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## A Qualitative Study on the Good Life

## According to Homosexual Men

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M.Sc. Thesis

*January 2018*

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## **Abstract**

Most research on gay men has focussed on the problems they can encounter. These problems seem to find their origin in deviating from ascribed gender roles. The focus of this paper is on the good life. Studies related to that focus mostly on hedonistic elements, like alcohol, drugs and sex in the lives of homosexual men. Hedonism, the strategy to maximise pleasure and minimize pain, is not necessarily resulting in a good life. Eudemonia, identifying one's values and living in accordance with them, is in this context hardly studied. This study will try to investigate the relation between the good life and both hedonism and eudemonia, values and homosexuality. This research was conducted with an interview designed for this study and a convenience sample of five men. For the analysis of the interviews an inductive approach was taken. Eudemonia and hedonism were both important aspects of the good life. A perspective of the good life where hedonism was combined with eudemonia, seemed to fit best to the participants' view on the good life. Besides that, romantic partners, balance, safety and social contact were considered to be important elements. Values remained mostly implicit, but were regarded as important. Homosexuality was not seen as having a negative influence on the good life.

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## **Introduction**

It's the first weekend of August, the sun is shining on more than half a million visitors, most of which are walking, dressed up for the occasion, shoulder to shoulder alongside Amsterdam's canals. The city has been decorated with rainbow flags, pink can be seen everywhere and the atmosphere is vibrant with parties during the annual Gay Pride. Crowds are cheering for the passing boats, guys can be seen kissing other guys and the parties, drugs and sex are, for some, the highlight of the Pride. Does this mean that life is good for homosexual men in the Netherlands? What people do not see is their struggles, the depression and the higher suicide rates of these men (De Graaf, Sandfort, & ten Have, 2006).

From an outsider's perspective, gay life might not look so bad in the Netherlands. It is one of the world's most accepting countries in the world regarding homosexuality (Keuzenkamp, Bos, & Adolfsen, 2007), same-sex marriage has been legal since 2001 and the level of education of gay men is higher than that of straight men (De Graaf et al., 2006). On top of that the AIDS epidemic seems to be more under control than ever (Grov, Whitfield, Rendina, Ventuneac, & Parsons, 2015).

Nonetheless, even in the Netherlands, with all its progressive views on gay rights and equality, there are still a lot of problems these men experience. When matters are investigated from a closer point of view the cracks in the exterior, where much seems to be about enjoyment and appearances, start to show. The research conducted on this topic shows the flip-side of that what meets the eye. Being gay causes challenges throughout the lifespan (m) encountered in the general society, the gay community and within oneself. These three areas will be discussed below.

Much of the problems seem to find their origin in gender roles, or rather the deviation from those (Sullivan, 2004). The assumption that homosexual men are more like women, is a view long held in society (Terry, 1999). Vestiges of this view are still in today's society. A

consequence of this is that being labelled as homosexual is not just referring to your sexuality, yet also has implications for your gender, as Herek (2000) puts forward. Homosexual behaviour, which deviates from the standard gender roles, is described to be a threat to the explicit and implicit rules of what is masculine and feminine, this could create anger (Sullivan, 2004). So, coming out means an increased risk of being the victim of discrimination and violence as a result of deviating from the masculine gender role as ascribed by society.

Looