportunities to (re)gain control over life, restoring men's sense of power (Valentine in Robertson, 2003). While it has been found that men most commonly incorporate characteristics associated with hegemonic masculinity (such as sport, being 'one of the boys') into their narratives of recovery, Emslie et al., (2006) found a minority of men could express their masculinity outside of hegemonic constructions, by emphasising their 'difference' as positive in the form of heightened sensitivity and intelligence. Lomas et al (2013) also showed that it is possible for men to engage proactively with their mental health and wellbeing, finding ways to be emotionally engaged, through meditation for example. Men in their study described

their struggles in 'crossing the threshold from boyhood to manhood', during which they often disconnected emotionally, becoming 'emotionally tough' as a way to deal with their vulnerability. While some men turned to drink or drugs as temporary ways to manage their emotions, meditation helped men cope with stress and find alternative ways of being.

3.1.5. Help seeking

Past research has shown that even when distressed, most men do not seek help from mental health services (Andrews, Issakidis, and Carter, 2001). While some men do seek professional help, it has been repeatedly argued that it is at a far lesser rate than women (Kessler, Brown and Broman 1981; Farrimond, 2011). Research has also suggested that this pattern remains across age (Husaini, Moore, and Cain, 1994) and ethnic background (Neighbors and Howard, 1987). This then leaves men more vulnerable to physical and emotional problems (Courtenay, 2001), including depression, anxiety, and drug and alcohol abuse (Wester and Vogel, 2012). There are also disparities among men. Black men are less likely than other groups to seek professional help for psychological distress (Snowden, 2001), attitudes towards services among these men have been found to be more negative than white counterparts - in the American college student population at least (Duncan, 2003). Experiences of racism have been identified as significant in black men's experiences of psychological distress (Watkins, Green, Goodson, Guidry, and Stanley, 2007), and attitudes to mental health services (Watkins, Walker, and Griffith, 2010). Research has suggested connections between male socialisation and their ability to seek help (Addis and Mahalik, 2003; Williams, 2003). For instance, help seeking may represent a violation of masculine norms learnt from childhood, including dependency, incompetence, and losing control and autonomy (Moller-Leimkuhler, 2002). In support of this idea, research has shown correlations between conformity to masculine norms and negative views on seeking counselling (Mahalik, Good, and Englar-Carlson, 2002).

Yet some newer studies have found that men and women may not be so different in respect to help seeking (Galdas, Johnson, Percy, and Ratner, 2010), and that

cultural influences (Galdas, Cheater and Marshall, 2007), age (Wang, Hunt and Nazareth et al., 2013), or perceived severity of symptoms (Douglas, Greener, Teijlingen and Ludbrook, 2013; Galdas, 2009), may all play a role in men's decisions to seek help. Further, resisting simple explanations of men's help-seeking, research has highlighted that when men do seek help, it may be because men take time to rationalise their symptoms, of for example chest pain (White and Johnson, 2000). At the same time, research has confirmed that women may also delay help-seeking, for example for breast cancer (Burgess, Hunter and Ramirez, 2001), and cardiac symptoms, as women do not expect to have cardiac problems and thus find it hard to recognise symptoms (Higginson, 2008). Smith, Braunack-Mayer and Wittert (2008) found many men may self-monitor their own health, seeking their own information before seeking help from medical professionals. Men may 'watchfully wait' before seeking treatment, for example for prostate cancer (Chapple, Ziebland, Herxhiemer, McPherson, Shepperd, and Miller, 2002). Men may also take time to negotiate transitions between identities, particularly when moving from a position of control to a less dominant position (when needing help); thus men may draw on and move between identities in the process (McVittie and Wilock, 2006). Finally, in addition to men showing willingness to seek help, research has shown that some men seek reassurance about health even when they are not experiencing symptoms (Douglas, Greener, van Teijlingen, and Ludbrook, 2013). These studies are important in giving a fuller and more complex picture of men's help-seeking, rather than dichotomising men's experiences into simple categories, constructing them as either 'good' or 'bad' with regard to help-seeking. Exploring how men make sense of their experiences in this way carries important implications for how best to approach men and help improve their wellbeing.

3.1.6. Summary

This section has explored the relationship between men and wellbeing in five distinct areas, namely, health, caring, emotions, help-seeking and mental health. While the dominant literature tends to paint a one-dimensional picture of men as 'damaged and damage doing' (Mac an Ghaill and Haywood, 2012), newer research has shown that men can construct their own health-promoting practices, can talk about emotions in specific circumstances, and can undertake caring practices for instance as part of

their family responsibilities. It has also been shown that men can be pro-actively engaged with their mental health and find ways to actively reconstruct more positive identities. Finally, recent research evidences that some men do seek help, despite dominant literature stressing men's reluctance, and furthermore that services may be unequipped to deal with men's needs.

3.2. Masculinity, schooling and peer relations

Men's accounts from the current study demonstrated that early experiences with school and peers were implicated in most men's narratives of successful ageing, and thus a significant element of the results. The following section reviews literature around boys and education and their peer relations. The school setting has been recognised as one of the principal sites where masculinities are constructed (Connell, 1995), and of particular importance for boys aged 7-11 (Swain, 2006). The first section looks at how the relationship between masculinity and schooling has developed historically (with a particular emphasis on Britain and Australia). As will be shown, the issue of boy's underachievement within the context of school has been a consistent theme in the literature since the 1960s.

The second section explores the literature on homosocial peers and friendship during the school years. Research here suggests that boys traditionally adopt homophobic, misogynistic, and aggressive behaviours in order to conform to a rigid code of masculinity, often damaging themselves, and excluding others in the process (McCormack, 2012). As boys start to learn about the hierarchy of friendship and peer relations, they may feel ambivalent about being part of a group (as against the idea of being an individual), though they have also reported ways in which friendship groups can usefully aid identity construction (Stroudt, 2006).

The final section focuses on boys' peer relations with girls and their early sexual and romantic relationships. The dominant literature tends to support the view that boys hold most power in their relations with girls (Allen, 2003), though newer literature offering more situated understandings of power relations as something constantly reworked have challenged this (Giordano, 2006). Indeed, rather than power relations

being predetermined, symbolic interactionist approaches understand power relations as co-constructions negotiated within interactional processes in specific contexts.

3.2.1. Masculinity and schooling

Schools are arguably key sites where masculinity is constructed, often in opposition to the school and authority figures within them (Connell, 1995). For Connell (1996), while pupils are also active agents, masculinising practices such as gendered curriculum areas, punishment and sport all work towards producing specific kinds of masculinity. For instance, women have traditionally been excluded from industrial arts (shop) teaching, which is historically linked with manual trades, thus a strong culture of workplace masculinity exists (Connell, 1996). Furthermore, when corporal punishment was legal, boys were more heavily targeted than girls, and they still face the majority of non-violent punishment (Connell, 1996).

Historically, social class has divided what boys learnt in UK schools, as middle-class boys focused on Latin, literature and science, and working class boys were taught more basic numeracy and literacy skills (Skelton, 2001). In the UK the 1940s saw the creation of a tripartite system of grammar, technical, and secondary modern schools, entry to which depended on 'measured intelligence' and performance in the 11 plus examination, acting to reinforce the divisions already in place, as academic grammar schools were seen to have the highest status (Skelton, 2001). Research into boys, schooling and class has traditionally posited that middle class boys were more likely to be academically successful, and to have the most positive attitudes towards school (Lacey, 1970). Working class boys would conversely hold the most negative attitudes as a result of being labelled 'failures'. This understanding of working class boys as failures was challenged by radical youth cultural studies research in the late 1970s. Here researchers aimed to re-contexualise the negative representations of working class boys as passive failures as challenges to dominant forms of social power and masculine protest (Willis, 1977; Corrigan, 1979).

By the late 1970s and '80s the academic focus in the field of education shifted on to gender and away from class; the issue of boys' underachievement (relative to girls) first became evident, as large scale studies highlighted girls' success and consistent

outperformance of boys in nearly all areas (Skelton, 2001). By the 1990s boys' education become a matter of public and political concern in a number of countries, most notably the UK, the USA and Australia (Foster, Kimmel and Skelton, 2001). There are various constructions and approaches to 'failing boys' as well as many critiques, largely from feminist perspectives. It has been argued that notions of 'achievement' may be defined too narrowly, thus ignoring the experiences of boys for whom just attending school is an achievement (Smith, 2003). Furthermore, discourses of boys' 'failure' may demonise them for their apparent wastefulness of resources and inability to take responsibility for their own achievement (Francis, 2006). Statistical differences suggesting boys' underachievement may also hide a more complex picture, in that not *all* boys underachieve relative to *all* girls, and that differences in social class and ethnicity are just as relevant, but often not accounted for (Skelton, 2001). Although working-class boys' disengagement from education continues to be a major public concern, Stahl and Dale (2013) suggest the focus on anti-school masculinities tends to come at the cost of exploring how low-achieving boys actively engage and succeed in their learning and and how this relates to identity construction. Furthermore, post-structuralist theories have encouraged us to recognise differences between groups of boys and girls, providing links to exploring subjectivity and to how schooling can produce a range of masculinities, which are made and remade through the contextual contingency of identity formation (Mac an Ghail, 1994).

3.2.2. Homosocial peers and friendship

Informal peer group life has been noted as one of the most important features of schools as social settings, one through which distinct gender orders are played out (Connell, 1996). As children, boys and girls tend increasingly to separate by gender as they grow older, until this peaks in adolescence (Thorn, 1993). During this time, research suggests that boys' and girls' friendships may be marked by different patterns (Fehr, 2004; Rose and Asher, 1999). For instance, it has been commonly argued that homosocial male friendships are more aggressive and less intimate than friendships among girls (Lansford and Parker, 1999; Fehr, 2004), which are said to be more self-disclosing (Dindia and Allen, 1992) and emotionally closer (Carstensen,

1991). The dominant discourse is that boys' peer relations are constructed in relation to a rigid code of (hegemonic) masculinity (Mac an Ghail, 1994; Stroud, 2006), known as 'boy code' (Pollock, 1998), or 'guy code' (Kimmel, 2008), demanding stoicism and aggression on the part of boys. As part of hegemonic masculinity, intimacy between men is generally channelled through alternative social relations such as competition (Thurnell-Read, 2012).

Plummer (1999: 97) argues that as girls and boys separate in friendship groups, a division also widens between boys themselves: those "who successfully conform to peer expectations and those who don't". Those who can't or won't conform to peer expectations face being labelled "poofters" due to their 'difference', independent of sexual orientation (Plummer, 1999). The deployment of homophobic language is part of peer discipline that aids hegemonic constructions. As argued by Connell and Messersmidt (2005), hegemony requires the policing of men (and boys) in order to remain powerful. Dichotomous, stable notions of masculinity are preserved and perpetuated through peer disciplining that imposes artificial and rigid boundaries on what is largely an "ambiguous and socially constructed identity" (Stroudt, 2006: 279). This rigidity has meant that for young gay men to be accepted they have had to remain closeted, as those who have come out have faced punishment from peers (McCormack, 2012). Beyond this binary division however, boys may also subdivide into character groups, such as 'nerds' or 'trendies' (Kinney, 1993). Such groups are positioned in contrast to 'loners' or 'outsiders' who are unacceptably different (Kinney, 1993), and for whom the school ground can be a particularly dangerous and risky place (Whitney and Smith, 1993; Boulton, 1995). Indeed research has shown that boys may value the security and safety fostered within a group context (Plummer, 1999). However research has also revealed ambivalence on the part of boys in relation to group membership at school. Plummer (1999) found that while group membership may be necessary for protection, it may also mean having to conform to group standards and sacrificing one's own individuality. Stroudt's (2006) research on an elite suburban school, found that conforming to a group can indeed offer rewarding opportunities for friendship and inclusion. Some participants even understood peer disciplining within the group to underpin close trustworthy friendships, stating that it helped 'shape you as a person' and provided an opportunity to learn 'what social traits you can bring to the outside world' (2006: 281).

In this sense, peer disciplining was understood as a "shared practice" among peers, (rather than one bully imposing boundaries on everybody else), and a significant resource for identity construction. On the other hand peer discipline was based on sharp distinctions between inclusion and exclusion, producing feelings of shame and fear (as well as intimacy, bonding and friendship among the boys). As a result of their ambivalence, some of Stroudt's (2006) and Plummer's (1999) participants found ways to negotiate or move between being an individual and part of a group. For instance Stroudt's participants, while demonstrating the need to adhere to a group, highlighted the importance of popularity through originality and individuality via 'acts of resistance' (such as turning up a collar at school). However, for Stroudt (2006:282) such acts were "safe", closer to conformity and of little consequence in terms of challenging the institutional or peer power structure. Such 'protests' stayed within acceptable boundaries, allowing boys still to 'get along', without 'rocking the boat'. In this way Stroudt's white, upper-middle to upper class, mainly heterosexual participants, sustained their already privileged social positions.

As indicated by both Stroudt (2006) and Plummer's (1999) research, for young men and boys in particular male friendships are an important part of constructing identity (Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Nayak, 2003). Men depend on other men to inform their understanding of themselves as men, so a sense of belonging with other men serves to strengthen masculine identity (Wade, 1998). The central argument in Connell's (1995) theory is that masculinities are constructed relationally within a gendered hierarchy of power relations, and men therefore understand themselves as dominant, marginalised or subordinated in relation to other men (and women). Male friendship is a primary site where masculinity is negotiated and collectively defined (Mac an Ghaill, 1994). As Thurnell-Read stresses, "The stakes appear high…homosocial groups represent simultaneously, possible acceptance…but also the chance of rejection"; indeed what is not established as "acceptable masculinity" is "forcibly rejected" (2012: 251). Hegemonic masculinity then is in part sustained by homosocial groups and these relations play an important role in establishing accepted forms of masculinity (Thurnell-Read, 2012). Kimmel (2008: 47) confirms that "masculinity is largely a 'homosocial' experience", but reminds us of agency, that is it also something that is done, "performed for, and judged by, other men". In addition to peers, it should be noted that boys are also influenced about friendship

and peer groups through watching parents and grandparents with their own friends (Grief, 2011). Furthermore, decisions such as where to live, what school to attend, and how children should spend their time, most often made by parents, may also significantly impact on boy's friendships (Grief, 2011).

Recent research has started to challenge the idea that male friendships are ruled by hegemonic codes, for instance, McKormac's (2012) study showed that while hierarchy does exist between boys, it does not have to be defined by hegemony, but can be based on 'inclusive masculinity' involving charisma, authenticity, emotional support and social fluidity (in opposition to homophobia, aggressiveness and misogyny). Moreover, work by Way (2011) has also suggested that boys are wanting and having intimate male friendships, challenging conventions of emotional stoicism, and that such friendships are significant for all aspects of wellbeing. Further research in school settings has also documented that decreased homophobia results in the expansion of gendered behaviours for male students (Kehler, 2007; Renold, 2004). In opposition to Way (2011) and McKormac (2012) however, recent research by Mora (2013) on a group of low income Latino boys in the US continues to show the abjection of homosexuality in the construction of culturally dominant forms of masculinity.

3.2.3. Early heterosexual romantic relations

Across adolescence, heterosexual boys progress from same gender friendships and peer groups (having learnt their position within the hierarchy of homosocial friendships) towards romantic relations (Collins and Sroufe, 1999), but very little is known about this transition (Brown, Fiering, and Furman, 1999), or early romantic experiences more generally in relation to other peer relations (Giordano, 2006). Given the dominant discourse on different styles of friendship and interaction between girls and boys, it has been assumed that they are likely to face challenges in learning how to interact with each other romantically (Maccoby, 1990). As research has posited that boys enact male friendships with more competition, aggression and dominance than do girls (Lansford and Parker, 1999), it has been assumed that boys' transitions towards romance and sexual relations will be carried out more confidently and with less emotional engagement than girls (Giordano,

2006). The issue of relationship power has been documented, with the dominant belief supporting the idea that boys hold most power and influence (Allen, 2003). However support for this view has tended to come from female narratives, or from a male peer group setting, rather than from individual boys themselves, and research relating to boys' experiences and perspectives of romance and sex is lacking (Smith, Guthrie, and Oakley, 2005). Significant differences have been found in the way boys talk in peer based situations compared with private settings (Wright, 1994), highlighting the need for studies based on boys individually. A number of studies have suggested that slightly older boys may stress the importance of romance and love in their sexual relationships (Furman and Wehner, 1994; Adams, Laursen and Wilder, 2001), emphasising shifts that can occur within stages of the life course, such as adolescence.

Taking a symbolic interactionist approach and framework, empirical research by Giordano (2006) has more recently challenged the dominant discourse of a relatively easier transition for boys into romantic and sexual relations. Rather than straightforward male privilege and domination, Giordano asserts power dynamics are more situated and constantly negotiated in relation to early heterosexual relations. Based on interviews with over 1300 adolescents, she found boys reported significantly higher levels of communication awkwardness and lower levels of relationship confidence in their early relationships than girls. This remained the case across various levels of socioeconomic status. This has been supported by research arguing that when boys and girls first resume contact in adolescence, boys' awkward attempts to make contact with girls may initially resemble something close to harassment (Plummer, 1999). Though as time goes by this tends to be replaced by more intimate and lasting contact, and rather than girls being rejected, "hegemonic boyhood" becomes in part sustained by "compulsory heterosexuality" (Plummer, 1999:95). However research by Smiler (2008) revealed few connections between masculine ideology and sexual behaviour, and peer motives for pursuing sexual relations were not frequently endorsed by participants, signalling a need to move beyond traditional ideologies when examining boys' sexual and romantic motives. Research generally agrees that the normative pattern among teenagers is to date and develop intimacy and disclosure in a relationship before engaging in sexual intimacy (O'Sullivan, Cheng, Harris, and Brooks-Gunn, 2007). It has been argued

that while a desire for companionship and affiliation is important for adolescents forming relationships, there is a shift towards trust and support in young adulthood (Collins, 2003).

In relation to relationship power in Giordano's (2006) research, adolescent boys were perceived by both girls and boys to have less relationship power; and were more likely to report that their dating partner attempted to influence them or actually did so. They also found that boys and girls reported similar levels of feelings of love in connection with their relationships, and that boys were able to emphasise the importance of intimacy and social support. Boys' descriptions of the loss they felt when a relationship ended further compounded the sense of importance boys attributed to their romantic relations. For Giordano (2006), the transition to romantic relationships creates conditions that encourage new definitions, emotions and a more connected view of the self. While more conventional gender scripts have been found in older age, it has been suggested that boys may gain in maturity and confidence as they age and as traditional sources of inequality take hold, romantic relations may correspond to conventional gender scripts more frequently and directly (Giordano, 2006). Furthermore, Giordano asserts her results may reflect cohort changes associated with broader level societal changes.

There have indeed been some shifts reported in the practices associated with early sexual and romantic relations today compared with previous generations. For instance, popular media depictions suggest that romantic activity today consists of more sexual activity and less desire for emotional connection (Denizet Lewis, 2004). However there is little empirical research to support this, and this may be attributable to linguistic shifts applied to contemporary sexual and romantic behaviour, with the use of terms such as 'hooking up' (Sassler, 2010). Additionally, some contemporary behaviours such as internet dating have only recently become possible. While temporal differences may exist, Sassler (2010) has argued that a common thread unifying all relationships is a desire for intimacy, whether emotional or sexual. In relation to wellbeing, becoming involved in romantic or sexual relationships at any age is understood as beneficial (Kamp-Dush and Amato, 2005).

To summarise, this section has reviewed the literature around masculinity and schooling, peer relations among boys, and early heterosexual romantic and sexual

relations. In relation to masculinity and schooling the school setting aids masculinity construction. Of particular significance to the literature is boys' underachievement; indeed this has been an on-going issue since the 1960s/'70s, first in terms of social class inequalities and more recently in relation to 'boys being boys' (Foster, Kimmel, and Skelton, 2001). Secondly, the chapter discussed homosocial peer relations, which have been shown to be fraught with difficulties for boys, given the rigid codes of masculinity and entanglement with homophobia. However, some newer research suggests a lessening of homophobic influence in homosocial relations, and a softer, more inclusive masculinity developing, resulting in closer bonds between men. Finally, boys' early sexual relations have traditionally been theorised as privileging boys, given the greater confidence and power they are presumed to hold (Allen, 2003). However, more recent research paints a very different picture in which boys have reported more communication awkwardness and less perceived relationship power (Giordano, 2006). The following section builds on the review of boys' experiences, exploring how relationships may change and develop across the life course for men.

3.3. Relationships across the life course

This section looks at men's significant relationships across the life course, including homosocial friendships, fatherhood, and grandfatherhood. While there is a significant body of research on male friendship in earlier life (particularly on the differences from female friendship), much less in known about how friendship develops across men's lives. Research here suggests more similarities between men and women regarding the significance of friendship, although the importance of friendship may change across the life course.

The literature on fatherhood is vast. Central to men in the current study is how fatherhood has been understood, experienced and practised across time. Thus this section reviews literature around changing discourses of fatherhood, providing a framework to help understand the current study's participants' experiences with their own fathers, as well as becoming and being fathers. Changing social and cultural practices, particularly in the sphere of work, have led to significant changes in fathering. This section also reviews the literature on fatherhood and wellbeing,

including the impact of becoming a father on identity, social relationships and health and wellbeing. Finally, the chapter reviews the research on grandfatherhood, of key interest to many of the current study's participants. Research here has been lacking, with the majority of studies focusing on grandmothers (Bates and Taylor, 2012). More recently though, studies have started to explore how becoming a grandfather may impact on older men's wellbeing and identity, and bring about new domestic and caring roles (Tarrant, 2012).

3.3.1. Friendship

While the previous section on boys' peer relations explored how these early relations are formed and the significance of masculinity and peer discipline at school in constructing early friendships and identity, we now turn to look at how men's friendships play out across the life course. While dominant frameworks tend to focus on the differences between male and female friendships (particularly early friendships), research that includes the context of age and the life course tends to suggest more similarities than differences. Felmlee and Muraco (2009) demonstrated that across a wide age range men and women held similar preferences for close ties, norms of trust, commitment and respect. Similarly, Greif's (2009: 20) work on male friendship and the life course suggests that men and women want the same things, namely "intimacy, empathy, and trust in their close relationships. It's just that men have different ways of getting there". For example, recent work has highlighted how men's friendships and intimacies are developed through embodied practices rather than verbally, like surfing (Waitt and Warren, 2008), and football (Evers, 2010). Indeed, sport is a space through which many (mainly heterosexual) men communicate and play out their friendships across their lives, though they may participate in less physically active sports like golf and fishing as they age (Greif, 2009). It is also suggested that men develop 'shoulder to shoulder' or 'side by side' friendships and communication, based on 'doing' things together (Wright, 1982; Golding, 2012), rather than face-to-face communication that women are said to excel at and favour (Burleson and Samter, 1996). Furthermore, it has been suggested that only *definitions* of friendship differ for men and women, while levels of importance are similar (Roy, Benenson, and Lilly, 2000). While gender

differences in friendship continue to be debated, there remains a lack of research on the characteristics of inter-male friendships specifically (Rankin, 2013), and even less on men's friendships across the life course, reflective of a larger trend to neglect the context of age and temporality in masculinity research (Thurnell-Read, 2012). Thus the current study provides an important corrective.

Greif (2009) has looked at men's friendships across the life course, finding age to be a significant factor in friendship formation. He found the need for friendships strongest in youth when men have more leisure time. As men move towards marriage this need declines in the wake of increasing childcare and work responsibilities. According to Grief (2009) the need for friends then climbs again as men slow down or end their working lives, and as children leave home. The transition towards marriage is a turning point in men's friendships (Grief, 2009) and a distinctive biographical moment in the male life course (Thurnell Read, 2012). The prior homosociality of masculinity and expulsion of the feminine can mean relations with women (particularly if committed) are seen as oppositional to their homosocial friendships (Gilmartin, 2007). Thurnell-Read's (2012) research on stag tours shows how such an event may be used as an emotional outlet to celebrate long lasting friendship and intimacy and at the same time commemorate it, given the impending loss of friendship perceived to ensue. Thus the stag tour represents the uneasy transition between stages of the life course for heterosexual men, and their close relationships. As such, contemporary research that includes the context of age is starting to challenge the negativity implicit in much of the research around early peer relations and the hierarchies that structure them. Thurnell-Read's (2012) research found that groups were largely non-competitive, and that intimacy and emotional expression, including declarations of love, were frequent. Furthermore, a high value was placed on group cohesion and a sense of togetherness, suggesting possible patterns of change within homosocial male friendships.

As men get older, their social networks diminish as friends die (Walen and Lachman, 2000), just as their need increases (Gupta and Korte, 1994). Research relating to older men shows that remaining friendships can buffer against loneliness, and time spent with an old friend can help older people feel young again (Greif, 2009). While the need for friendship may be greater in older age, older adults may be more likely to turn to family members for emotional and instrumental support, particularly when

declining health leads to dependency (Mendes de Leon, Gold and Glass, 2001). Miller, Buys, and Roberto, (2006) highlight the importance of location in older men's friendships, finding that among older rural married Australian and American men, mild depression was predicted by not having someone to trust and confide in, and it was not just linked to functional limitations. As such, their research stressed the importance of friendships beyond the marital relationship for older married rural men, in contrast to the dominant discourse that marriage and/or intimate partnership provides protection for men against social and emotional isolation (Arber and Cooper, 1999; Davidson and Meadows, 2010).

3.3.2 Fatherhood

To understand older men's experiences of fatherhood and being fathered (and the relation of this to wellbeing), it is first necessary to explore some of the changing social and cultural practices over the last 40 years or so, that have led to a reshaping of fatherhood for men today. As Arber et al (2003: 3) highlight, "when we study people from age 60-85, we are comparing distinct age cohorts in which gendered family and labour market roles reflect the changing norms prevailing during their life course". Changes relating to the family, employment and the division of domestic labour, including rising divorce rates, women's increasing role in the labour force, and the gradual decline of patriarchal authority, have brought about major shifts in scripts of fatherhood over the last three decades (McMahon, 1999; Lupton and Barclay, 1997). The changing relationship between men and work has played a central role in the reshaping of fatherhood (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006). Since the industrial revolution fatherhood has been underpinned by the principle of the 'male breadwinner' as sole provider (Marsiglio, Amato, and Day, 2000; Waller, 2002). Occupied with work outside the home, men could exempt themselves from childcare. However the restructuring of the labour market in recent decades, including the decline in manual and unskilled labour, and the increase in women's work outside the home has constrained the potential for some men to be 'providers', and led to a decline in the breadwinner role (Waller, 2002). Such changes in work structures contributed to claims that masculinity went into 'crisis' (Payne, 1995). However, alongside this narrative are newer emerging stories about positive forms of

masculinity (Brannen and Nilsen, 2006) and egalitarian relationships (Setterten and Tirado, 2010) that may even challenge hegemonic forms of masculinity (Connell, 1995).

While rising divorce rates and a decline in marriage rates mean the likelihood children will live apart from their fathers has increased (Kennedy and Bumpass, 2008), discourses of the 'new involved' father representing greater care and engagement on the part of fathers have increased in recent times (Draper, 2002; Waller, 2002). The involved father is emotionally connected with his children and shares childcare responsibilities (Waller, 2002). He rejects the traditional father as over-authoritarian, disinterested or absent (Finn and Henwood, 2009). However, critical arguments against the new fatherhood discourse have emerged, for instance, viewing it as cultural fallacy (La Rossa, 1988). The ongoing predominance of the father's breadwinner role in Britain (Lewis, 2000) has also been highlighted as limiting the prospects for new fatherhood. Some social constructionist positions, however, maintain that the new father may have some potential for disrupting hegemonic forms of masculinity (Connell, 1995; Lupton and Barclay, 1997).

Research by Brannen and Nilsen (2006) looked at three generations of fathers, providing insight into changing patterns of fatherhood. They found that men born during the Second World War (the middle generation) became fathers and married at the youngest age. Men's transitions into marriage, work and fatherhood occurred very quickly, within a few years of each other. This contrasted with the current fatherhood generation, where transitions were much more stretched out, with men becoming fathers much later. These men had an extended 'youth phase' where as young adults they could experiment more with different patterns of living, made possible by the historical conditions that have shaped education, employment and fertility (Brannen and Nilson, 2006). Brannen and Nilsen (2006) constructed a typology of models of fathering/fatherhood reflecting not only men's identities as fathers but also their masculinities. These included the 'work-focused father', where the work ethic dominated men's identities and involvement with their children was low. The second model called 'family men' included men who whilst being the main breadwinners also placed a high value on 'being there' and participating in childcare. The last model, 'hands on' fathers, consisted of men who were heavily involved in

child care, none of whom had been the main breadwinners other than for very short periods of time. While men from all three generations (and from different socioeconomic backgrounds) could be 'work-focused fathers', 'family men' largely consisted of men from the current generation, and 'hands-on' fathers only consisted of men from the current generation. Such changes in fatherhood practices are made possible due to changing structural conditions, including the decline of the male breadwinner role and the increase of women's work. Additionally, men may actively negotiate changes in fatherhood practices themselves.

There is a large supporting body of literature that suggests styles of fathering are heavily affected by the relationships men had with their own fathers (Finn and Heywood, 2009; Roy, 2006; St John, Cameron, and McVeigh, 2005, Goodman, 2005). As such, men's past experiences carry weight in how they identify as fathers and the practices they adopt. Interestingly, Brannen and Nilsen (2006) found both continuity and discontinuity in ways of being a father within families. For example, the 'work-focused' model of fathering permeated all generations, though some men were less involved with their children than their father's had been, because they work longer hours. Other men followed their fathers by highlighting the importance of relating to their children. Miller's (2011) research on men's transitions to first-time fatherhood found that when imagining what fatherhood might be like, men envisaged 'being there' for their children in ways that were qualitatively different from experiences with their own fathers. Following the birth of their children, men were indeed "more actively and emotionally involved in caring for their child than they recall their own fathers to have been" (2011; 1107). However, after returning to work following two weeks paid paternity leave, men tended to squeeze caring practices into evenings and weekends, with wives and partners being constructed as the 'experts', effectively 'falling back into gender' expectations (Miller, 2011).

As well as changing patterns and practices of fatherhood, and intergenerational links, the relationship between fatherhood and wellbeing is central to the current study. According to Settersten and Tirado (2010), research on fatherhood has been more interested in the negative effects of fatherhood on children, rather than the positive effects on children, or the effects both positive or negative on men themselves. However there is a fledging body of literature on the consequences of

fatherhood for men's lives, exploring the impact on men's identities and personal growth (Palkovitz, 2002; Miller, 2011), social relationships (Knoester and Eggebeen, 2006), health and wellbeing (Nomaguchi and Milkie, 2003) and work and education (Lundberg, 2002; McBride 1991). Given the advances in research on wellbeing, significant advances have been made in studies concerning the relationship between parenting and wellbeing, for instance by including measures of meaning and purpose (Umberson, Pudrovska, and Reczek, 2010). While not all of these areas can be covered by this review, we will begin by looking at research on fatherhood and identity, before then going on to look at social relationships.

Fatherhood can be a turning point in narrative identity, impacting on future behaviour (Roy, 2006). Draper (2002) found that whether first time parents or not, many men felt uncertain about their new role and the changes that would occur. Palkovitz (2002) argues fatherhood encourages a 'settling down' for men, leading them to become less self-centred and more giving, and helping them to achieve greater maturity and sense of direction. Fathering may also encourage men to become generative, encouraging a revaluation of priorities, greater concern for future generations and more involvement in their communities (Snarey, 1993). This has been echoed by other studies highlighting fatherhood as an aid to self-development, including shifts towards being 'more sensitive' and 'caring about others' (Premburg, Hellstrom, and Berg, 2008: 59). Shifts in men's sense of self can also lead to greater self-care and reduced risk taking (St John et al., 2005). However, while some men may want to 'let the feminine side out' through care giving activities, they may also be held back by expectations of fulfilling more gender-defined roles i.e. 'action-based', public sphere activities with children (Finn and Henwood, 2009: 555). These influences on the fathering identity, including reduced risk-taking, while positive for most men, can be moderated by factors such as the timing of fatherhood, the number or ages of other children, the status of his partner relationship, or residential circumstances (Settersten and Tirado, 2010). For instance, for a 40 or 50 year old man fatherhood is likely to be less about 'settling down' and more about incorporating a child into existing demands (Settersten and Tirado, 2010).

In terms of social relationships, research has consistently argued that fatherhood alters men's social ties, and while some social relationships, such as with friends and associates are said to lessen with fatherhood, (Eggebeen, Drew and Knoester,

2010), while others are said to thrive, such as those linked with their children (Snarey, 1993). Research by Eggebeen et al (2010) found that men who become fathers are more likely to have altruistically oriented social relationships and to be involved with service organisations compared with men who never become fathers, benefitting extended families and communities as well as children themselves. In relation to the effect of fatherhood on intimate partnerships/marriage most tend to argue parenthood is associated with declines in marital/relationship satisfaction (McHale and Huston, 1985; La Taillade, Hofferth, and Wight, 2010), due to the demands and time constraints of parenting (Twenge, Cambell, and Foster, 2003). However some have highlighted positive improvements in the quality of relationships (Belsky and Rovine, 1990). La Taillade et al (2010) focused on the relationship of fatherhood and relationships with partners and parents, finding that while the quality of relationships with partners was adversely affected by men becoming fathers, relations with parents became closer.

As well as effects on identity and social relationships, there has been some work on opportunities for positive wellbeing in the form of 'lifestyle changes' in the context of having children (Hockey and James, 2003). Men may decrease risky behaviours such as drinking and smoking (Bottorff, Oliffe, Kalaw, Carey, and Mroz, 2006), and engage in more health protective behaviours (Gordon et al., 2013). In Gordon et al's (2013) study the shift towards health protective behaviours were conceptualised as legitimately 'masculine' by men, as they were motivated by new responsibilities for others, denoting maturity and growth, and successful command of the life course (Barker, 2005).

In addition to the benefits of fatherhood there may be costs. For instance, early transition to parenthood (prior to age 23) can result in an increased risk of depression for both men and women (Mirowsky and Ross, 2002). Distant and strained relationships with children may develop when divorce occurs, more so for men than for women (Shapiro, 2003), often negatively impacting on fathers and children's wellbeing (Amato, Sobalewski, and Lamb, 2004). Crouter and Booth (2004) highlighted marital status and economic status as influential in men and women's experiences of parenting, suggesting that those who are unmarried and those of lower economic status are more likely to have experiences with parenting marked by struggle.

Research is beginning to understand the interdependence of parent's and children's life course trajectories, and the implications for wellbeing. However, a focus on 'linked lives' is yet to be fully implemented in methodological aspects of studying parenthood (Umberson et al, 2010: 623). Utilising the idea of 'multiple clocks' (Macmillan and Copher, 2005), Umberson et al (2010) argue that a life course perspective draws upon three temporal dimensions, individual time, generational time and historical time, emphasising the importance of social and cultural contexts as well as individual and cohort experiences in the experience of parenthood. They suggest an important goal of future research is to explore the relationship between wellbeing and parenthood over historical time and across social groups; indeed this is a focus of the current research. Settersten and Tirade (2010) also argue that to move forward, data must be gathered on trajectories into and through fatherhood. By linking experiences over time it becomes possible to identify the processes and mechanisms though which the effects of fatherhood come about and how those effects accumulate (Settersten and Tirado, 2010). Fatherhood is not merely a function of individual agency or a question of the degrees to which men sustain or challenge hegemony, but can also be one of personal biography and the interconnections of social reality (Finn and Henwood, 2009). "Looking at continuities over generational time can help us to further understand why particular versions of fatherhood and masculinity are held together and fashioned the way they are" (2009: 556).

3.3.3. Grandfatherhood

For some men in the current study, their roles as grandfathers were narrated as a significant part of successful ageing. Thus, the final section reviews the historical development of the literature on grandfatherhood. The last 40 years or more has seen the growth of popularity in studies on grandparenthood (Mann, 2007). This is unsurprising in one sense, given men and women are living longer than previous generations, thus the grandparent role has expanded across the span of an individual's life (Mann, 2007). However, research has primarily focused upon grandmothers, leaving our understandings of the experience of grandfatherhood underdeveloped (Bates and Taylor, 2012). As suggested by Mann (2007), this may

be indicative of a general failure to integrate research into ageing and masculinity, as well as an underestimation of the contribution and involvement of grandfathers in caring. Experiences of grandfatherhood have also been largely obscured by a conceptual framework that reflects the experiences and behaviours of grandmothers (Mann, 2007). As stated by Spitze and Ward (1998: 125) "grandfathers may appear to be less involved if dimensions important to them are not measured", and if research relies on "gender-biased measures reflecting female conceptions of familial behaviour".

Research that does address grandfatherhood has mostly been based on research into grandparents as a single entity (Mann, 2007). However, this research can be drawn on as a starting point to help form an understanding of grandfatherhood. For instance, such studies have found differences in the degree of involvement with grandchildren, as well as the kinds of support and activities they take part in (Hagestad, 1985). Hagestad (1985: 39) highlights older men's "task-oriented involvement" with grandchildren outside the home, while women were more likely to emphasise interpersonal dynamics within the family. Like fatherhood, studies that do focus exclusively on grandfatherhood have largely been limited to exploring how grandfathers impact upon grandchildren, rather than how being a grandfather may impact on older men. However, there are some exceptions; Bates and Taylor (2012) looked at the relationship between being a grandfather and mental health outcomes. By categorising grandfathers into three types, namely 'involved', 'disengaged' and 'passive', they found that 'involved' grandfathers had fewer depressive symptoms and higher scores on positive affect than 'disengaged' grandfathers. Thus their findings suggest that involvement with grandchildren may offer a protective factor against the development of depressive symptoms.

Waldrop, Weber, Herald, and Pruett (1999: 39) found that as older men, grandfathers departed from conventional stereotypes to express "a desire to be involved in emotional and spiritual relationships with their grandchildren". They found that older men's desire to teach grandchildren about values and interpersonal relationships illustrated "a new form of grandfather as teacher and mentor" (1999: 43). In a similar vein, it has been suggested that masculinity may soften with age (Thompson, Ellis, and Wildavsky, 1990, Guttman, 1997) and men may become more nurturing (Radin, Oyserman, and Benn, 1991). Thompson et al., (1990) found that

grandfathers talked much more emotionally and lovingly about grandchildren than they did about their own children. Russell (1986) has suggested that grandfathers may feel a sense of regret about their own absence as a father, sometimes encouraging a greater desire for involvement with grandchildren. Grandfatherhood may therefore offer the potential to counter notions of hegemonic masculinity defining collective experiences of fatherhood (Sorensen and Cooper, 2010). Grandfatherhood may also bring about the opportunity for countering negative identities ascribed to older men. In their research on older men and leisure, Wiersma and Chesser (2011) found that leisure was a site that excluded older men, but as grandfathers men are provided with opportunities for continued access to various public and leisure spaces, offering resistance to spatially embedded ageism (Tarrant, 2012). Possibilities for transforming spaces such as the home (dominantly understood as feminine spaces), are also created through performances of new domestic masculinities in a grandfather role (Tarrant, 2012). The transition to grandfatherhood can be met with an increase in care-giving by older men (Mann, 2007). Such changes in caring practices and increased nurturing show ways in which men negotiate ageing masculinity as they age (Tarrant, 2012), and challenges the assumption that the grandparent role carries more importance for woman than men.

While recent research does seem to point to a different portrayal of grandfatherhood compared to longstanding grandparenthood research, Mann (2007) suggests such changes may be a response to changing *ideas* about what constitutes a 'good' grandfather, rather than necessarily signifying any qualitative changes in attitudes and behaviours. Further research is needed into the relationships between masculinity and grandfathers, within the context of life course factors such as age, given possible shifts in masculinity across the life course (Guttman, 1997). Indeed, it has already been suggested that 'styles' of grandparenting may be related to the timing of the transition to grandparenthood (Kaufman and Elder, 2003), as well as differences between new and experienced grandparents, and the age of grandchildren (Mann, 2007). Brannen and Nilson (2006) found that in some cases grandfathers were more involved with their grandchildren than they were with their own children, though due to changes in both the life course and discourses of fathering, it is hard to disentangle possible explanations. As they argue,

intergenerational transmission regarding fatherhood practices is not always transparent, for resources passed on by one generation may be used diversely by the next, with each generation putting its own mark on what has been passed down.

To summarise this section on relationships across the life course, the chapter began by reviewing the existing research on ageing and men's friendships, which points to changing patterns from earlier years as men move in and out of different life stages. Marriage for example may cause men to invest less in friendships, whilst loneliness in older age may increase the need for friendship, perhaps particularly for men from more rural locations (Miller et al., 2006). The section then went on to discuss fatherhood, research suggesting that various factors, including the decline of the 'breadwinner' role and increase in women's public participation, have led to changes in practices of fathering contributing to discourses of the new 'involved father'. Intergenerational research has shown fathering is implicitly connected to experiences of being fathered, whether men choose to adopt their father's own practices or supersede them through greater involvement with their own children. Fathering has strong links to positive wellbeing; as an aid to personal growth and self-development, to building closer and more altruistic relationships, or creating more positive lifestyles, less shaped by negative forms of risk. However, early entry into fatherhood may increase risk of depression and lead to the decline of other relationships, such as those with friends. Finally, grandfatherhood may also lead to improved wellbeing and a redefinition of masculinity. Grandfathers may legitimately embrace more domesticated and caring roles than they had with their own children, which may in turn offer protection against depression.

3.4. Summary

This chapter began by focusing on ways in which men can act constructively in relation to their health, emotions, capacity to care, mental health, and ability to seek help, contrasting with much past research that has painted men and masculinity one-dimensionally as destructive. Indeed newer research has shown that some men demonstrate significant concern for their health, and that concerns over appearance, or the need to keep working may prompt men to turn to health-promoting behaviours.

Thus caring for one's health need not be deemed 'unmasculine' by men. Research on men and emotions has highlighted specific contexts and relationships where men demonstrate a greater willingness to share emotions perhaps particularly with wives and daughters, though some research also highlights emotional expression as a feature of homosocial friendships and sport as a space where men feel able to connect and express emotions with other men. Research on men's capacity to care has shown that some have strong investments in caring for partners and parents, and that caring for one's family may be central to some men's definitions of masculinity. Furthermore, men may express their care in different ways to women, such as through 'action'-oriented behaviours rather than verbal communication; thus men's care may go unrecognised. In relation to mental health, research has shown how men can 'deal' with difficulties in positive ways and reconstruct valid identities in the face of depression for example, through sport, or meditation. Finally, contemporary literature on men's help-seeking has complicated dominant discourses that suggest men are unwilling to seek help, by illustrating how they may monitor their own health and take time to come to terms with changes in identity brought about by needing help.

The chapter then reviewed the literature on men's significant early relationships, including peers and romantic relations, as well as experiences of schooling. The school system has been identified as a primary site where masculinities are 'made', and since the 1960s the literature on boys and schooling has been preoccupied with themes of boys' underachievement in relation to girls, contributing to on-going discourses of the crisis of masculinity. Boys' peer relations have traditionally been theorised as being structured by negative hegemonic codes such as homophobia, however such relations may nonetheless inform early identity construction in positive and useful ways. Furthermore, newer research emphasises the breaking down of hegemonic codes together with greater intimacy in boy's homosocial friendships. The chapter then turned to reviewing the literature on heterosexual boys' early sexual and romantic relations. The dominant view is that boys have been understood to hold most power in heterosexual sexual relationships; however such findings have most often been drawn from girls' narratives rather than boys'. Indeed some newer research based on both sexes has highlighted higher levels of communication awkwardness on the part of boys in comparison to girls.

The final section of this empirical review focused on men's relationships across the life course including friendship, fatherhood and grandfatherhood. Research on men's friendships across the life course is sparse, though it points towards decreasing ties as men age and form other important relationships, such as those with girlfriends or wives. However as men reach older age and social ties diminish, the need for friendship and connectivity with others increases. In turning to fatherhood, most literature centralises the impact on children's wellbeing rather than on men's. Nevertheless fatherhood has been found to impact positively on men in relation to identity, social relationships and lifestyle practices associated with health and wellbeing. Men have experienced cohort changes in practices of fathering brought about by wider structural changes, for example in men and women's work, contributing to discourses of the 'new involved' father. Indeed, intergenerational research has illustrated men's efforts to shift away from their own experiences of being fathered, particularly if these were negative. Finally, grandfatherhood, particularly where they are involved grandfathers, has also been associated with protective health factors, such as a reduced risk of depression and greater social participation. Becoming a grandfather may also engender men with opportunities to counter traditional hegemonies that may have structured their fathering practices. Indeed, this may be welcomed by older men who may already be experiencing tendencies towards greater sensitivity.

This study will now outline the aims and objectives of the research, before discussing the methodology.

3.5. Aims and objectives

Aim:

To examine approaches to "successful ageing" and wellbeing among a diverse, older male sample, including a comparison between UK and Australian men.

Objectives:

1. To collect diverse narratives across the life course from men who self-identify as ageing relatively successfully.
2. To investigate the ways in which men experience their masculine and other identities in relation to their subjective wellbeing.
3. To compare narratives for themes of successful ageing and wellbeing across age, race, class, culture and sexuality.
4. To develop recommendations to support men in ageing well, including promoting positive well-being.

Chapter 4

Methods

This research uses semi-structured interviews to elicit narratives with a purposive sample of 40 socially diverse male participants – 20 in England and 20 in Australia. The data has been analysed using thematic analysis (TA), based on Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2013) method. This chapter is divided into six sections. The first section explains and justifies the qualitative approach taken in the study. This begins by discussing the narrative semi-structured approach to interviewing, followed by the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the research, namely critical realism. The second section examines ethical issues. The third section details sampling and recruitment information. The fourth section discusses the issues pertaining to data collection, including pre-interview information, developing the interview guide, and the interview process. The fifth section outlines the specific analytical procedures undertaken by the current study, based on Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2013) method. The final section addresses the issue of quality assurance.

4.1. The qualitative framework

Narratives have been discussed elsewhere in the thesis; – in Chapter 2 (the theoretical review) narratives as phenomena was examined, emphasising their chronological dimension and the idea that narratives are told for a specific audience who are co-creators in the meanings they attribute to narratives. This section will explain and justify why a narrative semi-structured approach to interviewing was adopted by the current research, including some details about how the guide was constructed to elicit men's narratives. Secondly, this section discusses the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the current research, that is, critical realism.

4.1.1. Narrative semi-structured approach

Qualitative research concerns itself with how people understand their experiences in the social world and the meanings they attach to them (Pope and Mays, 2006).

Narrative interviewing is a qualitative method of data collection used to gain access to people's subjective worlds, including how they construct and are shaped by different versions of reality (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Narrative approaches are guided by the perspective that everyday social interactions are influenced by the stories we tell each other (Murray, 1997). Furthermore, exploring such stories can provide insight into the character of the experience for the storyteller, as well as their identity and the culture in which they live (Murray, 1997). For instance, within the sociology of health, health researchers are often interested in the meanings people give to experiences of health and wellbeing, including "feelings, emotions and behaviours" (Morse 2012: 20-21), and can elicit narratives to explore the relationship between health (or ill-health) and identity (e.g. Charmaz, 1991; Kleinman, 1988).

The narrative approach can capture the multiple realities of lived experiences, including those related to successful ageing, wellbeing and masculinity, such stories being the best way to access them (Bond and Corner, 2006). The narrative approach can uncover understandings of the multi-layered body and how it is shaped by broader discourses and institutions (Gare, 2001). Narrative approaches are particularly useful when there are differences in the cultural backgrounds of the researcher and participants, enabling the researcher to gain access to their point of view and personal experiences (Mattingly and Warlor, 2000). As a younger British woman interviewing older British and Australian men, the narrative approach helped me to gain access to men's worlds within which I was an 'outsider' (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

Narratives were elicited through encouraging a life story approach via the initial opening question "tell me about a significant experience from when you were younger that stands out". The intention was to encourage story-telling, allowing participants to highlight what is personally meaningful in their past. This was followed by further narrative questioning, constituting the first half of the interview guide. Subsequent topics of discussion constituted the second half of the guide, and were drawn from related literature around wellbeing and successful ageing (See appendix G for these topics). Questions were all open-ended, allowing experiences associated with wellbeing and successful ageing to be introduced as appropriate to the flow of the interview, rather than enforced as topics of discussion. This is because "the

perspective of the interviewee is best revealed in stories where the informant is using his or her own spontaneous language in the narration of events" (Jovchelovitch and Bauer, 2000:61). Questions were purposefully constructed to invite participants to tell their own story in their own words, and on their own terms (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander, 1995), and to encourage fluid conversation rather than static dialogue characterised by a question/answer format (Reissman, 2004).

As highlighted in chapter 3, men are capable of sharing and expressing their emotions in specific circumstances (Bennett, 2007; Walton et al, 2004). Thus every effort was made to create an atmosphere conducive to men sharing their emotions and experiences. This included being sensitive to men's needs and interests, maintaining an empathetic, open, and non-judgemental manner, using the language men used themselves (rather than reinterpreting through academic terms), ensuring men understood that I was interested in what they had to say, and giving men the time they needed to think before answering questions (Pini, 2005). Furthermore, specific techniques were used to encourage storytelling, including repeating the men's words back to them to invite further comment on a topic an asking men "what happened next", thus encouraging men to stay within a temporal framework.

Narrative approaches are used by health professionals, such as therapists and counsellors, who may attempt to disrupt patient narratives (Murray, 2000). However, the role of the narrative interviewer is specific, as they seek to facilitate the joint search for collaborative meaning, allowing the interviewer to develop understandings of multiple participant perspectives, thus drawing out analytical threads (Bates, 2004). As such, participants were treated as the experts informing the research with their experiences and views. As explained in Chapter 2, narratives allow us to restore some sense of order to potentially disordered events or feelings (Kleinman, 1988) and as such, may be particularly useful in eliciting positive stories, as sought by the current study, as we attempt to repair or give coherence to chaos. Narratives may also help to explore changing societal attitudes, for example towards sexuality (Plummer, 1995). Thus the narrative approach enabled a focus on men's changing attitudes, around their own masculinity.

4.1.2. Ontology and epistemology

As part of a commitment to reflexivity, it is important that researchers acknowledge their ontological and epistemological presumptions (Cutcliff, 2003). Ontological presumptions refer to the nature of reality and knowledge (Braun and Clarke, 2013). More specifically, stating an ontological position means making a decision as to whether the world exists independently of human consciousness (Danermark, 2002). Ontological positions tend to exist along a continuum, where at one end reality is entirely separate from human ways of knowing about it (known as realism), and at the other, where reality is entirely dependent on human interpretation and knowledge (known as relativism) (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Relativist approaches argue that rather than a pre-social reality, there are multiple constructed realities differing across time and context (Nightingale and Cromby, 1999). Thus knowledge is reflective of where and how it was produced (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

Epistemology refers to presumptions about how it is that we know what we know (Luker, 2008), what is possible to know (Braun and Clarke, 2013), or indeed, what is (or should be) regarded as acceptable or legitimate knowledge (Bryman, 2001). Thus, epistemology questions the relationship between the world and our way of knowing it (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Epistemology can also be realist or relativist. While a realist position assumes that access to 'the truth' can be gained through producing legitimate knowledge, a relativist position, with its focus on time and context, argues against the possibility of a single, absolute truth (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Realist positions tend to underpin positivist frameworks (Bryman, 1984). Closely aligned with empiricism, positivist methods work to collect 'uncontaminated' knowledge, free of bias (Silverman, 2000) through control variables that separate the practice of observation, the observer, and that which is observed (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Thus, through appropriate application of quantitative methods the 'truth' may be discovered. In contrast, qualitative research posits that the social world cannot be studied by the same principles as the physical world/natural sciences, that is, via biological mechanisms (Draper, 2004). Rather, social reality and human action is meaningful, and guided by "intentions, motives, beliefs, social rules and values" (Draper, 2004: 643). Qualitative research recognises that data derives from and makes sense within the context in which it was generated (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

This includes an understanding that meaning is created through a dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. Data production is therefore a co-construction that is drawn from this collaborative relationship (Reissman, 2004). This does not necessarily need to be seen as obstructing the research, but instead as a potential aid to depth of understanding (Minichiello, Sullivan, Greenwood, and Axford, 1999), or a research tool (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

It is important for research to be transparent about the assumptions that underpin it, as different sorts of knowledge are produced within different theoretical and methodological frameworks (Braun and Clarke, 2013). This study adopts a position of 'critical realism', sitting somewhere between realism and relativism. 'Critical realism' argues that there is an external world independent of human practices and behaviour, but that it crystallises over time through political and historical forces (Danermark, 2002). What does taking on a position of critical realism mean for how narratives are understood? For example, to what extent do we trust the story we are being told? Can we include a focus on what is not told when producing data? Ricoeur's (1981) distinction between a 'hermeneutics of faith' and a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' may be used to understand interpretive stances towards narratives. While a 'hermeneutics of faith' aims to restore meaning to a text, giving 'voice' to its author, a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' looks for meaning beyond the text (Ricoeur, 1981), and thus, is more interested in the performative aspect of the story (i.e. *how* a participant has constructed their narrative, and what position this has allowed them to adopt, rather than the 'whats' of their story), as well as what is left out of the text. Thus ''suspicion" is associated with critical positions. Josselson (2004: 22) explains that it may be possible to move between "giving voice and decoding" but that such a stance must "reflect on its own positionality". In the current research men's narratives have been treated primarily as informative and accurate accounts of their experiences rather than simply as performances or constructions. Thus the themes produced from men's accounts related to life 'as lived' for the participants. However the current research also offers readings outside of the text, retaining a degree of 'hermeneutic suspicion' about what is being said, and recognising that men's narratives are co-constructions performed and achieved in a specific context. This research would not necessarily expect the same accounts and the data to be reproduced were the research to be replicated, for the data produced may tell one

story among many about the data, stories that are partial and subjective (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

4.2. Ethical issues

Prior to any field work commencing ethical approval for this current study was sought from the University of Westminster on August 16th 2010 (application number 09/10/39) in addition to Deakin University in Melbourne Australia (See appendices A and B for Westminster ethics application and approval letter). In complying with ethical guidelines, informed consent forms were sent to participants' homes and via email to provide further details about the study prior to the interviews so that any questions could be answered (See Appendix C). Consent forms and payment forms were signed in person before the interview. Participants were also given a list of contacts should they feel distressed following the interview. Participants were made aware that they could stop the interview at any time without penalty, such as payment being withdrawn, and that they could withdraw their data from the study any time prior to publication. They were also assured that their data would be kept anonymous and confidential.

While the research is focused largely on themes relating to positivity, in-depth narratives inevitably demand the recollection of a diverse range of experiences and feelings, potentially including sensitive topics for participants. For this reason the ethics protocol included measures to help reduce the risk of such distress. These included:

- Maintaining sensitivity and respect for participants' narratives.
- Developing rapport with participants through on-going contact during the research.
- Confidentiality, by means of altering details of descriptions of men and their names, places and events in any recording of data or presentation of the research findings. Only the researcher and supervisors accessed the field work data.

- Participants were observed for signals of distress during the interview and the researcher enquired about distress when it was identified, though only one man became visibly distressed. A referral sheet with details for appropriate help-lines and counselling was given to the participant.
- Any questions participants had were answered before and after the interview.
- Participants were informed that they could stop the interviews at any time without question or penalty.
- Participants were contacted a few days after the interview to see if the interview had raised any concerns.
- Transcripts were returned to willing participants for checking within about a month of the interview, providing another opportunity to check in with participants.

Participants frequently reported having enjoyed the interview, either directly after the interview or subsequently through email. For instance, a couple of men confirmed that it was 'good to talk to someone' as the interview finished, while some others reported having enjoyed the process of reflection the interview encouraged later through email. Only one man became visibly distressed during the interview, in which instance he was asked if he was all right, and every effort was made to empathise with his distress, after which the interviewed continued. In this case the participant was also asked what his plans were following the interview to check whether he would have access to support from friends or family should he need it. While the participant had plans to meet a family member, I spent some time with him following the interview.

4.3. Sampling and recruitment

The following section details the maximum variation sampling approach adopted by the current study. Secondly, this section discusses how men were recruited, including details about designing a poster advert to publicise the research and recruit participants.

4.3.1. Maximum variation sampling

This study undertook a maximum variation sampling approach in order to achieve a diverse sample of Australian and British men who, according their own views, have aged successfully. Maximum variation sampling tries to achieve variation in the sample, sought in this study in relation to age, ethnicity, sexuality, social background/class (such as education, or career), partnership status, and region, that is, rural and cosmopolitan living. Achieving this diversity allows the researcher to potentially identify themes that cut across the variation, as well as heighten the possibilities of documenting uniqueness (Patton, 2002). Maximising variation in a sample helps to avoid the privileging of any one voice, and to illuminate the complexity and the varieties of the contemporary life course (Settersten and Angel, 2011). Men were recruited from different settings during four stages of the research: Firstly, 15 men in Australia, then 13 in England, then 5 in Australia, then 7 in England (see sampling table below showing the characteristics of participants).

While maximum variation was ultimately the aim, recruiting for stage 1 was very open and all men who wanted to take part were interviewed, having responded to an A4 research poster (see appendix D). The poster asked 'Are you a man?' 'Are you aged between 50-90?' 'Do you have positive feelings about ageing?' All men participating at this stage satisfied these inclusion criteria. Given this, participants from stage 1 can be seen as constituting a 'convenient' sample. During this stage snowball sampling was also adopted. Snowball sampling involves drawing on networks or individuals who may be able to help locate the required cases or participants (Patton, 2002). Snowball sampling can be used to gain a sample of convenience, as well as more directly to achieve variation in the sample. Snowball sampling was aided by external supervisors Dr Alex Broom from Queensland University in Brisbane, and Dr Tess Knight from Deakin University in Melbourne, who both publicised the research within their networks.

For stage 2, sampling was more selective to increase sample variation. Whilst the initial 'open' stage achieved diversity in terms of class, age, and region, it lacked ethnic and sexual variation. Snowball sampling was again employed, but specifically to achieve greater ethnic and sexual variation in the sample. Personal networks such

as friends and family members helped to recruit further participants by publicising the research poster to potential interviewees. However, achieving ethnic variation in Australia was particularly difficult, and consequently the Australian sample is predominantly Anglo-Australian. The option of approaching aboriginal groups was explored but given the potentially lengthy ethical procedures involved (up to 2 years), this approach was discounted. Greater sexual variation was successfully achieved at this stage, discussed further in the following section on recruitment. Stages 3 and 4 called for snowball sampling again, firstly to bring a few more rural men to the research, achieving greater variety in respect to region. Dr Tess Knight helped to locate two rural men living in rural areas outside of Melbourne. Stage 4 in the UK sought to increase sexual variation specifically, and achieved this through personal and professional networks.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the sample of 40 men

Age	Ethnicity	Occupation (previous if retired/ unemployed)	Work Status	Partnership status	Sexuality
50-60 **10**	White British **15**	Education **5**	Unemployed **1**	Single **8**	Heterosexual **34**
60-70 **8**	White Australian **12**	Tradesmen **10**	Employed **12**	Partnered **7**	Homosexual **5**
70-80 **14**	European/mixed Australian **8**	Health-care **4**	Retired **27**	Married/CP **21**	Bisexual **1**
80-90 **8**	Black British **3**	Business **7**		Widowed **4**	
	Mixed British **1**	Civil service **5**			
	Asian British **1**	Other **9**			

4.3.2. Recruitment

Forty older men were recruited, split equally between Australia and England. This reflects the minimum number of participants deemed necessary to explore a diverse range of experiences, as pre-set by the supervisory team. However, rather than pre-determining the sample size, the guiding principle should be the concept of saturation (Mason, 2010). Saturation is defined as "data adequacy" and is operationalised as collecting data until no new information is gathered (Morse, 1995). Interviewing further men may have been useful to the research, particularly around more marginal topics of interest less supported by data, but this was the maximum number possible within the time and financial resources available. It is unlikely saturation was reached in relation to every aspect of the results, however, the final set of interview transcripts did not produce any significant new codes, suggesting the main themes resulting from the study had been satisfactorily explored within the 40 interviews and saturation for these themes had been achieved.

Gaining access to the research field involved identifying and contacting appropriate organisations within which to publicise the research, via the research poster (see appendix E for the list of organisations that agreed to take part). The sites in which posters were advertised in Britain, such as community centres, were chosen in an effort to reach reasonably active men engaged with society, as this has been well-established as a component of successful ageing (e.g. Rowe and Khan, 1998). While some of the sites chosen may have privileged the physically and mentally able, they did not act to exclude disabled men. To open up the potential of recruiting participants with disabilities the organisation Access to Art was included; a charity that helps transport disabled adults to and from art galleries and exhibitions. While Access to Art did not result in recruiting any participants, the sample did include participants with physical disabilities. Organisations were contacted either by email or telephone and were forwarded details about the research. Regarding the research poster, it was designed to appeal to men within the required age range (50-90) who had positive feelings about ageing. This was achieved through asking direct questions on the poster, including, "Are you a man aged between 50-90?" "Do you have positive feelings about ageing?" Additionally, we offered $40 in Australia and £20 in the UK to help compensate for any costs incurred by the participants as a

result of taking part in the research. While not all men necessarily incurred costs, the token cash payment also acted as a 'thank you' for men's involvement. To ensure the poster was attractive and inviting we employed a professional graphic designer to help with the overall design.

In stage 1 of recruitment the research posters were advertised within the Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA). AMSA is a support network across Australia, where (mainly older) men come together in shed type spaces, to carryout meaningful occupation, such as woodwork, and to socialise with one another. In stage 2 in Britain the research poster (adapted to suit the different geographical location such as contact details and payment details) was advertised in a range of areas in Britain, including a British branch of the Men's Shed organisation, and community and adult education centres with specific activities and programmes for older men. This included one specifically for Somali men to gain greater ethnic diversity. Finally, the research poster was advertised again in Australia during stage 3, within a networking group for older gay men called 'Vintage Men', enabling the inclusion of more gay men within the sample.

4.4. Pre-interview information: the interview guide, and data collection

This section details pre-interview information, including how men were introduced to the research, and how rapport was built prior to the interview. It also discusses how the development of the interview guide and the data collection.

4.4.1. Pre-interview information

Prior to inviting men to undertake interview an information sheet was developed about the research to give men an idea of the purpose of the study, what to expect when being interviewed, and what would happen to their stories after the interview (appendix F). It included making men aware of issues of confidentiality and anonymity (i.e. that their names and identifying details would be removed from the transcripts). This also included giving men the relevant contact details in case they had any questions prior to the interview, or complaints after the interview. The

information sheet was designed to be readable, without using complicated or academic language. Men received this information sheet and a consent form by either post or email after expressing their initial interest in taking part in the research. Slightly less than half the men phoned to express interest, allowing for the opportunity to develop rapport prior to the interview taking place. This was achieved through a friendly discussion about the research aimed at putting men at ease and answering any questions they had. Other men chose to email, most often leaving their contact details so I could phone them to discuss the interview and answer any questions. Interviews were either arranged over the phone (i.e. when and where to meet) or subsequently by email.

4.4.2. Developing the interview guide

The interview guide developed across three distinct phases. Firstly, the original interview guide was constructed under the guidance of supervisors Damien Ridge and Tina Cartwright and a pilot interview was conducted to test out the guide (see appendix G for this version of the guide). Although questions around specific topics related to the research were included in the guide, these were only drawn upon if such themes were not discussed in the narrative elicitation phase of the interview. This approach allowed for the production of data that put centre stage the participants' experience, rather than pre-formulated assumptions on the part of the researcher. For example, although no explicit or direct questions were asked about masculinity or 'being a man' as part of the interview guide, men's relationship to masculine identity emerged as strong feature of their narratives. Men reflected on their relationship to masculinity, both implicitly and explicitly, in the process of reflecting on their lives. The interview was flexible and open to the emergence of new themes. The pilot interview was deemed reasonably successful, so the guide was only minimally modified before undertaking the first set of interviews in Australia. One change that came about as a result of the pilot interview was the need to include the topic of death, as this was discussed by the interviewee as something significant. Thus, the topic of death was added to the guide and approached openly with participants by asking; "How do you feel about death?"

This second phase of interviews brought about the most significant revisions to the interview guide (see appendix H for these modifications constituting the final draft of the guide). Problems that became apparent during the interviews included confusing questions for some men due to poor wording and a lack of clarity. For instance, the question "tell me about some of the journeys you've been on with family and friends" was misunderstood by some participants, and taken literally in the sense of geographical travel, so was consequently simplified to read "Tell me about friends? Tell me about family?" Furthermore, the interviews highlighted which questions produced more extensive and richer data, so original questions around how men understood wellbeing were re-ordered to prioritise those that worked better. Another issue that emerged after the interviews in a supervisory meeting was the necessity to clarify the two separate stages of the interview, the initial narrative, and subsequent topics of interest. While the opening question remained the same, further narrative questions such as "Tell me about getting older" were moved further down the guide to help achieve this clarification. Also, as a result of undertaking group analysis of one transcript at a supervisory meeting, it was discussed how further probing might facilitate greater elaboration to increase depth in the data. This resulted in greater emphasis being placed on repeating interviewees words back to them and asking "tell me more about that" more often. Lastly, a new question relating to advice for other men was included ("Tell me about any advice you might have for other men"). This was deemed important as data around this topic may be valuable in helping to construct recommendations to help support men to age well.

4.4.3. Data collection: interviews

It has been argued that the interview site can have far-reaching implications and can construct the power and positionality of participants in relation to issues discussed in the interview or the interactions between interviewer and participant (Elwood and Martin, 2000). Thus participants were encouraged to choose the interview time and location to instil a sense of ease. Interviews therefore took place wherever was most convenient and comfortable for participants, thereby allowing men to feel like 'themselves' as much as possible without compromising the quality of the interview. In Australia, men most often suggested carrying out the interview in their homes (8

scattered around Sydney and Melbourne). Some were interviewed at the site of community groups they belonged to, namely the Australian Men's Shed Association (AMSA) in Sydney (2) and Altona, just outside Melbourne (3). Men were also interviewed at Deakin University in Melbourne (1) and Geelong (2), at the University of Sydney (2), at a participant's workplace (1), and finally, 1 participant was interviewed in a friend's home. In England participants were again most often interviewed in their homes in London (9), or in quiet cafés near to the University of Westminster (UoW) (5). 1 man was interviewed at UoW itself, 2 at the Men's Shed Association in Eltham, London, 1 at the site of a voluntary workplace, 1 participant requested to be interviewed in a park, and again, 1 participant was interviewed at a friend's home. Originally it had been intended that more men would be interviewed at UoW (if they preferred this to their homes), however given the very formal atmosphere of the rooms available, most men were interviewed in a nearby café, providing a more relaxed and comfortable atmosphere that was more conducive to informal and personal conversation. The café had a basement where different areas were sectioned off, ensuring privacy for the participants.

Before the interview began, and after a brief (generally) introductory conversation, participants read and signed the consent form, a payment form, and were given their reimbursement for the interview, as well as the list of places to contact if they felt distressed or upset after the interview, adapted for the different geographical locations (UK and Australia). A pre-interview procedure was undertaken in which all participants were reminded that their privacy would be protected, to take their time to respond to questions, and of their right to refuse to answer anything they didn't want to discuss. Participants were also asked if they had any questions before the interview started. Interviews were recorded, except for one who was not comfortable with this and so detailed notes were taken in this instance. Interviews varied in length but normally lasted between 1-2 hrs. Two interviews were substantially longer than this due to the detail in which those participants went. Additionally, one participant was much slower in his explanations, so took a little longer than others to tell his story. I returned to his house a second time to complete the second half of the interview, as we could not fit his story into the 2 hr slot provided. In total his interview lasted 3hrs, 38 mins. On most occasions the interview concluded with a brief

conversation thanking the participant and asking whether or not he wanted a copy of his transcript.

4.5. Thematic analysis

This section details the analytical procedures undertaken by the research in line with Braun and Clarke's (2006; 2012; 2013) approach to thematic analysis (TA). TA was originally developed in the 1970s (Merton, 1975), but did not become a 'named' or systematic approach with clearly outlined steps for the social sciences until Braun and Clarke's (2006) paper 'Using thematic analysis in psychology' (Braun and Clarke, 2013). Braun and Clarke (2006: 6) define TA as "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data". This is not unlike other major analytic traditions, such as interpretive phenomenological analysis, grounded theory and modified constant comparison that search for themes or patterns across data to account for it in meaningful and complex ways (Braun and Clarke, 2006). TA shares a lot of similarities with other analytical qualitative approaches particularly in the early stages of the process as researchers familiarise themselves with their data and begin to generate codes. Grounded theory (GT), interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA), and discourse analysis (DA), all seek to describe patterns across a data set (Braun and Clarke, 2006), though the way they go about it entails different procedures (for a detailed outline comparing these approaches see Braun and Clarke, 2013).

In highlighting why TA was chosen as most appropriate method for analysing participants' narratives, it is necessary to briefly contrast with alternative methodological approaches. For instance, IPA (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009) adopts an idiographic approach using small samples to focus on individual experiences as a phenomenom, with an emphasis on psychological rather than social interpretations of data (e.g. Wyer, Earll, Joseph and Harrison, 2001). TA, on the other hand, is theoretically flexible and need not be tied to any particular epistemological or ontological framework or theoretical approach. Given this, TA can be used diversely as a method of analysis, rather than being a methodology. TA can be realist, describing the 'reality' of participants' meanings, 'giving voice' to their

stories, or it can be relativist/constructionist, examining how discourses shape participants' versions of 'reality') (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Furthermore, TA can sit in between realist/relativist approaches, to occupy a position of critical realism, as has been adopted by the current study. Thus, TA can be used to explore individual experiences as personally meaningful for participants while recognising how these experiences may be shaped by a broader social context.

While GT (Glaser and Strauss, 2009) could have been an appropriate method of analysis for the current study, in that, unlike IPA it emphasises sociological concerns and a focus on social structure, it is geared towards theory building, which was not the focus for this current research. Furthermore, it is highly demanding and time consuming, thus TA is a much more manageable approach for first time researchers (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Finally, NA was not adopted by the current study because unlike TA, stories cannot be fractured for different analytic purposes, rather the story must be kept "intact" for analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2013).

TA has grown in popularity and recognition and is used to research a wide range of topics (Braun and Clarke, 2013). It has been used to explore and understand women's experiences of anorexia (Ross and Greene, 2011); playing video games (Mclean and Griffiths, 2013), understanding young people's experiences of counselling in UK secondary schools (Lynass, Pykhtina and Cooper, 2011); and men's experiences, of infertility (Malik and Coulson (2008). TA has also been used to compare gender differences and similarities in men and women's experiences in relation to breast and prostate cancer (Gooden and Winefield, 2007).

Braun and Clarke (2006) developed a six-phase process or 'recipe' (2006: 5) for TA, outlined as follows: 1. Becoming familiar with the data, 2. Generating initial codes, 3. Searching for themes, 4. Reviewing themes, 5. Defining and naming themes, 6. Finalising analysis and writing up the report. While the above steps may give the impression of a linear process, like other analytical approaches such as grounded theory, the initial stages of thematic analysis is a cyclical process where the researcher continually reflects on and migrates between the related literature, data collection and coding, linking codes and rethinking and reshaping the coding system (Emslie et al., 2006).

The analytic process is described in four sections below: 1. Becoming familiar with the data and generating codes, 2. Searching for themes, 3. Reviewing themes, 4. Finalising themes and writing up.

4.5.1. Becoming familiar with the data and generating codes

Interviews were transcribed professionally by an outside agency (apart from the pilot interview which was transcribed by myself), returned with all identifying details (names of places and people) removed for the purposes of anonymity. Transcripts were returned by email and were password protected. Some transcripts included text that had been italicised, signalling lack of clarity or audibility (due to accent or outside noise), in which case these transcripts were checked against the original audio recordings. All participants were encouraged to check the transcript, received either by post or email for checking following transcription; however, only 8 participants agreed to do this. None of the men asked for anything to be altered in their transcripts.

Analysis of the data begins after (or even during) the first interview, as the interviewer reflects on what is said. However a more structured approach to analysis began after stage 1 of the interviews was complete, by reading through all the interviews transcribed by that point (the first 15 from Australia) to get an overall 'feel' for men's narratives as a collective set. Rather than reading men's narratives passively, analytical and critical readings were undertaken by asking early questions of the data, for instance, "How are men making sense of their experiences?" and "How do they make sense of the same topic differently?" This helped to start thinking about what the data might mean rather than just absorbing the semantic understandings of men's words. Following the initial readings, comprehensive, line by line coding was carried out on this first batch of transcripts. This was important given the exploratory and broad nature of the research question: how do men make sense of their identities in relation to positive wellbeing? For Braun and Clarke (2013: 207) a code "is a word or brief phrase that captures the essence of why you think a particular bit of data may be useful". Thus coding meant highlighting key phrases

used by participants (such as 'taking action', 'going with the flow'), and noting down potential interpretations in the margins of the transcripts, as well as descriptive labels, for instance, to capture an important stage or relationship in men's lives, such as 'childhood' or 'homosocial relations'. The interpretations written in the margins of the transcripts did not all necessarily translate into codes; rather they formed the basis of creating and finalising codes. Coding was primarily 'data driven' (Braun and Clarke, 2006) at this stage, in that codes were grounded in the data, unguided by research questions or wider theoretical frameworks. This was important given the topic under research is exploratory, so should not be limited by prior research but open to all conceptual possibilities. However the code 'hegemonic masculinity' was included early on to label instances where men talked about masculine values or ideals, demanding prior conceptual and theoretical knowledge of Connell's (1995) work on masculinities. Thus the current research encouraged themes to emerge inductively, or 'bottom up' (Erickson, 2004), though it has also been guided by theories relating to 'multiple masculinities', such as 'hegemonic masculinity' (Connell, 1995).

As interviews continued, further transcripts from stages 2 and 3 were then compared to look for similar interpretations running through them. Additionally, new codes were developed and some closely related codes were collapsed to avoid creating too many codes, for instance, 'collectivity' and 'community'. Further codes were merged, such as 'fatherhood' and 'male friendship', which became 'homosocial relations', thereby encapsulating all relations (other than sexual) between men. Codes were then clustered in order to develop an initial coding system of around 80 codes. Difficulties were experienced in developing broad enough codes that accounted for all participants' experiences. Indeed, codes were being 'salami sliced', encompassing only 'half' experiences. For instance, an initial code 'homophobia' was later changed to 'sexuality views' to encompass all of men's views on sexuality. Thus codes were broadened out to allow for the full range of experiences and were then reflected in most data items. Wider codes such as 'childhood', 'adolescence' and further life stages were gradually included, allowing men's experiences to be categorised within a life course structure. Initially codes also favoured more psychological rather than sociological interpretations. Further effort was therefore made to employ a 'sociological imagination' (Mills, 1959) in thinking about the codes,

in other words to try to understand some of the social processes at work underneath men's discussions. This was achieved through asking further questions of the data (i.e. how are men *positioning* themselves in relation to topics of interest, such as coping, within their narratives).

Coding data helps to organise it, enabling the identification and development of patterns or themes within the data. For Boyatzis (1998: vii), a theme is "a pattern in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomena". This is similarly described by Joffe (2012: 209) who argues themes are "patterns of explicit and implicit content". When the coding system was deemed sound by the supervisory team, having broadened out codes and sought more sociological interpretations, codes were entered into the software program Nvivo. Organising data through Nvivo allowed the comparison of data emerging from the same codes, and to help link different codes that shared the same data. This helped to tease out some generalities in order to tell a bigger story, connecting the individual to the social (Luker, 2006). Codes could consist of single sentences or paragraphs, and multiple codes could be applied to the same set of text. At this point uncoded transcripts from remaining interviews were used to 'test' the coding system to see if it 'fitted' all of the interviews, or whether new codes could be generated. No major new codes were included at this stage.

4.5.2. Searching for themes: creating an 'abstract of codes'

Following the finalising of the coding system an 'abstract of codes' was written. The 'abstract of codes' aimed to explore what was 'going on' in the codes by exploring the relationships between them, allowing patterns in the data to begin forming inductively. For example, the relationship between 'coping' and 'ageing' was explored, bringing together all the men's excerpts relating to managing difficulties as they aged. Not all 80 codes were interrogated in this way to begin with; rather, larger codes and those deemed of integral importance to the research (i.e. ageing, coping, hegemonic masculinity) were explored. At this point deductive analysis began, whereby data driven codes go beyond the 'surface' layer of the data and are explored in line with some of the major questions of interest to the research (Braun

and Clarke, 2006). These included "how do men cope with struggle?" "How do men make sense of successful ageing?" In the process of interrogating codes in this way the complexity of relationships between codes, for example between ageing and coping, became more apparent. In relation to coping it quickly became apparent from the overlap between coping and different life stages that strong coping patterns emerged in relation to 'childhood', 'adulthood' and 'older age', thus highlighting ways in which coping was directly related to the life course. The abstract of codes and strong connections between codes thus informed the development and direction of chapter titles and further exploration of themes. For instance, bringing together 'ageing' and 'coping' helped to illuminate the importance of the code 'control' (given men struggled with the loss of control as they aged). Thus 'control' developed into an over-arching theme in relation to men's experiences of ageing and coping, and sub-themes followed, including 'taking action' and 'going with the flow' to describe how men positioned themselves in relation to control. Indeed, in this instance the sub-themes 'taking action' and 'going with the flow' reflected words literally used by men themselves.

4.5.3. Reviewing themes

Some themes emerged as too narrow, telling 'half-stories', as they only explored partial experiences. For example, initially it was clear that fatherhood was significant to men, in particular men's relationships with their daughters stood out, but this was not explored in light of the experience of fathering sons, and therefore lacked depth. Similarly, men's experiences with their own fathers were not explored fully at first, with negative experiences and themes of absence dominating. Upon closer inspection however, some men did speak positively about their fathers. In fact, looking more closely at positive experiences or descriptions of fathers led to a more nuanced understanding of the men's relationships with their fathers, which went beyond the absence or lack of closeness that was dominant in men's descriptions which also commonly centred around rationalising the behaviour of father's (i.e. lack of support) and praising them. Thus, 'half-stories' were corrected by identifying what needed to be explored by way of comparison (i.e. men's experiences of having daughters *and* sons, positive descriptions and experiences with fathers as well as more negative stories), thus adding depth to and a fuller picture of men's

relationships and experiences. Themes also emerged as too narrow due to grouping together men's experiences in an attempt to illustrate commonalities between men, rather than recognising and reporting the full range of experiences, highlighting the diversity in men's stories and experiences. Again, this was corrected by reviewing each theme and the related data, and making sure that the full scope of men's experiences were included in each theme, including both majority and minority experiences. Going through this process of reviewing themes contributed to the search for 'negative cases', that is identifying cases that did not fit with the developing model and reporting (discussed further in section 4.6.2 on quality assurance).

It also emerged that some themes were not as important as initially thought and lacked data to support them. For example, men's shifts towards caring for partners in older age (and the associated shifts in identity) were at first thought to be significant, but upon reviewing the data, very few men had actually experienced caring for their wives or partners. Furthermore, it was initially felt that men's rejection of religion in adolescence marked an important transition concerning agency, yet this neglected the experiences of men who embraced religion. Furthermore, when all the transcripts were scrutinised it became more apparent that, for the most part, early sexual relations marked more significant moments for men during adolescence than their relationships with religion. In these cases effort was made to review initial themes, 'test out' all of the transcripts against themes, and to look for 'negative cases' (Patton, 2002: 554) to see what they offered by way of widening, problematising and developing initial themes. This involved re-reading the entire dataset, identifying cases that did not fit the pattern, then acting to develop and further understandings around the pattern (Patton, 2002). Furthermore, re-reading the whole dataset at this stage allowed all themes to be reviewed to see whether they 'worked' and secondly enabled the coding of additional data within themes that had been missed within earlier coding stages (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

In the process of reviewing the whole data set some themes were wholly adapted (as in the example given concerning religion), and in others were simply in need of refinement so as to allow for all participants' experiences. For example, the category

of men's early sexual and romantic relations was refined in two ways: firstly men's narratives were clarified as being commonly structured in relation to issues of access, opportunity and resources and secondly, more positive experiences were included, even though men tended not to discuss these in as much detail as the challenges of early sexual and romantic relations, which seemed more significant for men. Analysis of men's experiences of 'parting' from a wife or partner was also reshaped and reconsidered as something more significant, as a strong pattern was identified, namely that men took time to assimilate the difficulties involved with relationship break-ups and to move towards recovery. As part of this refinement the relationship between themes and sub-themes was clarified. It should be noted that while it was important for themes to be supported by sufficient data, themes were not always ordered into a hierarchy by prevalence, as more important than this are themes relating to the major questions of the research.

4.5.4. Finalising themes and writing up

Themes could only be finalised once a satisfactory 'thematic map' (Braun and Clarke, 2006) of the data had been achieved. This involved considering all the themes individually, and in relation to one another, as well as finalising all sub-themes. One theme in particular raised concerns - 'insider traits'. These were used to describe men who were perceived as performing or trying to attain hegemonic masculinity, in contrast to 'outsiders' who tended to define themselves as not 'fitting in' with other men and resisted certain hegemonic ideals. However, 'traits' gave the impression of something static, aligning more with biological accounts of masculinity rather than constructionist. Furthermore, upon closer inspection of the data, very few men presented themselves as 'insiders' in any sort of coherent way, and 'insider' and 'outsider' narratives appeared to create a false dichotomy. Thus, the data was better presented by focusing more on the different ways men expressed 'outsider' identities in their narratives, as the variation within this theme had been overlooked. The theme 'outsiders' also consisted of 'loners' and those who identified as 'different'. Identifying this variation allowed for more nuanced understandings of the links between identity and wellbeing to develop, as being a 'loner' or 'different' was conceptualised more negatively for men than being an 'outsider', and thus carried

less positive implications for wellbeing. Consequently, 'insider narratives', rather than being instances where men had achieved or were trying to attain hegemonic masculinity, were actually identified as stories about valuing male friendship and successfully navigating homosocial contexts. Thus, experiences of valuing male friendship were included in the chapter to create greater depth.

Furthermore, hegemonic masculinity (as it was performed by men) was being presented in the results over-simplistically as negative. For example, men's negative experiences of risk were being highlighted more than men's positive experiences of competition and achievement. Thus hegemonic masculinity as it related to men's experiences was reviewed, and men's positive experiences of hegemony were further illustrated in the data, such as men's emotional expression when fathering daughters. In this way a fuller picture of men's relationship to hegemony and the implications for wellbeing and successful ageing was achieved. Writing up the research has involved excluding data that didn't substantially add to a theme and reshaping themes to strengthen the plausibility of arguments. This included recognition of instances where further diversity of experiences still needed inclusion, as well as instances where findings have been generalised, or presented as over-arching rather than idiosyncratic (For example the idea that men experienced women as openly available to talk to).

Writing up the research also involved ensuring that interpretations of the data were consistent with the theoretical framework, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Indeed, final feedback from the supervisory team suggested narratives were being presented too much as 'real' events in participants lives, at the expense of treating narratives as performative, that is as positions men were adopting in the research. This research has adopted a critical realist position, aiming to include a 'hermeneutics of suspicion' (Josselson, 2004), consequently, the way narratives were largely being described (as actual events) was reframed to illustrate that narratives were performative in nature. Specifically, the way narratives were being presented tended to lack explicit illustration that men's stories of the past were narratives men were adopting to age successfully, and were specific to an older cohort. As such, writing up has involved making sure the results suggested answers to the main question and focus of thesis – how men *position themselves* as *ageing*

successfully. A significant part of writing up includes constructing an analytic narrative that makes an argument in relation to the researcher question/s (Braun and Clarke, 2006). While the results had brought together men's' experiences in relation to identity and ageing, the implications for wellbeing and successful ageing had not been made explicit. Thus, the implications for successful ageing were woven into the results chapters and brought together in the discussion chapter.

Finally, writing up has involved making connections between different elements of men's narratives to understand certain experiences as cumulative, and thus to tell a bigger story. For example, men's relationships with their emotions emerged at different times in the results, such as in childhood when many men described difficulties in being able to express how they felt, and again in discussions of fatherhood when some men described positive experiences of shifting towards greater emotional expression. Hence, men's journeys with their emotions were brought together in the discussion chapter.

4.6. Quality assurance

Criteria for assessing the quality of social research are dependent upon the nature of the research undertaken, and must be generated by the theoretical and methodological underpinnings of the research. Different research paradigms and methodological practices produce different languages and concepts through which discussions and methods of quality assurance are shaped, such as 'validity' and 'reliability' (Seale. 2004), or 'credibility' (Patton, 2002). Discussions of validity and reliability are most often associated with quantitative research in the positivist tradition, and linked to a desire for replicability and empirical representation (Seale, 2004). This research is critical realist, largely opposing the positivist tradition through the view that truth is always partial and that the trustworthiness of qualitative research is negotiable and open ended, so it is not a matter of 'proving' quality so much as recognising multiple realities and providing a credible analysis (Seale, 2004). Credibility, as opposed to validity, is emphasised in qualitative research as linguistically lending itself to interpretivist approaches to research, reflecting different conceptions about the status of reality and knowledge produced by research (Seale,

2004). Credibility refers to "the adequacy of the links between claims and evidence within the report" (Seale, 2004:79). In order to strengthen the quality of this current research a number of methods have been employed that remain compatible with the theoretical and methodological frameworks of this research, including establishing rapport with participants, ongoing evaluation of the development of research by the supervisory team, and 'member checks'. These methods will be discussed briefly. First however, I will discuss another method of quality assurance, involving reflecting on my own subjectivity and role as researcher to provide insight into ways in which I may have influenced the results.

4.6.1. Reflexivity and the researcher

A significant part of quality assurance for qualitative research involves recognising that the researcher's subjectivity (their views and frameworks for making sense of the world), and personal and social identity (such as gender, class, or nationality influences the data throughout the research process (Silverman, 2000). As a result, qualitative researchers share a commitment to reflexivity, involving critical reflection on the research process, the knowledge we produce, and on one's own role as researcher (Finlay, 2002), including the theoretical and methodological choices we make (Cutcliff, 2003). Wilkinson (1988) distinguishes between two forms of reflexivity – functional and personal. Functional reflexivity involves looking at how the research tools and methodology may have influenced the research, while personal reflexivity involves critically reflecting on how the researcher shapes the research, making their role in the production of data transparent. Here I will address personal reflexivity by outlining a brief biography, including my social, historical, and cultural position, my experiences, motivations, and achievements, allowing the reader to make their own evaluations of the thesis in light of this reflective account. This will be followed by drawing some links between my subjectivity and identity to highlight ways in which this may have influenced the research process and data generated. Issues pertaining to functional reflexivity will be discussed in Chapter 9 as part of critically reflecting on the thesis.

I grew up in a middle class environment and background to baby-boomer parents, self-taught intellectuals, who ran and owned an alternative bookshop called 'Compendium' in Camden Town, London, from the late 1960s. My childhood was relatively materially and culturally privileged, yet it lacked any real sense of rules, boundaries or discipline, and hence, lacked strong feelings of security. I lived with my mother and brother, seeing my father less often, though I tended to identify with him over and above my mother. My father's intellectualism led to a desire for knowledge, though my interest in books did not really develop until I no longer had them at my fingertips, after the bookshop closed in 2000, when I was aged 18. It was at this time I left school, having 'underachieved' academically, with just 2 A 'levels to show for an expensive private education. I worked in various retail jobs for a year, lacking in direction, before deciding to embark upon a University degree.

I began attending Westminster University, studying for a degree Women's Studies and Psychology, before promptly changing to Sociology and Women's Studies. Studying Sociology was like opening a window to a new world, where I was provided with a framework to understand the world, helping me to personally make sense of my own social position and biography in positive ways. Three years later I graduated and began teaching at Westminster University on the Sociology BA course I had completed the previous academic year. At the same time as beginning a career in teaching, I undertook an MSc in Gender at the London School of Economics and became increasingly interested and involved in different forms of feminist activism, leading to some significant and long lasting friendships.

I became aware of the opportunity to undertake the PhD 5 years ago from a Westminster colleague, Dr Celia Jenkins, who encouraged me to apply. It seemed to bring together some of my interests in gender and masculinities, and offered the opportunity to move beyond the comfortable position of teaching the same modules each year on the Sociology BA course. I came into the PhD with no experience of qualitative interviewing, or any background in ageing research, yet perhaps also with a sense of over-confidence of how I would manage the process! I have found the research process itself incredibly challenging. Undertaking and writing up this PhD has been an uncomfortable, and at times, very difficult process of growth and reflection, requiring learning new skills and confronting how little related knowledge

and experience I had, which has been a humbling experience. It has meant having to develop as an academic and a researcher – a process to which I have been resistant at times.

Turning to drawing some links between my identity and the ways in which this may have shaped the results, it is important to reflect on the various ways the positions of power I occupy, such as my gender, age, and class, may have 'met' with men's identities to shape the interview relationship and results. Researchers bring 'cultural baggage' to the interview situation, including personal history and identity in ways that inevitably influence the interactional process and outcomes of research (Arendell, 1997). It is also important to consider whether these various power dynamics at work between me and my participants were conducive to fluid, emotional honest dialogue, and how they may have differed across the interviews. Furthermore, there is the consideration of whether there were aspects of the researcher/participant relationship that over-rode or reversed others such as the topics of conversation, or 'researcher expertise' (versus lay participant understandings) (Arendell, 1997). Given there is a limited space within which to discuss these issues, I will focus on the most significant aspects that may have hindered, or indeed, produced more credible results, rather than trying to discuss every aspect that could have shaped the interviews.

Firstly, as a younger woman interviewing older men about their experiences of ageing (and wellbeing), I am a true 'outsider' - I am not male, nor do I yet (as a 32 year-old woman) have the life experience to understand personally the depths of meaning of reflecting on 50 or more years, and to speak from this perspective. This is compounded further in the case of interviewing Australian participants, given I am British. Not being part of either of these categories could on the one hand provide a helpful distance to analyse critically the participants' experiences, and on the other, it could lessen my understandings the topic under study. On the positive side my identity as a young woman interviewing older men may have at times generated more credible results, as this researcher presentation may have allowed men the opportunity to openly discuss vulnerable or potentially feminising experiences or practices, away from the policing of other men (Sloan et al., 2009). Furthermore, as women have traditionally played the role of 'nurturer' or 'carer' in men's lives,

enabling them to confront issues around wellbeing, this may have helped to facilitate men's talk around such issues during the interviews (Sloan et al., 2009). As a younger woman interviewing older men, a paternalistic dynamic may have been 'at work' in some of the interviews, in that men may have related to me like a daughter, and I may have at times related to men like a father, given the personal and emotional issues discussed. Both of these factors may have created opportunities for men to relax, and discuss vulnerable experiences more openly. Indeed, research has suggested men are more likely to discuss their emotions with girlfriends (Courtney, 2000), or daughters (Bennett, 2007), and less with other men.

At the same time however, this dynamic – being potentially viewed in more personal terms than professional - may have limited how much I could probe into participants' lives, as there were occasions where men gave off signals of wanting to move on from certain topics by trying to draw them to a close, such as around sexual history. Furthermore, any benefits may have been countered by the potential pressure men may have felt to modify their beliefs and stories in the presence of a younger woman, possibly adopting more egalitarian, and less traditionally masculine narratives than had the interviewer been male and older. Additionally, not sharing the same gender, age, class, ethnicity, or cultural background as the participants, may have at times created distance, misunderstandings, and communication barriers, or simply a less relatable dynamic for some men to feel comfortable about sharing their stories. To minimise any barriers every effort was made to use colloquial language rather than academic language, and to be friendly and open.

While Western society arguably remains stratified by gender in ways that still place power with men, this power is less accessible to older men in many domains, thus this could in some ways be seen as 'levelling out' any power imbalances. In addition to gender and age in relation to power were issues of knowledge that were present in the interviews, in that, at times participants positioned me as more knowledgeable than themselves about the topic of research, or even about their own behaviours. For instance, men sometimes asked me directly for insights into their actions, in a similar way to which one may approach a counsellor. However, more frequently men understood that they were the experts in the research by informing me of their views, thus placing the power back with men themselves.

4.6.2. Further methods of quality assurance

As well as a commitment to reflexivity, some further methods of quality assurance have been adopted. Firstly, establishing rapport with participants and encouraging free expression of feelings and experiences without fear of judgment helps to gain the interviewees trust (Fontana and Frey, 2000), and contributes to frank and open discussion (Goudy and Potter, 1975), thus adding to the depth of data production. This has been of high priority in this research, and was achieved through on-going communication with participants, both before and after the interview. Furthermore, rapport was achieved through the interview itself by creating an atmosphere sensitive to men's needs and interests (Pini, 2005). Secondly, quality assurance has been sought through on-going evaluation of the research's development by the supervisory team, including how data production has developed. An early example of this included a group analysis session with Damien Ridge and Tina Cartwright of one of the interview transcripts, and a group discussion of the coding system where Alex Broom was also present, allowing for multiple perspectives to emerge rather than a single 'truth' or interpretation (Patton, 2002). Additionally, a multiplicity of voices has been achieved through seeking diversity in the sample, discouraging the domination of any one experience. Further evaluation by the supervisory team has included extensive discussion on thematic development and feedback on on-going drafts of thesis chapters.

Thirdly, 'member checks' have also been in operation. This involves sending transcripts to willing interviewees so they can check them and indicate any feelings they may have on how they have been represented, and/or modifications required (Lincoln and Guba in Seale, 2004: 78). However, as already noted, very few men expressed interest in this, possibly suggesting that I did not adequately impress upon men the significance of their feedback for the purposes of quality assurance.

Finally, the search for and analysis of 'negative cases' (Patton, 2002: 554) was included as part of the recruitment and analysis. This involves having already identified patterns in the research then considering instances and cases that do not fit the pattern, acting to develop and further understandings around the pattern (Patton, 2002), as discussed in section 4.5.3 on reviewing themes

Chapter 5

Qualitative analysis and results (1)

Narratives of struggle and coping

This chapter examines men's narratives of struggle and ways of coping across the life course. The first section explores struggle. Themes pertaining to struggle could be grouped into four main categories: 1. Relations with fathers; 2. Sexual and romantic relations; 3. Sick leave, unemployment, and retirement; and 4. Declining physical functioning. The second section looks at coping. Themes relating to coping fell into five categories: 1. Indirect/passive coping in childhood; 2. 'Taking action' in adulthood; 3. 'Thinking positively'; 4. 'Going with the flow'; and 5. Maintaining action in older age. These categories are explored below sequentially, illustrated with excerpts from men's interviews.

5.1. Narratives of struggle

As stated narratives of struggle fell into various categories. Difficulties in relations with fathers and sexual and romantic relations pertained to men's earlier years. Men frequently described emotionally distant relations with fathers, lacking in physical affection or intimacy. Men rarely discussed how being distant from their fathers made them feel, and tended to find ways to account for their father's behaviours rather than criticise them. Conversely some men described closer relations with their fathers. Early sexual relations tended to be characterised by themes of opportunity, access, and resources for both heterosexual and homosexual men. Indeed, men commonly narrated the lack of opportunities available to meet potential partners and form successful relations. Sexual knowledge and cars emerged as resources that could aid success in early romantic encounters.

As men aged they faced further struggles with romantic relations when having to 'part' from a wife or partner, for example through separation, divorce, or becoming a widow. Men described experiencing difficulties at first, but in time typically found positive ways to reinterpret or offset their experiences. Unemployment, sick leave,

and retirement were narrated as significant times of transition for many men, often characterised by difficult emotions including a lack of purpose and self-worth. Finally, men described experiences of struggle as they started losing physical function. Men's bodies emerged minimally in their narratives prior to men perceiving them as 'going wrong' in older age.

5.1.1. "I never really got to know him…but yeah, he was a great guy": Distant relationships with fathers

These older men in this study commonly discussed a lack of closeness in their families, particularly with their fathers. Fathers were often physically absent and emotionally distant from men's lives. While men sometimes noted their father's financial contributions these narratives were characterised by loss; men missed spending time with their fathers which saddened them, like Sam (UK, 67):

"He would give you money, he would never give you his time, that was about dad…he was a very good provider. Maybe not of the things that you basically need as a kid, because as a child it doesn't really bother you, does it, if you've got the latest of this, that and the other? It's, it's you want the person, not a Hornby Train Set. And that, I think, I would say that, in looking back, that is what I missed…having him there."

Yet, as well as expressing the lack of a father/son bond, men often displayed ambivalence when discussing their father's absence. On the one hand they described not really knowing their fathers and demonstrated disappointment for the lack of closeness. Though on the other hand, men seemingly found it hard to criticise their fathers, and frequently affirmed their father's status as role models, expressing praise and admiration:

"He was busy lots of the time and I never really got to know him closely, which was a shame, we all say that don't we? But yeah, he was a great guy really…I admired him, looked up to him if you like from a distance." (Pete, UK, 73)

"I couldn't have asked for a better dad except that he might have been there…I said it to mum, that it would have been nice if dad could've been there, but she'd go, well he was working. And I'd go, yeah I know." (Brad, Aus, 51)

For Brad, 'being there' meant his dad attending his football games, which he "*would rarely get to see because he was always working*", but it would have been *"selfish"* and a *"burden"* to have asked him to *"be around more."* Brad also felt his father prioritised drinking with mates instead of spending time with him. He "*used to think about it at the time, but then I thought well, that's just, that's life, you know, that's the way it is…so there's not much I can do about.*" Conversely, for men who described more positive relations with fathers memories of sport could play a significant role in narrating a close father/son bond. Watching a football match with his dad was particularly memorable for Howard (UK, 81) who warmly recalled holding onto his dad's hand to avoid being *"swept away"* by the 80,000 strong crowd: "*I don't think my feet touched the ground, but I didn't get knocked over, I just got carried along. That is one of my big memories of my dad.*" Despite being late to the match, having a bad viewing position, and his team losing, the fondness of the memory lay in Howard sharing the experience with his dad.

The lack of time men spent with fathers meant that relationships between them were described as undeveloped. Men also talked about feelings of discomfort, or unease around their fathers. Jim (UK, 73) described his nervousness when seeing his father for the first time after his father had returned from the war. Feeling like he *"no longer knew him"* he *"ran away, in the park and hid.*" Men with distant relationships gave quite limited descriptions of their fathers, often describing similar traits in them. Robert's (UK, 59) father was *"a silent person"*, with their "*only interaction"* when they watched football together, though he didn't feel that this was *"terribly unusual"* relative to other families he knew. Jack (Aus, 66) described his father as *"introverted"* as a way to account for their lack of contact, and for Albert (Aus, 75), his father was a *"private sort of a person",* signalling the lack of a bond between them. Thus men commonly tried to understand their fathers and explain their behaviour. Men also empathised with their fathers. Jim (UK, 73) felt *"sorry"* for his dad *"because he didn't have a good life with my mother."* Andrew (Aus, 84) understood why his father *"had to be"* "*a pretty hard man…he had a lot on his plate."* Being one of eight children meant his father "*never had time to talk to you that much… if he wasn't working or sleeping he'd be out in the garden or mending shoes.*" Andrew attributed his dad's *"bad temper"* to his *"lack of sleep and all that sort of stuff."* Additionally men

emphasised work commitments, illness, alcoholism, or prioritising other interests (such as friends and drinking) to explain their father's absence.

Thus, men were largely unable to criticise their fathers or talk about any feelings of rejection that may have emerged as a result of their father's apparent dis-interest or lack of time spent with sons. However, a couple of men showed less understanding or empathy for their fathers. Duncan (UK, 53), who described a significant lack of communication with his father ("*I think the longest conversation me and him had had would be, your mum says tea's ready*") described feeling perplexed by him: "*I don't know about him, just don't know what he's about.*" However like others previously, Duncan seemed to minimise the emotional impact of the distance between himself and his father: "*Not that upset about it…it was just the way it was.*" Some men offered some general criticisms of their fathers. Duncan (UK, 53) described his father as "*weird*", while William's (Aus, 60) dad was a "*control freak*", indeed William felt "*I'm the complete opposite to him.*" Furthermore a couple of men were able to express sadness and regret for the lack of a bond or contact, but this was not without also rationalising/accounting for their father's behaviour, like Kerry (Aus, 58): "*we can't have easy, comfortable conversations together, and I don't think we ever will, which is kind of sad…his childhood was difficult and so, it's all very very messy.*" Albert (Aus, 75) and Robert (UK, 59) were able to express regret for a lack of closeness, but only after their fathers had died: "*I just have a feeling, it's a kind of regret now that he's gone*" (Robert, UK, 59); "*we should have done this and we should have done that*" (Albert, Aus, 75). Thus men largely kept an emotional distance from discussing the feelings associated with the lack of a bond and time spent with fathers.

Men typically described a lack of physical closeness or contact between their parents, as well as themselves and their parents, illustrated by the excerpts below:

"You never saw any affection between my mother and father. There wasn't any, no affection between my mother and myself and things like that, nor really with my father. He'd shake hands with you when you went off to sea again, but that was the limit. Mum wouldn't even bother coming to the front door to wave you off." (Don, Aus, 82)

 "I've never seen my dad hold my mum's hand or kiss her even, stuff like that." (Duncan, UK, 53)

"I don't think I ever touched him, I don't think he ever touched me, I don't think my mother ever touched me, not that I can remember, we just weren't that sort of family... I don't think many families were in those days, it wasn't the thing to do." (Pete, UK, 73)

Men's distant relationships with their fathers were also typified by a lack of guidance around certain issues such as sex. For instance, the only guidance Jim (UK, 73) remembered was his father's instructions not to bring any *"trouble"* home. Stephen (Aus, 71) too emphasised that his father *"never gave us any sex talk or anything."* Robert (UK, 59) felt that while his parents were supportive, they could have given him *"more guidance"* and major decisions of his young adulthood, such as what to do after school were *"left to me."*

Such accounts can be contrasted with more positive stories of supportive relations with fathers. James (Aus, 86) remembered his father guiding his career path: *"I was 13 and my father said to me would you like to be a plumber, son."* Henry (UK, 57) too described his parents as *"car[ing] a lot about our education,"* and Howard (UK, 81), who described the relationship between his parents as *"ideal"*, remembered his father as *"always taking an interest in what I was doing."* Men with positive stories emphasised the 'values' they admired passed down by their fathers. For Ned (Aus, 69) these were *"Christian values"* that helped *"give a lot more meaning to life."* Henry admired his dad's *"quiet strength",* describing him as *"one of the good guys really", "a good role model for his sons"* and a *"gentle man."* Indeed 'gentleness' was a common characteristic men with positive stories described valuing in their fathers.

In contrast, men whose relationships lacked supportive bonds sometimes made connections between difficulties with self-esteem and feeling criticised by fathers. Thus distant and critical relations impacted the way men viewed and felt about themselves. Kerry (Aus, 58) described feeling undervalued and *"never good enough."* He described conversations between himself and his father as rigid and competitive where *"ideas"* couldn't *"grow",* and suggested *"it's [competition] a common theme that probably runs through some men's conversations."* Harry (Aus, 56) also described the lack of self-worth his father inspired within him, instead referring to a University Professor as the first person who ever made him feel *"like you were OK and that you were going to be able to do things."* He also reported, like

other men, that feeling criticised by your father is *"probably quite a common thing."* Andrew (Aus, 84) drew direct connections between the lack of time spent with his father and his ability/willingness to build relations with others: *"I felt out of it a bit. And that's affected yourself a bit so I was bit of a loner yeah."* While father/son relations were often problematic, as described by men, there were indications that relations could improve and become closer in later years as men become less critical with age, as Kerry suggested:

"I think a lot of young boys and young men feel like they don't have a close relationship with their dads…and it's not until you get much older that you feel like you kind of have a warm relationship with your dad." (Kerry, Aus, 58)

Indeed there was some consensus that masculinity shifts with age, positively impacting father/son relations as men 'soften':

"My wife's dad was apparently a really harsh disciplinarian and so on and he's now in his mid 80s, but in the last ten years has become a nice guy, you know. And funny how that can kind of happen, I don't know why it is but I think it's quite common… I think that happens with men actually where they kind of, they get to a point where they soften." (Harry, Aus, 59)

However this was not the case for most men, whose distant relations with fathers tended to extend into older age. Finally, beyond distant relations with fathers, a minority of men described experiences of physical abuse. For men with violent fathers violent experiences tended to dominate early memories. Duncan (UK, 54) remembered having his leg 'mistakenly' shut in a car door by his father (who refused to apologise). He also described his father *"waiting"* to *"belittle"* him in front of his friends. However, like others previously Duncan demonstrated trying to understand his father's behaviour rather than simply criticising him, explaining: *"His [father] parents were weird."* For Charlie (Aus, 57) one of his earliest memories was hiding from his alcoholic father with his siblings in the back yard of his home, where *"he was trying to find us with an axe" (Charlie, Aus, 57).* Charlie grew up in a violent household where he witnessed his father physically abuse his mother. As he grew older violent exchanges took place between him and his father. However rather than criticising his father Charlie felt *"sorry for him",* as it was his father who was now *"missing out"* on having a relationship with his grandchildren. Gerry (Aus, 62) also

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witnessed his father being abusive towards his mother and recalled violent exchanges between himself and his father as he reached mid-teens:

"We did have a couple of physical scuffles, there was an occasion when a door ended up getting taken off its hinges… She actually had to separate us, and that was because he got abusive towards her so."

However Gerry indicated not wanting to discuss his father in any detail, and thus did not openly criticise him. Where fathers were totally absent some men discussed step-fathers in their place, a couple of whom were also violent. Men were more willing to directly criticise step-fathers than biological fathers, like Gavin (UK, 70) who described his step-father as *"such a bastard."*

5.1.2. Early sexual and romantic relations: Issues of access, opportunity, and resources

Men's narratives of early sexual and romantic relations were characterised by struggle more than positive memories for most. Most notably men faced challenges including a lack of access, opportunity, and resources to meet and successfully develop these early relations. For heterosexual men all-male environments often limited their interaction with women. Lacking access to girls was a significant difficulty for Harry (Aus, 56), who described being constrained from exploring a world outside the home or school:

"I didn't have any kind of social life outside of school because of a combination of circumstances, where I lived, parental attitudes, the fact that it was a boys school, yeah a whole range of things like that, which it felt like, I didn't feel as if I had a normal, what I regard as a normal adolescence in a sense. And it was just schoolwork and sport basically and yeah, and nothing else."

Lacking contact with girls could extend beyond school into national service, as for Pete (Aus, 73) who "*never knew what girls were really, they were just sort of things that walked about, they looked a bit different."* But as he suggests:

"It was quite common in those days…there was no social mixing until I'd finished school. And then of course it was national service."

Given the problems in accessing romantic and sexual partners, when men did meet potential partners experiences were often shaped by both a lack of sexual knowledge and self-confidence. For instance, when Stephen *"found himself"* in a back room with some girls he tried *"to edge up to kiss her but I got an erection, and I didn't think, I didn't know what to do…I was pretty naïve."* Other men described difficulties in 'developing' or navigating physical relations with girls:

"There were a few girls and fellows there that I got sitting with and got talking with but it never got any further than that. And similarly there was an ice rink…but we used to just go round and round and round...So that was my teen years really." (Pete, UK, 73)

Men also spoke of missed opportunities with girls due to their lack of sexual knowledge and confidence:

"I never really came to terms with women until I, I kept going to dances and everything else but I was so naive it was, it's not funny. When I look back of opportunities and things like that it astounds me…I had no idea. You know, there was sex offering and everything, I still didn't pick up on it. So, yeah until I got to the technical school and I got a bit more confidence and then I found myself, I started to push forward a little bit more and a little bit more." (Stephen, Aus, 71)

These difficulties can be contrasted with the minority of men who spoke with more ease and confidence about early sexual relations, sometimes even with a sense of bravado. Harry (UK, 57) *"had lots of girlfriends, nothing serious. I wasn't having sex with lots of them. It was go out for a few times and it was good fun."* Gareth (Aus, 65) also *"had lots of girlfriends. Oh, I had my girl stick in them days, I used to tell them, I said I got to fight the Sheilas off, they want to maul me all the time."* Gareth's bravado, seemingly said in jest, counteracted other parts of his narrative where he described himself as a *"loyal sort of sod"*, married since he was 17. Indeed access to girls was not highlighted as a problem for men who had married young, like James (Aus, 84), who was *"always chasing girls."* *"I met my wife when I was 19…I found her in a boat down the creek…then I ran into her at another dance about three months later."* Don (Aus, 82) also described meeting his wife at a young age where he used to play tennis: *"we got on very well and things like that and after a year or two we*

sort of decided it mightn't be a bad idea if we got married." Charlie (Aus, 57) remembered *"competing"* for *"the pick of the Catholic Schoolgirls…and I won."* Men with positive stories described easier access to potential partners: *"there were girls around, didn't seem to be a problem. There always seemed to be lots of girls"* (Henry, UK, 57). This was also true for Robert (UK, 59):

"It was not too difficult…you'd go to the dances and the boys would stand around really, eyeing the girls…it was easier [for me] than for most of the people I know."

Robert described the dreaded *"walk"* to approach girls at dances, where boys, *"shaking in their boots",* ran the risk of rejection and *"everyone looking at them."* But Robert decided *"that if you got turned down you just had to go in again, really."*

In terms of resources some men of lower socio-economic status gave the impression of feeling they couldn't always compete successfully for girls:

"I was terribly immature but I guess that's just the way things go. And yeah, and she was into older guys anyway who had money and cars, so none of that applied to me." (Ivan, Aus, 67)

Thus the context of dancing as well as the aid of a car commonly emerged as significant to improving men's access and opportunities with girls. Dances were a common setting to meet girls and cars a crucial way to increase opportunity and self-confidence as Jim (UK, 73) describes:

"You'd be dancing with a girl and you'd say can I take you home or something…but when you say, yeah, we'd go on the bus, suddenly you could see the interest draining…but if you've got a car it's a bit of a different proposition."

Indeed Robert's (UK, 59) friend was particularly *"useful"* when it came to *"picking up girls."* Not only *"because he had a car, but also he didn't drink."*

For gay men lack of access and opportunity could come from leading 'hidden lives' due to the lack of gay-friendly/safe spaces. For Greg (UK, 56) childhood was an *"eternal summer"* up until the age of 14. Indeed he condensed this time as *"very happy…very good parenting…very loving parents."* But adolescence caused *"the*

clouds to come in" and difficulties in living a secret life began as he couldn't talk to anyone about his sexuality. He tried to date girls in his teens: *"I wanted to be normal…I wanted to go to the parties…I was dead from the neck down."* Greg's fear of 'coming out' in a homophobic society constrained his opportunities for forming and experiencing satisfying relationships. Without the access to gay-friendly spaces Greg committed himself to living a secret life, where early sexual experiences with men was limited to public toilets; *"It's not a nice thing."* (Greg, UK, 56) Other gay men narrated less difficulty in coming to terms with sexual identity, though early sexual relations were still characterised by secrecy rather than openness:

"The guy over the road from me and myself had an affair for about two years but he wasn't really gay, he was, he was just comfortable fooling around, I guess so." (Gerry, Aus, 62)

As demonstrated in the previous section men described a lack of sex advice from their fathers. Gay men also narrated an absence of discussions around sex within the family. For Mathew (Aus, 76) this silence around sex was directly linked to his own lack of awareness and confusion about his sexual identity:

"I knew nothing about sex. Our family didn't talk about it. Mum's side of the family was quite uptight. They, Mum's mother was quite religious, and sex was something you just never talked about. … I'd never heard of the word homosexual or, they didn't use gay in those days, until I was in something like fifth form… being gay, I didn't know it, of course, so I evolved into this very, very naïve, young man."

The lack of sexual knowledge and information Mathew received, coupled with a (homophobic) religious influence created a complex struggle involving guilt, denial, and poor self-worth:

"I think maybe in my last year of high school at long last the light dawned a bit, but I couldn't deal with it. I didn't do anything about it. I just thought, oh, if I pray hard to God I'll be cured."

Some men reflected on the ways their lack of knowledge and experience may have shaped their decisions. For instance Matthew (Aus, 76) felt his lack of experience in sexual relations caused him to develop his first serious relationship too quickly:

"I started living with him, which was a huge mistake, but I was, didn't have, I was intellectually advanced but not, how I put this? Because I had, didn't go through a teenage relationship thing, like a sexual type relationship thing, I was very, I, just backward in that. And so the first guy that said hello and appeared to like me, I thought, well, this is it."

Greg (UK, 56), who in contrast to Mathew knew he was gay from the age of 4, felt he had to *"keep a lid on it"* until he left home and thus had *"more agency."* Like other men success in romantic relations was often constructed as beyond men's control, and far more reliant on the circumstances and environments men were exposed to, allowing them the necessary opportunities to meet potential partners and form relationships. When Greg turned 18 going to university in London provided the stage upon which *"everything changed."* Greg was suddenly in a mixed environment where he had the chance to make new friends: *"we chose each other, [we weren't] chucked together."* For the first time Greg was able to tell a friend he was gay: *"that was a great moment. I felt ecstatic and elated the next day, and hung over…I'm eternally grateful to her."* Mathew's 'moment' also came when leaving home to travel to London when he was 20:

"I bought Dennis Altman's book, and that's when I got the theory that I had to get to London, so I did…I found out that there was a Gay Liberation in London, so I rang them as soon as I got there, and started going to meetings, and I end up losing my virginity in London and everything, so it all happened."

Mathew was able to 'come out' to his parents from London via a letter, and returned home with a much more positive sense of self, empowered to get involved with the gay community in Australia.

Leaving home was a significant transition for Greg and Mathew and integral to their processes of 'coming out'. By contrast leaving home was less likely to be significant for gay men who demonstrated *"always be[ing] at ease with my sexuality"* and did not live lives as constrained by secrecy. For example Sam (UK, 67) always felt "*I am what I am, I am that and that's it, get on with life."* The freedom he was accorded at home (*"I could come and go as I pleased, I could do exactly as I liked when I lived at home")* meant he *"didn't feel oh whoopee this is now the beginning of a new era"* when leaving home to live with a boyfriend, *"it was just a different place to live and*

living with someone different to living with my mother at home." In addition to traveling and leaving home, other transitions such as moving into work and starting university were also influential in men's opportunities to develop valued sexual relations, as described by Jim (UK, 73):

"When I eventually went to work it was a bit of an awakening for me because suddenly I was in an office environment and there were all these attractive young ladies around me, and I was inordinately shy of them because I'd, I hadn't had much experience with women at all, but gradually it came about."

Going to University was significant for heterosexual men too like Ivan (Aus, 67), who met his wife at University:

"She was doing science, I was doing engineering, so we shared some lectures together. And yeah, we've been friends ever since."

For Harry (Aus, 56) "*starting university was really significant.*" As he described, it was like being in the 1920s, and "*then suddenly you're thrown in to the '70s.*" It was at University that David began the process of *"learning to talk to girls"* and described forming friendships as key to developing successful sexual relations: *"it was a huge relief to be freed up I suppose."*

5.1.3. "I grieved for 6 months… then realised I could do whatever I wanted": 'Parting' from a wife or romantic partner

Men did not tend to discuss the difficulties experienced within the course of their romantic relationships, but experiences of 'parting' from romantic partners through divorce, separation, or being widowed, were narrated as particularly difficult. Transitioning into 'single' life could initiate much change for men, including grief and emotional struggles. Additionally men described more practical struggles, such as single fatherhood and learning new domestic roles. While men tended to experience struggle at first new opportunities (e.g. for 'freedom' and reinvention) eventually surfaced in time.

"That's your first serious, well what you would term as serious, in reality that was going nowhere, but you don't realise it at the time and you're all heartbroken that sort of stuff." (Brad, Aus, 51)

After being left by his wife with a 4 year-old son Andrew (Aus, 84) took up drinking. He described feeling a lack of support around him, with only a sister to rely on for help: "*You didn't have any support those days…so one of my sisters looked after him for a while, while I picked up with another wife and whatever.*" Andrew expressed confusion as to why his marriage had broken down: "*I couldn't understand it. I didn't mind her leaving me. She must have had her reasons of that, but leaving the four year old.*" Andrew did re-marry, but after his second wife died he faced a new set of struggles:

"The trouble is taking over where she left off because a woman runs a house. She does the cooking and ironing and washing and her living round the place. And you've got to take over where she left off."

Like Andrew Harry (Aus, 56) also faced single fatherhood after his wife left him: "*so I had four or five kids or whatever it was, a new job.*" He described how his negative feelings towards his wife caused conflict and challenges in his relationship with his children:

"It's very difficult because you know you're not supposed to agree with them and say, yeah she's really bad isn't she? So it's that thing of trying to support them without, I guess support them without confirming the way they're feeling…so you kind of feel a bit ambivalent about all of that."

Men could find break-ups to be traumatic and have trouble assimilating them. Terry (Aus, 65) described himself as *"shattered"* when his wife left him, and like Andrew expressed confusion as to why it had happened: "*I've never really figured it out properly, but she came out of a very strange household, you know.*" Indeed men often emphasised the 'time' it took to recover from breakups:

"I guess it was a matter of understanding process, knowing it was going to take some time. And getting to the point where, you know, I was ready for other relationships." (Terry, Aus, 65)

Men weren't always able to talk about breakups in much detail though, seemingly too painful to remember, like John (Aus, 85):

"She seemed to develop a lot of other interests that I wasn't involved in and I don't want to go into it all but eventually we decided to separate which was very acrimonious and painful."

Despite the difficulties men described following 'parting' from their wives or partners, in time men commonly recontextualised these experiences positively, often enjoying their new freedom, for example, to go *"out with other girls"* (Robert, UK, 59), or like Charlie (Aus, 57) simply to enjoy personal interests that had been neglected:

"The first true love is a devastating thing…I grieved for six months, and then realised how wonderful it was, I could do whatever I wanted. I could sit up and play computer games all night if I wanted, or watch movies. I love movies and I just wasn't seeing them."

Andrew (Aus, 84) also emphasised the importance of 'time' for recovery like Charlie and Terry, and consequently felt less constrained as a single man and freer to make his own choices:

"There's a lot to deal with in the first year. And once you get over that and move on then you're all right. But I'm alone now but I'm not lonely. I don't have to watch movies I don't like or listen to music I don't like…I can go and come when I want to with no one to say where you've been, when are you coming home. So I just, I've got a lot of freedom. But I didn't realise that at first."

The death of Andrew's wife also meant taking on new roles, precipitating the onset of learning new skills: *"to work the washing machine"*, or *"paying the bills"*, *"the shopping and the ironing and the cooking and the washing and everything"*, but he *"finally adjusted. It took about 12 months. But I dabbled with it."* For Harry (Aus, 56) going through divorce led to the discovery of new capabilities, and thus a greater sense of agency and achievement:

"It actually enabled me to, it kind of freed me up in a sense to, because I was in, when that happened I was kind of in charge, I was organising everything, I was doing everything… And if you haven't had the opportunity to discover that you can do all those things for yourself without anybody's help, then you don't really know that."

It also encouraged opportunities for reflection, for instance on his decision to get married so young (and to his first ever girlfriend):

"Maybe it's because it's the first person you every really feel comfortable with…You kind of reflect on, why do you end up with somebody and what leads to it and that kind of thing? And especially if, I'm now divorced so, you sort of, you think about that."

5.1.4. Sick leave, unemployment and retirement

Sick leave, unemployment and retirement were often narrated as significant times of difficulty for men. Many men described valuing the 'breadwinner' role, thus paid work emerged as integral to identity and self-esteem. As Jack (Aus, 66) says:

"A man would never say I'm married, well yeah I'm married with children, a man would say that I work and I'm in charge of this department and all this sort of stuff."

Becoming too sick to work or facing unemployment could raise troubling questions over self-worth and purpose for men. Gareth (Aus, 65), who had led a face-paced working life up until becoming sick, described the ensuing depression:

"I got to a stage where I didn't want to get out of bed, I used to wake up in the morning and say, what have I got to do today, because I'm going from a situation working from say 19 hours a day, and I mean flat on work and not sitting in an office, to waking up in the morning saying, what do I do today?"

Men who had experienced unemployment through redundancy also narrated issues relating to self-worth, particularly if this occurred later in life when men deemed themselves less attractive to the labour market:

"I was in my early 50's, a bad time to be unemployed…it was a belonging thing. I didn't belong anywhere any more…you'd start feeling that you'd done something wrong and you weren't worthy…an outcast from society…so that was a bad, bad period in my life." (UK, Jim, 73)

"[it was] a shock, I don't know how many applications I made but, spent quite a lot of money with the consultants and all of that sort of stuff. And, I was, well, mid 50s at that stage and I kept getting told

I'm…over qualified. And I think that was just a euphemism for being too old. You know?" (Terry, Aus, 65)

Retirement could also bring about feelings of uselessness, or *"not knowing what to do with myself"* (UK, Randeep, 71), particularly for men who had led fast paced working lives as illustrated by Gareth's narrative. Sam (UK, 67) described a difficult initial period when he first retired: *"I was running round like a headless chicken"* still trying to do *"everything at once."* As he explained, *"I'd worked 50 years when I retired, and you are programmed."* Though Sam described gradually transitioning towards being more at ease with a slower pace of life:

"It took me what, three, six months for this to sort of work through the system. And you think, hang on, hang on, if you don't do it today, you do it tomorrow…It doesn't make any difference... But now I've, that's all gone now, totally relaxed and, yeah, because I think oh well, I'll do that whenever."

Randeep (UK, 71) also described being *"at a loss" "for a while"* following retirement, *"but then gradually it all fell into place."* Moreover Randeep narrated having greater opportunities as a result of ageing and retirement. Indeed some men exhibited shifts towards community and connectivity as they retired, such as taking up voluntary work, joining support groups, and making use of the internet (discussed in chapter 7). Not all men were able to 'slow down' or shift away from 'work', like James (Aus, 86) who spent his life working seven days a week. James had *"retired 3 times": "I get bored if I stop…I'm busy, busy, but perhaps doing nothing, but busy, busy."* By contrast Sam (UK, 67) expressed contentment in his retired role and rejected constructions of retirement based around voluntary work as a way to 'fill time':

"People say well why don't you get a job? I said I don't want a job. Work in a charity shop, I said I don't want to work in a charity shop…since I haven't got to, no I don't want to, thank you, I've done my stint, thank you."

Some men showed awareness and foresight by describing the need to plan and prepare for retirement (though this didn't necessarily lessen the difficulties). Jack felt that he'd "*done the psychology and I knew a little bit about retirement from there."* He felt retirement was something he needed to plan. Like Gareth (Aus, 65) had described Jack (Aus, 66) didn't want to wake up in the morning asking *"what the hell*

am I going to do today?" Jack found himself unemployed aged 61; *"I was stuffed, and the fact that you're 60 odd, who wants to employ a 61 year old?"*

Not all men in the sample had left work and some questioned the dichotomy of working/not working like Henry (UK, 57), who had given up his career as a teacher, but still left himself open to the possibility of other forms of work so did not consider himself as retired: *"Well, if you go out there, are those guys retired? I've given up teaching. Would I give up work? Not necessarily. If something came along…Yeah I'd do it."* Taking this approach seemed to have a positive effect on men's sense of self and wellbeing. Indeed Henry now saw himself as *"my own boss":*

"I'm not an employee anymore. I can do what I want pretty much when I want and if the weather's wet then I can get on with that job and if the weather's dry I can get on with that job."

Terry (Aus, 65) was similar*: "I would like more bits and pieces of work, and, but, you know, everything comes to him who waits, sort of thing. You never know what might turn up."*

Some men demonstrated a decline in competitiveness in their working lives, seemingly to make way for other priorities such as family. Brad (Aus, 51) stopped work in his 40's to take up more domestic responsibilities, including a bigger role in looking after his children. Brad had been raised to value the ideology of the male 'breadwinner', thus the decision to take time off work was a struggle, for which he sought the help of a 'psychologist' to make the transition. However Brad enjoyed his domestic role, even in the face of friends comically naming him 'HB' ('House Bitch'). Harry (Aus, 56), newly married, *"reached a point where I'm not concerned about career advancement…my concern is being in a nice place until retirement, so that's a change."* Jack also felt that other priorities had superseded earlier ambitions:

"there's a lot of important things in your 30's and 40's because you're trying to make your way in the world and try to prove it and stuff, but now it's, a lot of things don't matter." (Jack, Aus, 66)

For Jack in particular, getting a University degree allowed him to *"settle down"; "I'm not as thick as I thought I was or as thick as other people might think I was."* Shifts

away from work could induce considerable changes in identity, as noted by Gareth (Aus, 65) who recognised a positive difference in himself since leaving work and facing less pressure:

"I was one of the worst bosses you'd ever find in your life, I was a rotten ...demanding respect... I was...very difficult and you can speak to a lot of people that I was involved with in that period of my life and they'll tell you what a mongrel I was. And I think my, I've mellowed probably 75% to what I used to be...I'm a better person today yeah...I'm not under the pressure that I was under financially when we were selling the product, we were exposing ourselves up to probably $2m at a time, and I didn't have $2m."

In drawing together men's experiences of leaving work, some faced significant challenges to their identity and self-worth, particularly when faced with unemployment as older men. Retired men tended to narrate adapting to a 'slower pace' of life as a 'gradual' process. For some this was aided by continuing some form of work (paid or voluntary) as this helped to soften the transition away from former working identities (discussed in more detail in chapter 7). However some men described the lessening importance of work as they aged, and new priorities taking precedence, such as family, reducing the negative impact on wellbeing as men welcomed new roles.

5.1.5. *"I realise I'm getting older, the body tells me that": Shifts towards physical decline*

The body, and specifically declining physical function, took centre stage in men's discussions of ageing. The body emerged in men's narratives minimally prior to men perceiving them as in decline, though when men did speak of earlier bodily memories they most often involved experiences when men lacked control, such as physical disability, or the embarrassment of a young unruly body. For instance Rudolf (Aus, 86) recalled his embarrassment after defecating in his trousers at school (indeed, this was his first ever memory, reflecting its significance). Thus men's narratives highlighted how the body is taken for granted until it failures to perform/'goes wrong'. A couple of men also discussed early body image issues in relation to lacking in strength and muscle like Ken (UK, 50):

"I was small, small for my age, I was underweight, I lacked strength, I was prone to infections…the other kids made me aware of it…that I was never going to be an athlete...I was always going to be toward, right at the bottom of the class pretty much."

For the most part however the body came more into the fore as men aged. This was often demonstrated by constructing the failing body against an active mind. By older age the body acts as an indicator of age, informing the mind of change: *"I realise I'm getting older, the body tells me that"* (Gareth, Aus, 65). A body/mind dualism was commonly played out by men whereby the mind was constructed as still highly active in relation to the ageing body:

"I hate it, I really dislike it…there's so many things I have in my head that I'd like to do, unfortunately my body won't let me do it…nothing would give me more enjoyment to get up there on the tractor and do things but now…it's just so difficult." (Gareth, Aus, 65)

Physical decline was most often understood by men in relation to functionality and the ability 'to do', including practical everyday tasks such as lifting and carrying, or running to the car. Physical decline was usually constructed as minimal and gradual rather than a sudden transition; something that could 'creep up' on men taking them by surprise, as demonstrated in Harry's (Aus, 56) description of running to the car with his children:

"Like I was with my kids one day and we ran to the car, and I could still run really quickly and I could run more quickly then them, but we got to the car and it took me about five minutes to get my breath back and, instead of 30 seconds. And I thought what's going on, what's going on here?"

Sometimes men referred to the physical pain involved as part of losing functionality: *"I get the aches and pains…you wake up and you're not quite as limber."* (Ken, UK, 50). As part of men's focus they expressed concerns around the length of time it took to recover from injury:

"The downside to getting older is losing your fitness, if I was to bend down and look under the chair there I'd come back dizzy and I'd have to hold possibly for three seconds, then it would clear up… yeah, it's slow recovery from any sort of injury or any knock." (Aus, Jack, 66)

Men also expressed concerns for the future and the implications of losing physical function on their working lives. For Duncan (UK, 53) and Henry (UK, 57), while both still in their fifties, as craftsman they discussed the potential of not being able to use their tools in the future. Henry in particular reflected on his lack of strength that *'as a man'* was *'an unpleasant shock'* to be losing. Thus while there was some variation, men didn't tend to 'feel old' physically until the end of their fifties/early sixties and could be quite unsure or vaguely aware themselves about this. For instance, one of the younger participants, Brad (Aus, 51) said:

"Yeah I don't feel old. I do sometimes, I did the other day because I went round and helped one of my neighbours shift some blue stones, so I think I've hurt my back."

While Brad first claims not to 'feel old', in the context of undertaking a laborious task for his neighbour and the eschewing physical pain he 'feels' a sense of ageing. Over 10 years older, Frank (UK, 64) described only recently starting *"to worry"* about the physical decline of ageing. For him it was the *"struggle to tie up my shoelaces"* as well as feeling *"achy"* that engendered a sense of ageing, again highlighting a practical task as well as some level of physical pain. Men's understandings of themselves could shift in relation to routine tasks they once found easy, and tasks themselves take on new meaning. For Albert (Aus, 75) mowing the lawn had become a 'chore' in older age:

"I get tired of doing things that I used to do. You'd just duck out and mow the lawn after you came home from work and that was it. And now mowing the lawn is a chore, I know I've done it."

Albert's assertion that he 'knows he's done it' seems to imply something about the physical signs left on the body, but this remains implicit.

Sexual and body image concerns associated with physical decline also emerged, though to a much lesser extent than more 'functional' ones for men. Unlike strictly functional tasks men described greater awareness in relation to declining sexual ability and attractiveness, which were experienced more suddenly:

"I suppose until about the age of 70 I was OK and I could get an erection of sorts and relief, after that it suddenly tailed off and I lost all sorts of things. I lost my muscle bulk, my skin became softer and shallower, ridiculous, don't age, don't do it…just do it slowly." (Pete, UK, 73)

Ivan (Aus, 67) also felt the sudden change with which feeling attractive declines with age, but more than this, he implies a shifting of priorities he no longer feels part of:

"We live in a world of advertising, beautiful bodies, holidays, bikinis on the beach, this sort of stuff. And all of a sudden it's no longer there, however much one would like to be there but it isn't."

James (Aus, 84) played out a mind/body dualism in relation to losing attractiveness and sexual prowess:

"Of course the body's older but If you can give somebody the gift of the mind…I'm not older but the body won't move. I can't run after a beautiful girl because they start running."

For Pete (UK, 73) being less sexually 'energetic' was 'sad', but at the same time he felt it was also a relief, finding 'those urges' a 'drain' and 'nuisance'. Mitch (Aus, 76) also described being less concerned with sex now than in the past, inferring a shift in activity and interest:

"The old concept of sex doesn't worry me as much as it would have been at the age of 30, I admit the fact I'm not the bloke I was 30 years ago."

For Gavin (UK, 70) taking up meditation in later life had led to less interest or concern with sex and attractiveness:

"Well, I used to, it used to worry me a lot, you know? Getting older like I, you look at yourself and you think, no longer as young, or you're not longer attractive. But now I, sex or, doesn't come into it any more. I'm basically celibate...I think meditation has brought this on somehow."

Given the losses described by some men in relation to sexuality and attractiveness, remaining sexually active in older age could be a strong source of empowerment and resistance to discourses of ageing as decline. By confirming an active sex life/interest men could 'do' both masculinity and successful ageing. For instance, Mohammed (UK, 56) stated that he still felt *"young when I am with a woman."*

Another arena in which men commonly narrated and measured their physical decline and made sense of ageing was in relation to sporting abilities. Sport was heavily associated with masculine identity and self-worth in men's narratives, whether they

played sport or not (discussed in Chapter 6). Most men had some involvement with sport as teenagers, unless they deemed their abilities to be too poor, or objected to the violence involved, and many maintained this involvement as they aged. Stopping sport due to physical decline was a significant decision and time of transition for men, and could be quite emotional. For instance Henry (UK, 57) confessed to missing sport: *"I still find it difficult to go down and watch games because I want to be out there."* However more often than discontinuing any involvement with sport men found ways to soften and cope with this transition, for instance, by taking up new sports or hobbies that required less physical exertion. Men were also able to recontextualise physical decline in a sporting arena in positive ways through playing out a mind/body dualism. For example through sport Harry (Aus, 56) recontextualised his feelings about ageing, suggesting that he may be physically slower as an older man, but that he had become more mentally able or 'astute':

"I remember having a conversation with a guy I used to play soccer with and we were discussing what it would be like if we went back and played again, and he was saying well look, I think I'd be ok, maybe a little bit slower but I'd be smarter, I'd manage it because I'd be more astute…I just be clever, I'd be able to get by that way."

Using his friends' comments Harry suggests that while ageing involves physical decline, it can also bring about increasing awareness which he could draw on if necessary to still compete with other men. Similarly Charlie (Aus, 57) positions increasing wisdom against the physical decline he's experienced as a result of playing sport in youth:

"My knees are not great because I played football for a long time, and after the competitive football I played touch football for quite a few years, so the knees are not great, I get little aches…so I can see that the vehicle that I'm travelling in is not running as well as it used to run. But I also know that I've gathered a lot of wisdom, and that I have the capacity to pass that wisdom on in…So yeah, there's a lot of benefits as well."

While some men felt they had to stop playing sport due to decreasing ability or risk of injury, replacing one sport for another (or some kind of physical activity) in later life was common among men. Thus men could negotiate the hegemonic demands of sport in light of their transitions as older men, like Brad (Aus, 51) who was

considering taking up lawn bowls (which he redefines as a younger man's sport) in place of football and cricket:

"I stopped playing sport and stuff…I used to play cricket and football. I'm thinking I should take up lawn bowls, you know, for a lot of reasons because it's not necessarily an old man's sport anymore, because there's a lot of young people playing it…maybe when I can't go to the beach anymore…or I'm too worried about the shape I'm in to go to the beach."

There was evidence that aging brought about a complex relationship to sport, mediated by other responsibilities such as work:

"I stopped playing [football]…getting too old for it weren't it? Can't run as fast as a seventeen or eighteen…if you break a leg or something y'know can't go back to work so you, so at that time I packed it up." (Alfie, UK, 62)

In this instance men could negotiate different risks as they aged. Alfie for instance, now liked to *"have a bit of a gamble."* Jack also suggested sporting interests had become less important while maintaining relations with grandchildren had come into the fore:

"You now have the situation that once the game's over I can't remember who played last week, so is that important? It's not as important as it might have been…your priorities change and so it should be important to keep contact with the grandchildren."

Indeed, for a few men the future was *'all tied around family'* (Stephen, Aus, 71).

To conclude, men most frequently narrated their bodies into their stories when they perceived them as 'going wrong' in older age, though a minority of men spoke of earlier bodily memories where they lacked control, or weight and muscle. Men most often understood their bodies as declining in relation to functionality and the decreasing ability to carry out practical tasks. Such changes in ability were constructed as 'creeping up' on men, indeed some were only vaguely aware of physical changes. However, while discussed less frequently, the loss of sexual ability and attractiveness were felt more suddenly. Sport was also an arena where men narrated losing physical function, but the mind was often constructed as able to

offset the loss experienced in this context. Men also displayed shifts away from sport as they aged, mediated by other responsibilities and priorities such as work and family.

This section has discussed narratives of struggle including difficult relations with fathers, sexual and romantic relations, the experience of sick leave, retirement, and unemployment, and the decline of physical functioning. We now turn to men's narratives of coping across the life course.

5.2. Narratives of Coping

Men's coping can be groups into four categories. Firstly, indirect or passive coping in childhood; men most often lacked the resources to find satisfying ways of reconciling problems at this time, and more often described simply having to endure and accept the difficulties they faced for it was 'just the way it was'. Some men described forming 'inner worlds', such as retreating into books and music, or becoming 'introverted' to cope. Secondly, by adulthood men began 'taking action' to cope with adversity, involving trying to control their circumstances. Third, some men discussed the significance of 'thinking positively' in response to struggle. Fourth, some men chose to 'go with the flow' in the face of difficulties, involving acceptance, and less exertion of control than demonstrated with 'taking action'. Fifth, men discussed ways of maintaining control through 'mental action'. Men displayed shifts between the above categories as they aged, illustrated below.

5.2.1. "It was just the way it was": Coping with childhood struggle

Early struggles for men included difficult relations with fathers and early sexual relations as demonstrated in the last section. Some men also spoke about difficulties at school, including peer relations and corporeal punishment. These struggles significantly impacted men, but they weren't able to make any real attempts at resolving problems (i.e. finding a 'voice' to respond to violence and bullying). Rather, men frequently understood these experiences as something they had to accept as this was 'just the way it was', highlighting men's lack of agency in earlier life. Given

men's difficulties with fathers and early sexual relations were discussed in a previous section, this current section will focus on men's difficulties in school to provide a context for men's coping practices in early years.

To begin with, difficulties in school were not limited to peer relations, indeed sometimes more significant for men were memories of corporal punishment, some of which were quite harrowing:

"Physical violence was absolutely endemic…the cane was something I was brought up with as being normal…girls were never caned…I was beaten by a games master with slippers, he was a very interesting man who devised tortures for pupils who'd done things that he didn't approve of. Looking back on it, he really ought to have gone to prison." (Ken, UK, 50)

However this tended to be written off in the same way as men's relationships with their fathers; as something one could do nothing about, so had to be accepted and endured: *"Corporal punishment was, just the way it was in those days." (Terry, Aus, 65)*

Gerry (Aus, 62) described some of the nuns at his religious primary school as *"sadists"* and confided in having been sexually abused by Marist Brothers at the religious secondary school he attended. He did not discuss how this affected him in any detail, but continued to cope through "*try[ing] to get on with other things and, yeah, what's in the past is in the past and you can't change it, so."* Gerry's assertion that what's in the past can't be changed seemed to fit with other men's understandings of their experiences as 'it's just the way it was'. Gerry discussed his mother offering him the opportunity to change schools when he was about 13 or 14: *"she cottoned onto what was going on."* But Gerry *"didn't have the strength to say yes to do it"*, as he explains:

"There was too much stigma attached to leaving a religious school and going to a state school…So things didn't quite work out according to plan in that, in those respects, but anyway, that's just the way it went."

As part of not being able to actively overcome or change their circumstances, some men described retreating into the self as a way to cope with struggle. For some this was achieved through solitary and sometimes creative activities. As such men (as

boys) created 'inner worlds' to escape from struggle, like Kerry (Aus, 58) who remembered his time at school as *"anguished."* He described the *"routine"* of regular canings and homophobic bullying due to his musical interests. Yet he described this time ambivalently as *"not happy"*, but also suggested *"it wasn't so bad."* Although, seemingly in need of a retreat Kerry would *"just go home and play my guitar"*:

"It [guitar] was an outlet for those things…I, there were places I could go when I was playing the guitar that I've never been since. You can be sitting and playing for a while and then suddenly you look at the clock and it's four hours later and you don't know where you've been. Quite transforming, quite, and I've never been there other than playing my guitar."

Andrew (Aus, 84) also described turning to music as a way to *"fill the time"* from his father's absence. Other men however described less positive experiences of retreating into the self through introversion and 'internalising' struggles like Harry (Aus, 56). Harry transitioned from the UK to Australia aged 12, *"a sensitive age"*, leading to difficulties with taunting at school. He describes the difficulties of not knowing how to cope and lacking a voice, leading him to 'internalise' the struggle:

"It would just become really kind of self-conscious I think and you kind of just sort of internalise it I think, and then, and just keep quiet, move on and it probably isn't terribly useful, but that's, you don't quite know what else to do. Yeah, it's not an easy thing, yeah." (Harry, Aus, 56)

Jack (Aus, 66) also described being *"introverted"* and drew connections between his tendency to 'avoid' and his identity as 'passive':

"I'm basically an introvert and introverts avoid, so your natural instinct is to avoid. So you avoid confrontation and you avoid confrontation as a kid, possibly the reason why my sister was active and I was passive because I was possibly on the introvert side of things. So I think that coping is probably through, possibly through being able to avoid confrontation, which just becomes part of the territory of being an introvert." (Jack, Aus, 66)

Coping with difficulties indirectly through avoidance such as this was common among men in childhood. Finally participants could also describe *'misbehaving'* as a way to cope, for instance to avoid sport at school, as described by Frank (UK, 63) who avoided physical education due to body image issues.

5.2.2. 'Taking action' in adulthood

By adulthood men had developed new coping strategies to deal with struggle. The most common way was through self-reliance by 'taking action' or 'keeping busy'. Here men tried to keep themselves occupied, seemingly as a way of avoiding difficult emotions at times. 'Taking action' meant following 'logic', *"getting on with it"* (UK, Duncan, 53), tackling a problem 'head-on' and not spending too much time considering emotions or 'reacting'. Instead men emphasised 'responding' i.e. taking action/control as Ned (Aus, 69) argues in his discussion of being *"solution focused"*:

"Yeah, well it's, life is what you make it. If things are difficult you can be problem focused or solution focused and there's a big difference, and whether you react to a situation or whether you respond appropriately to it."

Being active was important to men and narrated as part of masculine identity. Gareth (Aus, 65), who had led a highly active and fast-paced working life until becoming ill in recent years, described the sense of achievement having an 'action' filled life gave him:

"Nothing happens for me when I read a book, I need to have action, if I'm doing a million dollar deal, I'd feel much better than I, sitting back, people say why don't you come up to surfers with us and I used to say…what the hell would I want to go up there for? Oh relax, sit on the bloody pool and have a few pina coladas, I'd rather get up the farm and up on the tractor, because I've had, I've achieved something, I've made myself an obstacle to jump and I've jumped it and I've achieved it, and I feel good for it. And as now, when I do nothing, I think to myself, well I'm wasting another day of my life, am I going to sit here every day and let the day pass me by and I'm not achieving nothing, it doesn't suit me."

Given the way men identify with 'taking action' and the sense of achievement it can instil, it is not surprising that many men may use this as a way to respond to distress. Following the death of his father Brad (Aus, 51) described how he tried to cope through the action of being responsible for his children's needs, indeed he has to 'throw' himself into this to shift the focus away from his distress:

"So when dad died… I just kind of threw myself into keeping a really nice clean house and looking after the girls and making their lunches and all that sort of stuff, I thought, I better do something."

The impetus to 'do something' and take action was again described by Harry (Aus, 56) in relation to the distress of being made redundant and coping with relationship separation:

"How did you sort of work through that then in your mind [being sacked] ?

I think it was probably, I think that probably the action of actually securing another job quickly, I sort of said, well these people want to employ me, what's wrong with you, kind of idea. So that's probably the main way I dealt with it or didn't deal with it, you know.

…and then again I was proactive in initiating divorce proceedings and all of that stuff you know, so you're taking action, yeah." (Aus, Harry, 56)

As implied above 'taking action' as a way to 'deal' with problems could similarly be a way of not dealing with them (or at least with the emotional impact). Through keeping occupied men could find it easier to avoid confrontation with difficult emotions or circumstances. For Duncan (UK, 53) being active and 'doing something' was the best way to get out of the house to avoid confrontation with his father:

"I was just good at playing sports and I'm still quite active now, you know what I mean? I've got to be active, doing something, because that used to keep me busy, to keep my out of the fucking house as well, away from my dad."

Gerry (Aus, 62) reported suffering with increasing unpleasant memories of his abusive childhood, but 'keeping busy' was seemingly chosen against seeking outside help and support:

"How have you coped with that? Have you been able to find ways of coping or seeking support that's helped?

"I tend to just try to get on with other things."

Indeed 'taking action' was generally underpinned by ideals of self-sufficiency and thus could be positioned in direct contrast with seeking professional help. For instance, as evident from Gareth's (Aus, 65) narrative below seeking help was in direct tension with 'taking action'. After suffering with depression Gareth decided to

seek professional help, but as he describes; *"couldn't get any fulfilment out of the discussion"*, leading to shifting the responsibility of care back onto himself and the re-adoption of 'taking action':

"I went and saw a psychiatrist and he told me what I already knew, that it was probably because of the fact that I'd been working so much and it's built up and it's, I'm worn out…But I couldn't get any fulfilment out of any of the discussion…eventually I thought, oh this is really not of benefit to me, I'm wasting my money going to see this bloke and I thought I've got to give myself a kick up the bum and try and do something about it."

The will to take action, 'do something', or keep busy in response to problems predominated among participants at the younger and more physically able end of the age range. 'Action' can become harder for men to maintain as they age as Gareth describes below. While the desire to respond to life and struggles may still be action-based, decline felt through ageing may prevent the possibility of this, particularly when the realisation of one's own mortality comes to the surface.

"I see my friends keeling over at 65 years old and I think, shit maybe I'm going to go next week.

So when you think about the future you worry

Negative, yes, also, yes terrible, it depresses me, because I don't really, haven't got time for that. My attitude in my growing life was I haven't got time to think about that I'm too busy, I haven't got time to die I used to say, people say, oh you're going to kill yourself working like this, say bullshit, I haven't got time to die, I'm too busy, I've got too many things I want to do and I still have that same actual, same feeling today but I just can't do it any more, and I know that I'm saying I'm 65, I'm saying to you all these people drop dead everywhere, friends of mine are dying at this age." (Gareth, Aus, 65)

5.2.3. 'Positive thinking'

Around half of the participants spoke explicitly of being 'positive' or 'thinking positively' in their narratives, though it was not always clear what men meant by this as they inferred different things. Among the men that gave most detail two main themes emerged in their understandings. Firstly, that being positive involves thinking of others (who are worse off) and/or alternative circumstances, in order to realise one's own fortune:

"Yeah, lose your job, lose all your money but I looked at it from the perspective that I was only in my early 30s and the phone call that I got to say I'd lost my job could have been from a doctor saying, you've got six months to live or three months to live, you've got cancer and you're going to die, so I suppose we tried to look at it pretty philosophically and just try and take a positive at it, that look it's just a job." (Aus, Brad, 51)

Such ideas and outlooks were also found in the narratives of participant's that didn't explicitly discuss 'positivity', particularly during times of struggle, suggesting that comparing oneself to others less privileged may be a common way men rationalise negative situations in order to cope with them. Secondly (though less frequently), being positive meant looking to the future and things that may bring happiness, instead of focusing on present struggle:

"And if you've got a really bad one [problem], try to jump it, try to think beyond it, I will overcome this, I will get past this, and then I've got my holiday coming up. And, I don't know, sometimes reward yourself with something, go and buy something, bit of comfort buying…Don't put all your thoughts on this one that's come up in front of you." (UK, Jim, 73)

Within these dominant understandings of positivity men seemingly demonstrated relying on attitude rather than 'action' to cope with struggle. However men still applied a level of control to coping within positivity narratives. For instance Jim's understanding of positivity involves trying to control the future through focusing on it rather than the present, while Ned and Brad apply a process of rationalisation through thinking of others who are 'worse off'. Thus adopting discourses around 'thinking positively' do not necessarily signify a shift away from ideals of control or 'taking action' as they may seemingly imply.

The remaining ways of understanding positivity were idiosyncratic so can only be understood in relation to participants' individual circumstances. For Gareth, who had recently recovered from serious illness and was still struggling with coming to terms with a less active self, not living in fear of becoming ill again was an important part of remaining positive. This meant he had to go about his life enthusiastically, rather than hiding away at home conserving his energy. For Gerry (Aus, 62) being positive meant structuring his time well and doing *"stimulating things"* given the medication he took for illness had begun to make him feel disengaged from life. Thinking

positively for Jim involved visualisation and imagining having already overcome his problems. For Gavin (UK, 70) (who had spent his working life as an international drug smuggler) a recent shift brought on through meditation had led to a whole new value system. Positivity for him seemed to be structured around *"doing good"* and *"living honestly"* involving undertaking voluntary work.

Themes of 'positive thinking', like 'taking action', tended to predominate among the younger participants. Indeed younger participants described 'thinking positively' about ageing as 'thinking young', thereby exhibiting a belief that ageing or feeling old can be controlled. As with 'taking action', by older age (when men tended to physically decline or face other struggles) themes relating to positive attitude could decline and men could describe a need to reassess their attitudes to adapt and cope with new circumstances or feelings, as Pete (UK, 73) explicitly suggests:

"I've always been sort of positive, I still am really…but then you find things are going downhill, you think oh, I'm not going to last forever after anyway, so it's a whole new outlook you have to cope with."

The data suggests that as men age, rather than relying on attitude they may start to turn to sources outside of themselves to cope with struggle, exhibiting shifts to community. Participants also narrated responding to their struggles (of largely physical decline) through constructive ways of 'working' on the body (both discussed in Chapter 7). The following section discusses how some men positioned themselves as 'going with the flow' to cope with struggle in contrast to 'taking action'.

5.2.4. 'Going with the flow' and opting out of the need to control

'Going with the flow' was a positive stance a number of men adopted in response to stress or struggle, sometimes as part of a wider narrative around 'positivity' or 'positive thinking'. For some men 'going with the flow' had been a long adopted attitude to help cope with life's problems, or simply a 'philosophy' of life from a young age:

"As I grew up I thought well, you know, what's the point in striving against things, lets go with the flow and let's take things as they come sort of thing." (UK, Pete, 73)

Men positioned themselves as 'going with the flow' in relation to different aspects of their lives, including careers, relationships, or creative projects such as gardening. 'Going with the flow' meant letting things evolve naturally*, "falling into things"* and *"stumbling through life"* (Aus, William, 60) without trying to influence outcomes:

"It's never been a burning desire of mine to pursue a career of sorts, so life has kind of evolved for me. I've just been thinking about this past day, stuff just evolves for me it doesn't, I don't kind of drive to go somewhere…my general life is pretty disorganised…I kind of go with the flow." (Aus, Kerry, 59)

For some men 'going with the flow' was an outlook achieved in later life, usually as a way of coping with a major transition such as recovering from illness, retiring, or coping with perceived (most often physical) decline from ageing. This often involved a shift away from a more controlling or rigid self and away from 'taking action'. For men here 'going with the flow' was a positive shift, and consistently meant not being too concerned with or 'stuck' in the past (or the future as demonstrated in 'positivity' narratives), but being in the present. For Andrew (Aus, 84) shifting towards 'go with the flow' was adopted in later life after retiring and taking up yoga:

"He sort of lives in the past [participant's friend]…But I move on. When I retired I took up yoga…you sort of drift in and out and all your problems float away…I had trouble relaxing at first. You think you should be getting up and doing something but you finally stop it…it gives you a different outlook altogether. So I keep moving on now."

Gareth (Aus, 65) also demonstrated this shift. As illustrated in the previous section he relied on 'taking action' to feel good until reaching a stage where he just *"couldn't do it anymore."* Illness had caused him to stop work, bringing about depression and feelings of uselessness. He struggled to come to terms with his new limitations. He went on to contact a community support organisation that allowed him to become involved with a range of new activities, helping to induce a shift towards 'go with the flow'. This gave him *"new insight into life…something else to look forward to."* This then allowed him to separate past anxiety from the present to feel that *"the past is the past now and the future's the future."* The struggle for Gareth was 'moving on'

and accepting his limitations rather than trying to control them. *"I know what my limitations are now…when it comes to practicability, I can't do it, I just have to accept it now and say I can't do it."*

Terry (Aus, 65) also demonstrated a shift to 'go with the flow', seemingly brought about by decline (or fear of decline) from ageing and a new focus on health:

"In the last couple of years I've become more accepting of the fact that I am older and my health isn't going to be as, I'm not going to be a 30 year old ever again. So, I guess this is part of the acceptance of being where you are, that, I mean, the things I can control I control, the things I can't, well I guess this is where you've got to accept them."

Indeed 'going with the flow' was constructed against the idea of trying to control life (past or present) or engaging in competition (particularly emergent in the work and sport environment for men), but rather, as Terry says, *"being where you are."* Thus men who chose to 'go with the flow' constructed themselves as having opted out of these pressures, and as conducive to their wellbeing.

5.3.5. Maintaining 'Action' narratives in older age

Finally, in addition to 'going with the flow' maintaining 'action' (control) was significant to experiences of positive wellbeing for many older men. However this could be difficult as men searched for effective strategies to help them cope with the loss of physical and mental functioning. As part of maintaining action and control some men turned to constructive ways of working on the body, such as walking, or going to the gym (discussed in Chapter 7). Additionally men found other ways to cope, like Jim (UK, 73) who described feeling easily overwhelmed as an older man. He discussed a need to slow down, reflect, and manage problems more effectively in order to cope and retain control in the face of feeling less physically and mentally able:

"There is a danger, as you get older it's more difficult to cope with a lot of things. You do feel at times that I can't cope with all of this. You can become overwhelmed by things. Your brain isn't so agile. You're physically not so agile…I do panic sometimes. I get a bill comes in, how am I going to pay this. Sit down, think it through, how the heck am I going to work it out. Another thing is make a list of

things, because I find if I don't do things like that they're ganging up on me and my brain is starting to go, but if you write down a list of problems then you can find, you can maybe cross them out or you can write something like I'll come back to that later, that sort of thing. It works for me. It may not work for everyone, but this is me, the way I will cope with the problems and get through them."

As men sought to maintain control in older age they extended 'action' narratives beyond what was discussed in section 5.2.2 on 'taking action'. For instance as men started to perceive themselves as losing both physical and mental capacities narratives around staying mentally active became as important (or could replace) narratives of physical action. As Henry (UK, 57) asserted *"you've got to keep physically and mentally active."* Don (Aus, 82), who *'dreaded'* the idea of being *'bed bound'* because *"you can't get up and do things"*, had *"always had something to do and I need something to do."* As an older man Don described strategies in order to *"keep my mind active… I do the puzzles…I do this sudoku or whatever they call it…"*

Jim (UK, 73) also highlighted the importance of keeping mentally occupied:

"Keep your mind occupied. That's the main thing. Try and have a goal, try and have something to aim at, no matter how obscure it is. Give yourself something to occupy your mind. That's the main, and it's very important."

Thus discourses of 'mental action' were drawn on by older men as a way to maintain action and control, and to compensate for the failing ageing body.

5.3. Summary

This chapter began by discussing men's narratives of struggle. Pertaining to early years distant relationships with fathers and challenges in sexual and romantic relations were discussed most frequently. Men's relationships with their fathers were often described as lacking significant bonds, closeness and contact, whereas more positive stories were characterised by time spent together, guidance imparted, and values passed down. Yet men with distant relations still expressed admiration for their fathers and often found ways to empathise with them and to account for the loss and rejection they experienced in these relationships. Thus seemingly men

found it difficult to talk about the negative feelings associated with father/son relations, or to criticise their fathers, positioning them as dually 'untouchable'. Turning to the challenges of early sexual relations, these were often characterised by themes of access, opportunity and resources for both heterosexual and homosexual men. For heterosexual men lacking access to women was often a result of all male environments. For gay men lacking access to gay-friendly spaces constrained their ability to form and experience satisfying early relationships. As men aged they developed more opportunities to meet women (i.e. through moving into work, or university) and gay men described processes of 'coming out', leading to more fulfilling relationships and experiences. Later difficulties relating to sexual and romantic relations often involved the experience of 'parting' from a wife or partner through separation, divorce, or death. Men's descriptions of break-ups in particular could be traumatic and initiated emotional struggles and grief, but after 'time' negative experiences were most often redefined in positive terms. Next were the struggles men go through when they become too sick to work, experience unemployment, or retire. For many men leaving paid work involved feelings of uselessness and poor self-worth, though some also demonstrated positive feelings about stopping work. Furthermore some men found ways to blur the boundaries between working and not working, helping them to avoid the negative feelings associated with retirement. Finally, men demonstrated struggle as the loss of physical function started to 'creep up'. Men most often narrated this shift in relation to everyday/practical tasks (i.e. mowing the lawn) as well as sporting abilities, thus turning men's attention to the body. Additionally a minority of men highlighted sexuality/body image concerns in the context of ageing as well as the loss of physical functioning.

The second half of the chapter explored men's ways of coping across the life course. Childhood struggle (particularly poor relations with fathers and difficulties at school) tended to be managed indirectly or passively as men (as children) described resigning themselves to their circumstances with little power to challenge or confront difficulties. As children men didn't necessarily have the resources (that can be accrued with age) to know how best to address and cope with difficulties. Most often men described avoiding struggle through introversion and internalising problems, or creating 'inner worlds' through solitary activities. Fundamentally, lacking a voice and

the knowledge or power to challenge or reconcile struggle was a struggle in itself, heightening problems. By adulthood men started to develop more active ways of coping, though did not always deem these fully successful/effective.

'Taking action' (or keeping busy) in response to struggle, particularly emotional distress, was one of the main ways men described coping during adulthood. Through 'taking action' men could feel a sense of achievement, counterbalancing negative feelings of distress. However 'taking action' led some men to avoid the emotional impact of their distress. Furthermore 'taking action' required men to be highly able and motivated, thus men at the younger end of the sample predominated here. Older men also reflected back on 'taking action' in the past when they had been more able. Seemingly in contrast to 'taking action' men relied on their personal outlook and constructed positive attitudes that helped them cope. Outlooks adopted here included 1) 'Thinking positively' (understood in a variety of ways by participants) and 2) 'going with the flow', which fundamentally meant learning to accept what you can't control. For some participants 'going with the flow' was an outlook achieved in later life, demonstrating shifts away from 'taking action'. Finally, the chapter looked at how men sustain 'action' narratives into older age, finding that many highlight the importance of mental 'action' as men perceived themselves as losing physical and mental function. Men also described the need to 'slow down' to cope with problems more effectively and maintain control as older men.

Chapter 6

Qualitative analysis and results (2)

Identity and wellbeing

This chapter focuses on men's early development and the relationship of this to wellbeing. The chapter is split into three sections. The first section comes in two parts. First it explores the narratives of men who positioned themselves as 'different' and 'loners' in relation to male peers and hegemonic constructions more generally, thus presenting themselves as not 'fitting in'. 'Loners', or those who identified as 'different', commonly minimised or dismissed the negative effects of not fitting in, but could also associate being a 'loner' more openly with negative feelings. Furthermore men frequently cited 'fixed' 'causes' for their identities as 'loners' and 'different' as out of their control (i.e. as 'acquired' through socialisation). This is followed by 'outsider' narratives. 'Outsiders' also constructed themselves away from peers and certain hegemonic constructions. However 'outsiders' were more positive and narrated their identities as proactively shaped. As 'outsiders' critically reflected on masculinity and rejected certain characteristics they adopted alternative models they valued such as self-discovery, or prioritised 'alternative' political beliefs.

The second section explores narratives of self-sufficiency and the relationship of this to wellbeing and identity. Men tended to understand self-sufficiency as not asking for help, or feeling the need to communicate, and often tied this to the experience of being a man. Men who viewed themselves as self-sufficient generally offered only minimal descriptions of struggle and were more likely to describe themselves as 'lucky' or 'fortunate' than others who gave more detailed descriptions of struggle. While some men seemed to view self-sufficiency as a valuable 'trait', others questioned the effectiveness of self-sufficiency and moreover, narrated it as harmful and and a confinement upon men. Thus men could display tensions between valuing self-sufficiency and wanting support.

While most men viewed themselves as self-sufficient and described not 'fitting in', some men also valued male friendship. Thus the third section explores men's accounts of homosocial friendship as positively reflected on by men. Significant male friendships tended to develop in the context of 'doing'/undertaking activities together

such as sport, drinking, and further 'risky' or competitive behaviours. While some men reflected on experiences of risk negatively, others highlighted the importance of risk and competition for male bonding and identity construction. Men's positive accounts of team sport illustrated the sense of achievement sport could bring, as well as opportunities for bonding and intimacy between men. A minority of participants discussed the importance of male friendship and support outside of an 'activity' framework, instead highlighting verbal communication and emotional support as valuable.

5.1.1. Being a 'loner' or 'different'

'Loners', or those who identified as 'different', most often described themselves as not 'fitting in' or feeling at ease in the company of other men. For example Pete (Aus, 73) described feeling like he *"stood out"* in homosocial environments such as the army because he was a *"free wheelin sort of drifter, sort of thinker."* Or Albert (Aus, 75), who lacked interest in socialising with other men; *"yeah, smoking, drinking. I've never been a club person or a pub person, wanting to get together."*

Men tended to find 'causes' for identifying as 'loners' or 'different' and positioned this as something they had little control over. For example Don (Aus, 81) felt his 'loner' status stemmed from parental behaviours or attitudes, suggesting "*she [mother] was a loner, my father was a loner and I'm the same."* Trying to recall his mother's words Don presents being a 'loner' as unproblematic, and furthermore as valuable by drawing on notions of competition: *"…the lone person travels fastest or something."*

Identifying as 'different' similarly led men to view themselves as not 'fitting in', with some highlighting concerns that something was *"wrong"* (Jim, UK, 73) with them. Jack (Aus, 66) constructs himself as 'different' in light of his 'active' and 'competitive' sister, rendering Jack 'passive':

"As a child I was passive and she was the tomboy, she was the one that climbed trees and I didn't…even at the age of 16 she had a motorbike and driving around…my mother said that I should have been the girl and she should have been the boy because she was the active one and she was the one getting in trouble and she was the one doing things."

Jack links his 'passivity' to an inability to 'do' masculinity (as determined by his mother), yet he dismisses the idea of this causing any struggle. Indeed his mothers comments *"didn't worry me, it was criticism of my sister."*

John (Aus, 85) highlighted school peers as influential in constructing his sense of 'difference': *"I didn't seem to fit in there very well… I found I was quite sophisticated and most of the, my contemporaries at the school I considered childish."* Like Jack John felt "*it didn't worry me that much*". Nevertheless John offers a 'fixed' explanation and again like both the previous participants draws on his mother's words, seemingly adding extra 'weight' or authenticity to his feelings:

My mother always said that I was the type of child who if I did something I, my attitude was I'd done it, you can either like it or lump it."

For others identifying as a 'loner' or 'different' was narrated more openly as a struggle. Harry (Aus, 56) struggled with 'fitting in' after migrating to Australia from the UK during his early teens, a decision made by his parents he had little control over:

"It was a kind of experience of wanting to, wanting to fit in but not really being able to fit in, because people would keep drawing attention to the fact that you were different, and that makes it kind of difficult to feel as if you're really part of it…so you know, that was a fairly significant thing."

Thus Harry highlights his desire to 'fit in', but described feeling alienated from his peer group. Howard (UK, 81) described suffering racist taunts and bullying as a child due to his curly hair, big nose, and 'overdone' clothes made by his mother. To compensate Howard explained he *"had to climb the tallest trees'* and play football. Thus as men constructed their 'difference' they often highlighted ways of compensating for any perceived loss of self-worth, particularly in relation to lacking sporting abilities, such as through emphasising academic achievements:

"There were some people who were good at sport and there were some people who were good at other things and I was always good at the academic things… at least I knew that I wasn't worthless if you know what I mean?" (Ken, UK, 50)

Terry (Aus, 65), who described himself as *"not any good"* at sport, highlighted *"read[ing] 3 or 4 books a week"* instead, but also managed to find a way to be

involved in the sporting context with peers. Instead of playing (which he was never picked for when it came to choosing teams) he managed the equipment for the school sporting teams, allowing him to have *"an association, rather than direct involvement."* Ken (UK, 50) also demonstrated dealing with his 'difference' by forming his own 'miscellaneous gang', thus offering protection from violence in school:

"I always seemed to gravitate towards people who weren't in any sort of clique, they were sort of odd balls, because they…didn't fit in like me, like, as I didn't fit in they didn't fit in either, so we, I, we always ended up in a sort of a miscellaneous sort of gang."

Early sibling relations - or indeed the lack of them - were also significant in the construction of men's identities as 'loners' or 'different'. The experience of being an only-child had an important impact on Jim's (UK, 73) early sense of self, initiating struggles with feeling 'different':

"when you're growing up you go through different phases of your life, and if you've got a sibling, they're experiencing similar things and you're not in the spotlight all the time, but as I was growing up I didn't have that, and I used to think there was something wrong with me or am I different to other people, and everything was focused on me because there was no-one to share that focus. So that's an aspect that I regret, of not having a brother or sister."

Pete (UK, 73) made connections between being an only-child and feeling like a 'loner', though dismisses the possibility of struggle, having 'accepted' who he is:

"I'm not really concerned one way or the other [about being an only child]. I've grown up with it, I accept that I've always been a bit of a loner, maybe because of that obviously, so it doesn't worry me."

However as Pete's narrative continued his position as a 'loner' becomes more problematic, and like others Pete provides a fixed 'cause' for his identity as 'loner' – too much feminine influence:

"Because I was an only child and I was the first grandchild to my grandparents, and I used to get taken down there and looked after by my Gran…there was a few girl sort of half cousins and I used to get mollycoddled"

Thus Pete's identity as a 'loner' is positioned as problematically feminine. Pete describes having different interests to most other men and presents this as how he is 'made', thus as something he has little control over: *"I'm not made to be one of the boys, I'm made to do my own thing and think my own thing."* Pete's lack of enthusiasm for joining in *"held him back"* at work where he described not being able to *"integrate enough."* He felt he stood out by not wearing the same clothes as others, not wanting to play golf, or *"do the beer after work thing",* instead preferring to pursue his own interests. On the one hand Pete seems to value his individuality, yet he also positions being as a 'loner' as a constraint and 'problem': *"this is all part of my problem, I think I've never been happy too much with the company of men."* Pete described the expectations he perceived in building homosocial relations: "*men want to be jolly and hail fellow…come out for a drink and down the pub and slap on the back, that sort of thing, that's not me",* leading him to voice a preference for (older) female company. He also highlights the competitiveness of men (and younger women) as to why he felt more comfortable with older women:

"They're much more sympathetic, they're, it seems to me they're not so competitive, maybe the younger ones are nowadays but my generation, and they're much more into interpersonal relationships, working together, no joshing about, they're more focused on doing things communally I think."

In addition Pete remarked upon the 'antagonism' of men, a theme picked up on by others:

"I'm not into antagonistic statements or actions… Whether I'm too soft or something I don't know but I've never been into that."

Albert (Aus, 75) also related more easily to women based on an understanding of masculinity and homosocial relations as defined through drinking and smoking, sport:

"I guess I've related to women more easily than I have to men. I've only ever watched one football game in my life and that was at high school."

However he also confessed to missing male company, and became most emotional when speaking about a male friend who had died. Albert had not been able to make

any significant new friends since and described feeling rejected by other men: *"I've tried, but no one's really been interested."* Thus while some men dismissed the idea of their identities as loners or 'different' being a struggle, most men offered a 'cause' beyond their control, and some openly narrated their positions as difficult. However as some men aged and reflected on their 'difference' they could re-evaluate their feelings about this. For instance Jim (UK, 73) described an instance of feeling like he didn't fit in with his friends anymore since they returned from the Army: *"they were far more streetwise than I was after…much more self-sufficient than me and they could do all these things."* But upon reflection he considered whether these feelings were a result of 'bravado', using the analogy of a 'parachute jump':

"I sometimes think I'd liked to have done a parachute jump, but then I think to myself I'd like to be able to say I'd done a parachute jump but whether I'd actually have the nerve to go and do a parachute jump is a different thing…bit of enforced bravado maybe."

Thus while not 'fitting in' may have caused difficulties for men in younger years, some demonstrated reconciling this with age as they developed better understandings of themselves, and no longer faced the same pressures or expectations as older men.

5.1.2. 'Outsiders'

Like 'loners' and those who identified as 'different, 'outsiders' described not 'fitting in'. However 'outsiders' tended to construct their identities as more flexible; with a greater capacity to adapt to homosocial contexts. For example as an 'outsider' Robert (UK, 59) could converse in talk about sport and football, *"which was something that boys did",* but he had other interests that were *"unusual for people, for boys that I grew up with in effect."* He went on to describe having *"strange tastes"* in music and a *"desire to be awkward and difficult."* Rather than Robert conceptualising this as struggle he highly valued his 'outsider' identity which he described as proactively sought:

"I was looking for something else that was not, not following the crowd. And I think perhaps I'm, that has been something that I've done, really, throughout my life."

Robert recounted refusing to join in *"nicking sweets from Woolworths"* with the other boys despite the *"pressure"* of being called *"chicken."* *"I was happy to be an outsider...I knew I wasn't going to do things just to be one of the boys really."* He also confessed to *"never [being] comfortable making idle chit chat"* and not having ever found *"anyone I find as interesting as myself."* Robert even reflected on carrying around Mao-Tse-tung's Little Red Book at school because it *"annoyed the other boys."* Though Robert also reflects on his lack of insight into his behaviour at this time:

"I don't know [what] it was actually rebelling against, against I suppose the opinions that people grew up with in the country, in a way. Certainly the country where I grew up is very, very Conservative." (Robert, UK, 59)

Like Robert, Stephen (Aus, 71) similarly presented himself as able to 'fit in' to homosocial contexts, such as the army, yet also positioned himself as an individual, away from being 'one of the boys'. He could see *"straight away it wasn't for me…a lot of the people in charge of you…they didn't know what they were doing…it irritated me but I could put up with it."* A similar pattern emerged when discussing the behaviour of other men he used to surf with (*"urinating on the fire…defecating in front of someone's car door"*). Stephen was *"too level headed"* to join in, but could *"see the funny side of it."* Effectively Stephen demonstrated being able to socialise in homosocial groups while maintaining a sense of individuality.

Kerry (Aus, 58) also recognised himself as a political 'outsider' in school, though described this less pro-actively then Robert as shaped by parental influence:

"Being an outsider politically as a kid, because my parents were probably politically quite active, certainly in terms of dinner time conversations."

Again rather than a struggle, Kerry described this more positively as 'interesting':

"it was an all boys school, basically they regarded me as being a communist, kind of get out you're yellow, yellow peril sort of stuff, and, so that was I suppose interesting for me because it meant that I was completely on the outer in terms of social views."

Kerry described positive feelings of 'connecting' with others by taking part in political demonstrations during the Vietnam War: *"there was a cluster of us; I suppose I didn't feel quite so alone if you like."* Thus despite 'outsiders' proactivity shaping their own identities, they could still demonstrate feelings of loneliness and seek opportunities for support and a sense of community.

Charlie (Aus, 57) also expressed his divergence from the 'mainstream' through his choice of reading, highlighting the importance of self-discovery rather than being *'taught' 'how to think'*:

"I read a lot of science fiction at that time, so probably not mainstream stuff. I steered clear of philosophy because it always struck me that they were trying to teach you how to think, and I always believed that you'd got to learn how to think, got to make your own discoveries for them to have meaning, not be told by somebody else who's discovered."

Mathew (Aus, 76) demonstrated political aspects to his 'outsider' identity as he reflected on proactively resisting hegemonic constructions by: *"purposefully sending myself down that path of avoiding the macho heterosexual male…*

I collected stamps and I played rounders with the girls and even though I wasn't really meant to, I thought that was fun."

Further positioning himself as an 'outsider' Mathew perceived a strong relationship between sport and violence, and thus was deterred from team sports due to the risk of injury, leading him to prefer 'girls games':

"I hated team sports, like football and cricket. I think that's fairly common amongst gay men, not to like those kind of macho team sports… I hated, didn't want to be bashed up…and I just couldn't see the point in it…I liked the games that the girls played. I found the skipping rope fun. I could do it, and I liked things like the girls had swap cards, and I thought they were good."

However Mathew professed a liking for tennis and valued the competitive element:

I liked [tennis] because I was reasonable, not really good but quite reasonable. And I am a bit competitive. I liked the competition. I still do. I was also competitive academically, too. I took pride…

Mathew's narrative shows that he rejected team sports on the basis of it being violent and 'macho', yet this didn't mean he couldn't invest in other traditional masculine characteristics (i.e. competition) that he enjoyed.

Thus, 'outsiders' showed flexibility in their gendered identities, and could still value traditional masculine values whilst demonstrating bonds with women and femininity. Indeed Mathew *"liked girls better than boys"*, explaining it as *"an emotional thing"*, thus suggesting he perceived men as more emotionally restricted than women. Robert (UK, 59) also reflected on the lack of emotion shown by men and how he could talk 'more deeply' with women:

"It could be that I probably perceive that men, you have to be hard and not show emotions, I think. So it could be just that it's my assumption that you don't do that with men, and therefore you can talk about emotions with women…I felt you could talk more deeply with women than you could with men, which may have not been the case, but that's probably it really…even XXX7 who's my, the male friend I have now, we don't talk about anything deeply meaningful."

Robert draws on the concept of 'blokishness' to describe the things about masculinity he found unappealing in other men: *"only talking about football and how many pints you've drunk"*, finding women *"more interesting."* As further evidence of men's flexibility as 'outsiders', Robert also talked about instances of being 'one of the boys' through his enjoyment of team sport. He perceived this as a contradiction within himself:

"It's a contradiction really, isn't it? Because I did do boys things and played sport and enjoyed it, but I think sort of, on a sort of other level I find sort of, well I can't think, it's not feminine things I like, it's just that, or male things, there are men who are like that, but it's, I just, I suppose I don't feel comfortable with blokishness, I guess, really, it would appear."

Though rather than this being a contradiction 'outsider' narratives demonstrate that men here are able to adopt characteristics associated with masculinity that they value whilst rejecting others (i.e. 'Blokishness'), thus emphasising the fluidity of men's identities. As further evidence of this fluidity men could illustrate shifts in valorising certain masculine ideals across the life course. For Robert (UK, 59) drinking alcohol and a preoccupation with sport, which he 'enjoyed' when he was younger, was positioned as 'a waste of time' as an older man:

"…only talking about football and how many pints you've drunk, and that sort of thing. Which we did when we were students, and I was ok with it when I was a student, but I thought you can't continue like that really…it's a waste of time, it's not very interesting."

Thus, 'outsiders' conceptualised their identities more positively than 'loners', or those who described themselves as 'different'. 'Outsiders' narrated a greater sense of 'action' in shaping their own identities, rather than presenting their positions as 'acquired' through parental views or decisions or being only-children - processes over which they had little control. Rather than expressing regret or a lack of self-worth, men valued their 'outsider' status which they defined through positive ideas around individuality and self-discovery, rather than expressing feelings of exclusion or loss. Perhaps harder to cope with was the homophobic bullying Kerry had to endure due to his interest in music and disinterest in sport, yet he reflected on this with ease and a sense of critical understanding:

"I suppose I went through that whole thing through the high school, oh you're a bloody poofter because you're playing music, it was a sort of fairly, fairly common theme."

Furthermore Kerry draws on his childhood experiences with his guitar - described as *"transforming"* - to position himself as more spiritually mature, or unique, than the boys that had mocked him: *"I just thought I'm going somewhere you're not going",* thus constructing himself as 'rising above' the policing of peers.

In drawing together men's experiences of developing their identities as 'outsiders', 'loners', or 'different' and the implications for wellbeing, men were impacted differently by this. As demonstrated 'outsiders' tended to identify most positively and flexibly, often emphasising alternative political beliefs, or themes of self-discovery as triumphing over popular hegemonic constructions (such as being 'one of the boys' or 'blokishness'). Indeed 'outsiders' narrated greater control over shaping their own identities and described successfully operating in homosocial contexts whilst maintaining their own individuality. However 'loners', and those who identified as 'different', tended to conceptualised their identities less positively, and were more likely to narrate the experience of not 'fitting in' as loss. There was a sense that 'loners' and those who saw themselves as 'different' felt expelled from homosocial

groups by peers, rather than having carved out a more positive sense of self, as outsiders demonstrated. However 'loners' and those who were 'different' sometimes drew on alternative sources of esteem, such as academic success, thus offsetting the negative associations with their identities with sources of worth they valued.

6.3. Self-sufficiency

Men often described themselves as self-sufficient though could express this in slightly different ways. For most self-sufficiency became apparent through a tendency not to ask others for help as Duncan (UK, 53) explained:

"I wouldn't turn to my friends really, I would sort it out myself, whatever's got to be sorted…I've got to sort my own shit out."

For Duncan his self-sufficiency was not positioned as a problem because it was what he was used to, as he explains: *"Any problems I've ever had, I've had to deal with them myself, other people can't help you really."* Pete (UK, 73) also kept his problems *"to himself"*, not wanting to *"burden"* others. *"I like to think around things and do, do around things individually, privately."* Robert (UK, 59) also asserted that he didn't need *"other people to help me make decisions",* confident that he's always

"known what I want to do…I don't really need any support from others, be it males or females, really. I think I, I'm self-sufficient…I feel I can make my mind up and I ought to make my mind up, and if it goes wrong then that's it."

As well as not asking for help or support men here tended to describe not really needing to communicate with others about their problems, and tied this to the experience of being a man. Francis (UK, 86) explained that there *"isn't the same degree of desire for communication in a man [than a woman]."* Henry (UK, 57) also felt that *"men don't talk"*, at least not *"men of my age and men of my situation",* though significantly he reflected that he didn't know whether "*the way that men deal with it [struggle] is right or the best."* Like Pete Henry (UK, 57) felt "*a lot of men are basically private and you don't talk about things that are that private really."* Albert (Aus, 75) also said *"you let people know what you want them to know and there are*

things that you don't tell anybody." Self-sufficient men made strong distinctions between 'friends' and 'acquaintances' (highlighting how friendship is hard to achieve but acquaintances are common), seemingly distinguishable by the level of trust men held in others. *"You don't find many real friends in life. You get a lot of acquaintances but you don't trust everyone."* (Andrew, UK, 84)

Self-sufficiency was often narrated into men's narratives early on and described as shaped by parents (rather than men's own choice). For instance Stephen (Aus, 71) felt his dad had *"trained"* him to be *"self-reliant."* Don (Aus, 81) also spoke of learning to be self-responsible early on:

"My mother insisted on the time that you could get your nose above of the top of the electric or in our case gas stove, you learnt to cook. And I could cook roast dinners and things when I was about 12."

Thus men reflected on the origins of their self-sufficiency and offered 'causes' (as demonstrated with 'loner'/'different' identities). Don had lived away from home since he was 12 at boarding school leaving him to determine *"I've been so long sort of battling on my own."* Thus men's self-sufficiency could be narrated as a struggle and an expectation upon men rather than a 'natural' part of masculine identity. Through religious schooling and parental influence some men were raised with strong 'breadwinner' beliefs that underpinned ideals of self-sufficiency. Henry (UK, 57) described being trained to *"plan ahead"* and save money in the expectation of *'looking after'* a family:

"One of the things about going to my particular Catholic school was that you were told as a man you'd be responsible for a wife and children."

This seemed to connect to the importance Henry placed on competence, which he described *'learning young'* through his training as a craftsman. Henry told stories of what he saw as incompetence or 'bad management', often positioning himself as more knowledgeable and an authority. Stephen (Aus, 71) also held a strong focus on competence and 'planning ahead' in order to help *"things fall into place."*

Commonly men who expressed self-sufficiency offered less reflection on the experience of struggle, often suggesting they'd not had any big problems in life and describing themselves as 'lucky'. Robert (UK, 59) found he *"hadn't really had any great stress or trauma in my life'* so spoke little about ways of coping other than to say that he *"seemed able to cope with things…I work things out in my own head."* Charlie (Aus, 57), who had grown up with a violent and alcoholic father, instead chose to highlight how *"incredibly lucky"* he was rather than the difficulties. Going to prison was a time of struggle for Duncan (UK, 53), but he had no *"special ways of coping'*, because *"you just get on with it."* Henry also felt he'd not had much to struggle over: *"I would say that on the whole I've been quite lucky in life. I've not really had a major problem to deal with."* Seemingly men who relied on self-sufficiency found it more difficult to discuss experiences and emotions involving vulnerability.

Like 'loners', and men who described feeling 'different', men made connections between their self-sufficiency and status as only-children. As only-children men were used to feeling alone, impacting upon whether they would seek support as adults:

"Yeah, it'd be pretty lonely without friends but, as I say, I'm an only child so I know I can exist on my own, all right? So only children have a different view on friends and brothers and sisters would as well because I know there is only me, I don't really have anybody to turn to." (UK, Duncan, 53)

Duncan's narrative suggests he values being responsible for himself and doesn't want to burden others, yet he concedes that without friends he would be 'lonely'. Being an only-child is the main way Duncan accounts for his self-sufficiency, but he also goes on to highlight masculinity, as he suggests his male friends - Scottish men specifically - are too *"rough"* to be able to discuss problems with.

In addition to being an only-child other types of family structures could also be drawn upon by men to give cause to their independence and self-sufficiency. Gareth (Aus, 65) ties up his independence with his identity as a boy among six sisters: "*I had to be an independent sort of a bloke, because I was one out of six.*" Similarly Andrew (Aus, 84) who was one of eight children confirmed; *"growing up in a big family you don't*

get the same care as those who have one or two in the family…you kiss your own knee better when you fall over."

In drawing some conclusions around men's self-sufficiency and wellbeing, men most often tended to understand self-sufficiency as not asking for help from others. While some men seemed to incorporate self-sufficiency unproblematically into their narratives and positioned it as a valued aspect of their masculine identity, others questioned the value of being self-sufficient, with some suggesting it could be damaging. Some men constructed their self-sufficiency as part of their socialisation (as with 'loner' and 'different' narratives), highlighting the 'unnaturalness', or cultural construction of self-sufficiency. Indeed some men directly linked their self-sufficiency critically to expectations of masculinity. Men could also display tensions between ideals of self-sufficiency and wanting to seek support and friendship, thus self-sufficiency can be a struggle for men to sustain. Indeed while self-sufficiency may be narrated as conducive to a positive sense of self, most men narrate this as an expectation, thus leading some to question, challenge, and search for ways to break away from this ideal.

Having now discussed 'outsiders', 'loners', those who identified as 'different', and self-sufficiency narratives, we turn to men's accounts of valuing male friendship and 'being one of the boys', most often in contrast to self-sufficiency, adopted by a minority of participants.

6.4. Homosocial friendship and being 'one of the boys'

While discussed by a minority of men, some described homosocial friendship as actively sought and conducive to wellbeing. Men here described male 'bonding', 'camaraderie', or time spent with other men as important. Men's 'bonds' tended to be made through hegemonic practices/activities, involving competition and risk, particularly in earlier years. For instance stories around sport and drinking with friends were relatively common in men's descriptions of close bonds with one another. A few men spoke of 'gangs' they joined in childhood. Stephen (Aus, 71) remembered his 'gang'; 'The Blue Boys':

"we weren't angels at all…we used to do some pretty silly things…we used to make a fire, a bottle bomb, pickle bomb I suppose it was, we had kerosene and we'd light it and throw it out in the middle of the road and then dash across the end of the street and disappear."

Gavin (UK, 70) described a comedy of errors in his attempts to carry out 'gang' related rebellion:

"So we tried to rob the place one of these times, and it was absurd. We managed to get into the kitchen, and we couldn't get out of the kitchen, so we robbed them of frozen strawberries and things. …we just made a complete bungle of it as usual."

Past rebellious, risky (and criminal) behaviours as above, could be reflected on as 'silly', 'ridiculous', or 'crazy' by men, as they constructed themselves as more 'mature' and reflexive in older age. For instance Kerry (Aus, 58), who had discussed experiences of risk-taking in his own youth involving experimentation with drugs, now helped rehabilitate young men who had suffered accidents as a result of risky behaviour as part of his profession: "*I mean they were either doing stupid things or being recipients of stupid things…and their lives are basically fucked.*" As an older man Kerry had moved away from risk-taking towards a position of responsibility and care for other men. Men could also describe moving away from risk as a struggle as the pressure to be involved with risky activities could continue into older age, as Duncan (UK, 53) explained:

"I found myself fucking being roped into sitting in dark fucking car parks with bags of money and doing these concrete deals, do you know what I mean? Which was even scarier than what I'd been doing back home. To go and, I can't be doing this for you man, you know what I mean? I came away, came here to get away from this sort of stuff. Oh well, you know, but it's kind of what you've got to do."

However other forms of 'risk' could be narrated more positively, helping men form significant bonds with one another, as illustrated by Henry (UK, 57):

"Bit of a bonding experience…canoeing and surf, this sort of stuff, but the abseiling there were no safety ropes…it was very much, not macho, it was just if you want to do it do it. If you don't, don't worry about it. It's not for everyone."

Undertaking risky activities could be understood as a 'rite of passage' and an opportunity to learn about personal identity and ability:

"The rally driving or other mad motorbike things, we've done it, guys and, but go ahead and do it, you've got to do it yourself. You've got to, boys you have got to go and do it, get the thrill from it and learn from it. Yeah, some of you are going to get hurt but…I think it's useful. It teaches you to look at the situations and it's the experience." (Henry, UK, 57)

Henry's narrative illustrates he values the risk involved in extreme sports, suggesting that risk teaches you responsibility, how to make decisions and cope as a man. However while taking risks or 'challenging' oneself may help steer a path towards self-discovery and growth, some men cited slightly more caution than Henry, like Ken (UK, 50) who describes a tension between taking risks and avoiding challenges as a younger man:

"You've got to find out who you are and you've got to find out what it is you're good at, what you can't do…you've got to steer the fine line between not forcing yourself into situations that are going to do you harm and, on the one hand, and not avoiding any kind of challenge or whatever on the other and just staying in your comfort zone."

Sport was frequently tied to the development of masculine identity and presented as something that aids male bonding/intimacy. Men could identify as a *"rugby man"* (Mitch, Aus, 76) or confess they were "*not a sports guy"* (Randeep, UK, 71), thus sport was commonly understood as part of *"boys' things"* (Robert, UK, 59) and successful sporting ability could provide a means of 'doing' hegemonic masculinity. Moreover sports could establish a hierarchy or *"pecking order"* (Ken, UK, 50) amongst men, as boys, adding identity construction. Further defining sport as part of masculinity and homosocial relations, it was sometimes constructed against successful relations with women. For instance men could describe being more interested in sport than girls when they were younger (Alfie, UK, 62).

"I didn't have many girlfriends or nothing like that cos I was into all sorts you know, snooker and err…I didn't want to get involved, I loved doing what I wanted to…when I was younger…I was more interested in football, that was my life up until 30, 35." (Alfie, UK, 62)

Conversely sporting interests could *'fall away'* (Jim, UK, 73) once marriage was entered into. Henry (UK, 57) below describes the difficulties he faced trying to maintain relationships with girls alongside a strong commitment to sport during his late teens and early twenties:

"I suppose it was a bit self-centred really but I used to play rugby and there'd be a rugby game somewhere in another part of the country and I'm there for the day and get back Saturday night. And there aren't too many girls with, keen, can't go out Saturday night because he's out playing rugby. And I'd say it's fine. Some would say to me, well a lot would say this isn't going to work. And I'd say, yeah you're probably right."

Men who enjoyed sport frequently commented on the competitive element as meaningful and enjoyable:

"it's rivalry 'innit? You wanna beat the other team as well as they wanna beat you." (Alfie, UK, 62)

"I suppose I liked the competitive element of it. That would be the most, I liked winning." (Gavin, UK, 70)

Henry (UK, 57) also highlights a sense of achievement gained through the competitive and team elements of sport, tying it to men and masculinity through his assertion that *"it's a male thing":*

"I suppose the physical challenge. It's one on one. I played in the front row of the scrum in the end and that's very much a wrestle, yeah. You gain an advantage by your guy or inner strength and the way you react to the situations around you. So I miss that. And it's also a sort of a male thing too. It's the team effort, the team games thing and I quite like that and the humour of it when you discuss it afterwards."

Thus through the competition of sport, hegemonic masculinity and a sense of success could be experienced, as well as opportunities for bonding and closeness between men as described by Charlie (Aus, 57):

"Sport gives you the instant success, doesn't it? You can score a try, you can make a wonderful tackle, and you can lose the game, but reflect on how it's happened…I was a very good medium

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distance runner, but I couldn't pursue that because it was just the most boring thing, to be training, doing laps on your own and not doing anything else. So team sport was great, and being with other people, working together, pulling off achievements or, if you didn't, knowing that you had tried as hard, as a group, as you possibly could."

Henry below distinguishes between men's 'inner strength' and outer physical strength in the context of sport, highlighting both as part of masculinity. However when describing his father it is the 'quiet strength' (learnt in a sporting context) that Henry draws upon to construct an image of 'ideal masculinity':

"He could break you without any trouble at all but be gentle as a pussy cat, but what you noticed about him was the quiet strength… So the other clack you hear about some men who are big and brutish but this was someone who was, who could match that but wasn't. I would have hated to play against him at rugby. He would have been phenomenal but he got into wrestling…and probably learnt to control himself there." (UK, 57)

Indeed, like 'outsiders', Henry constructs his father's masculinity as 'rising above' hegemonic constructs, or the 'clack', about 'big and brutish' men, highlighting 'control' as fundamental to hegemonic masculinity.

Sport could be intertwined with drinking alcohol in the pursuit of male 'bonding':

"head down [to the local footy] about three o'clock and have a couple of beers…ring up one of the boys and go, do you want to pop over for a beer or he'll go, I'm just sitting out in the deck do you want to come over? And I'll go, oh yeah, so we'll go over and have three or four stubbies and finish at about 6.30 and come home, so…this is male bonding…" (Aus, Brad, 51).

Drinking alcohol was also constructed as part of 'camaraderie' for James (Aus 86) who worked in the plumbing trade, though he had since become abstinent and described missing the intimacy:

"I missed the camaraderie…we went to the pub every night. When 6 o'clock closing, went down the pub at 5.30. It was a ritual and a plumbing thing where we'd sort of meet and line up all the glasses on the counter and we must have gone home tanked every night."

For Brad (Aus, 51) in particular, as an older man he described the importance of spending time with younger men in order to keep feeling young:

"I think I tend to keep myself healthy because I've got some young nephews as well and they're in their late 20s and 30s…So I sort of hang around with them which is good, but I'm thinking some of their mates probably think it's bizarre that this 50 year old hangs around with his 30 year old nephew but we get on really well and it's good fun, and yeah, have a few beers and I pull myself back onto the train and get home, and yeah, so I think that helps."

As demonstrated by men peer relations can be significant to instil a sense of achievement and provide opportunities for intimacy, friendship, and identity construction. At the same time peer groups can exclude others as Henry (UK, 57) stated regarding his participation in extreme sports; 'it is not for everyone'. While it was uncommon for men to talk about bonding and intimacy between men outside of these 'activity based' contexts, Jim and Brad represented rare exceptions to this. For instance Brad distinguished between friends with whom he got *"deep and meaningful",* involving talk about *"emotions"*, communication on *"a different level"* from those where it was *"pretty much generally, how's work going, what have you been doing?"* Jim (UK, 73) described a lonely childhood without siblings, an absent father and depressive mother, thus his male friends and their families helped him cope. Consequently they formed his sense of 'belonging'. Indeed without them, Jim asks *"what's the purpose of the whole life, existence thing?"*

"I looked to the companionship of my friends. They became my, they were really my family, my friends, and their parents…They're something that I can depend on. They're almost a standard thing in my life, because a lot of things in life can let you down and things happen, bad things happen and that. You've got someone you can turn to, someone you can depend on, someone to support you, someone to give you a purpose…So it's belonging, a feeling of belonging to something."

Men rarely used such emotional language to describe male friends, indeed men tended to masculinise their language to describe the support received from other men. For example when James (Aus, 86) told his friend he had diabetes he *"shoved"* him off to the doctor. Don (Aus, 81) described how men could *"toss"* around problems because someone will always offer advice on how to *"fix"* them. There were some examples of men using more emotional language when describing the support of friends in a work environment, where men could 'help' each other 'through' difficult experiences, expressed by both Jim (UK, 73) and Stephen (Aus, 71). Nevertheless, emotional bonds between men were much less frequently discussed in comparison to the bonds formed through competition and risk for men.

6.5. Summary

This chapter began by exploring the relationship between men's early identity construction/development and wellbeing, illustrating some of the ways men narrated their masculine identities when relating to experiences of wellbeing, both positive and negative. An overarching theme in men's narratives involved ideas around not 'fitting in' with other men, though men conceptualised this differently. Men who positioned themselves as 'loners' or 'different' tended to view themselves as having little control over not 'fitting in' and positioned their identities as a product of their environments or upbringings, such as parental influence or family structures. 'Outsiders' on the other hand were more likely to value their 'difference' as they associated this with positive ideas around individuality and self-discovery. 'Outsiders' positioned themselves as playing an active role in constructing their identities away from certain hegemonic characteristics, and as politically motivated. Furthermore, outsiders narrated greater flexibility in their gendered identities, frequently describing bonds with women and emotional connections as important. At the same time, 'outsiders' also presented themselves as able to successfully socialise with other men in traditional contexts (i.e. sport) and as embracing alternative characteristics of hegemonic masculinity (i.e. individuality, self-discovery), thus revealing identity to be fluid and dynamic.

The chapter then explored men's narratives of self-sufficiency, predominantly understood by men as not asking for help. While some men valued self-sufficiency most questioned this relationship and its necessary value. Indeed, some men made explicit connections between being an 'outsider' and/or self-sufficient and their masculinity (i.e. that men don't need to talk to other people about their problems). Furthermore men drew links between 'breadwinner' ideology and self-sufficiency narratives. Thus men largely constructed self-sufficiency as an expectation upon men.

Finally, the chapter explored narratives of homosocial friendship. Some men narrated valuing close relations with other men and male 'bonding' rather than maintaining such a strong focus on self-sufficiency (where men often devalued the need for friends and support). However narratives of self-sufficiency and narratives

of friends/support were not necessarily mutually exclusive and some men demonstrated tensions between on the one hand highlighting friends and support as important, yet also valorising self-sufficiency, suggesting there are tensions for men between building homosocial friendships and remaining self-sufficient. Narratives of valuing male friendship and support were generally discussed by men in the context of collective activities, including sport (or other competitive practices), drinking alcohol, and further 'risky' behaviours, which could aid identity construction. A couple of men spoke about the importance of male friendship outside of the framework of activities, in relation to emotional support, though this was rare among this cohort of men.

Chapter 7

Qualitative analysis and results (3)

Ageing and identity

This chapter has two sections. First, it discusses shifts towards responsibility, reflexivity, and emotional expression when men form relationships and build families. Secondly, it looks at men's shifts towards forming community bonds and constructive embodied ways of working on the body, as men cope with difficult transitions in older age, such as retirement, and losing physical function.

7.1. Shifts towards responsibility, reflexivity, and emotional expression

Adulthood often involved notable shifts for men towards new responsibilities, particularly when they formed families and relationships. Indeed men positioned themselves as more mature and responsible as 'family' men. However, discourses of responsibility were not institutionalised into gay men's romantic relationships, rather notions of exploration and discovery prevailed. Forming families and relationships led to other changes in heterosexual men, including greater reflexivity and emotional expression. The experience of having a daughter specifically, offered men 'legitimate' opportunities to explore and express emotions without transgressing hegemonic norms, while fathering boys was narrated with less ease in comparison. Shifts towards responsibility will be discussed first, followed by reflexivity and emotional expression.

7.1.1. Responsibility

An important transition, or 'rite of passage' for men associated with reaching 'manhood' was marriage. Men described the transition into marriage as demanding shifts towards greater responsibility and maturity, and as a normative part of the male life course. Deciding to get married was constructed as a significant decision,

guided by a rational *"weighing up"* (Ned, Aus, 69) of pros and cons. Marriage was a threshold to be crossed once men had reached the 'right' stage in life, when other priorities or experiences had been achieved in order to be prepared for the impending demands of marriage:

"I'm glad I didn't get married younger than I did…if I was married at 24 I'm sure I'd be divorced…you've got to give up things…other women…you'd drink, you'd make bad decisions… yeah, so I'm glad I didn't…I got out of my system a lot of things that I'd wanted to do. So I thought well I've done that, done that, yeah did that, went there, yeah I did that, yeah I'm pretty happy now, yeah I think I've done all the things that I pretty much want to do on my own, so I think I'm right to get married" (Aus, Brad, 51)

Being *"committed"* was constructed against being *"footloose" (Albert, Aus, 75)* which often didn't interest men when they were younger:

 "The idea of settling down didn't appeal to me. I'd seen too many blokes at my age married at 21 or girls that I knew that were married before they celebrated their 21st birthday." (Mitch, Aus, 76)

Indeed men who were in monogamous relations when they were younger could reflect on this negatively: *"I was a one woman guy but that was a bit of a downer I suppose."* (Albert, Aus, 75) Though at the same time, men could become concerned if they left marriage too late, like Jim (UK, 73):

"I was getting on for 30…I'm not sure if I was exactly hitting the panic button but I was beginning to wonder if I was ever going to get married."

Thus men frequently viewed marriage as part of their 'natural direction', and demonstrated having some sense of a time frame within which they expected themselves to marry. Given this significance, the move into marriage demanded caution and rational thinking, rather than being emotionally driven. However, some men in this older cohort described less caution, and married very young during their teens or early twenties. For this group of men marriage was described as a sudden entry into an adult world, far removed from their previous experiences. Gareth (Aus, 65) *"grew up very quickly once I left school and was in the workforce…I became an adult very young…because I was married at 17."* Marriage was at odds with maintaining the freedom and autonomy of youth due to the compromises marriage

would involve. Indeed, making marriage 'work' sometimes meant significant changes for men. For Mitch (Aus, 76) marriage *"gave me a new outlook on life because I was literally broke when I got married…so I kept working to build up because we wanted to have a family."*

Indeed, when men took on marriage it was with the understanding that fatherhood would 'naturally' follow. As Albert (Aus, 75) says; *"I believe very strongly in family and that was part of the deal, you got married and you had kids, that was the done thing."* Men commonly highlighted their role to work and provide financially for their family and generally expected their wives to be the primary carers of their children and maintain the home, particularly if they were socio-economically advantaged: *"I must provide for her. I should not let her work. Why should she work? She's my wife…I can afford to look after my wife."* (Aus, Rudolf, 86) Few heterosexual men challenged the conventions of having children and fulfilling this 'provider' role. Though while most men wanted to become fathers, they could still show ambivalence around taking on the responsibilities of having children and what this meant giving up:

"We'd always planned to have kids because we'd talked about it, but then it sort of went on and on and I'm thinking, this is pretty good, don't listen to her, that's ok, get some money in the bank and that's handy, do I really want to give that up?...I sort of became really comfortable not having any responsibility…well not responsibility of children." (Aus, Brad, 51)

Gay men's narratives followed some similar patterns to heterosexual men, in so far as being young effectively brought *"wanting to experiment"* (Frank, UK 64). Long-term/more committed relationships seemed to become more appealing as men aged (five out of six gay men were in long term relationships at the time of interview; two with civil partnerships). For Frank, "*one of the things I worry about getting old is if I end up on my own."* Frank felt ageing brought greater need for companionship, but at the same time, less opportunities:

"When you're in your twenties or even up to your early thirties it's very easy to make friends with people when you go on holiday, you can go up to people and talk, when you get older people get suspicions when you come up and talk to them in a way."

Both heterosexual and gay men discussed shifts in sexual interest and reduced investment. For example, some inferred that marriage or long term partnership was not conducive to an active sex life: "*a lot of people think that they get married just for sex I've got some news for you mate if that's the case you might as well not get married.*" (Mitch, Aus, 76). This was experienced by gay men too, as Sam (UK, 62) suggested: "*sex is not the core as, in, after 35 years I'm afraid, it's not the core issue.*"

However notions of responsibility were far less apparent in gay men's narratives. The 'breadwinner' role was not a pressure gay men described and fatherhood not naturally assumed (though one man had a child from a previous marriage and one was considering adoption with his partner). In contrast, themes of exploration and discovery prevailed more for gay men in their sexual and romantic relationships, as demonstrated by Sam (UK, 62) who reflected on a wave of new experiences during his first serious relationship: "*He introduced to me a totally different layer of society which I would never have known…absolutely fascinating.*" Sam felt this relationship gave him "*direction*" towards discovering his own interests in "*reading and music and the theatre.*" Gerry (Aus, 62) only started travelling outside of Australia when he met his ex-partner, "*which was new for me. I'd only travelled in Australia before that...that was new and exciting and different.*" Greg (UK, 56) described his first real boyfriend as key to his sexual awakening: "*I worked as a sexual being…He blew my mind.*" Heterosexual men could also discuss themes pertaining to personal growth associated with their romantic relationships, such as the development of greater emotional expression and reflexivity, as will be discussed in the following section. However, heterosexual relations were not characterised by the same sense of self-discovery that gay men attributed to their romantic relations, but were described more normatively as predetermined.

John (Aus, 85) was the only participant to describe himself as bisexual. In his earlier years John demonstrated the same pattern as many heterosexual men by taking on the weight of responsibility involved in the 'breadwinner' role. After his marriage split up and he 'came out' as bisexual John foregrounded the significance of authenticity, and exploring a new 'lifestyle' soon followed:

"I decided to be more honest with myself as well as being more honest with other people. And so I came out but I didn't come out in a grand ceremony. It was just more by the lifestyle I adopted."

John's new lifestyle took the form of getting more actively involved with the gay community. He became most animated discussing this time of new experiences and projects. John effectively demonstrated a shift from the responsibilities associated with the husband/fatherhood role, towards developing authenticity and exploration as an older bisexual man.

7.1.2. Reflexivity and emotional expression

Some heterosexual men narrated developing greater emotional expression when forming families and relationships. Women (i.e. wives, partners, friends, daughters) in particular played significant roles in encouraging reflection and greater emotional expression for men. This is not to say men could not be supportive of each other, indeed male friendship and 'bonding' was significant to some men (as discussed in Chapter 6), but most described more emotionally significant/fulfilling relationships with women, encouraging positive shifts in men. Even when men were not interested in seeking professional help for difficulties, such as depression, wives and girlfriends were frequently described as available to talk to. Ivan (Aus, 67) described a *"mild"* depression he experienced at night throughout his life, and never sought any professional help, though would discuss it with his wife. Thus as one of the first (or even only) ports of call for men in distress, female partners and wives could play important roles in helping men rationalise and confront their difficulties. Kerry (Aus, 58) described himself as lacking in strategies to deal effectively with personal difficulties, but talking to his partner helped orient him towards reflection and better ways of coping:

"I'm not so good at my own personal life, but certainly [partner] is very, very helpful in terms of saying, listen you just…you've got to find some better strategies here because they're not, they're pretty destructive and so having somebody to reflect about those things and talk about those things is very, very helpful."

For Ken (UK, 50) (who had lived with panic attacks and anxiety since his teens) coping with the daily stresses of life, such as housing issues, could easily become too much. He didn't actively seek help until he was 35 after being encouraged by his girlfriend: *"she said, you, why are you dealing with this on your own, you don't have to do all of this."*

At the same time some men also spoke of relationships with wives or partners characterised by less communication (and affection) as preferable, though could seek to provide 'causes' for this, such as childhood experiences:

"I'm not very good at opening out and exploring with her what the problems were. But she's another only child and we're similar in our outlook, we're self-contained I think." (Pete, UK, 73)

In addition to women encouraging greater reflection in men, men were particularly reflective when talking about their past behaviour with women. Charlie told a detailed story about 'pestering' a girl on her way home from school, centralising the regret he felt:

"I can see lots of mistakes that I've made as I've travelled through, and I can think of a few incidents where, to contemplate them, I'm deeply embarrassed by my part in them."

At the same time Charlie recognised this tendency towards reflection (and increasing wisdom) as a normative part of ageing: *"you don't get the wisdom till you've experienced it, if you had the wisdom when you were younger you could probably do a whole lot better than you have done."* Gavin (UK, 70) remembered his decision to leave the country as soon as he heard his girlfriend was pregnant "*Yeah, I was just such a bastard, I was."* By referring to himself as a 'bastard', Gavin suggests his past behaviour was tied to a younger self from which he had 'matured' (and thus no longer part of how he self-identifies).

Beyond female partners, fatherhood could encourage shifts towards self-reflection. Becoming a father had caused Brad (Aus, 51) to reflect on his 'health' and to give greater significance to living longer:

"I often sort of reflect and you see so many horrendous things happen, kids getting killed in car accidents, and kids that are sick…Kids who have lost their parents…I think, how awful would it be for kids to lose their parents and for parents to have to bury their children? I don't know, I just think that would be the worst thing, so I just hope that our kids bury us, and that we're both pretty old and healthy."

Furthermore fatherhood could encourage men to reflect on their experiences with their own fathers (and to a lesser extent mothers) and wanting to parent differently. Indeed some men demonstrated efforts to change traditionally masculine behaviour that was unhelpful to them, such as denying emotion, as a result of reflection, suggesting more self-care than in earlier years. While Duncan's reflections on his relationship with his father led him to try to be different to him this was still a struggle:

"Growing up you see what your parents kind of do…I'm not the most emotional guy, I'm more than he, well I'm aware of what he's like so I try not to be like him but that's taken me quite a while to get it sorted and it still ain't sorted yet." (UK, 53)

In addition to Duncan further men reflected on the connections they perceived between their own father/son relationship (and wider families) and how they approached fatherhood, frequently leading men to actively work towards not repeating their own experiences for their children. Brad (Aus, 51) described his father as 'stoic', but felt that he showed his emotions more than his father, *"like with our girls I'm forever hugging and kissing them, that sort of stuff because I feel that was one thing that I didn't get a lot of*." Kerry (Aus, 58), who also struggled with not feeling valued by his father (though didn't have any children of his own), noticed a pattern among his friends with similar childhood experiences with their fathers: *"They basically just get on with what they're doing and try to make sure the same stuff doesn't happen with their kids."* Mohammed's (UK, 54) father died when he was two months old, *"so that I never see my father, ever."* This caused him to reflect on *"loving"* his children; *"I like to be a good educator, to make their destination very good."* As well as wanting to parent 'differently' to fathers as a result of reflection, some men discussed repeating the traditional parenting practices and 'roles' they had experienced as children, like Albert (Aus, 75):

"Neither parent really warm and cuddly people…they just worked and we were left pretty much to our own devices. With our kids…I think I was pretty rugged, if they acted out they got smacked…and as a councillor that's not the done thing…But my own two kids, I don't think they've ever smacked their children, it just doesn't happen. And the dads are very much more responsible. [Wife] and I were like our mum and dad…We have our roles, [wife] was the inside of the house, the cooking person, the looking after the kids person. I was the one who mowed the lawns and washed the cars and earned the money. That was my role, that was her role."

Indeed even Albert's position as a school councillor could not break the pattern of repeating his father's traditional ways, including physical discipline, though reflecting on the norms of his son's generation ("*it just doesn't happen*") he highlight his son's capacity for change and to 'cross over' from the parenting practices Albert had practiced and experienced. As a result of men's reflection on their own father/son relations some described developing greater emotional expression as well as a more 'complete' sense of self. This seemed more apparent when men had daughters, though sons could also aid men's emotional expression and caregiving. However men tended to suggest that having a girl demanded a different kind of relationship to having a son; involving more 'legitimate' shifts towards emotional expression. Indeed men described traditional parenting approaches to having daughters; as demanding a 'softer touch' (Duncan, 53). As demonstrated below men welcomed the opportunity for a 'feminine' influence in their lives, and what this enabled within them, like Jim (UK, 73):

"I kept hitting the wrong button, boy, boy, boy"…I'd always wanted a girl…I can still remember because they said it's a girl, and I thought, ah, my feelings, I went up like that…[participant looked up to the ceiling and raised his hands]

What was it about wanting a girl?

My all male environment again, I think, and I still, wouldn't it be nice to have someone you could dress prettily and like this, and we did. I think maybe I overindulged her a bit …you're not complete. I could relate with guys, I could do all the men things, but I was attracted by girls and women and I like pretty things and that, but I couldn't seem to bring it out in any way. I needed something that I could do, go in that direction with, and that was it."

Jim, who had identified as a 'loner', narrates feelings of tension with his identity; he could *"relate with guys"*, yet was *"attracted by women…pretty things."* As implied, having a girl allowed Jim a legitimate, or 'safe' opportunity to express a 'feminine side' (that was less possible with men), or indeed a *"complete"* sense of self. Thus men could demonstrate desiring a balance between feminine and masculine influences as significant to positive wellbeing. Consider Duncan's (UK, 53) narrative below as he highlights the significance of having a girl in light of his own relationship with his father. Indeed he's *"glad"* to have a girl, in order to avoid reproducing the same relationship he had with his father:

"I'm glad I didn't have a boy…I'd have been more like my dad, but having a daughter then you, daughters are daughter's aren't they, girls are girls? I'll just be more softer and maybe a bit more thoughtful…so it requires me to stop and think before I just do as my dad did, and I still do sometimes as he did, as was done to me, so you've got to be aware, isn't it, and think about it all the time"

Pete (UK, 73), who had described a distant relationship with his father and identified as 'loner' also voiced his preference for having a girl, and his disappointment when a son arrived:

"When my wife had our second child, we had a boy and then three years later we went for another one…I obviously wanted a girl, I didn't get one, and the boy that came was a terrible baby…kicked and screamed and shouted all through the night." (Pete, UK, 73).

Unapparent in descriptions of sons, men voiced a tendency to 'spoil' daughters like Alfie (UK, 62): *"She wants something, I'll buy it. She's had four digital cameras off me…she gets what she wants because y'know, she's my only daughter so."* Men also described emotionally close relationships with their daughters as they aged. Arnold (UK) said he would rely on his daughter to discuss any problems rather than his sons: *"she phones every day and then any troubles I confide to her and talk to her."* As well as opening up opportunities for reflection and emotional expression, the practical support of daughters was very significant for older men and more frequently received than sons. For John (Aus, 85) who had a son and a daughter, his daughter gave the most significant support when he became less physically able by helping to adapt his apartment to suit his new lifestyle: *"she said you don't need this and you*

don't need that." Men described more frequent contact with daughters than sons, like Howard (UK, 81):

"I don't feel that happy, my sons…it sort of takes maybe a month or so, maybe two months before they visit me. And I'll get a phone call maybe once a month…my daughter's different."

This is not to say that all men with daughters always felt supported or had emotionally close relations. Don (Aus, 81) had two sons and one daughter yet described being *"all alone"* as they were all *"too busy"* to visit. Men also demonstrated much care for their sons and some described very good relations. Stephen (Aus, 71), who had a distant relationship with his own father, specifically highlighted the importance of receiving affection from his sons and spending time with them (he had one daughter also):

"The boys, I, their affection was very important to me…I always spent a lot of time, as much time as I could with them…I still get on very well with them."

Gareth (Aus, 65) also spoke positively about his relationship with his son: *"I see my son a lot, he's a lovely lad."* Men could also show much investment in sons, for example, in the case of managing disabilities. Indeed Mitch's (Aus, 76) greatest concern was for his son's future: *"if we can give him a good quality of life till the day he dies and we're alive we can die happy."*

For the most part though relations with sons had a tendency to be more problematic than daughters, with a greater propensity towards disagreements and less intimate relations. Jack (Aus, 66) had recently been told by his son that *"he didn't want anything to do with us…his argument was that we were looking after the daughter more than we were looking after him."* Jim (UK, 73) was unable to maintain a close relationship with his son, who had died from alcoholism, initiating struggles with self-blame for Jim. His son's death caused him to reflect on his own difficulties with showing affection and to draw links between this and his own childhood family experiences:

"Did I show enough affection? I'm a bit embarrassed by showing affection. I'm, it's because I didn't get a great deal of it from my mother…maybe I didn't show enough affection to him. I don't know."

Jim felt he was bad at *"instigating"* affection and described a fear of rejection: "*If I'm going to be rejected I'm not going to even go there. I've got to feel that I'm welcomed before I'll open more.*"

A harsher language could be used to describe boys. Rudolf (Aus, 86) spoke more fondly of his daughter, who *"grew into a beautiful girl"* with *"plenty of brains"* and *"strong will power."* His son (who was adopted) he described with much less warmth and in fewer words, as *"completely different"* and an *"eighth negro."* While enamoured with the arrival of his daughter, Jim (UK, 73) reflected that relations with children improve after the first, suggesting that close relations with children may not only be about gender but also about gaining experience with the fatherhood role:

"By the second two I'd mellowed, and this comes across very much, I think, even now in my relationship with them. I get on, my, the third boy…we're more like buddies than father and son."

7.2. Reclaiming identity and control: community bonds and 'working' on the body

As men aged they often demonstrated shifts towards establishing community bonds and placed greater importance on connectivity in comparison to their earlier lives. For example men described becoming involved in voluntary work, support groups, and valued computers and the internet in their lives as older men. Men also displayed shifts towards constructive embodied ways of working on the body through walking, going to the gym, or stretching, allowing many to reconstruct a valid sense of self in the face of isolation, retirement, illness, or the loss of physical functioning and control. Thus such shifts were framed within discourses of individual responsibility and challenged dominant discourses of ageing as decline by helping men to sustain the hegemonic demands of 'action', as well as ease transitions away from 'action' and control in other areas. Shifts towards community bonds and connectivity are discussed first, followed by constructive embodied ways of working on the body.

7.2.1. Community bonds and connectivity

Men's shifts towards forming community bonds and connectivity often came about as a way to help ease difficult transitions as they aged, such as retiring from paid work, or coping with declining abilities and illness, as well as simply having more time available as older men. Through community based support groups or new roles taken up by men, they found ways to actively reconstruct a more positive sense of self in the face of losing control and feelings of purposelessness and isolation. For example, Jack (Aus, 66) identified through his work for many years and thus struggled with retirement. However he found a way to offset the negative feelings of purposelessness by taking on new roles in the community:

"I still identify myself by my activities, so what do you do? Well I'm retired but I'm delegate to the … the Bowling Association, I'm secretary here and this here and this there…"

After his wife died Don (Aus, 82) described feeling lonely and depressed. He joined his local 'Men's Shed' (spaces where men carry out different types of crafts, socialise and make things for their community) and found the support he gained from the other men there very helpful:

"…being on your own is not much fun…I suffer from depression if I don't watch it…the good thing about coming to the shed is you've got the companionship of these other fellows."

As well as feeling a sense of connectivity with other men, going to the Shed helped Don feel useful as he valued the work he did for the community, by repairing furniture cheaply for local people:

"We work for the community partly…so you feel you're doing something useful that way community wise and so on, yeah."

Gareth (Aus, 65) also joined the Men's Shed as part of his recovery from illness and described it as giving him *"a new insight to life."* Stephen (Aus, 71) joined after retiring and welcomed the opportunity to *"get out of the house"* as well as *"the company and camaraderie."* As demonstrated the disruption men may feel when retiring can be repaired through new roles and identities. For some men this

consisted of voluntary work like Gavin (UK, 70) who worked at 'Mind' charity shop as part of a broader effort to *"do good"*, brought about through his turn towards meditation and abstaining from drugs. Ned (Aus, 69) and Terry (Aus, 65) both became voluntary members of an emergency response team after retiring. Men's guidance for one another was even geared toward community work and making connections with others: *"Don't isolate yourself. Get involved in either community work, or relationships with your neighbours, don't hide yourself away"* (Terry, Aus, 65). Shifts towards forming community bonds could help men move away from behaviours they deemed negative. For instance, Andrew (Aus, 86) credited the Salvation Army for helping him abstain from alcohol, forming part of a wider embodied shift around 'living right':

"When I stopped drinking I had to get myself right again…I think it was the teaching of the Salvation army come into it, to live right and eat the right things and all that sort of stuff… if I didn't have all that stuff and try and do it all alone I'd be in all sorts of trouble."

Some men described how ageing brought about new opportunities to form community bonds and greater connectivity with others, given retirement brought more free time. For instance, Henry (UK, 57) felt he now had more time to 'give back' to the community. Randeep (UK, 71) also highlighted shifting towards community and greater connectivity in older age as aided by new opportunities:

"I've developed like that, connecting to the world and connecting to people…it's a matter of opportunity now. You got the right opportunity at the right time, which I did not have when I was working. But since I've retired and getting older, I just get the right opportunity…I think if you manage your finances properly, old age is the best age."

Engaging with new technology, commonly computers, was heavily implicated in some older men's (re)constructive practices and shifts towards greater connectivity. Computers offered new ways of connecting with the world, helping men to re-establish and maintain relations with old friends or family (i.e. through Skype), learn new things and develop new interests: *"I go and I surf the net…so I am connected to the world…that's important…I connect to more things, without internet we will not be talking."* (Randeep, UK, 71) Men even encouraged the use of new technology in their guidance to other men:

"The important thing is to keep the brain engaged, learn something new, computers are weird and wonderful things, figure out how to use them properly…I get people to show me how and I make mistakes and fix it and discover new things." (Aus, Gerry, 62)

For Charlie (Aus, 57) who had identified as an 'outsider' in earlier years, ageing had brought about greater emphasis on valuing community bonds and being part of a group rather than an individual:

"I've learnt that…we need to be in a group, we need to have some place that we can identify…It took me a long time to realise that a lot of the things that I believe in are actually very typical Aussie Aboriginal community."

7.2.2. Constructive embodied ways

As discussed in Chapter 5 the body tended to emerge in men's narratives when it was experienced as out of men's control, and thus predominated in discussions of ageing when men described losing physical function. Turning to the body and constructive ways of working on it became more significant to men as they aged in order to sustain or regain action and control, thus helping men challenge dominant discourses of ageing as decline. While the body could be a site of constructive engagement when men were younger, for example through sport and dancing, men rarely related these activities to the body or positive health behaviours. Indeed, dietary choices or alcohol intake rarely featured in the earlier parts of men's narratives as part of how they understood successful ageing across the life course. However, as older men they sometimes reflected back on the absence of positive health behaviours in the past, signifying growth and informing understandings of themselves as successfully aged. By older age men frequently responded to their struggles (most often physical decline) through constructive embodied ways, such as 'eating right' and physical exercise and movement, including walking, stretching, yoga, and meditation. Men often positioned themselves as more knowledgeable as older men, and described the move towards taking greater care of their physical health within a framework of individual/personal responsibility, like Greg (UK, 56):

"Like all young people I didn't give much thought to the future, you think the future will take care of itself and when you get to about 30 you think actually the future won't take care of itself you've got to care of the future, so I started exercising a bit then and I've just got more and more into it as the years have gone by."

Indeed, men confirmed that health wasn't something that preoccupied them in the past, as Ivan says: *"It's never been uppermost in my mind. As a young person you just carry on. But I should have been, I should have been but I wasn't."* For Ivan, his wife had suffered a lot of reproductive health issues, so felt *"maybe the focus was on my wife's health."* (Aus, 67) Greg also described the move towards greater self-care as he shifted from 'partying' to 'maintaining health':

"Hangovers don't improve as you get older…I'm much more interested in maintaining my health, so I do a lot of exercise…I think the buzz I get from keeping fit has replaced to some extent the buzz I used to get from all those destructive things I used to do." (Greg, UK, 56)

Men also demonstrated sliding into a position of 'knowing' when reflecting on the health behaviours of younger men. Rudolf (Aus, 86) expressed frustration at the 'risky' behaviours of a group of local surfers, named 'The Bra Boys': *"they'll never die, they never get sick, they can do anything what they like, but this, later on they'll regret it when they get a bit older."* Rudolf now believed in *"moderation"* as a result of drinking to the point of illness as a young man. He avoided alcohol and walked over an hour a day.

Two men described proactively overcoming difficulties with drinking alcohol later in life, simply by 'giving it up' (Aus, 86). Gavin (UK, 70) had abstained from drugs since he began meditating, allowing him *"more time for reflection and thought and the future."* This led to further positive changes in behaviour:

"I wouldn't do that anymore…Lying…Killing things I would sort of …Kill mosquitoes and do things like that. I'd never do that again…gossip…I try not to sort of get involved in any of it, but it's very difficult." (UK, 70)

Lacking sufficient strength to play with his granddaughter, Albert (Aus, 75) started going to the gym with the explicit intention of being able to pick her up:

"Five years ago I started going to the gym, when [granddaughter] was little. Because, as I said, I love the kid to death and as a littley she used to say up Poppy, up Poppy, carry Poppy. And I had trouble picking her up physically…So I started going to the gym to strengthen the body and what have you."

Men's self-care was necessary in order to maintain the demands of traditional masculinity, such as the need to continue working:

"I can adjust the hours between the jobs to make one more and the other one less. It's really, its only subject to health, so I've just got to look after my health. So I've got to eat right, I've got to make sure I get enough rest, I've got to keep an eye on what's happening." (Ivan, Aus, 67)

Most commonly, men described enjoying walking in older age. Men suggested walking could lead to solving problems, in addition to other benefits, such as socialising and 'escapism'. Walking was also highlighted as a cheap form of exercise, as described below:

"I love walking… it's an adventure. I love discovering things. I love, I take my camera, and if I see anything I take pictures of it…It's a form of, it's an escape, in a way, from the mundane humdrum of life. It doesn't cost a fortune. It, hopefully it keeps me reasonably fit. I don't do as much of it as I should. It's just so nice to be out there in that environment, and people are friendly. You pass people, and you're morning, morning, and that. It's so different from the, it's a way of escaping from the problems that you have with life, with bills and all of this sort of thing…It takes me out of myself, and I just do it." (UK, Jim, 73)

Men were well aware of the benefits of walking, even drawing on scientific 'evidence' to support their views:

"I think there's good evidence that it's effective or more effective than antidepressants without the side effects. And I think as you get older if you either use it or lose it. And getting out, because I don't feel as good if I stay inside all day, I've always been a person that likes to get out…means a good start for the day." (Ned, Aus, 69)

Terry also highlighted the advice he'd received from 'health people' to start walking. In addition to the physical benefits, Terry highlighted more therapeutic/holistic aspects:

"I've been told by innumerable, numerable health people that I've got to start walking again. So I've been doing that actively. I consider it part of my job, so. And the, one of the people I've been talking with there said, look, there are three or four reasons you need to walk, first of all for your health of

your lungs, secondly because you're diabetic, and thirdly because it gives you Terry space. And it does." (Aus, 65)

Thus, walking was seen as something that would elevate mood, and was constructed as part of ageing successfully. As implied by Ned through the notion of 'use it or lose it', ageing successfully may mean having to make strong and consistent efforts to 'stay active', which can be aided by walking. 'Staying active' physically through practices like walking was a common strategy men suggested to slow down the inevitable decline they perceived as round the corner, and can be understood as an extension of 'action' narratives demonstrated earlier on in men's lives. For Jim, walking offered a sense of achievement via the opportunity to set and achieve goals:

"I'm attempting to do the London Loop. It's 152 miles. I've only done the first part, last Thursday…whether I do it or not I don't know, but because it's in my mind it's something to aim for, so as long as I've got something to aim for, something to occupy my mind, that's the sort of thing that keeps me going." (UK, Jim, 73)

As men aged they were well aware of the potential of losing the ability to walk, perhaps encouraging the shift towards constructive embodiment in later life:

" …you've got to enjoy life while it's there and while you're on your feet and you can get all, even if you can only walk 100 yards up the Great Wall of China and do it while you can do it." (Jack, Aus, 66)

Furthermore, men offered guidance to one another based around encouraging the adoption of physical exercise:

"I guess the main thing to do, as you're getting older, is to look after yourself and do the right things, and eat well, get some exercise…" (Harry, Aus, 56)

7.3. Summary

This chapter began by discussing heterosexual men's shifts towards greater responsibility as they moved towards marriage, constructed as a 'natural' destination for heterosexual men. For most, marriage was viewed as a move away from a

former 'single' self, towards adopting the 'breadwinner' role in the expectation of raising children. In contrast, gay men narrated themes of exploration and discovery in relation to pursuing sexual and romantic relations, rather than pending responsibilities. However, both heterosexual and gay men displayed a desire for longer-term relations as they aged, and furthermore, a reduced investment in sex as an older men.

The chapter then discussed heterosexual men's shifts towards reflexivity and emotional expression, which was often facilitated by women's support and encouragement. This was compounded by the fatherhood role, as men reflected on the relationship between their own father/son experiences, and the relationships and families they built in later life. Men who described distant relationships with families or fathers often drew links between these experiences and difficulties in expressing emotions in later life. Many men described actively trying to do things 'differently' to their fathers. However, while fathering daughters seemed to facilitate 'legitimate' emotional expression in men that was supressed during their father's reign, fathering boys tended to bring a greater risk of reproducing the hegemonic role that men themselves had experienced negatively.

The chapter then examined men's shifts towards community and constructive embodied ways of working on the body, often as a response to difficult transitions such as retirement, isolation, or illness and physical decline. Men took up a range of embodied ways including walking, going to the gym, meditation, yoga, and stretching, among others. Men's shifts to working on the body helped them to maintain 'action' and position themselves as ageing successfully by challenging dominant narratives of ageing as decline Undertaking new community based roles and activities allowed men to reconstruct a valid sense of self.

Chapter 8

Qualitative analysis and results (4) Class and culture

This final results chapter looks at men's overall narratives of successful ageing, centralising issues of class and culture. It comes in two parts. First, the chapter explores the development of 'resilience' through adversity, as narrated by men. Narratives of resilience appeared to stem from childhood experiences of financial disadvantage and poverty. Men here tended to make connections between their limited socio-economic circumstances as children, and their later achievement and success. Themes of independence, acceptance, creativity, resourcefulness, ambition, competence, opportunity, achievement, and agency ran through 'resilient' men's narratives. These narratives also appear to be culturally specific – all of the men who discussed developing resilience as a result of childhood poverty are Australian. Higher socio-economic status men, both Australian and British, could also discuss the development of resilience, though this tended to be drawn from experiences of bullying, grief, the breakdown of a relationship, sexuality, unemployment, and recovery from injury.

Secondly, the chapter examines narratives of developing autonomy and authenticity which also appeared to be borne out of difficulties for men, though less related to financial struggle. Rather, constraints such as parental attitudes, homophobia, or difficulties around migration and racism shaped these narratives. Narratives here were predominantly middle class, featuring men from both Britain and Australia. However, there were notable cultural differences in how men conceptualised the process of developing agency and authenticity. British men tended to understand this process as a positive consequence of ageing, and 'naturally' conducive to improving coping skills, through learning more about the self. By contrast, for Australian men, 'finding' themselves was the focus of narratives, and men said they needed to proactively achieve this state (even demanding/legitimising time off paid work).

8.1. Narratives of resilience

For working class men growing up in underprivileged circumstances tended to be narrated as having a big impact from a young age, strongly influencing their prevailing attitudes and notions of successful ageing. Growing up with only basic necessities could engender a sense of independent and creative agency within men. Ned (Aus, 69), whose family *"couldn't afford any toys"*, used to make his own by *"carving little yachts and racing them across the dam."* Upon earning enough money to purchase his first car he *"did most of the maintenance work", "working it out"* for himself. Gareth (Aus, 65), who also grew up *'very, very poor'*, recalled receiving a damaged second-hand bike for Christmas, but *"mucked around with it and got it to work."* Men described a resourcefulness they learnt from less privileged circumstances, as with Mitch (Aus, 76), who grew up in the aftermath of the Great Depression, *"when it was rough for everybody."* He described walking home from school via the beach to pick up empty bottles he'd exchange for ice-cream *"with our boots around our necks so as to save them wearing out."* Men described accepting their circumstances here; *"we didn't expect much more than what we got, because we were taught we couldn't afford it and we accepted it"* (Gareth, Aus, 65). Andrew also grew up in the *"tough"* days of the Depression, without hot water, or the *"books to get on with education"*, but felt *"you were pretty hardy in those days…we didn't know any different so we never used to worry about it."* Men's early independence was demonstrated by the freedom they described, for instance, by walking to school alone or with friends and being unrestricted by parents:

 "We walked, I think it was about 2km to school over, through bush paddocks and over a creek, and we'd wade in the creek on the way home, and no-one ever said, restricted us in that way. Everyone, all the kids did it. We rode bikes everywhere" (Aus, Mitch, 76).

In this way, themes of independence and acceptance ran through men's narratives. Men were quick to express their frustration at those they deemed *"bludgers"* (Mitch, Aus, 76), those who *"whinge"* (Gareth, Aus, 65), or "*think the world owes them a favour"* (Ned, Aus, 69). Reflecting on his adolescence, Ned remembered, *"we were never given a car and I certainly won't be helping my grandson to get one, they'll have to earn it."* Mitch also reflected on having to save up money for his own car *"unlike some of the boys I went to school with"*, teaching him *"the difference between having to claw your way through."* Charlie (Aus, 56) credited his *"strong working*

class background" as providing the motivation to achieve a scholarship to attend university. To support himself through University he worked *"two or three part time jobs as well."* Charlie also highlighted themes of independent learning, and the importance of making *"your own discoveries…not to be told by someone else."* The lack of outside sources of help or support appeared to instil a sense of agency in men;

"If I didn't do it no-one, I didn't have a rich father or a rich mother... Everything we've done…we've never been given any silver spoons…It's always been, if you want it you've got to put your nose to the grindstone and do it." (Gareth, Aus, 65)

As an older man nearing the end of life Andrew (Aus, 86) wanted to retain his independence as long as possible: *"I don't want to be an inconvenience in the family…I want to go to sleep one night and don't wake up."* Men here commonly spoke about the notions of opportunity, fortune, luck and the importance of learning across the life course. Charlie (Aus, 56) considered his time at University "lucky":

"I was there at exactly the right time…the Vietnam War was going…all these things happening, and lots of thinking, lots of opportunity to talk with people, and the best learning was happening outside the classroom."

Gareth (Aus, 65) reflected on the various opportunities he took advantage of including learning different trades. He also highlighted various opportunities with women (though describing himself as *"a loyal sort of sod"*, always declined). Reflecting on his life, Andrew (Aus, 84) concluded that he had *"learned a lot",* but that life had been hard "*They said life wasn't meant to be easy and it wasn't meant to be that hard either".* Mitch reflected on the importance of asking for help in order to learn: *"you don't learn anything if you don't ask for help".*

Men spoke with agency and determination about seizing opportunities and taking control: *"life is what you make it."* (Ned, Aus, 69) Men's motivation or ambition to overcome their circumstances and achieve their goals could be accounted for by directly drawing on their earlier experiences of poverty, as Gareth describes:

"we were brought up with nothing eating bread and fat and I never wanted to be like that in my life again. My mother used to make dumpling stew because we had nothing else to eat…I always had that attitude that I don't want my life to be like that…if I want to go and buy something I have the money to do it…" (Aus, 65)*

Men's agency and determination compounded with themes of positivity. When Gareth quit smoking he chose to do it without any help, or aids *"because that's how I am, I think I have a pretty, a positive attitude about what I do and what I want to do."* Mitch (Aus, 76) also felt *"being positive is better than being negative"*, and discussed giving up smoking with a strong sense of will, and the added benefit of saving money:

"I used to spend something like X amount of money a week on cigarettes and I put that into a Bushels jar and after about 6 months I had about a couple of hundred…I bought myself a nice Harris tweed coat and never went back"

Andrew (Aus, 86) discussed struggles with drinking alcohol, but *"determined I'd do without drink"* finally *"beat it."* Men here often described on-going, and repeated struggles, including bankruptcy and *"having to start over again"* (Gareth, Aus, 65). Struggles could include natural disasters; Ned (Aus, 69) suffered 3 major droughts and floods at his farm. He described feeling "*a bit down and despondent",* but upon working out *"the best way to handle it"*, *"you eventually get through it."* Following his marriage, Mitch (Aus, 76) described working nights for over a year to make enough money for a deposit on his home in preparation to start a family*. "There was no hurdles we couldn't overcome and you're overcoming hurdles all the time one way or another."* Andrew (Aus, 86) also described a hard working life: *"when the overtime cut out I'd move on somewhere where there was a lot of overtime."* Men continued to work hard, set and achieve goals, welcoming new challenges. Charlie spoke of being given the 'Order of Australia', and had set himself the challenge "*to do enough more of significance that they'll take me up another level."* Mitch (Aus, 76) felt that he needed *"something to challenge or something to do, if you've got nothing to challenge you it's a shame"* (Aus, 76)*.* Indeed, men here were action-oriented (as discussed in Chapter 5), and without challenges, or nothing 'to do', could become *"a bit depressed"* (Charlie, Aus, 56).

Through difficult experiences associated with underprivileged socio-economic circumstances, men learn to withstand and cope with struggle, and potentially come back stronger:

"you learn a bit of resilience from when things don't work out, you've either got to accept it and so you say, well what can I do to handle this more appropriately? Life knocks you down sometimes, let's get up and have another go" (Ned, Aus, 69).

Ned firmly believed that *"if everything's handed to you, you don't develop the will and the means to overcome it or look for new solutions"* (Aus, 69). Charlie (Aus, 56) also felt:

"There's value in the struggle, there's value in not having the comfort, not having everything you want. Value in the challenges that you've got to have as you grow up…"

Reflecting on his own childhood and experience as a father, he felt he had given his children *"too much" "[we've] tried to make their life easier, better, and probably gone far too far the other way. They haven't necessarily learnt."* Harry (Aus, 69) also reflected on the contemporary younger generation, comparing them with children in Bali: *"they've got virtually nothing but they're happy and they're creative and they enjoy themselves."* For Ned, happiness had to be achieved internally, irrelevant of material things: *"there's no amount of things will make you satisfied unless you're satisfied in yourself."* In reflecting on his resilience, Charlie (Aus, 56) felt that *"some people are born with resilience and some are not."* Specifically Charlie felt resilience had been passed down to him from his father and grandfather:

"I'm absolutely convinced that learning can get encoded under genetic material and passed from generation to generation…I think all eight of us were born with a high level of resilience, so we're very lucky…all of us have got a higher level of resilience than the average."

Men took the time to reflect on their achievements and the 'attitudes' that had contributed to their success:

"when you look at 65 and I think to myself, what we started with we didn't even, when we got married we didn't have enough money to pay for the church…I think if I didn't have the attitude that I have got, I wouldn't have actually achieved what I have achieved today." (Gareth, Aus, 65).

Yet, at the same time men used a discourse of modesty. Ned (Aus, 69) was quick to acknowledge *"there's a lot I don't know"* in the context of his growing knowledge of complementary therapies. Gareth routinely spoke of the *"fortune"* and *"luck"* he had in achieving goals. Charlie (Aus, 57) also felt *"my life has been very fortunate"* much of which he credited to being born in Australia at a certain time:

"I was lucky enough to be born in Australia…and at the time I was…it's kind of luck of the draw". Such a sense of luck could also engender a sense of debt: *"having been privileged in that way I kind of owe a lot, my debt is much greater because I have been so lucky"* (Charlie, Aus, 57).

While men had all achieved various successes despite less privileged backgrounds, and for some had *"got to a stage of our life where we can have what we want"* (Gareth, Aus, 65), the impact of growing up without material benefits marked men's identities: *"I'm not a waster. And one of the things you learn in your life, I'll tell you this for a fact, if you're brought up with nothing, even when you become rich you're a nothing"* (Gareth, Aus, 65).

8.2. Developing autonomy and authenticity

Narratives of developing autonomy and authenticity, as with narratives of resilience, were also born out of struggles for men, including difficulties with parents, bullying at school, religion, homophobia, and racist discrimination. While men's narratives here were often complex and idiosyncratic, some common themes also emerged. To begin with, as discussed in Chapter 5, men tended to commonly report a lack of communication or affection with parents whilst growing up, and childhood was a time where they felt constrained by parental influences. For Terry (Aus, 76), his relationship with his parents *"was never a significant, you know, close relationship in the sense that you could talk freely, or that sort of thing."* Coming out of a *"fairly strong"* religious family, Terry described going to church *"because that's what you did."* Reflecting on his lack of agency in childhood, Terry felt his parents *"set up patterns that we followed."* Randeep (UK, 71) also struggled with parental expectations whilst growing up, including their decision for him to marry aged 15:

"I got married when I was too young. I did not realise it at that time because that was the custom, but later I realised it was not the right thing to happen to anybody."

Randeep described feeling *'brainwashed"* by his parents and the cultural expectations at the time. He spoke with detachment when remembering his wedding day, and described playing a role that he did not fully comprehend:

"We did not quite understand, it's just like dolls getting married…like children and they play with dolls…there's a boy doll and a girl doll, they have their wedding ceremony."

Themes of feeling misled and controlled by his parents ran through Randeep's childhood memories. Reflecting on the Indian mythology stories he was read as a child, he now felt *"some of them are myths and they're not true, but you don't realise*

this when you're young." Randeep also remembered being *"forced"* into sports at school *"I don't remember whether I really enjoyed it or not."* Reflecting on his younger years in India he felt he was *"not allowed to think. I was just owned by my parents and, in a way, of the society, the expectation."* Harry also described his parents attitudes as constraining his opportunities, for example, for a social life outside of school, leading him to feel as though he didn't have *"what I regard as a normal adolescence."* He felt this had a significant impact on his future and how he understood the world: *"It actually affects your life circumstances, but it also affects the way you think about things and what you see as being normal."* Harry (Aus, 56) also described the difficulties of emigrating from Britain to Australia when he was 12, leaving him with the feeling of *"not really knowing where home is."* He described a lack of adult figures who *"made you feel OK about yourself…on reflection you sort of wish someone had…made you feel like you were OK and that you were going to be able to do things."*

For Ken (UK, 50), his grandparents seemed to be his biggest influence whilst growing up, and his parents were largely absent in his narrative. Ken identified most closely with his grandfather, and enjoyed watching him work with his hands, *"fixing"* things, indeed he found the *"skills involved" "impressive."* His grandfather had asserted the importance of *"learning a trade"* so as to *"never go hungry"*, leaving a lasting impression upon Ken. He described the constraints brought on by a *"sickly childhood",* as well as difficulties at school. Subjected to "*fears*" and *"aggression"* at school, he suffered panic attacks culminating in a *"breakdown*" around the age of 16, due to *"constant terror, constant anxiety, constant panic."* However, shaped by his grandparent's war-time anxieties *"that fear of poverty, fear of destitution*" he still *"just carried on."*

"This might be the downside of the sort of, of the parental and grandparental attitudes I grew up with, which is you don't make a fuss you just get on with it."

In the context of these difficulties Ken described the struggle over forming his identity during the school years:

"being yourself is a burden in a sense that you've got to find out who you are and you've got to find out what it is you're good at, what you can't do"

As men aged, and separated from parental influences they often started to experience change. Upon leaving home Terry (Aus, 76) discovered that the patterns set up by his parents *"didn't necessarily have to be followed"*, and his feelings about religion started to shift: *"I became quite sceptical…It was a negative sort of process to me."* He described his experience of religion as involving *"an awful lot of, a guilt process built into the whole thing."* While Terry hadn't totally lost interest in religion he had become more interested in the Quakers due to *"the lack of rigidity about beliefs"*, and self-examination: *"the inward looking nature of the process."*

Following his marriage, Randeep's (UK, 71) parents sent him to England to go to University: *"it got a bit too much. I got too confused…I just endured it…I had no choice…I just accepted it."* Despite this lack of choice Randeep highlighted his opportunity to start building an authentic self away from his parents, to "*see how I can live my life.*" Reflecting on his youth he felt *"you accept things more when you're young. It's more or less what will parents expect from you, rather than your own ideas and views."* When Randeep moved to the UK he felt *"everything was different here from a village in India."* While in India Randeep had *"to do whatever I was supposed to do"* and to *"accept it"*, he felt since being in the UK he had *"educated"* himself, having read *"more than I would have done in India."* At the same time Randeep struggled with the *"drink culture"*, he did not like the food, found it was *"too cold"*, and described experiences of racism: *"White people did not like us [living] next to them."*

Duncan (UK, 53), who had described significant difficulties with his parents growing up as discussed in Chapter 5, left home aged 17 because he *"just had to get out of there."* He told his father *"two days before I was leaving, I'm off, see you around. That was it"*, though described his mother as *"happy"* for him to *"go out there and live your life."* Upon leaving home Duncan described having his *"eyes opened big time…meeting different people, black people…we got into loads of different situations."*

Harry (Aus, 56) described the move to University as significant, and *"a huge relief to be freed up."* Going from his school *"which was very conservative and very restricted and fairly authoritarian"* to a university campus in the early '70s, during the Vietnam War, *"was a huge, huge jump."* He described the challenges of interacting with girls

for the first time *"you've got no idea."* At the same time as University being a relief, Harry felt he *"didn't have the confidence to go with whatever competence I had"*, and so consequently found achieving his first degree *"a real struggle." "I just always felt as if I really wasn't good enough to be there kind of feeling."*

For Ken (UK, 50) change came aged 25 when he *"divested"* himself *"of all responsibilities"* including 'signing on' and moving back home to live with his parents.

"I was self theraping in that when things got too bad I would simply go out and walk or cycle and just take the fresh air and go out somewhere nice and just be gentle with myself … to the best I could."

Ken felt this break gave him the opportunity to reflect on issues of identity: *"to get my head around what, who I am and what my problems are."* Reflecting on this break Ken again attributed his previous attempts to *"carry on"* despite struggle to his grandparent's mentality: *"you couldn't say, stop the War I want a break, you couldn't say, I'm not enjoying this air raid, I'm going to sit somewhere peaceful and quiet, it, not an option."* Having internalised his grandparents fears, Ken found it easier to *"relate to people who are older than me… because they've been through the same thing. …there's a sort of a flintiness that you, that you just inherit."*

Some men described on going struggles and issues over autonomy before arriving at a more comfortable relationship with themselves. Brad (Aus, 51) struggled with his working identity, and the need for 'a break' from the monotony of sales:

"I just thought, I don't want to have to get up every day, put a clean shirt on, put my tie on, put my suit on, go to work and make phone calls to people that I really don't want to talk to…I'd just had a gutful."

Brad remembered a significant day he couldn't face work: *"[I] almost [got] to their front door and I turned around and got back in the car…"* Feeling that nobody would *"miss me"* he decided to *"go home."* Brad described the decision to leave work in part to *"find myself…whatever that means."* But concerned with what *"people would think"*, he saw a counsellor to discuss it. With the help of his councillor, and by drawing on his own experience of wishing his father had been more involved in his life, he made the decision to stop work, feeling *"most kids think it's pretty cool their parents are around to pick them up."* This led to friends' nick-naming him 'HB'; the 'House Bitch' *"which was good."* Since taking time off work Brad had started his own

business, but still questioned whether he had 'found' himself, and the very terminology he used:

"I don't know whether that's the real, is that a term? I don't, actually I don't know whether it was to find myself, I suppose that's a term people use when they, you know, they end up getting divorced. Oh I've got to go and find myself or something. So I didn't join a cult or anything like that or start having affairs."

Terry struggled following the breakdown of his first marriage, describing himself as *"shattered", "it took me a long time to work my way through that."* In an effort to *"work on"* himself Terry went to some *'retreats and things like that." "I did "some fairly hard work on myself in terms of finding myself clearly, you know? And getting a perspective of where I was."* Since undertaking this 'work' Terry felt he had achieved *"the emotional independence that I was looking for, that I knew where I was, you know? And…That internal integrity, sort of…"* Terry described orienting himself towards a position of control over his own actions:

"Being, fundamentally being aware that you're essentially responsible for yourself for the actions you take... You mightn't be responsible for all the things that happen to you, but the things that you choose, the attitudes or the directions you take are your decisions."

Terry felt that while he was not *"searching for answers",* he needed *"the opportunity to reflect and pick out where I was."* Terry drew links between this need and his religious upbringing: "*I think a lot of it goes back to the old, sort of, Reformist guilt things, you know, reformation guilt type, that, and getting rid of that."* Following his divorce Terry remarried, and described achieving a *"much more open relationship than the earlier ones."*

Harry (Aus, 56) also discussed the importance of *"taking responsibility for who you are and what you are and how you feel…and stop blaming those years",* but also felt this *"wasn't easy."* Also, like Terry, he centralised his divorce as a significant experience of struggle in later life, leaving him as a single parent to six children. He described feeling so low that he *"couldn't conceive life would go on"* yet also described the experience as enabling:

"It kind of freed me up in a sense to, because I was kind of in charge, I was organising everything,…I'd gone from a situation of living with my parents to getting married, living with my wife, without any period of being on my own or managing things and all that kind of stuff…so that kind of,

it's an opportunity in a sense to realise that there's all these things that have to be done that you've only ever done with somebody else. ..And if you haven't had the opportunity to discover that you can do all those things for yourself without anybody's help…then you don't really know that."

Indeed Harry described a sense of *"pride"* and *"determination"* that he attributed to *"being happy with who you are":*

"I'm actually pretty good deep down and any feelings of not being any good are kind of almost on the surface, really deep down you think you're OK as a person."

Duncan (UK, 53) experienced struggle after being sentence to a spell in prison. He didn't view himself as *"a criminal type at all"*, and confessed to finding prison *"pretty scary."* He described an experience of being 'framed' by the police, consequently increasing his time in prison, but adamant to not let it *"burn"* him, he repeated his mother's earlier words when he left home, highlighting the importance of living authentically: *"I've now got to live my life, yeah, just got to now live my life."* At the same time, Duncan felt the police had started *"a war"* against him, and thus, described identifying with reggae music:

"it's got a message, isn't it, love thy neighbour, you know what I mean? And just basic stuff like that. It's the sufferer's music isn't it, reggae? It's all about the wrongs of the world."

While Duncan didn't see himself as the 'criminal type', following prison he still found himself *"being roped into sitting in dark fucking car parks with bags of money and doing these concrete deals…Which was even scarier."* While Duncan felt he didn't want to take part in such 'work', *"it's kind of what you've got to do."* Thus, Duncan struggled with his autonomy, and further highlighted similar themes when his daughter was born: *"I hadn't planned for none of this, you know what I mean? And it all happened really quick…[I was] slightly trapped, yeah."* Duncan described being *"accused"* of being *"distant, hard and uncaring"* by his family at times, but drew on his own experiences in childhood in Scotland to explain:

"you want to fucking see these lot where I've come from, they really don't give a fuck, you know what I mean? And the way they talk as well, they're much more brutal and harsh, harsher than I am."

Yet he credited his ability to engage more authentically with his emotions to becoming a father to his daughter, as demonstrated by other participants also, discussed extensively in Chapter 7. While Duncan's relationship with his father never changed, he described his feelings changing toward him from hatred to pity: *"I just*

feel sorry for him know." Duncan had made a conscious effort not to be like his father, *"but that's taken me quite a while to get it sorted and it still ain't sorted yet, do you know what I mean?"* It was '*tough*' for Duncan to show emotions *"having been brought up strangely"*, but he felt this had changed with age and exposure to *"people that do have emotions and show them."* Thus, Duncan felt ageing had allowed him to:

"know yourself more…you're not going to put up with the bullshit, you don't have to put up with the fucking bullshit, so it's just a case of knowing yourself better, knowing who you are and what you want and what you don't want…And being able to say that, yeah…I don't have to do what people expect of me."

As demonstrated by Duncan, British men tended to conceptualise their increasing autonomy and agency as 'naturally' emerging through the ageing process/life course. Ken (UK, 50) felt his biggest change came aged 39: *"I get the feeling it was something almost chronological, it was almost hormonal."* He described taking on the *"hardest work I'd ever done"*:

"It was literally shifting cement sacks around and mixing cement and carrying bricks and knocking down walls….Extremely physically demanding and I felt bloody brilliant."

Ken went on to describe the positive changes in his body, countering the image produced by his 'sickly childhood':

"At the end of it I had a four pack and if not a six pack, because I've always been underweight and I was probably in the best physical condition that I'd ever been in."

While the work didn't last, achieving his physical peak through laborious work seemed to equip Ken with better coping strategies: *"since then life has thrown difficulties at me and I've had panic attacks and things like that, but not in the same ballpark as before."* In addition to the work, Ken attributed this shift in coping to the ageing process and increasing self-knowledge: *"I've had to learn what is it that I enjoy doing, what is it that does me good, what is it that I can do even if I'm feeling a bit wobbly, you know?"* Around the same time Ken got an allotment, enabling him to do further physical work:

"I enjoy doing mindless physical work, I also enjoy doing practical work with my hands, repairing things…so in a sense you could say, oh look he's become his granddad."

Ken felt he was "*born aged 65*". Thus, it would follow that the closer he gets to this age the more he would feel like 'himself', and at ease:

"I knew that as I get older things would actually get easier…as life progresses I've found it easier to cope with and now I'm having to cope with things which before would've literally spun me out of control…I think that it's a natural consequence of growing old and I think that it's just time and practise of dealing, of living with yourself … I'd rather be me now than at most other points of my life."

For Randeep (UK, 71), the lack of knowledge, *'brainwashing'* and disconnection he felt subjected to in childhood seemed to encourage the need in adulthood to *"connect to the world"* involving *"surfing the net",* listening to the radio and reading books:

"I got the chance of doing what I wanted to do…I'm in a very happy situation now…connected, to read the newspaper, you're connected to what's happening in the world, or read books, so as long as I'm connected I'm happy."

Randeep described having *"broken away"* from his family, though kept up relations with grandchildren (who came to visit him in London), more than his own children. While Randeep *"love[d] people"* he also liked *"freedom",* describing himself as *"a bit claustrophobic"* he found *"family life" "too restrictive." "You have to come back home and be good to people even if you don't want to be good… if you can have a family life, enjoy it or don't do it."* Having left behind the customs in India Randeep felt that as an older man in the UK he was *"in an ideal situation."*

"I feel good, feel good and contented…and I know what is going on in the world… I've developed like that, connecting to the world and connecting to people."

As an older man Randeep felt he had *"opportunities"* that were not available to him in his working life. *"But since I've retired and getting older, I just get the right opportunity" "If you manage your finances properly, old age is the best age."* Nevertheless, he still showed signs of struggling with issues from the past. Memories, including his education, and *"the way the family system works in India"* came back to *"punish"* him: *"what happened long time ago, you remember clearly, especially things have gone wrong."* As an older man, Randeep now felt *"if somebody suggests you something, you do it only if you really feel comfortable with it."* Randeep no longer took *"much notice of what other people saying… or want."* As an older man he felt it

was important to *"notice things",* and *"to look at the pavement some time because then you don't fall off."*

8.3. Summary

To summarise, men who had experienced poverty in childhood narrated the development of 'resilience' as key to successful ageing. Thus, among these men success was gained through struggle, as men exhibited heroic narratives of overcoming and learning from hardship. By drawing on past stories of coping with struggle men were able to develop more positive stories of strength and success. Difficult experiences then were seen as directly contributing to success in later life for men. Thus, adversity could be enabling, and successful ageing meant learning and benefitting from adversity, not the absence of it in men's lives. It should be noted that all of the men who featured here are Australian. Indeed, there was no such narrative demonstrated by British men, and less coherence in British working class narratives which tended to be marked by greater diversity (i.e. ethnically).

For British and Australian men who did not grow up experiencing poverty, narratives of developing autonomy were narrated as significant to ageing successfully. Becoming more autonomous often developed against a backdrop of feeling constrained by parents, or religious influences, and linked with a search for self-understanding and greater authenticity. However, there was a cultural difference in the ways men conceived the development of autonomy and authenticity. Australian men tended to position developing autonomy and authenticity as something to be proactively gained, and thus was a focus of Australian narratives (i.e. via visiting a psychologists, or attending retreats involving emotional honesty). Thus, Australian men emphasised the "hard work" (Terry, Aus, 76) involved in "finding themselves" (Brad, Aus, 51), British men however tended to position their growing autonomy and authenticity as "naturally" conducive to the ageing process, and did not narrate seeking help, or 'action' as an aid to self-discovery and authenticity. British men, in contrast to being proactive, were more likely to narrate the development of autonomy and authenticity as determined by circumstances across the life course, whereby things 'fell into place', or as a consequence of ageing, less directly shaped by men themselves. Thus, for British men, ageing was less likely to challenge masculine

identity, as men felt more at ease with themselves as they aged. Consequently, for Australian men, developing autonomy and authenticity was demonstrated earlier on in men's narratives due to their active engagement and awareness, whereas British men narrated autonomy and authenticity as something that 'found them' as they aged. Thus, British and Australian men showed different degrees of valuing action, and the extent to which this shaped narratives of successful ageing.

Chapter 9

Discussion

9.1. Overview

This study examined ageing, wellbeing, and the life course in relation to older men who self-selected as ageing successfully, thus offering insights into what shapes men's perceptions of "successful ageing" and what it means for them. Here I will outline the key findings, prior to a more detailed discussion. First, men's coping strategies tended to be organised in relation to age and the life course, and in particular, their sense of control. Most men described lacking control in childhood and adolescence, and 'taking' greater control in adulthood. Older age involved sustaining, negotiating, and 'letting go' of control. This relates to the first objective of the study: to collect narratives from across the course of men's lives. Indeed, this approach has led to understandings around control as particularly significant. The second objective which is explored in the second finding, relates tothe ways men experience their masculine (and other) identities in relation to their subjective wellbeing. Most men identified variously as 'outsiders', 'loners', or 'different' in comparison to their male peers across the life course, and often against popular ideals of masculinity, such as a preoccupation with sport, drinking, and "blokishness". Viewing oneself as 'different' or a 'loner' seemed to carry more negative inferences for men's wellbeing than identifying as an 'outsider'. The third key finding relates to men's embodied experiences. Men in the sample talked more about themselves as being embodied at precisely the point their bodies started to 'go wrong' in older age, as they became aware of the limitations of their bodies. As men started to understand themselves *as* ageing bodies, they often turned to constructive ways to maintain 'action' and control. The fourth key finding was that ageing appeared to encourage greater emotional expression for (heterosexual) men, most often through romantic relations, and becoming fathers. However, fathering sons brought a greater risk of reproducing the hegemonic role as more distant and critical than fathering daughters. The fifth finding was that ageing successfully needs to be understood as mediated by sexuality, class, and culture, as will be discussed in this chapter. These final two findings can be located within the third objective of the

study, that is, to compare narratives for themes of successful ageing and wellbeing across identity positions.

9.2. Coping, control, and wellbeing across the life course

In this research men's coping strategies tended to be organised according to age cohort. In particular, their sense of control changed over time as most men described themselves as lacking control in childhood and adolescence and 'taking' some control in adulthood. Older age involved a more flexible and adaptive relationship to control, as men described sustaining, negotiating, and 'letting go' of ideals of control. Research has commonly made connections between power, control and masculinity; indeed, the capacity to assert control over oneself, the environment, and others can be understood as a 'manhood act'– "signifying practices through which the identity "man" is established and upheld in interaction" (Schrock and Schwalbe, 2009: 279). Issues of control may be particularly important to older men as the process of ageing is most often understood as leading to increasing dependence and a loss of control (Smith et a.l, 2007; Canham, 2009; Calasanti; 2013), which runs counter to dominant ideals of masculinity, and may leave older men with an "ill-defined model" of how to be a man (Canham, 2009). The ability to maintain control in aspects of life, such as health or finance, may help men to delay suffering in later life, by sustaining masculine ideals of independence (Canham, 2009). Dominant psychological research on successful ageing also suggests that the feeling of being in control of one's life is a key aspect of psychological functioning in older age (Baltes and Baltes, 1990; Ryff, 1989; Knight, Davison, McCabe, and Mellor, 2011).

Despite evidence confirming the importance of a sense of control in psychological wellbeing, research has not explored men's relationship to control as a life course issue, that is, how men understand and experience at different life stages, starting in childhood. In the current study men described coping in childhood (and adolescence) as passive, as they lacked the resources to find satisfactory ways of dealing with difficulties. Men's distant relations with fathers, challenges in early sexual relations, as well as struggles at school with peers and teachers were often dismissed by the common mantra of 'it's just the way it was'. Thus, as part of successful ageing, men commonly positioned themselves as having little control over their early difficulties.

Adulthood was most often described in terms of 'taking action' to cope with difficulties and distress, in contrast to the lack of action and control that is possible in childhood. 'Taking action' was understood by men as 'keeping busy', being productive, or 'solution focused', and was tied to masculine identity. Thus, men highly valued 'taking action' and commonly discussed the sense of achievement it instilled. However, some men also inferred that 'action' helped them to avoid the emotional impact of the distress associated with significant life events such as divorce, or being made redundant. Furthermore, taking action could be at odds with seeking outside support, raising some concerns over how effective 'taking action' can be, and in what circumstances it might be best avoided. Indeed, men themselves identified limitations to 'taking action' as a way of 'dealing' with distress. Kilmartin (2005) argues that men are encouraged to disassociate from their emotions, by converting them into actions, which might potentially contribute to criminal behaviour, substance abuse, and/or impoverished friendships. Empirical research has also suggested that developing better ways to engage with emotions, such as through meditation, may improve men's wellbeing, for example, by decreasing the risk of turning to alcohol to cope (Lomas et al., 2013).

Men's accounts illustrated how 'taking action' becomes harder as men age later in life; some described strategies they used to maintain 'action' and reassert control in the face of declining physical and mental functions. Such strategies included turning to work on the body through walking, or going to the gym (discussed further in section 9.4 on embodiment), as well as foregrounding the importance of mental 'action' (by remaining mentally engaged through computers or puzzles, and learning new things). This finding has been mirrored by research about older women who demonstrate an ability to 'monitor and manage ageing body parts' through exerting an 'active mind' as well as a 'busy body' in an effort to control the ageing body (Paulson and Willig, 2008). In the current research, as men talked about losing physical function, they sometimes offset this by describing an increase in knowledge and wisdom, demonstrating that 'manhood acts' of control are especially called upon when the masculine self is at risk of being discredited (Ezzell, 2012), such as in the context of ageing. This reflects empirical research by Coles and Vassarotti (2012: 36) who suggested that as their male sample aged they operated in a "field of aged masculinity", where capital such as experience, maturity, and wisdom was valued,

and could compensate for an aged body that no longer fit the ideal. The significance of wisdom (and self-growth) has been a long standing feature of some psychological models of successful ageing (Ryff, 1989; Baltes and Baltes, 1990) and more recently identified in empirical research on lay understandings of successful ageing (Reichstadt et al., 2010). Interestingly, age-associated wisdom is also a discourse taken up in neurobiology, as it has been demonstrated that brain growth and development can continue into older age (Meeks and Jeste, 2009).

Additionally, in contrast to much of the literature on masculinity, ageing, and control - whereby older men seek to maintain control (Sloan et al., 2010; Calasanti et al., 2013; Canham, 2009) - the current study also illustrates the ways in which some older men can let go, or 'go with the flow' to help them cope with major transitions, such as physical decline and unemployment or retirement. Indeed, 'taking action' and control could not always be maintained, nor was it always seen as wise as men aged. Thus, narratives about 'taking control' were more predominant among the younger participants (in their 50's and early 60's). The finding that men may move towards a position of 'go with the flow' in older age relates to theories of adaptation in psychological research on successful ageing (Valliant, 1971; Baltes and Baltes 1990), whereby older people successfully adjust to their changing circumstances. Furthermore, theories of adaptation relate to distinctions made in the literature between 'primary control' and 'secondary control'. Primary control relates to an individual's belief that personal outcomes can be controlled through the individual's own actions (Mirosky and Ross in Umberson et al., 2010), also called 'control beliefs' (Lang and Heckhausen, 2001). Secondary control involves cognitive processes that enable individuals to adapt by disengaging from action (i.e. control over the external environment), and move towards managing internal thoughts and emotions as a means of maintaining control, thus helping to mitigate the loss of primary control (Canham, 2009). For older populations, secondary modes of control are considered more common, involving changes in perspective and attitude to help cope with physical or other changes beyond men's control, or to shift emphasis on to areas in which men can still excel and demonstrate control (Canham, 2009). Thus, as men in the current study shifted towards positions of 'go with the flow', they moved towards secondary control by adapting their attitudes to cope with their changing identities and abilities. Clarke and Bennett (2013) illustrate a similar finding in their research

on older people living with multiple chronic conditions. They found that men tended to view their chronic conditions as a normal aspect of ageing, approached with resignation and stoicism, helping them to achieve 'biographical flow' rather than disruption. While not all men in Clarke and Bennett's (2013) research opted out of methods of control, and many described frustration with the loss of ability, some described having to accept their situations and move on with their lives, signaling a 'letting go' of primary control and moving towards secondary. Using a life course approach, the current study was able to go further, illustrating how arriving at a position of biographical 'flow' in older age may involve significant struggle for which men need support, and is not necessarily a position men naturally assume in older age. Indeed, adopting a position of 'flow' may involve moving away from ideals of control involved in 'taking action' integral to many men's identities. The current research explored the cumulative process where men arrive at a position of 'secondary control' (including the strategies adopted and associated difficulties), by identifying how important notions of primary control were earlier on in their lives. Being able to relinquish ideals of control, as demonstrated by participants, can be beneficial to wellbeing. For participants in the current study, shifts towards secondary control were encouraged by community participation and constructive embodied strategies such as yoga. Community participation and ways of 'working' on the body, such as walking or going to the gym, may also help men sustain 'action' and primary control. Indeed, letting go of ideals of control and maintaining control are not necessarily mutually exclusive, as letting go of control in one area may mean taking control in another.

Finally, in addition to 'taking action' and 'going with the flow', the current research found that men also drew on discourses of 'positive thinking' to aid coping, defined in two main ways by participants. First, men defined 'thinking positively' in terms of comparing oneself to others who may be less privileged, in order to acknowledge one's own relative good fortune. Indeed, downward social comparison has been noted in past research as effective in coping with negative changes (Willis, 1991). Secondly, men defined 'thinking positively' as looking to the future and to things that may bring happiness, rather than focusing on present struggle. Men also defined positivity in idiosyncratic ways depending on their distinct struggles. Like 'taking action', positivity could be harder to maintain with age as men had to adapt to new

circumstances. In relation to control, 'thinking positively' appeared to privilege attitude (secondary control) over 'action' (primary control), as with 'going with the flow'. However, men's accounts demonstrated that positioning oneself as 'positive', or adopting 'positive thinking', does not necessarily require relinquishing primary control, and may rely on controlling the future (by planning things to look forward to). Thus, 'positivity' can still underpin forms of action, in contrast to 'going with the flow', defined by men as being in the present (*"being where you are"*).

In conclusion, results from the current research both support and add to the literature on men's relationship to control and ageing successfully. Empirical research has shown that older men seek ways to maintain control, as well as negotiate and adapt their relationship to control in order to achieve 'biographical flow' rather than disruption, both of which are supported by many men's accounts in the current research. The life course approach taken by the current study has enabled a close focus on men's relationship with control and the transitions they experience as they age, including the lack of control in childhood, 'taking' control through 'action' in adulthood, the difficulties associated with maintaining control in older age, the strategies men use to sustain primary control, and the process of moving towards secondary control. Furthermore, the current research illustrates how discourses of 'positive thinking' may be drawn on by men to help cope with struggle, and how this may be underpinned by primary control, rather than secondary. This is the first qualitative empirical study to explore men's relationship to control across the life course and the implications for wellbeing. Indeed, lacking control in childhood and adolescence was a struggle for men and was coped with indirectly; 'taking' control in adulthood was described positively, but was harder to sustain in older age and sometimes led men to distance themselves from their emotions. Moving towards secondary control could be a very difficult process for men, particularly if they had held strong ideals of control and 'action' across their lives, but such shifts marked significant yardsticks for men's sense of successful ageing. Thus, while the current research recognises the importance of control and taking action for masculine identity and instilling a sense of achievement, it raises questions about its effectiveness (across the life course). Men may position 'taking action' and seeking outside help and support as being at odds with one another; thus, adopting ideals of control may discourage men from seeking help as well as confronting emotions.

Given that ideals of control may be tied up with emotional restriction, letting go of ideals of control may enable greater emotional expression. It has been suggested by Miller (2013) that being able to express emotions more freely will provide men with greater agency, self-direction and understanding of their own mental health issues. However, the relationship between weakening and diminishing ideals of control (or a move towards secondary control) and emotional expression have not been explored empirically in research on successful ageing. Thus, the current research offers originality in this area.

9.3. Identity construction and wellbeing

The second finding was that most men identified as 'outsiders', 'loners' or 'different' in comparison to how they perceived male peers (and ideals of masculinity more generally), which tended to revolve around popular hegemonic constructions, such as a preoccupation with sport, drinking, and 'blokishness'. Thus men showed awareness of what was expected of them as men, but rarely (if ever) did they express a coherent identity that consistently conformed to these expectations. Men described their identities as 'different', 'loners', and 'outsiders' as being formed during childhood, and often in relation to school peers. Men tended to maintain these positions and understandings of themselves across the life course. As men saw themselves at odds with certain hegemonic constructions in early life, they positioned peer groups as structured by hegemonic codes, in line with older work by Connell (1995), possibly reflective of this older cohort of men. Indeed, more recent work on boys' friendships highlights emotional intimacy between boys, and a breaking down of hegemonic traditions (Way, 2011; McKormac, 2011). Not 'fitting in' with male peers, as narrated by men, carried a variety of implications for wellbeing. Dominant research suggests that feeling part of one's peer group is of crucial importance to boys (Warrington and younger, 2011), even when hurtful, in order to bolster a sense of masculinity (Oransky and Marecek, 2009). In the current study however, understanding oneself outside the peer group was reflected on both positively and negatively by men.

Men who identified as 'different' and 'loners' tended to conceptualise their identities less positively than 'outsiders', and illustrated more tension in their narratives. On the

surface men frequently dismissed the idea of any struggle associated with their identities, yet this seemed to minimise the difficulties involved with identifying as 'different', or a 'loner'. Indeed, at the same time as dismissing the notion of struggle, men frequently provided explanations for their identities, citing fixed 'root' 'causes' that were out of their control, such as being an only-child, or parental attitudes, lending support to suggestions that gender behaviours are at least partially rooted in the parental home (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Thus, some men displayed tensions around their identities as 'different' or 'loners'. Others however, narrated their positions as a struggle more openly, involving difficulties with esteem and feelings of alienation. Thus, not 'fitting in' could be narrated as a significant struggle where men felt 'expelled' (or excluded) from peer groups, for example, in the context of sport. However, men sometimes found ways to compensate for this by carving out alternative sources of self-worth, such as academic success, shown elsewhere in research (Renold, 2001). Thus, some 'loners' found ways to offset less valued aspects of their identity with alternative sources of worth by constructing a positive sense of self, despite troubling feelings of not 'fitting in'. This has parallels with work by de Visser and Smith (2007) on 'trading masculine competence', whereby men may compensate for the loss of masculine capital in one area (for instance in choosing not to drink) by highlighting alternative sources of masculine worth, such as intelligence, as demonstrated by the current sample.

Turning to 'outsiders', these men narrated their positions more positively than 'loners', or those who identified as 'different'. 'Outsiders' (like 'loner' and 'different' narratives) also tended to identify themselves as distinct from the peer group and some hegemonic constructions. However, rather than struggle associated with not 'fitting in', men highlighted the importance of autonomy, self-discovery, and individuality, above being 'one of the boys'. Narratives were also often motivated by 'alternative' political beliefs, where men expressed deriving satisfaction from disrupting the status quo. Thus, 'outsider' identities were positioned as proactively shaped from adolescence and under men's control, rather than a consequence of circumstances beyond their control (as demonstrated by 'loner' and 'different' narratives). Once again this demonstrates the importance of control for narratives of successful ageing. Some previous empirical research on boy's narratives in the schooling context has also found that boys may identify as 'different' or 'individuals'

as they display ambivalence about being part of the peer group versus the idea of being an individual (Plummer, 1999; Stroudt, 2006). Stroudt's (2006) work in particular revealed the value boys may place in achieving a 'different' identity to other boys, in line with some 'outsiders' accounts in the current study. However, in this study 'outsiders' illustrated an ability to reconcile peer group demands while maintaining a sense of individuality, rather than positioning these as a troubling binary they were unable to overcome. Indeed, 'outsider' identities were flexible and adaptive; men maintained an understanding of themselves as 'unique', whilst successfully navigating male peer groups (enjoyed by some, 'put up with' by others). Furthermore, 'outsiders' often narrated enjoying bonds with women, whom they frequently deemed as being more emotionally open than men. While 'loners' could also enjoy bonds with women, they more often positioned themselves problematically *as* feminine, 'passive', or 'soft'. As such, 'outsider' identities were characterised by greater ease and less tension than 'loner' or 'different' narratives.

Although men sometimes narrated strong bonds with women, across identity positions (i.e. 'loners, 'different', 'outsiders') men also viewed themselves as self-sufficient, commonly understood by men as not needing support or even necessarily communication with others (male or female), in line with the literature on masculinity, stoicism, and help-seeking. However, while some men narrated self-sufficiency as part of identity and conducive to wellbeing, many also questioned its effectiveness, with some narrating self-sufficiency as harmful (similar to 'taking action'), thus highlighting men's awareness of the problems around not seeking help, and their capacity for adaptive change. Men's willingness to seek help and their capacity for positive change is starting to be acknowledged by empirical research that focuses on constructive behaviour in relation to help-seeking (Chapple et al., 2002; Douglas et al., 2013), moving away from dominant discourses of masculinity as destructive. As with 'loners' or 'different' narratives, men often sought explanations for their self-sufficiency, positioning it as 'acquired' through socialisation (i.e. being 'trained' to be 'self-reliant' by parents). Furthermore, men narrated tensions between upholding ideals of stoicism and self-sufficiency, and wanting to seek friends and support. This complicates past literature on men's help-seeking that portrays men as simply unwilling to seek help (Husaini et al., 1994), by illustrating how seeking help may be

a significant struggle for men, tied to identity, personal history, and background, about which men demonstrated awareness.

Most often in contrast to self-sufficiency narratives, some men narrated male friendship and support as valuable, commonly in the context of 'doing' things together (e.g. sport, drinking, 'risky' activities). This is in line with research that suggests men develop 'action' based, 'shoulder to shoulder' friendships, rather than prioritising verbal communication (Golding, 2012; Wright, 1982). Sport and risk (forms of competitive 'action') were described as integral to forging positive connections with other men, as well as instilling a sense of individual achievement, and aiding identity construction. Men also described drinking alcohol with other men as aiding male 'bonding' and 'camaraderie'. A minority of participants described verbal communication and emotional support from other men as significant, rather than exclusively 'action' based friendships, but this could also be viewed as at odds with ideals and expectations of self-sufficiency. Thus, seeking emotional support from other men was rare and often in tension with the broader themes underpinning men's narratives.

In conclusion, men's narratives showed how they can construct positive identities both away from, and in line with hegemonic characteristics (such as competition, risk, or sport), challenging the dominant discourse of hegemony as inherently negative for men. For example, risk-taking has been theorised as destructive (Courtenay, 1999; 2000), yet men's accounts show how risk-taking can positively aid identity construction and closeness between men. Men also reflected on enjoying traditional masculine activities such as sport where they valued competition and experienced a sense of achievement, and often negotiated these as they aged in order to sustain some degree of participation. At the same time, men also reflected back on some forms of risk less positively, positioning themselves as more mature and wiser. Additionally, men narrated some traditional masculine ideals as harmful (for example, self-sufficiency). While some men reflected positively on hegemonic masculinity and peer relations, most identified away from peers and at least some hegemonic characteristics. For some this led to negative feelings of alienation, but others valued their individuality, prioritising political views, or self-discovery, above being 'one of the boys'. Men also expressed valuing female company, whom they often deemed more emotionally expressive and open then men. Furthermore, for

'outsiders', who identified most positively, masculinity was not constrictive, and they were able to adopt masculine characteristics they valued, whilst rejecting others, thus illustrating how masculinity can be fluid and dynamic.

9.4. Turning to the body and constructive embodiment

The third finding relates to men's embodied experiences. Men in the sample tended to bring their bodies into their narratives as they started to 'go wrong', most often in older age, though a minority spoke of earlier bodily memories. As men began to understand themselves *as* ageing bodies, they often turned to constructive embodied ways of working with the body to maintain control, such as walking, or going to a gym. Social-constructivists view the physical body as inherently storied and eminently social (Sparkes, 1997). As such, the body plays an important role in understanding social life, including embodied differences of class, gender, sexuality and so on (Shilling, 1993; Turner, 1992). Sociological research on men's bodies and embodied experiences has been developing over the last 25 years or so (Bordo, 1999; Pope, Phillips and Oliviardia, 2000), though the 'cultural turn' to the body in sociology the late 1980's/early 1990's initially ignored men's experiences in favour of women's (Morgan, 1993). More recently, research continues to note that female bodies and experiences of embodiment are more frequently explored than men's (Johnstone and Longhurst, 2010). Indeed, men have traditionally been aligned with the 'rational' mind, and thus seen as 'in control' of their bodies, rather than experiencing their bodies as unpredictable and uncontained as women have been viewed (Young, 1990). Today however, the idea of the male body as 'relatively unproblematic' (Hepworth and Featherstone, 1998) has been challenged by research into men's bodies in many areas, including sport (Ricciardelli and McCabe, 2006), health (Watson, 2000), body-dissatisfaction (Grogan, 2007), and popular representations (Bordo, 1999; Gill, 2007). Furthermore, some research has started to position the male body as unruly and unrestrained, for example, in the context of the pre-nuptual 'stag' weekends (Thurnell-read, 2011). It has been argued that 'true' masculinity is almost always thought to proceed from men's bodies (Connell, 2005), but research on ageing men's bodies is still lacking (Shirani, 2013). The current

research encouraged men to tell stories of bodily activity, given the importance of embodiment for understandings of subjectivity (Burr, 1998).

While narratives of early bodily memories were less common, some men described 'sick' or unruly bodies in childhood, when they as boys were vulnerable and lacking control (rather than positive stories of embodiment). However, a minority of men mentioned enjoying the physicality of sport, dancing, sex, and running in early years. Men commonly discussed the lack of physical affection in their families. Hence, most men lacked positive stories of early physical intimacy. Nonetheless, most commonly men's bodies emerged in their stories in relation to lacking control, which predominated in discussions of ageing as participants started to perceive themselves as losing physical function. Men tended to discuss the physical changes they perceived in relation to practical tasks that had become more challenging, such as mowing the lawn, or running to the car, as well as decreasing sporting abilities. This supports research that suggests men most often make sense of the body through physical functioning (Halliwell and Dittmar, 2003), or as Franzoi (1995) argues, as a tool for social and physical action, and are less concerned with issues of physical appearance that tend to dominate women's narratives (Gill, Henwood, and Mclean, 2005). Indeed the loss of physical functioning can impede older men's capacity to perform youth based masculinity, as physical decline may restrict forms of assertion and self-control (Calasanti, 2013). However, the male 'body as machine' discourse is shifting as representations of the male body are increasingly on display as eroticised, connoting 'to be looked-at-ness' in ways that have dominated representations of women (Gill, 2007). Thus, the focus on functionality demonstrated by participants may be reflective of this older cohort. Furthermore, a minority of men did discuss struggles around body image, including lacking in weight and muscle in early life. Indeed research confirms that adolescence is often understood as a time where issues relating to body image arise, given the huge social and physical changes that occur during this period (Jones and Crawford, 2004). Some more recent research suggests that body dissatisfaction in boys is common, and often associated with emotional distress (Cohane and Pope, 2001). McCabe and Ricciardelli (2001) found that among young males who were dissatisfied with their bodies, strategies to increase weight and muscle tone were common (whereas for girls, methods of losing weight were adopted more often), though this was not discussed by men in the

current sample. A few men discussed feeling less sexually attractive as they aged. Nevertheless, men much more frequently highlighted practical and functional concerns rather than appearance based in the context of physical changes, including being less able to sexually perform. This is somewhat similar to women, who have shown less concern with appearance as they age, and have asserted the greater significance of health (Hurd, 2000). Yet recent research also suggests notable differences still exist in men and women's embodied experiences of ageing, with women more focused on appearance than men (Panek, Hayslip, and Pruett, 2014).

The loss of physical function was often constructed as something that 'crept up' on men, or of which they were only vaguely aware, thus further highlighting men's lack of self-consciousness of their bodies, carrying implications for health and wellbeing. As men began to understand themselves *as* ageing bodies (bodies that will ultimately break down) this precipitated reflections on 'health' and the adoption of constructive embodied practices, demonstrated elsewhere in research (Calasanti, Pietila, Ojala, and King, 2013, Sloan et al., 2010). Indeed, research suggests that mid-life may see the beginnings of physical decline for men, and many may express anxiety about ageing and the declining ability 'to do' (Shirani, 2013), reasons for which may also vary by socio-economic background and work experiences (e.g. See Wandel and Roos, 2006). As such, mid-life and older age can be a time of renewed interest in the body, and men may try to combat physical decline through embodied practices, such as body-building (Phoenix and Smith, 2011), or exercise and diet (Calasanti, 2013), constituting counter-stories to the dominant narrative of ageing as decline (Gullette, 1997). Indeed, Calasanti's (2013) research suggested that as men age and face challenges to their ability (particularly to compete with other men), they may be inspired to rethink the degrees of control they have over their bodies and health behaviour, and hence, turn to health promoting practices to maintain control. Rather than this turn to self-care challenging a sense of masculinity it could involve a reinterpretation, conceptualised as undertaking 'hard work' by some men, in line with hegemonic ideals. A similar finding was uncovered by Sloan et al (2010) in their interviews with 'healthy' men, as respondents reproduced a masculine self (in the context of their 'healthy' behaviour) as autonomous, action-oriented and in control of their health. For Calasanti et al's (2013) interviewees, emphasis was placed on increasing responsibility and rationality as men tended to frame health as something

they "appreciated" more with age, and took "more seriously". As such, it is apparent that in the context of ageing, the body becomes a 'legitimate' site through which core masculine characteristics can be retained (or claimed), while others may be actively rejected or lost (Canham, 2009; Sloan et al., 2009).

Walking was most commonly described by men in the current study as enjoyable, and as leading to positive health benefits both physically and mentally, including better coping strategies, such as 'problem solving'. Men even drew on scientific 'evidence' of the benefits of walking to support their views. Participants also described stretching, going to the gym, and riding a bike, as positive physical activities. Being physically active has long been highlighted as a key component of models of successful ageing (Rowe and Khan, 1987), and more recently many lay accounts of successful (Knight and Riccardelli, 2003) or 'active' ageing (Stenner, McFarquhar, and Bowling, 2011). Drawing on biomedicine and lay accounts, scientists have established that maintaining a consistently active lifestyle in older age can play an important role in helping older people retain independence and a good quality of life (Phoenix and Grant, 2009). Furthermore, subjective accounts have shown that feeling or understanding oneself as 'old' has been typically associated with diminished activity for both men and women (Stenner et al., 2011), suggesting activity keeps one feeling young, or conversely, that feeling young may lead to greater activity.

Some research has highlighted how some stages of the life course may encourage men to reflect about their bodies, such as fatherhood as well as older age, leading some to develop a new found care for themselves (Gordon et al., 2013). In the current research men's reflections on their roles as fathers and grandfathers led to reflecting on health and longevity. As grandfathers, men wanted to remain active with grandchildren as long as possible, encouraging shifts towards 'working' on the body to remain 'fit'. Research suggests that fatherhood is a relationship that tends to be characterised by high levels of activity with children (Lamb, 2010), often linked to men's memories with their own fathers (Shirani, 2013). Doucet (2006) found fathers called upon the body to convey their experiences as strong, physical and active beings, able to play sport with children (sons in particular), holding implications for older fathers, or indeed grandfathers. In Shirani's (2013) research, concerns about ageing tended to be limited to men with sons, as daughters were deemed less

physically demanding (leading some older men to express a preference for daughters). The current research would suggest that men with daughters may have fewer fears and concerns about ageing, given that daughters tend to be a greater source of practical and emotional support for ageing fathers (as discussed in section 9.5).

In conclusion, this current study both supports and adds to the (quite sparse) literature around older men's embodiment and wellbeing. The life course approach taken by the current study illustrated that most men lacked awareness of their bodies, until they 'went wrong' in older age. While a minority of men spoke of earlier bodily memories, these accounts also usually described instances where men lacked control and felt vulnerable. Thus, this research supports the dominant view that men most commonly understand their bodies in relation to functionality. When men started to perceive their bodies as 'failing', they often turned to constructive ways of working on the body, conceptualised as legitimately masculine by men, which is also suggested elsewhere in literature (Calasanti et al., 2013; Sloan et al., 2010). Both fatherhood and grandfatherhood could lead to reflecting on health and the body, encouraging constructive action to increase men's involvement and time with children, adding to the literature on how life stages may encourage constructive embodiment for men.

9.5. Emotional expression, fatherhood, and the reproduction of hegemony

The men in the current study often spoke about the difficulties they had in expressing emotions. This reflects the dominant view of men's emotional poverty found in research and wider society. Indeed, strong connections have been found between traditional hegemonic norms and restricted emotionality, such as denial of emotions and disconnectedness (Addis, 2008). But more than this, men's struggles with emotions emerged as a life course issue, with many men describing difficulties stemming from childhood. Furthermore, some men described journeys towards greater emotional expression as they aged, thus challenging popular discourse of men as emotionally restricted. Moreover, men in the current study showed considerable awareness of their difficulties with emotions, and drew links between their distant relationships with fathers (and to a lesser extent mothers) as children,

and struggles with emotional expression as adult men. As evidence of men's difficulties with expressing emotions, men were rarely able to talk about how being physically and emotionally distant from their fathers made them feel, and often found ways to account for, rationalise, or empathise with their father's behaviour rather than criticising them, thus positioning men's' fathers' as dually 'untouchable'.

The narrative approach taken by the current study revealed that as heterosexual men developed romantic relationships and became fathers, they often narrated shifts towards greater emotional expression, conducive to their wellbeing. Shifts in men's emotionality across the life course is discussed by Guttman (1994: 24) who suggests: "the older man seems to gain a sensitivity and tenderness previously lacking in his psychological makeup". Some research has suggested that men's display of emotions may be permissible in some contexts and relationships, such as with girlfriends (Courtney, 2000), or daughters (Bennett, 2007), but less so with other men. Although, some research has pointed towards homosocial contexts such as sport as a legitimate space for men's emotional expression. Men in the current study sometimes described talking to wives or girlfriends about difficulties when they did not talk to anyone else, thus providing opportunities for reflection and positive change. Of more interest perhaps, were men's accounts of fatherhood and developing emotional expression. Men were acutely aware of the potential dangers of reproducing the traditional hegemonic role in their own parenting practices (i.e. of being non-communicative or non-affectionate with children). Indeed, men who had negative experiences with their own fathers tended to draw links between their childhood experiences and wanting to parent 'differently', for example, to be more affectionate and spend more time with children, in line with the "new involved" father role (Brannen and Nilson, 2006). This adds to the growing body of research that suggests men tend to reflect on their own experiences with their fathers upon transition to fatherhood, and that this impacts on the style of parenting they want to adopt (Finn and Heywood, 2009; Deave and Johnsone, 2008; Roy, 2006; St John, Cameron, and McVeigh, 2005). Men may want to parent 'just like their dad', or, the opposite if their experiences were less positive (St John et al., 2005). This includes wanting to parent differently from their own fathers if they were perceived to be distant or disengaged, in an effort to be emotionally close to their own children

(Goodman, 2005), which was reflected in the current study. Intergenerational empirical research has indeed confirmed that men can 'cross over' from negative experiences to reconfigure their role as fathers rather than replicating the same pattern with their own children (Floyd and Morman, 2000). Such shifts in fathering practices are often attributed to the wider changing socio-cultural context within which discourses of the 'new involved father' have developed (Brannen and Nilson, 2006). Additionally, men have been shown to exercise much agency in negotiating the demands of fatherhood despite not necessarily having positive role models to draw from (Forste, Bartkowski, and Jackson, 2009).

Significantly, in the current research men's opportunities to parent 'differently', that is away from the traditional hegemonic role they had experienced (fathers as distant, disengaged, critical, and competitive), seemed to be better for men with daughters. Daughters were narrated as providing 'legitimate' opportunities for men to reflect and express emotions, without transgressing hegemonic norms. Indeed, men described fathering a daughter as demanding a 'softer touch' to sons, thus, encouraging moves away from men's own negative experiences with their fathers. For some men having a daughter was positioned as an opportunity they had been waiting for, inviting men to "go in another direction", providing feelings of "completion". For others, parenting daughters 'differently' was narrated with less ease, requiring men to "stop and think" before "just doing as my dad did." Research on the impact of fatherhood on men's wellbeing is underdeveloped compared to the impact of father's on children. Thus, a large body of work is devoted to the links between father presence/absence and wellbeing in an array of areas for boys and girls. For boys, an absent father may result in 'father hunger', consisting of "an emotional and psychological longing" for distant fathers (Perrin, Baker, Romelus, Jones, and Heesaker, 2009:315). Indeed, the damage done to men by absent or dysfunctional fathers was a key issue of the men's movement (Magnuson, 2008). It has been suggested that when fathers are actively involved in their son's lives, sons become less aggressive, less overly competitive, and more equipped to express feelings of vulnerability and sadness (Brody, 1996). Furthermore, when sons described the relationship between themselves and their fathers as close in Brody's (1996) research, sons showed a heightened capacity for empathy and had more flexible and relaxed attitudes about gender and life. However, there have since been challenges to the idea of fathers as

integral to boy's wellbeing (Pease, 2000; Paul, 2010). For example Pease (2000) has argued that rather than needing to identify with fathers to establish a gendered identity, sons can construct their masculine selves through dis-identification with patriarchal fathers and empathy for their mothers. For girls, father absence has been viewed as equally damaging, with research citing links to teenage pregnancy (McLanahan, 1999; Ellis, Bates, Dodge, Fergusson, Horwood, Pettit, and Woodward, 2003), anti-social and criminal behaviour (Harper and McLanahan, 2004), and drug and alcohol abuse (Lerner, 2004). Father presence, or having a close relationship with fathers, may lead to better overall health for daughters (Troxel and Mathews, 2004) and less stress-related illnesses such as insomnia and headaches (Fabricius and Luecken, 2007). For boys and girls an absent father may lead to earlier exit from education (McLanahan, 1999).

Literature that does include a focus on men's wellbeing in the context of fatherhood most frequently highlights the importance of sons for fathers rather than daughters, who are in turn viewed as more in need of fathers than daughters (Rotundo, 1985). Indeed, 'teaching boys to be men' constructs a mutually 'special relationship' between fathers and sons (Harris and Morgan, 1991). Fathers have also reported being closer to sons (Starrels, 1994), hence, most literature suggests that fathers invest more time in relationships with sons than with daughters (Tucker McHale, and Crouter, 2003; Mammen, 2011; Dahl and Moretti, 2008). In Gallup Poll surveys men are more than twice as likely to profess a preference for sons rather than daughters (Bianchi and Raley, 2006), though research also suggests that parents most often seek a child of each sex (Andresson, Hank, Ronson, and Vikat, 2006). In the current study, men actually vocalised a preference for daughters rather than sons. Much less work has been undertaken on men's relationships with their daughters than sons, but it has generally been less positive. Indeed, research frequently highlights communication difficulties between fathers and daughters (particularly in comparison to mother/daughter relationships), which in turn are blamed for a range of psychological difficulties among girls, such as increased eating disordered behaviours (Botta and Dumlao, 2002), poor future relations with men (Flouri, 2005), and a lack of self-worth and sexual agency (Katz and van der Kloet, 2010). Again, very little research looks at the implications of father/daughter relations for men's wellbeing. However, there are some signs this is shifting. Indeed, some research has

started to suggest that fathering daughters may lead to changes in men's gendered attitudes, including moving towards more progressive attitudes than if men fathered sons (Washington, 2006; Shafer and Malhotra, 2011; Oswald and Powdthavee, 2010), for example, in the field of reproductive rights (Washington, 2006). Thus as men father girls, they may become more aware of, and concerned with issues of gender inequality (as they pertain to women). Furthermore, it has now been suggested that daughters increase father's longevity, by an average of 74 weeks per daughter born, while sons did not have a significant effect on parents' longevity (Jasienska, Nenko, and Jasienski, 2006). However, research has not explored the implications of fathering girls in comparison to boys in relation to men's emotional expression and wellbeing, or in the broader context of successful ageing, thus the current study provides some originality in this area.

In the current research hegemonic discourse were implicated in men's parenting practices, positively shaping their relations with daughters, though less so with sons, given men's tendency to parent in traditional ways that emphasised 'softer' treatment of daughters, encouraging change in men themselves. Research suggests that parents usually respond to children in traditionally gendered ways (Kane, 2006), for example by emphasising themes of autonomy during story-telling more with sons than with daughters, when emotions are more frequently highlighted (Fiese and Skillman, 2000). Some empirical research has suggested men make a greater effort to fulfil the 'breadwinner role' when they have boys by working longer hours for a higher wage (Lundberg and Rose, 2002). Research has also suggested that fathers and daughters may have less competitive and more affectionate relationships than fathers and sons (Snarey, 1993), in line with the current research findings. Kane's (2006) research shows how fathers may raise sons in a way that is consistent with hegemonic masculinity, while for daughters, greater degrees of gender-role non conformity are tolerated, or even encouraged. However, again, this body of literature tends to emphasise the impact on children (or offers no links to wellbeing at all), rather than centralising the implications for fathers specifically.

In addition to providing more legitimate opportunities for a 'different' style of parenting, involving more intimacy, men also tended to position daughters as more supportive than sons in later life, with more frequent contact characterised by greater

emotional closeness, indeed, men would talk more to their daughters than with sons about problems. This is supported by research that has suggested that daughters provide greater care to ageing parents than sons do (Ingersoll-Dayton, Starrels, and Dowler, 1996). In the current research men's relations with adult sons tended to be more distant, and were characterised by more disagreements and tension than relations with daughters. A minority of men with sons did discuss intimate matters and have affectionate relations, but for the most part men's relationships with sons had a tendency to be more problematic and less intimate than relations with daughters. Thus, narratives suggest that fathering a son may bring a greater likelihood of reproducing the hegemonic role, as a more detached and authoritarian figure, often described negatively by men when reflecting on their own experiences with fathers. Thus, fatherhood may be a crucial stage of men's lives where they could be usefully supported in order to avoid repeating the less positive fathering practices they experienced.

In conclusion, emotional expression was narrated as a difficult journey for many heterosexual men in particular, beginning in childhood, complicating the simplistic view of men as emotionally impoverished. Most men in the current study were not raised by the 'new involved father', and often drew links between the lack of emotions shown by their families and fathers in particular, and their own difficulties with emotional expression as adult men. Thus men illustrated awareness around their difficulties, yet this insight is rarely acknowledged in the literature on men and emotions. As men developed romantic and paternal relations, they often moved towards greater emotional expression (and reflexivity), however, this was less apparent for men who fathered sons, where there was a greater chance of reproducing the traditional hegemonic role as distant and critical. Thus, the current study responds to a recent call for research into men's relations with daughters and the potential for reflection on men's own father/son experiences in this context (e.g. Miller 2013). Indeed, the current study goes further by uncovering the positive implications of fathering daughters for men's wellbeing. Finding that fathering daughters brought a greater likelihood for both reflection and emotional expression in men is apparently supported by some newer research that suggests daughters encourage men to shift away from more traditional values i.e. towards more progressive attitudes. However, emotional expression specifically has not been

studied in this context. Furthermore, for men in the current study, it was within the traditional structures of hegemony that men with daughters felt enabled to move towards greater emotional expression and accepting support in later life, rather than men's moves towards emotions challenging hegemony in some circumstances. Thus further emphasising hegemony can be positive for men. However, fathering boys seemed to bring a greater risk of reproducing the hegemonic role that men had themselves reflected on with a sense of loss, characterised by greater distance and tension. Thus, fathering boys may be a time in men's lives they find deeply challenging and need support to help them manage the specific difficulties with this parental role.

9.6. Sexuality, class and culture

9.6.1. Sexuality

Men's narratives revealed similarities and differences in the way sexuality impacted on wellbeing and ageing successfully. In terms of similarities, both heterosexual and gay men described challenges in their early sexual relations relating to issues of access, opportunity and resources as providing the biggest 'stumbling block' to achieving successful early romantic and sexual relations. Considering heterosexual men first, they spoke of all-male environments and parental attitudes and decisions as preventing much needed contact with girls. This presents a different set of difficulties from contemporary literature which tends to highlight issues of relationship power, with the dominant view that boys exert power over girls in different arenas, such as communication, or decision-making around sex (Allen, 2003). Thus, issues relating to opportunity, access and resources may be specific to older cohorts of men, due to the greater separation of gendered spheres and all male environments in these men's earlier lives. Furthermore, when participants did get the opportunity to speak with girls it was often characterised by communication difficulties, due to men's lack of experience, thus challenging contemporary research suggesting boys overpower girls in communication. Indeed, some newer research relating to contemporary experiences suggests that boy's communications skills are less developed and navigated with less confidence than girls (Giordano, 2006), but the

current research would suggest this may have been the case for men in earlier generations too. In relation to resources, the aid of a car emerged as important in heterosexual men's narratives, increasing their confidence and their opportunities to spend time with girls.

Gay men also faced difficulties with opportunity, access, and resources in early sexual and romantic relations. Indeed, lacking access to gay-friendly/safe spaces limited gay men's ability to form and develop successful relationships. The lack of information and discussion around sexuality when men were younger meant they had limited resources through which to make sense of their own sexual identities. Indeed, literature on ageing gay men analyses their identities and behaviours as formed against a backdrop of stigmatisation and criminalisation (Friedriksen-Goldse and Muraco, 2005), AIDS (Martin, Fain, and Klotz, 2008), as well as legislative changes, such as decrimilisation in 1967 (Friedriksen-Goldsen and Muraco, 2005). Indeed, Clunis, Goldsen, Freeman, and Nystrom (2005) argue that to understand lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) adults we must locate them within their social and historical context, which may create different constraints (Beeler and Diprova, 1999), as well as opportunities for gay men as they age. Indeed, some research suggests that gay men may be better equipped to accept and cope with ageing (and associated stigmas) due to their experience of having already managed a stigmatised identity (Sharp, 1997; Quam and Witford, 1992).

In terms of differences between heterosexual and gay men's narratives, marriage and fatherhood - characterised by themes of responsibility - were a significant part of successful ageing for heterosexual men (though welcomed with caution). Indeed, taking on the responsibilities, as men perceived them, of marriage and fatherhood, illustrated successful command of the (heterosexual) life course, in line with dominant research around acceptable masculine life courses (Barker, 2005). In contrast, rather than the impending responsibilities of marriage and fatherhood, gay men's early relationships were frequently characterised by themes of exploration and discovery. Indeed, gay men did not tend to grow up valorising ideals of marriage and fatherhood, and thus did not take on board the weight of impending responsibilities constructed by heterosexual men in relation to marriage and fatherhood. Thus gay men's paths were narrated as less determined than heterosexual men. Some related literature has suggested that older gay and lesbian adults form their important

relationships on the basis of choice, friendship, and love (Beeler et al., 1999), in comparison to heterosexual men, whose choices may be shaped by more rigid expectations of masculinity. Indeed, gay men have been said to report greater flexibility in gender role definitions than heterosexual men (Barranti and Cohen, 2000). However, there were areas of convergence in heterosexual and gay men's narratives also, for example, being young was characterised by 'wanting to experiment', while growing older led to desiring longer-term relations, as well as placing less value in sex.

9.6.2. Class

A strong working class dimension emerged in the narratives where men from lower socio-economic positions (SEP), as described by men themselves, tended to describe themselves as 'resilient'. These men positioned themselves as 'fighters', whereby adversities (such as financial, work-related, and natural disasters) were viewed as enabling, in that overcoming them led to further success. These men exhibited strong ambition from an early age and a creative independence shaped by their childhood disadvantage. Furthermore, many had managed to improve their financial circumstances significantly as adults through hard-working careers. The cumulative effect of socioeconomic disadvantage in childhood has been studied in the field of health, for example studies have found that those from a low SEP were more likely to report functional limitation and to experience the greatest health related burden as adults (Turrell, Lynch and Kaplan, 2007), including a greater risk of heart attack (O'Rand and Hamil-Luker, 2005). Aside from physical outcomes, links have been made between low childhood SEP and low cognitive functioning (Kaplan, Turrell, Lynch, Everson, Helkala, and Salonen, 2001), as well as higher risk of major depression in later life (Gilman, Kawachi, Fitzmaurice, and Buka, 2002). However, much less research underscores the positive cumulative outcomes for men from low SEP's as they age. Sampson and Laub (1996) found that men from low SEP's who served in WW2 subsequently achieved improved occupational status, better job security, and economic wellbeing. As a result the authors highlight the potential of large scale structural interventions in the lives of disadvantaged youth. Such research highlights the possibility that the development of resilience and financial

upward mobility among the current sample may be connected to this specific cohort and the employment opportunities available at the time.

Resilience, as a psychological concept, has been studied since the 1970's (Garmezy, 1973). It can be defined as a dynamic process, where in the face of significant trauma or adversity, individuals demonstrate positive behavioural adaptation (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000). Thus resilience refers to both the exposure to adversity and the ability to adjust positively to that adversity, and hence is two-dimensional (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000). It has been argued that the standard definition of resilience cannot adequately account for cultural and contextual differences in the expression of resilience (Ungar, 2004a), and research has subsequently demonstrated that cultural and contextual factors have a significant impact on the development of resilience among at-risk youths (Ungar, Brown, Liebenberg, Othman, Kwong, Armstrong, and Gilgun, 2007). It has been argued that promoting the development of resilient functioning as early as possible may be more valuable than delivering strategies designed to repair existing disorders (Luthar, 2000; Rutter, 2000). Researching resilience involves identifying vulnerability or protective factors and the processes underlying their effects (Luthar and Cicchetti, 2000). The development of resilience in later life has been attributed to different childhood adversities including sexual abuse (Valentine and Feinauer, 2007) and experiences of foster care (Samuels and Pryce, 2008), among others. Some research has looked at the relationship between childhood poverty and the development of resilience, as found in the current study. For example, Werner, Bierman, and French (1971), and Werner and Smith (1977;1982) confirmed the presence of resilience in a large sample of infants born into poverty in the Hawaiian Islands, finding that by early adulthood the cohort emerged as competent, able and autonomous. The authors argued that this was in part due to protective factors including good peer relations and a willingness to seek support from adults. More recently, Garmezy (1993) has looked at the relationship between child poverty and the development of resilience. Resilience has been studied in the field of successful ageing (Ong, Bergerman, and Bisconti, 2006; Wagnild, 2003; Greve and Staudinger, 2006), however, the current study is the first to link childhood experiences of poverty to the development of resilience in narratives of successful ageing from a male lay perspective.

9.6.3. Culture

Culture is an important element in this current study, as it compares men's narratives of successful ageing and wellbeing in England and Australia. The definition and conceptualisation of culture varies across disciplines. The United States Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health (USDHHSMH) defines culture as "integrated patterns of human behaviour that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups". Torres (1999) argues that culture has been an important 'structuring element' with regard to understandings and experiences of successful ageing; culture can greatly shape how we may or may not be advantaged in the context of ageing. Indeed, it has been suggested that culture (possibly more than race) seems to be an important source of diverse understandings of successful ageing (Matsubayashi, Ishine, Wada, and Okumiya, 2006). The current study found both similarities and differences in British and Australian men's narratives of successful ageing. Given key results must be limited and cannot encompass everything that has been found, this section will focus on the emergent differences between British and Australian men.

Both British and (mainly middle class) Australian men narrated journeys towards developing autonomy and authenticity as part of ageing successfully; however, they differed in how they described achieving this. British men tended to narrate developing agency and authenticity as a 'natural' part of ageing, achieved across the course of one's life, as one learnt more about the self. In contrast, Australian men tended to position this as something to be proactively gained. For example, one Australian participant discussed seeking help from a psychologist to help 'find' himself, while others described courses or retreats involving emotional honesty and self-discovery. British men however, did not narrate seeking help as an aid to self-discovery, and thus, did not elaborate on themes of taking 'action' in relation to developing authenticity across the life course. Australian men's stronger tendency towards 'action' and being proactive is also evidenced in the results on 'taking action' in chapter 5, where Australian men featured more prominently than British men. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the previous section, working class narratives of resilience, involving agency on the part of men, were exclusively Australian. Indeed, this is supported by Rosenberg's (2008) research which found characteristics of

resilience and integrity as central elements of wellbeing for older Australian men. No such narrative was demonstrated by British men in the current study, indeed, there was less coherence in British narratives which tended to be marked by greater ethnic diversity. These men, in contrast to being proactive like the Australian men, were more likely to narrate positive change as determined by circumstance, whereby things 'fell into place', less directly shaped by men themselves. Thus, British and Australian men demonstrated different degrees of valuing action, and the extent to which this shaped narratives of successful ageing, suggesting some differences in the cultural construction of masculinities across the life course between the British and Australia. It has been suggested by Gough and Robertson (2010) that the relationship between masculinity and wellbeing could valuably be explored in cross cultural contexts. Yet to date there have been no empirical qualitative studies specifically exploring the construction of masculinities between the UK and Australia. Kellehear (2000) has suggested that dominant Australian-middle class society tends to mimic the values of 'English society', including a stoic 'stiff upper lip', dichotomised constructions of gender, and 'soldiering on' in the context of illness. However, masculinity is dynamic and evolving, thus challenges to Australian and British masculinity as underpinned by stoicism have also been highlighted, with some recent research identifying more positive ways Australian and British men may conceptualise and address health and wellbeing (Smith and Robertson; 2008; Chapple et al., 2002). For example there is evidence in some Australian men's proactive lay accounts that they reflect deeply about health and wellbeing, with many understanding wellbeing in holistic terms, seeking to balance physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health (Rosenberg, 2008).

In addition to the different degrees of 'action' in British and Australian narratives, some interesting cultural differences emerged within the narratives of gay men. Narratives of successful ageing also revolved around the development of agency and authenticity for some gay men, as some had experienced struggles with sexual identity and 'coming out'. For this particular cohort of gay men, social and legal changes in the treatment and acceptance of homosexuality featured frequently in their narratives. Indeed, men described their astonishment at the changes they had witnessed in recent years, such as gay marriage and adoption rights for gay couples. The increasing liberation gay men described involved a cultural element – England,

and London specifically, was described as a place of liberation by some men (particularly during the 1960s/70s) and integral to some gay men's 'coming out' processes. Indeed, two out of the six gay participants discussed coming to London as key to 'coming out'. Australia as a cultural location did not feature as much in men's narratives of sexual liberation, although one man described returning back home to Australia after 'coming out' in London, feeling empowered to get involved in gay liberation in Australia. Thus, men's accounts illustrated that England (more specifically London) was viewed as a place of liberation for gay men (unlike Australia).

In conclusion, the current research found that 'taking action' featured more frequently in Australian than British narratives, reflective of Australian men's pro-active stance towards developing authenticity and autonomy. Furthermore, narratives of resilience were exclusively Australian; indeed there was no such narrative among British men. Thus for Australian men, understanding themselves as being in control seemed more significant than for British men who were more likely to narrate experiences as out of their control and subject to structural circumstances across the life course, and who had less confidence to instil change themselves. However, as British men aged, they described learning more about themselves as a 'natural' consequence of the ageing process, which was then positioned as conducive to the development of autonomy and agency.

9.7. Critical reflections on the thesis

As discussed in chapter 4, qualitative research recognises that the researcher's subjectivity influences the data throughout the research process (Silverman, 2000). Thus a commitment to reflexivity, involving critical reflection on the research process and the knowledge we produce is paramount in order for the research to be fully credible (Finlay, 2002; Cutcliff, 2003). Given the process of data analysis has been discussed extensively in chapter 4, this section will discuss two remaining areas where my methodological choices and role as researcher inevitably shaped the research process: sampling, and the interview process.

This study sought a diverse sample via a 'maximum variation' approach and achieved this in relation to age, class, and sexuality in both England and Australia. However, there was little ethnic diversity in the Australian sample, as men were overwhelmingly Anglo Australian or of British descent (See page 84 for sampling table). The current research sampled men from Sydney and Melbourne where, according to 2011 Australian census data, the principle ancestries are Australian and British, at 20.4% and 20.4% respectively. The current study wanted to include some indigenous men in the sample, who make up 1.3% of Sydney and 0.3% of Melbourne's populations (Australian Census, 2011). However, this would have involved a 2 year ethics application process, thus was discounted. For indigenous people in particular, there are nuances found in ethical guidelines, and all research involving indigenous peoples must be reviewed and approved by a registered Human Ethics Research Committee (HREC) (NHMRC et al., 2007). In particular, reciprocity is emphasised in research with indigenous peoples, so that they see some benefits from the research (Blagg, 2011). Nevertheless, given the demographics of Australia, the lack of indigenous men in the sample does not reflect a crude misrepresentation of the wider population. In England ethnic diversity was achieved as a quarter of the sample deviated from the white British norm, which according to the 2011 UK census data, make up 87.1% of the population. It should be noted that whilst the current study was committed to a maximum variation approach, this was not with the intention of making generalisations representative of the wider population. While quantitative research aims to achieve empirical generalisations representative of the population, qualitative research seeks to explore complexity, but may achieve theoretical generalisations representative of larger phenomena (Luker, 2006).

A second point to make about the sampling relates to the organisations from which men were sampled. In both the UK and Australia the Men's Shed Association (MSA) helped to recruit men; 2 men in England and 6 men in Australia. This cultural discrepancy in sampling may have influenced the results pertaining to cultural constructions of masculinity. The Men's Shed initiative centralises a traditional masculine ideology through its 'action' oriented/craft -based focus. The current study found a higher degree of 'action' narrated into Australian narratives; hence, this could be seen to be a result of this sampling discrepancy. However, men's narratives

of 'action' certainly extended beyond the men sampled from the MSA in both England and Australia, thus, it is unlikely that the sampling choices impacted the narratives in this way.

Thirdly, it may be seen that sampling men who specifically had positive feelings about ageing represents something of a 'bias', in that it misses the experiences of men who do not age successfully, or feel positive. However, the aim of the study was to explore the experiences of men who do have positive feelings about ageing and, according to their own views, have aged successfully. This was important in order to 1) see how masculinity (among other facets of identity) is experienced in this context, and 2) identify strategies used by men to age successfully to see how, or indeed whether, they may be applied to other men. However, during the interviews it became apparent that not all men viewed themselves as 'ageing successfully' at all times. At a deeper level, some men described considerable struggle, and some struggles were on-going, such as difficulties in dealing with emotions.

Moving on to the interview process, as my identity as a young middle-class British woman has already been discussed critically in section 4.6.2, here will be a space to discuss other aspects of the interview and how my interaction with participants may have shaped the narratives that were produced. In some men's narratives I intervened and prompted men's stories more than others. Indeed, some men gave the impression of having a clear story to tell, and more than this, a strong desire to tell it without much interaction or response. These men did not seek any direction in helping orient them towards what they thought they 'should be' talking about, and narratives were largely uninterrupted. Thus these men's narratives were less shaped by my own interventions than the narratives of men who sought more interaction. Other men they were more hesitant, looked for more guidance in terms of what to talk about, and questioned the significance of their stories for the research. For instance, James (Aus, 84), asked "do you really want all this rubbish", while John (Aus, 85) inquired "Is this too much detail?" Thus men were often conscious of the implications of their stories for the research and whether their stories were 'any good'. In these instances I assured men that their stories were of much interest and significance, and to focus on what was important to them, rather than on what they thought was important for me to hear. At the same time I retained an awareness of

the aims of the research, and thus veered men away from topics less relevant, for instance, when men's stories said more about friends or family members than themselves.

Embarking qualitative research with no experience of interviewing meant I had to develop my interview technique during the course of research, learning as I went along. In hindsight I am aware of two main ways my inexperience may have influenced and potentially 'hindered' the interview process. Firstly, rather than prioritising men's frameworks for understanding the world, in early interviews in particular, there were instances where I attempted to interpret men's words through my own framework. Indeed, this became most apparent when men did not relate to my interpretations and were quick to clarify their original statements. For instance, Jim (UK, 73) struggled with his religious faith in older age, and directly asked me why it was that his faith had not become stronger as he aged. Rather than encouraging him to elaborate on his feelings around this topic I clumsily jumped in with suggestions. Indeed, my ideas did not resonate with Jim, who brushed them aside, in which instance I felt I had 'lost' his engagement. Given misinterpretation is a threat to the credibility of data (Baxter and Eyles, 1997), misinterpreting men's meanings crystallised the importance of prioritising their own words and understandings of their experiences, and asking men to elaborate on their own feelings rather than interjecting with my own assumptions. At the same time, there were occasions where my interpretations were welcomed by men and incorporated into their own accounts. Furthermore, this relates to another point around 'forcing' preconceived theories on to men, rather than approaching topics with an open mind. Indeed, recalling the literature around gay men's experiences of ageing, that is, the idea that older gay men are marginal to gay culture that prioritises youth and appearance (e.g. Jones and Pugh, 2005), I put this to a number of gay participants. However, men wholeheartedly rejected this idea, feeling it was based on a one-dimensional view of gay culture, and did not relate to the participants lives as lived. Furthermore, given the legislative changes across gay men's lives, ageing had actually brought greater freedoms and opportunities, rather than being restrictive.

Secondly, my inexperience may have led to missing 'key moments' or 'turning points' in men's narratives. For instance, Kerry (Aus, 57), discussed a significant experience

when he realised that his "dogmatic" political views may have been perceived as off-putting for others. However, rather than exploring this with him I disrupted his narrative by asking him to revert back to earlier memories that he had quickly moved on from, without then returning to this significant moment. Thus, such instances highlighted the importance of noting down important points throughout men's narratives, so that I was able to return to them after men had given their initial narrative uninterrupted.

There were also practical issues that may have hindered the interview process. On one occasion I undertook 3 interviews in a single day and by the third I was tired, and less able to be as engaged with the final man's story or as responsive to significant moments as I had been with the previous two interviews. Thus I made sure not to repeat this mistake by organising so many interviews in one day. A couple of interviews were too long (over 3 hours), and included less relevant information to the research topic; it is possible more effort should have been made in these instances to steer narratives towards specific topics of interest to the research. Finally, one participant had requested to be interviewed in a park, which on reflection was not the most appropriate setting to carry out the interview given the outside noise and disruption that occurred (we were interrupted by members of the public on two occasions during the interview). As the interviewer, I should have possibly encouraged the participant away from this idea towards an alternative setting.

9.8. Implications and recommendations

The following section outlines the implications and recommendations that have emerged from the current study and is in two parts. It begins by discussing the theoretical implications which stress the importance of research on men and wellbeing, recognising three areas: 1) men's constructive behaviour; 2) age and the life course; and 3) the importance of an intersectional analysis. Indeed, it is vital to recognise how different facets of identity and context may interact to create certain experiences for men. Secondly, the section makes some recommendations in terms of how best to support men to age successfully and have positive wellbeing, as well as highlighting when men may need the most support.

9.8.1. Implications for theory

Three main implications for theory have emerged from this study. First, participants (all of whom identified as having positive feelings about ageing prior to the interview) demonstrated strong links to positive wellbeing and constructive behaviours, such as looking after their physical and mental health, caring for their families, emotional expressiveness, a capacity for reflection and personal growth, and the willingness to make positive changes. Thus their narratives join the growing number of men's stories challenging the dominant view of men as poor at engaging with their own wellbeing (O'Brien, 2005; Emslie et al., 2006; Sloan et al., 2009; Lomas et al., 2013; Calasanti et al., 2013). Secondly, the study highlights the importance of including the context of age and the life course to develop more nuanced and situated understandings of masculinity (and of identity more broadly), which tend to be implicitly youth based, as discussed in Chapter 1. Third, the study illustrates the importance of applying an intersectional analysis in the field of men's wellbeing research. It found narratives were classed and cultured as well as structured by sexuality, age, and the life course, in ways that had important implications for men's wellbeing and sense of successful ageing. These three points will be examined in more detail.

First, many men narrated constructive behaviours as part of a valid sense of masculine identity. Men's positive behaviours did not tend to challenge masculinity, but rather, were incorporated within their ways of being older men, found elsewhere in research (Sloan et al., 2010; Calasanti et al., 2013). Such ideas about men's constructive behaviour in relation to health and wellbeing have recently given rise to a new perspective within the study of men and masculinities called 'Critical Positive Masculinity' (CPM) (Lomas, 2013). CPM argues "that men can effect positive changes in their lives that benefit them and those around them" (Lomas, 2013: 182). Bearing parallels with 'positive psychology' and the associated shift away from pathology, and Hearn's (2004) Critical Studies on Men (CSM) (which sought to 'problematise' men), CPM is more suited to highlighting the positive dimensions of masculinity, whilst still retaining an understanding of its structural position within a framework of unequal power relations (Lomas, 2013). Thus, the current research can

add to this growing discourse, for example, with the finding that traditional forms of masculinity may enable shift towards greater emotional expression in men as a result of having daughters, benefitting men's wellbeing (as well as men's families) and contributing to a sense of successful ageing.

The second theoretical point concerns the importance of including age and the life course when undertaking research on men and wellbeing. Research on men is implicitly based on younger men, and tends to neglect the process of ageing (Arber et al., 2003). Including the context of age has uncovered nuances in men's relationship to hegemony across the life course, including the ways in which men negotiate and sustain, as well as move away from traditional hegemonic masculinity as they age. Furthermore, the inclusion of the life course approach enabled insights into the cumulative processes that shape men's lives, for example, in relation to the reproduction of parenting practices and men's desire to move away from the patterns of their parents. Through a life course approach, a close focus on transitions across the life course and associated shifts in identity was made possible, uncovering how coping shifts with ageing. Thus, this contributes to understandings of when men need most help and support, and how best to help men.

Third, the research found that men's narratives of successful ageing and wellbeing were classed, cultured, and structured by differences in sexual identity as well as age, thus highlighting the importance of an intersectional analysis in the field of successful ageing. Intersectionality, while conceptualised in various ways, argues that human lives cannot be reduced to single characteristics, but rather social categories of gender, class, and sexuality are inseparable, and influenced by time and place (Hankivsky, 2012). Intersectionality is rooted in the work of Black feminists (e.g. Lourde, 1984, hooks, 1990) who critiqued second-wave feminism's focus on gender as the root cause of women's oppression. Empirical research stressing the importance of intersectionality in the field of health has grown (Griffith, 2010; Pietila and Ojala, 2011; Hankivsky, 2012). Indeed, it is now considered critical to acknowledge that gender depends on other social categories for meaning (Coles, 2009) if we are to create understandings of men's experiences in the field of health and wellbeing that accurately reflect their lived experiences (Griffith, Metzl, and Gunter, 2011).

Results from the current study contribute to two main areas of discussion in relation to implications and recommendations to support men to age successfully: *when* men most need help and support, and *how* best to approach and support men. Furthermore, some of the findings from the current study may indeed be particular to this cohort of men, rather than reflecting the experiences of younger men today, thus, where appropriate this will also be made transparent.

Considering the first area of discussion – when men most need help and support - the current research identified various transitions and points in the life course that were difficult for men, most frequently when they lacked control. Indeed, a lack of control was illustrated in childhood as contributing to poor coping methods. Men also often described lacking control and a positive sense of self when they became sick, unemployed, or retired, or felt themselves losing physical and mental function. Thus, a key challenge for men as they age includes successfully navigating the loss of control. Many men found ways of managing the loss of control effectively, for example, through turning to constructive ways of working on the body, such as walking, stretching, going to the gym, understood as legitimately masculine by older men, or joining community support groups and undertaking voluntary work. While men's efforts to constructively work on the body tended to be framed within discourses of individual responsibility, initiatives may still valuably support men's constructive embodiment given older men's shifts towards valuing community bonds and social participation. In addition to sustaining control through the body, some men foregrounded the importance of the mind in maintaining action by keeping 'mentally active' (through puzzles, or learning new things). Thus men require opportunities for continued mental engagement as they age which may usefully be undertaken in community contexts.

Men displayed significant struggles when trying to manage the shift from primary control to secondary (i.e. developing changes in attitude that helped men adapt to their changing situations and abilities), but when managed effectively shifts in attitude were described as conducive to wellbeing. Thus, this research would suggest that interventions and initiatives should seek to support men in managing a

loss of primary control, and encouraging a move towards secondary control. Shifts towards secondary control may involve similar strategies to maintaining control such as engaging in constructive physical action, mentally stimulating activities, and learning new things, thus helping men to move beyond certain difficulties, such as a loss of identity, by constructing new attitudes and fulfilling identities. Indeed, 'taking control' in some areas may mean letting go of it in others (they are not mutually exclusive); thus moving on from old problems may mean getting involved in new activities. At the same time this study suggests a note of caution, as while taking control and remaining 'active' may be helpful to men, it can lead to avoiding emotions and be in tension with seeking help (Kilmartin, 2005). Indeed, there may be circumstances where asserting control or 'action' is less helpful to men, and they may benefit from emotional support in addition to more practical approaches, for example, during relationship break-ups or unemployment, when men described experiencing significant emotional distress. Thus initiatives must be aware of control and action for men as a 'double edged sword', and retain an awareness of men's need and willingness to talk about their emotional distress, as evidenced in their interviews. Furthermore, as demonstrated in the current study, control and action oriented coping may be mediated by culture and thus, more welcomed by Australian men.

Less directly related to control, fatherhood emerged as a crucial stage for men, where they reflected on their own father/son relations, carrying many implications for wellbeing. In the current research fathering sons seemed to be more problematic for men than fathering daughters, involving a greater risk of men reproducing the traditional father as distant and critical, and the 'father wound' in sons (Miller, 2013). Indeed Miller (2013) has argued that by adopting the 'new involved father' role that is welcoming of emotional expression, men may not only connect with sons, but also possibly come to terms with problematic aspects of their own father/son relationship, potentially allowing men to alter aspects of the self and make positive changes. Indeed, Diamond's (2007) work illustrated the potential of repairing a father/son wound through fathering a son. Thus initiatives could be valuably directed at fathers, of boys in particular, to ease/support the early fatherhood process, and work with men to encourage moves away from reproducing negative fatherhood practices and the 'father wound'. This may involve encouraging men to reflect on their own

father/son experiences, given men's traditional fathering practices may be rooted in a "sense of empathy for their own fathers' past behaviours and experiences" (Miller, 2013: 201), as evidenced by men in the current study. Furthermore, struggles around communication between fathers and sons in men's own experiences led to the lack of imparting advice or guidance to boys, such as around sex. Thus initiatives could support fathers in undertaking important roles and responsibilities associated with fathering boys, such as how to give responsible sex advice to sons.

Secondly, results from the current study feed into the debate of how best to approach and support men to age successfully and have positive wellbeing. As men's health has become a more pressing issue to governments and policy makers (White and Cash, 2004; Banks, 2004; Smith and Robertson, 2008; health initiatives directed towards men have increased. Australian health and wellbeing initiatives have been advanced in relation to prostate cancer (Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia, 2008), depression (Beyond Blue, 2008), and some specifically directed towards older men, to counter isolation for example, such as the Men's Shed initiative. Men's Sheds are community-based male-friendly spaces where men can engage with other members of their communities, while learning practical skills (such as woodwork, gardening, carpentry), and developing new interests (Mensheds Australia, 2011). Men's Sheds originated in Australia in the late 70's (Misan, Haren, and Ledo, 2008), and have since spread to the UK and Ireland, as well as other European countries (White, McKee, Richardson, de Visser, Madsen, de Souza, Hogson, Zatonski, and Makara, 2011). Further UK health and wellbeing initiatives for men have included the 'Premiere League Health' aimed at 'coaching' men to improve fitness and wellbeing, and 'Tackling Men's Health', where men were offered free health assessments on match days at a rugby club in Leeds (White and Witty, 2009). More recently, 'Football Fans in Training' (FFIT), a healthy living programme delivered to football fans in Scotland was undertaken (Hunt et al., 2014). It has been suggested that counting on men to attend doctor's surgery's may be unrealistic given many men's perceptions of the GP surgery as a 'feminine' space, as well as men's working hours, indeed, men have previously asserted that flexible opening hours are important to them (Leishman, and Dalziel, 2003). Such initiatives tend to centralise a traditional masculine ideology (i.e. through sport) in order to reach men, and highlight the potential of bringing health services to settings where men congregate, such as

pubs or sports clubs (White et al., 2011). Very few of these initiatives have been assessed however, though some research has been conducted on men's sheds as well as The FFIT (e.g. See Hunt et al., 2014).

Debates ensue around whether or not to endorse male-only services that centralise traditional masculinity, such as these initiatives. Work by Thompson and Whearty (2004) suggests endorsing 'traditional masculine ideology' is important as this is directly associated with the satisfaction men derived from their social participation. However, some research questions the necessary value of certain male-specific services (Douglas et al., 2013; Robertson et al., 2008). As Coles (2009: 30-31) argues, "hegemonic masculinity may have a marginal impact upon the lives of men who choose to disassociate themselves from the mainstream and operate in a social milieu where their masculinity is dominant in relation to other men". Men in the current study tended to seek and experience positive change through 'legitimate' means, in other words, within a hegemonic framework (i.e. emotional expressiveness with daughters), thus supporting arguments for initiatives that endorse a traditionally masculine framework in an effort to reach men. Future research may seek to explore further 'legitimate' opportunities for men to experience positive change at times of transition across the life course.

However, not all men in the current study identified exclusively with traditional masculinity as illustrated by their narratives in Chapter 6; masculinity was also interpreted more flexibly and broadly as men enjoyed bonds with women. Indeed, men in the current study could position certain hegemonic characteristics, such as self-sufficiency, 'taking action', and avoiding emotions, as potentially harmful. Thus, there should be a note of caution about the potential dangers of endorsing initiatives that support a traditional ideology at the expense of other ways of being masculine. Initiatives should be cautious about what masculine characteristics they promote over others and in what contexts. For instance, men reflected on significant experiences of emotional distress during relationship breakups, and at times of unemployment, thus demonstrating a need to talk and express this distress. At such times men may benefit from emotional support and a space to be heard. Initiatives centralising a traditional masculine ideology and a focus on 'action-orientation' may not always be equipped to support this demand. Moreover, men's awareness of the

questionable effectiveness of privileging action over confronting emotions as well as the desire and willingness to make changes, suggests that approaches may benefit from addressing older men as knowing and agentic subjects. In other words, older men should be approached as knowledgeable beings who understand how constructions of masculinity can shape them (both positively and negatively), but more than this, as agents who are able to act outside of these expectations in certain contexts, towards more positive approaches.

9.9. Conclusion

This study has produced some important findings. Firstly, men's relationship to control was integral to their sense of identity and wellbeing across the life course. Most men told stories of lacking control in childhood, 'taking' control in adulthood, and often trying to find ways to maintain control in older age as bodies and minds started 'failing' men. Men conceptualised their identities most positively when they described them as actively shaped and thus under men's control, rather than shaped by parental or other influences beyond their control. Australian men exhibited stronger tendencies towards taking action and control. Importantly however, men's accounts also suggested that maintaining control and self-sufficiency may be at the expense of emotional engagement and expression and seeking help. This may be shaped by difficulties in childhood, as suggested by men themselves. Control was also harder to maintain in older age, thus raising questions over the effectiveness and limitations of trying to maintain ideals of control, particularly in older age.

Results also suggest that most men seek 'legitimate opportunities' to engage with their emotions and cope with difficulties. Some men described developing greater emotional expression and 'completeness' through becoming fathers and engaging in romantic relations. Crucially however, men's opportunities for 'legitimate' emotional expression (within the framework of hegemony) seemed to be largely missing from men's narratives with sons, which were more troubling in comparison to daughters; characterised by a reproduction of hegemony that some men described experiencing earlier on in their own lives. A minority of men could experience positive wellbeing by

resisting hegemony through expressing a greater identification with and preference for female rather than male friendship during youth.

In general men's narratives showed strong evidence for older men's capacity for reflection, self-examination and willingness towards critically evaluating their identities and wellbeing, allowing themselves to be vulnerable, and to share thoughts and emotions that were sensitive and likely difficult to discuss at times. Thus, the life course approach revealed interesting findings, complicating simplistic constructions of men as emotionally impoverished, or unwilling to seek help. Thus the current study suggests future research must incorporate the importance of men's experiences with identity across the life course to develop more nuanced accounts of how men 'do' and experience masculinity at different life stages, and the implications for wellbeing.

Appendix A - Ethics application

University of Westminster Research Ethics sub-Committee

Application for Research Ethics Consideration

COVER SHEET

(To be completed by all applicants)

Section 1 – PROJECT AND APPLICANT DETAILS

To be completed by all applicants

- **Project Title: Male Narratives of Successful Ageing and Wellbeing**

- **Applicant Details**

Name: Miss Natasha Gravill	**Email Address:** N.Gravill1@westminster.ac.uk
Contact Address: 49 Emminster, 135 Abbey Road, London, NW6 4DL	**Telephone Number:** 02076248840 (Home) 07950840817 (Mob)

Please check the relevant box:

  Undergraduate   Postgraduate X MPhil/PhD Student   Staff

1.3 Supervisor/Dean of School/ School Research Director details

Please note that all applicants with a supervisor(s) must ensure that the supervisor signs the declaration at the bottom of this page if completing Part A only or in **Section 10.3** if completing Part B

All staff must ensure that their Dean of School, or School Research Director (or nominee), as appropriate, signs the declaration at the bottom of this page if completing Part A only or in **Section 10.3** if completing Part B

Name:	**Email Address:**
Dr Damien Ridge	d.ridge@westminster.ac.uk
School/Centre/Unit:	**Telephone Number:**
School of Life Sciences	0207 911 5134

NOW COMPLETE PART A

PART A

Section 2 – Project Details

2.1 Please provide a description of the background to your study including a literature review (250 words maximum):

This current research proposal draws on a relatively new body of literature highlighting the experiences of men who make positive attempts to manage their own wellbeing (Smith & Robertson, 2008; Ridge & Ziebland, 2006; Ridge, 2008; O'Brien et al 2005). This research will contribute to a number of academic fields including successful ageing (SA) and wellbeing, narrative and masculinities, and ageing and the life course as described in more detail below.

The place of gender in narratives of successful ageing is central and calls for further research into the experience of ageing for men *as men* have been made (Hoonaard, 2007). Previous research has found for example that 'doing' masculinity has played an integral role in the construction of more positive wellbeing narratives for men (Arrington, 2003; Bennet

2007; Chapple, 2002; Charmaz, 1995; Emslie at al, 2006; Oliffe, 2005; Robertson, 2006; Ridge, 2008). Male lay perspectives on SA and wellbeing that account for complexity and multiplicity have also been called for (Bowling, 2006; Callahan & McHorney, 2003; Robertson, 2006). This study will address these gaps in the literature on SA. It will also provide cross cultural comparisons of lay narratives of SA and wellbeing between the UK and Australia as no other study has explored this to date.

This study will contribute to neglected areas within the field of masculinity studies which has hardly engaged with ageing as a category of analysis. Similarly research around ageing has neglected masculinity and particularly older men, in favour of women (Hoonaard, 2007).

2.2. Please provide a brief description of your study (250 words maximum):

The main aim of the research is to identify strategies of SA among a diverse, older male sample, including a comparison between UK and Australian men.

This research is qualitative and will involve narrative semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of approximately 50 socially diverse male participants. Participants will be between the ages of 50-90 and have personally identified with lay definitions of SA. The data will then be analysed using a modified grounded theory approach (Cutcliffe, 2005).

The research is guided by a theoretical framework that integrates Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' (1995), and 'doing gender' (West & Zimmerman, 1987) to help make sense of men's narratives, and to bridge the gap between structuralist and interactionist thinking. This research will also draw on symbolic interactionism and a feminist framework with regard to undertaking and making sense of the interviews.

The cross cultural aspect of this current research opens up much potential for originality in the field of SA and wellbeing. This proposed study has identified a number of areas that could be explored in a cross cultural context including the construction of masculinities, the relationship between masculinities and social class, lifestyle differences associated with space, climate and outdoor activities, and the relevance, if any, of men's health policies.

2.3. What are the specific aims of the study? (250 words maximum):

•   To identify discourses which men draw on to make sense of SA and wellbeing
1.   To make sense of the issues associated with masculinity and men's relationship to wellbeing
2.   To explore the relationship between narratives of SA, masculinities and ageing in the cross cultural context of Britain and Australia
3.   To explore the relationship between important life events/life course and male narratives of SA and wellbeing
4.   To explore the relationship of SA to work/career practices and the place of the collective in individual narratives of SA

2.4. Please outline the design and methodology of your study [attach extra information as necessary]

(250 words maximum in total)

Sampling

Interview participants will be socially diverse. They will opt into the study having personally identified with lay understandings of SA. In both the UK and Australia participants will be partly recruited via snowballing, by first drawing on professional networks. Additionally, a number of organisations have agreed to help publicise the research. Sampling will be purposive in order to achieve diversity of age, socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicities and locale (Minichiello et al, 1999). Men who express interest in participating will be given an information pack, and will complete an informed consent form before taking part.

Interviews

Qualitative interviews will last between 1 and 2 hours. They will be recorded using a dictaphone for the purposes of professional transcription. The interview will take place wherever is most suitable for the participant. Questions will be used to encourage story-telling. Questions will then be used to encourage reflection and to explore further topics of interest to the research. Further topics may then include: memories of growing up, descriptions of men's life course, how men understand SA and wellbeing, ways of coping, life challenges, interpersonal relationships, participation in social activities, groups and programmes, descriptions of social networks, leisure activities and lifestyles, the role of locale and culturally specific activities, work/career paths, standard of living, spirituality/religion, politics, and outlooks for the future. Throughout, there will be a strong focus on their relationship to masculine identity and the interviewer will be flexible and open to the emergence of new themes. Once transcription has been completed transcripts will be sent to participants to check.

Data analysis

The data will be analysed using a modified grounded theory approach (Cutcliff, 2005). The qualitative data analysis (QDA) software NVivo will be used to help manage and make sense of the high volume of data. Findings will be written up for a PhD thesis, where we hope to make recommendations of how to support men to age successfully and promote positive well-being.

2.5 Timescales

Start Date (DD/MM/YY): 1st October 2009

Estimated duration of work: 4 years

Section 3

RISK OF HARM

		Yes	No	N/A
1	Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study		X	
2	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	X		
3	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?		X	
4	Will the study involve raising sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, revelation of medical history and/or illegal activities)	X		
5	Does your work involve any material containing human cells (e.g. blood, urine, saliva, body tissues) from living or deceased persons? (Such work must take account of the Human Tissue Act).		X	
6	Will DNA samples be taken from human participants? (Such work must take account of the Human Tissue Act).		X	
7	Does your study raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (Especially relevant if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)	X		
8	Does your study involve deliberately misleading the participants (e.g. deception, covert observation)		X	
9	Does your work involve administration of a non-food substance in abnormally large amounts or one that is known to cause allergic reaction(s) in some people?		X	

PARTICIPANTS

Does your work involve any of the following:

		Yes	No	N/A
10	Human participants in health settings (e.g. private patients in private clinics)		X	
11	Human participants in health settings (e.g. NHS patients in NHS clinics/hospitals)		X	
12	Human participants who are in the care of a social worker		X	
13	Expectant or new mothers		X	
14	Refugees		X	
15	Minors (under the age of 18 years old)		X	

		Yes	No	N/A
16	Participants in custody (e.g. prisoners or arrestees)		X	
17	Participants with impaired mental capacity (e.g. severe mental illness, brain damaged, sectioned under Mental Health Act, lowered or reduced sense of consciousness)		X	

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS

		Yes	No	N/A
18	Will you provide participants with a Participant Information Sheet prior to obtaining consent which can be taken away by the participant?	X		
19	Will you describe the procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	X		
20	Will you obtain consent for participation? (normally written)	X		
21	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	X		
22	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	X		
23	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	X		
24	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (e.g. give them a brief explanation of their study)?	X		

If you have answered NO to questions 1-17 (inclusive) and YES to questions 18-24 (inclusive), you do not need to complete the Full Research Ethics Approval Form (Part B). Please keep this form for your records.

If you have answered YES to any of the questions 1-17 (inclusive) or NO to any of the questions 18-24 the Full Research Ethics Approval Form (Part B) MUST be completed.

If you are applying for external Ethical Approval, please send an electronic *copy* of the Cover Sheet and Part A of the form to Huzma Kelly, Senior Research Officer (Policy and Governance), Academic Registrar's Department, Copland Building, New Cavendish Street.

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Smith, J & Robertson, S (2008) Men's health promotion: A new frontier in Australia and the UK *Health promotion International* (advanced access published July 1st)

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PART B

N.B. Please ensure you have completed the Cover Sheet and Part A, and check that you need to complete Part B before proceeding with further details below.

Section 4 – Risk Assessment and Hazard Analysis

4.1 Describe any potential hazards which may cause harm or distress to the participants, psychologically or physically, in the study and/or any potential harm to the community, environment etc:

The focus of this PhD project is on narratives of successful ageing and positive wellbeing. The interview is expected to be a pleasurable process for participants. Nevertheless, sensitive topics may emerge during the interviews that could be sensitive for participants, e.g. sexual activities. However, these risks are anticipated and will be managed as outlined in section 4.2.

It should also be noted that this current study raises personal safety issues with regard to the interviewer, as interviews may take place in participants' homes. The interviewer will therefore follow the Researcher Safety Protocol guidelines as set out by the Social Research Association. This includes leaving the interviewer's itinerary and appointment times with a dedicated colleague, carrying a mobile phone at all times, and confirming the interviewer's safety with the dedicated colleague at the end of the interview. The interviewer will also use Skyguard to ensure personal safety.

4.2 Give details of any measures taken to reduce the risk of such harm or distress to the participants, psychologically or physically, in the study (e.g. COSHH or other risk assessment forms **–** any such forms should be attached to this application form):

This potential risk will be reduced and managed through the following:

• Maintaining sensitivity and respect for participants' narratives.
• Developing rapport with participants through ongoing contact during the research.
• Confidentiality, by means of altering details of descriptions of men and their names, places and events in any recording of data or presentation of the research findings. Only the PhD candidate and supervisors will have access to the field work data.
• Participants will be observed for signals of distress during the interview and the researcher will enquire about distress. Participants will all be given a referral sheet with details for appropriate help-lines and counseling.
• Any questions participants have will be answered before and after the interview.
• Participants will be informed that they can stop the interviews at any time without question or penalty.
• Participants will be contacted a few days after the interview to see if the

interview has raised any concerns.
• Transcripts will be returned to participants for checking within about a month of the interview providing another opportunity to check in with participants

4.3 Outline the extent to which these risks are balanced against the potential benefits to education and/or the contribution to scientific knowledge:

It is clear that the potential benefits of the project – helping and supporting men to develop strategies of positive wellbeing– will outweigh the small risks to men. As a marginalised group (the voices of whom are often not heard) a narrative interview also represents a chance for members of an older generation to share experiences and tell a personal story to someone who is interested (Minichiello et al, 1999). Furthermore, the process has been argued to promote wellbeing itself through the potentially healing function of telling one's story (Murrey in Chamberlain, 1999; Reissman, 2003)

4.4 What criteria will be employed for deciding the end point at which the study will stop because of unjustifiable further risk of harm or distress, psychologically or physically, to the participants?

It is very unlikely that the study will stop due to all the measurements in place. Nevertheless, any critical issues that arise will be discussed with my supervisors.

Signs of uneasiness that are particularly concerning will be reported back to the supervisors and issues about withdrawing participants discussed. As soon as any of the participants either ask to stop the interview or to withdraw their participation (before or after the interview) their participation will immediately cease. If any complaints are made by participants, the study will stop until the complaint is satisfactorily investigated.

4.5 What monitoring mechanisms will be in place to decide when some or all participants should be withdrawn from the study i.e. explain what your procedures and criteria for detecting and addressing these issues are (such as a half-way point check)? Also what procedures are to be used, and subsequent observations made, on participants for the purpose of detecting any harm or distress, psychological or physically, to the participants arising from the study?

See section 4.2

There will be continuous contact with participants throughout the study to check on their wellbeing. For instance, participants will be contacted a few days after the interview, and again at a later date to return their transcripts. Through this continual

contact rapport is expected to develop with participants, and this will provide multiple opportunities for detecting any issues of concern. The researcher will actively check participants wellbeing throughout.

Section 5 – Informed Consent of Participants, Recruitment of Participants

5.1 It is an expectation that written consent will always be obtained from participants. Have you obtained or will you be obtaining written consent?

☒   Yes (Please attach a consent form which will be used for your study, failure to do so may result in a delay in consideration by the UREC)

   No (if you think this does not apply please justify your reasons

5.2 Is there a Participant Information Sheet?

☒   Yes (Please attach a Participant Information Sheet which will be used for your study, failure to do so may result in a delay in consideration by the UREC)

   No (if you think this does not apply please justify your reasons**)**

5.3 How and where will you make contact with the participant(s) in order to recruit them?

In Australia and the UK participants will be sampled from a combination of snowballing, by first drawing on professional contacts, and from publicising the research through a variety of appropriate organisations such as the Older Men's Network (OMNi), and various leisure and community centres servicing the needs of older people. Men who respond to the above adverts will then be given (or emailed) an 'information sheet' with all the necessary information about the study. Participants who wish to take part will need to contact the researcher by email or phone. The researcher will always endeavour to talk to the participant on the phone to establish rapport and answer questions before meeting in person. Participants will have the opportunity to ask any questions before signing the consent form.

5.4 How will consent be obtained and stored?

Please note, storage at home or on personal lap tops may be considered insufficient to the requirements of the Committee.

Consent will be obtained via a written consent form, signed by participants after having read and understood the project information sheet. Consent forms will be stored in locked filing cabinets in the School of Life Sciences, accessible only by the PhD student and supervisors.

5.5. Is parent/guardian consent required for any participants under 18 years of age?

   Yes

☒   No

5.6. How will this be obtained?

Section 6 –Expenses and Conflict of Interest

6.1. Will expenses be paid to participants?

☒   Yes (If yes, how much?) A maximum of £20 will be paid to cover the costs of travel, refreshments and child-care for participating in the research will be paid.

   No

6.2. Will a reward separate from expenses be made to participants?

   Yes (If yes, please give more details)

☒   No

6.3. Will any of the participants be known to you? If so please indicate your relationship with them?

Yes (If yes, please give more details)

☒   No

Section 7 – Confidentiality of Information, Data Protection and Freedom of Information

7.1 Who will you be sharing information with? Please tick the relevant box(s):

	Yes	No	N/A
Others, please specify: PhD candidate's supervisors	X		
Others on the project		X	
External collaborators		☒	
Commercial organisations and funding councils		X	
Participants		X	
Research Councils/Funding bodies		☒	
Charities		X	
Sponsors		X	
Other Higher Education Institute		X	

Other please specify:

Participants' details and data will only be seen by the PhD candidate and supervisors. This includes two external supervisors in Australia as well as two supervisors in the UK.

7.2 Will the study include:

Named participants

☒ Participants whose names have been separately coded

Anonymous participants

7.3 – How will you store and make secure the data and/or material of human origin collected

in the study?

Coded data files will be stored in locked filing cabinets in the School of Life Sciences.

7.4 If the investigation involves storage of computerised data which might enable a participant to be identified, please name the person in charge of computer system security for the study?

The interviewer will be responsible for computer system security for the study. The interview data will be stored on the researcher's laptop and will be password protected. The contact details of participants and interview data will be kept as separate files so they cannot be linked.

7.5 Does the study include use of, or planned publication of, photographs or videos either of individuals or any human material?

Human material   Yes   No X

Individuals   Yes   No X

If yes to either of these, please provide a copy of the consent form which participants will be asked to sign for this purpose (please attach a copy to your application).

Section 8 – Funding and links with external organisations

8.1 If your work involves research which includes working with or being facilitated by those external to the University, please provide details of any organisations/individuals involved

Contact Name : Dr Tess Knight	Contact Name: Dr Alex Broom
Address Deakin University 221 Burwood Highway, Burwood, Vic 3125 Australia	Address The University of Sydney Faculty of Health Sciences 75 East Street Lidcombe NSW 2141 Australia
Telephone Number (+61) 39244 6100	Telephone Number (+61) 29351 9161

Please provide a copy of any agreement between the organisations/individuals (this should be attached to your application form, failure to do so may delay your application for approval, as it is good practice to receive agreements with facilitators/collaborators in advance).

Please see appendix for signed supervisory forms

8.2 Is this study initiated/sponsored?

    Yes
 X   No
If yes, give the **name** of the organisation/individual:

What benefits will you receive, if any, for conducting this research by the organisation or individual named above, please state:

Section 9 – Insurance

(If uncertain about answering any questions in this section, please contact the University's insurance officer; Procurement Manager Andrew Rance)

9.1 Are manufacturers of any of the products used (for testing) providing insurance cover?

   Yes (If yes, please enclose a letter confirming insurance cover, including the names of all

      covered)

   No

☒   N/A

9.2 Are all of the investigators/researchers either employees or students of the University of Westminster?

☒   Yes

   No

If no, please provide evidence of insurance cover, including:

•   list of all people involved in the investigation

- details of the form this cover will take

9.3 Does the investigation involve the use of equipment or non-food substances?

   Yes

☒   No

If yes, please give details of *manufacturer's indemnity*:

9.4 Does the investigation involve the use of equipment or non-food substances which are manufactured on site but are not covered by insurance?

   Yes

☒   No

If yes, appropriate insurance cover must be arranged and written confirmation of such cover must be attached to this form.

Section 10 – Declarations. *This Section should be read carefully and must be completed by all applicants*

All students must ensure that the supervisor signs the declaration at Section 10.3

All staff must ensure that their Dean of School, or School Research Director (or nominee), as appropriate, signs the declaration at Section 10.3

10.1 Data Protection Act and Freedom of Information Act

I understand that

•   the information provided on this form is subject to the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
•   this form may be disclosed as a result of a Data Protection Act Subject Access Request
•   this form may be disclosed as a result of a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.
•   I must ensure that any subjects selected for study are made aware of their rights and our obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998.
•   I must ensure that sponsors are made aware that the University of Westminster is subject to the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

10.2 Applicant declaration

The information I have given on this form is true and to the best of my knowledge correct:

Name of Applicant	Signature
Miss Natasha Gravill	
Date	
22nd February 2010	

It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator/researcher to refer to the University of Westminster '*Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct Research*' and to consult their Supervisor/Dean of School/ School Research Director

10.3 Supervisor/Dean of School/ School Research Director (or nominee) declaration

In accordance with the University's **Code of Practice Governing the Ethical Conduct of Research**, I agree that

(a) the applicant named in 1.2 and 10.2 above should submit their proposal to the University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) for consideration

(b) The information given on this form is true and to the best of my knowledge correct:

Name of Supervisor/Dean of School/ School Research Director	Signature
Date	

Send the completed form to:

Huzma Kelly

Senior Research Officer (Policy and Governance)

Academic Registrar's Department

Copland Building

University of Westminster

London

W1W 6UWEmail: h.kelly01@westminster.ac.uk

SCHOOL OF LIFE SCIENCES
Ethical Conduct of Investigations, Demonstrations, Research and Experiments

For all research this completed form must be submitted to the School Office

- **Project Title: Male Narratives of Successful Ageing and Wellbeing**

Start date: October 1st 2009   **Estimated end date: October 1st 2012**

- **Applicant Details**

Name: Miss Natasha Gravill	**E-mail Address:** **N.Gravill1@westminster.ac.uk**
Contact Address:	
49 Emminster,	**Telephone Number:**
135 Abbey Road,	**02076248840 (home)**
London,	**07950840817 (mob)**
NW6 4DL	

Please check the relevant box:

 Undergraduate   Postgraduate X MPhil/PhD Student   Staff

1.3 Ethical classification of the proposed research

Complete the tick sheet on the back of this page.

Is your project:

CLASS 1   <u>CLASS 2</u> X   CLASS 3   CLASS 4

If Class 1 and your research is required by an outside body to be scrutinized by the University's RESC to ensure that the research conforms with general ethical principles and standards, please also complete Form A of the Research Ethics Approval Form. Submit Form A to Huzma Kelly. If you are doing this please tick the box:

If Class 2, does this project fit within a Generic Ethics Approval?

Yes   No   **X**

If yes, please write code:

If no, parts A and B of the Research Ethics Approval Form must be completed.   Submit Forms A and B to Huzma Kelly.

If Class 3 and approval MUST be sought from an external body (for example, a NHS RESC or the HO), please complete Form A of the Research Ethics Approval Form. Submit Form A to Huzma Kelly. Copies of the approval letter from the external body should be lodged with both the School Office and Huzma Kelly. If you are doing this please tick the box:

If Class 3 and approval from an external body is NOT required, Forms A and B of the Research Ethics Approval Form must be completed. Submit Forms A and B to Huzma Kelly. If you are doing this please tick the box:

Does work include the *in vivo* use of animals?*

Yes   No   **X**

If yes, please enter Home Office project number and the licence number of the institution where the work will be done:

* NB no one is permitted to do *in vivo* research with animals on UoW premises

---

If Class 4 and Generic Ethics Approval has not already been awarded, Forms A and B of the Research Ethics Approval Form must be completed. Submit Forms A and B to Huzma Kelly.

If you need to submit **any** forms to Huzma Kelly, Senior Research Officer, then you may not commence work until you receive the approval of the University's RESC. When you receive approval please lodge a copy of the approval letter with the School Office.

1.4 Declaration. The information on this form is true and to the best of my knowledge correct. If you are a student your supervisor must sign the declaration to demonstrate that they have read and approved your application.

Signature:

Name: Dr Damien Ridge	**E-mail Address:** D.Ridge@westminster.ac.uk
Dept: School of Life Sciences	**Telephone Number:** 020-7911-5134

RISK OF HARM [this tick list is a quick guide to the classification of your work only. The exact classification should be determined using the University of Westminster Code of Practice for Investigations, Demonstrations, Experiments and Research (http://www.wmin.ac.uk/page-17110)].

		Yes	No	N/A
1	Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study		X	
2	Could the study induce psychological stress or anxiety or cause harm or negative consequences beyond the risks encountered in normal life?	X		
3	Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?		X	
4	Will the study involve raising sensitive topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use, revelation of medical history and/or illegal activities)	X		
5	Does your work involve any material containing human cells (e.g. blood, urine, saliva, body tissues) from living or deceased persons? (Such work must take account of the Human Tissue Act).		X	
6	Will DNA samples be taken from human participants? (Such work must take account of the Human Tissue Act).		X	
7	Does your study raise any issues of personal safety for you or other researchers involved in the project? (Especially relevant if taking place outside working hours or off University premises)	X		
8	Does your study involve deliberately misleading the participants (e.g. deception, covert observation)		X	
9	Does your work involve administration of a non-food substance in abnormally large amounts or one that is known to cause allergic reaction(s) in some people?		X	

PARTICIPANTS

Does your work involve any of the following:

		Yes	No	N/A
10	Human participants in health settings (e.g. private patients in private clinics)		X	
11	Human participants in health settings (e.g. NHS patients in NHS clinics/hospitals)		X	
12	Human participants who are in the care of a social worker		X	
13	Expectant or new mothers		X	

		Yes	No	N/A
14	Refugees		X	
15	Minors (under the age of 18 years old)		X	
16	Participants in custody (e.g. prisoners or arrestees)		X	
17	Participants with impaired mental capacity (e.g. severe mental illness, brain damaged, sectioned under Mental Health Act, lowered or reduced sense of consciousness)		X	

INFORMATION TO PARTICIPANTS

		Yes	No	N/A
18	Will you provide participants with a Participant Information Sheet prior to obtaining consent which can be taken away by the participant?	X		
19	Will you describe the procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	X		
20	Will you obtain consent for participation? (normally written)	X		
21	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	X		
22	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	X		
23	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	X		
24	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (e.g. give them a brief explanation of their study)?	X		

If you have answered NO to questions 1-17 (inclusive) and YES to questions 18-24 (inclusive) then the project is probably Class 1.

If you have answered YES to any of the questions 1-17 (inclusive) or NO to any of the questions 18-24 (inclusive) then the project is either Class 2, 3 or 4.

Any documents for consideration by the University's RESC should be sent to: Huzma Kelly, Senior Research Officer (Policy and Governance), Academic Registrar's Department, Copland Building, New Cavendish Street.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

Natasha Gravill

49 Emminster

135 Abbey Road

London

NW6 4DL

16 August 2010

Dear Natasha

App. No. 09/10/39

Natasha Gravill: School of Life Sciences

Mode: MPhil/PhD

Supervisor: Damien Ridge/Tina Cartwright

Male Narratives of Successful Ageing and Wellbeing

I am writing to inform you that your response to conditions set was considered by Secretary's Action on 16 August 2010. The proposal was **approved**.

If your protocol changes significantly in the meantime, please contact me immediately, in case of further ethical requirements.

Yours sincerely
Huzma Kelly

Senior Research Officer (Policy and Governance)

Secretary, Research Ethics sub Committee

cc   Dr. John Colwell, (Chair) Research Ethics sub Committee

Dr. Damien Ridge

Dr. Tina Cartwright

Mike Fisher

I am advised by the Committee to remind you of the following points:

1. Your responsibility to notify the Research Ethics sub Committee immediately of any information received by you, or of which you become aware, which would cast doubt upon, or alter, any information contained in the original application, or a later amendment, submitted to the Research Ethics sub Committee and/or which would raise questions about the safety and/or continued conduct of the research.

2. The need to comply with the Data Protection Act 1998

3. The need to comply, throughout the conduct of the study, with good research practice standards

4. The need to refer proposed amendments to the protocol to the Research Ethics sub Committee for further review and to obtain Research Ethics sub Committee approval thereto prior to implementation (except only in cases of emergency when the welfare of the subject is paramount).

5. You are authorised to present this University of Westminster Ethics Committee letter of approval to outside bodies, e.g. NHS Research Ethics Committees, in support of any application for further research clearance.

6. The requirement to furnish the Research Ethics sub Committee with details of the conclusion and outcome of the project, and to inform the Research Ethics sub Committee should the research be discontinued. The Committee would prefer a concise summary of the conclusion and outcome of the project, which would fit no more than one side of A4 paper, please.

7. The desirability of including full details of the consent form in an appendix to your research, and of addressing specifically ethical issues in your methodological discussion.

Appendix C - Informed consent form

Project: Male Narratives of Successful Ageing and Wellbeing

- Participation is entirely voluntary.

- You have the right to withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

- You have the right to ask for your data to be withdrawn as long as this is practical, and for personal information to be destroyed.

- You do no have to answer particular questions in interviews if you do not wish to.

- Your responses will be confidential. No individuals will be identifiable from any collated data, written report of the research, or any publications arising from it.

- All personal data will be kept in a locked cupboard on University premises.

- Please notify us if any adverse symptoms arise during or after the research.

- If you wish you can receive information on the results of the research.

- The researcher can be contacted after participation by email at N.Gravill1@wmin.ac.uk or by telephone on 07950840817 (UK), or 0410262324 (AUS)

I agree to take part in the above study. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the sheet "Information Sheet for Interview Participants", which I may keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

- be interviewed by the researcher

- allow the researcher to take notes about the interview

- audio record the interview only if I agree by signing this sheet

Tape recording the study
I agree that the interviewer may tape record my interview (please tick the box to show your choice):

☐
Yes

☐
No

Note: Participants who do not agree to tape recording will not be excluded from the study, instead, the researcher will take detailed notes during the interview.

Male or female interviewer

☐

Yes, I would like Natasha to interview me.

☐

No, I do not want Natasha to interview me, I would like a male interviewer.

Your name: ....

Signature: ………..……

Date: …………………….…………………......................…….

Name of PhD student: ....

Signature: ………..……

Date: …………………….…………………......................…

Are you a man aged 50-90?

Researcher looking for men aged 50-90 to take part in exciting new study on men's experiences of getting older.

Do you have positive feelings about growing older?

Are you willing to share your stories about growing older, your life, and your hopes?

Taking part in this study would involve being interviewed by me, Natasha Gravill, about your experiences of growing older and how you feel about life. By talking to me about your life you could help other men.

I am interviewing men in the UK and Australia. I am based in the UK but will be in Sydney between July 1st-14th 2010 and August 7th-28th 2010, and in Melbourne between July 20th-August 3rd 2010 to interview men. I will interview you either in a private university room or in your home. If you would like to participate you will be paid $40 to cover your expenses (e.g. travel, food away from home).

To express your interest in the study and to find out more about taking part please email me at N.Gravill1@westminster.ac.uk. You can also text me on +447950840817 and I will return your call.

Note: I am a PhD student who is paid by scholarship for their work. The study has been approved by the University of Westminster Research Ethics sub-Committee in London.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER

Appendix E - Organisations promoting the research

Australia	Britain
AMSA (Australian Men's Shed Association)	**Access to Art**
University of Sydney	**Mary Ward Centre**
Vintage Men	**Working Men's College**
	Age Concern Greenwich
	Eltham Men's Shed
	St Pancras Community Centre

PhD Project: Men and Successful Ageing

Hello, my name is Natasha Gravill.

I am a PhD student at the University of Westminster in London. This sheet gives you details about the research I am asking you to take part in, and you can ask me any questions you like.

What is the purpose of the study?

The idea of this study is to learn about older men's experiences of ageing. I want to talk to men who have good feelings about growing older, and to find out about the ways they live their lives. I would like to talk to you about growing older, about your life, and how you feel about the future.

Do I have to take part?

No. It is up to you to decide whether or not you want to take part after having read this information. If you decide to take part, you will be asked whether or not you want to sign a 'consent form'. You should only sign the form if you feel you fully understand the study. If you decide to take part, you are still free to stop at any time without giving a reason.

What would taking part be like?

Taking part would involve participating in an interview with me, which will take place

at a time and place to suit you, such as your home, the University of Sydney, or Deakin University in Melbourne.

The interview will not normally last longer than 90 minutes but can last longer. I will take notes and will also audio tape the interview if you have given me permission to record the interview. You do not have to give permission for your interview to be recorded, and you can still be included in the study if you do not have your interview recorded.

This study is based in the UK, so the notes and audio tape from your interview will be transferred to the University of Westminster in London for analysis. Only the typed up notes from the interview will be used in the research, not the audio. All names of people and places will be removed from the typed up interview to keep your identity confidential. Only a professional typist will be used to type up your interview, and they will sign an agreement to keep your interview confidential, and not talk to anyone about it.

The interview will be like a discussion, but I will ask you questions e.g. what was life like when you were younger? How do you manage problems that come up in life? How do you

try to feel good? What kinds of social and leisure activities are you involved in? How have you coped in work and relationships?

Remember, you can leave out anything that you do not want to talk about.

If you feel more comfortable, you may ask for a male interviewer by ticking that option on the consent form.

What are the drawbacks of doing the study?

The time involved is the main drawback of this study.

Talking about yourself can sometimes bring up upsetting feelings. I will give everyone who participates a list of contacts that can be used to get more help if personal issues come up that you would like to discuss further.

Expenses

You will be paid up to $40 to cover your expenses involved in participating in the study (e.g. travel, food away from home).

What would happen after the interview?

I will use the interview notes and tape recording (if you have agreed to be taped) to type out everything that was said in the interview.

All material including interview tapes, and typed up interviews will be identified with codes only (not your name and identifying details which will be removed). The signed consent forms will be stored separately to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. A copy of your consent form will also be sent to you.

The typed up transcript will be kept on computer, and will be password protected. It will not contain any information that could identify you, as this information will be stored separately.

A copy of the interview will be sent to you to check. You may like to change or remove some of your interview if you like. You may also like to request a final report on the study.

What if I decide to withdraw after the interview has taken place?

You are free to leave the study at any time. If you decide to leave after the interview, your tape will be destroyed. Also, we will not use your interview quotes in the study if you tell us not to. However, we will not be able to remove your quotes once the study is published.

Contact for further information & questions

I hope that this information sheet about the study has told you what you need to know before deciding whether or not to take part.

You can also ask me any questions you like, and discuss any concerns you have with me before, during and after the interview. Please email on **N.Gravill1@westminster.ac.uk** or call or text me on **0410 262 324** and I will return your call.

If you have any questions that I can't answer please contact one of my supervisors. You can email Dr Tess Knight in Melbourne at tess.knight@deakin.edu.au, or telephone Tess on 9244 6595. Alternatively you can email Dr Alex Broom in Sydney at alex.broom@sydney.edu.au, or telephone Alex on 9351 9373. You can also contact my main supervisor Dr Damien Ridge in London by email on d.ridge@westminster.ac.uk, and telephone on 004420 7911 5134.

If you wish to make a complaint about your experience with the research you can contact Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC) at research-ethics@deakin.edu.au, or by telephone in Melbourne on 9251 7129.

Notes:

- I am a PhD student who is paid by scholarship for their work.

- The study has been approved by Westminster University Research Ethics sub Committee in London, and Deakin University Human Research Ethics Committee (DUHREC) in Melbourne.

Appendix G - Interview guide draft 1

Introduction (before the interview)
Review the content of the participant information sheet (PIS) with the interviewee
Explain their options (re how they appear on PIS) and answer any questions
Emphasise final decision can be made after reviewing transcript
Sign the consent form
Explain that names should be avoided to protect others
Ensure that the participant is aware he or she can stop, take breaks, refuse to answer a question if they wish
Provide all participants with contact details for groups that they can contact should they feel distressed during or after the interview, and make sure they can identify the researcher's contact information specifically

……………………………………………………………………………………………

Initial questions to elicit storytelling/life course narrative:
Maybe we could start with you telling me a bit about a significant memory of growing up…what stands out as a memorable story from when you were younger?

Tell me about an experience of learning to cope with life's difficulties/challenges? In terms of relationships/work/anything else?

Tell me about getting older?

Tell me about when you stopped feeling youthful (if you have)?

....

Topics to cover if not already discussed during initial narrative

How men understand SA and wellbeing
Tell me about how you feel about yourself?
Can you tell me a bit about your outlook on life?
Tell me about how what makes you happy now compares to what made you happy when you were younger?
Tell me about what has contributed to the success and fulfillment in your life?
What kinds of ways do you make yourself feel good?

Participation in social activities, groups and programmes
Tell me a bit about your experiences with social activities, groups and programmes? (type/level of involvement, value/importance, changes over time)

Descriptions of social networks
Can you tell me a bit about some of the journey's you've been through in relationships with family and friends?

Leisure activities and lifestyles
Tell me a bit about your lifestyle?
What kinds of leisure activities are you involved in?

Standard of living
How do you feel about your level of material comfort?

(Changes over time?)

Spirituality/religion
Has religion or spirituality been important to you at any point in your life?

Outlooks for the future
Tell me a bit about your thoughts for the future?
Tell me a bit about how you feel your future life could be most improved?

Appendix H - Final draft of interview guide

Introduction (before the interview)
Review the content of the participant information sheet (PIS) with the interviewee
Explain their options (re how they appear on PIS) and answer any questions
Emphasise final decision can be made after reviewing transcript
Explain that names should be avoided to protect others
Ensure that the participant is aware he or she can stop, take breaks, refuse to answer a question if they wish
Provide all participants with contact details for groups that they can contact should they feel distressed during or after the interview, and make sure they can identify the researcher's contact information specifically
Sign the consent form
……………………………………………………………………………………………….

Initial question to elicit storytelling/life course narrative:
Maybe we could start with you telling me a bit about a significant memory of growing up…what stands out as a memorable story from when you were younger?

....
Topics to cover if not already discussed during initial narrative

How men understand SA and wellbeing
Tell me about how what makes you happy now compares to what made you happy when you were younger?
Tell me about what has contributed to the success and fulfilment in your life?
What makes you feel good?
Can you tell me a bit about your outlook on life? (not a priority)

Descriptions of social networks
Tell me about friends? Tell me about family?

Leisure activities and lifestyles
What kinds of things do you like doing?

What kinds of leisure activities are you involved in?

Standard of living
   How do you feel about your level of material comfort?
(Changes over time?)

Learning to cope
Tell me about an experience of learning to cope with life's difficulties/challenges? In terms of relationships/work/anything else?

Spirituality/religion
Has religion or spirituality been important to you at any point in your life?

Getting Older

Tell me about getting older?
Tell me about when you stopped feeling youthful (if you have)?

Death
Tell me how you feel about death?

Outlooks for the future
Tell me a bit about your thoughts for the future?
Tell me a bit about how you feel your future life could be most improved?

Advice for other men
   Tell me about any advice you might have for other men?

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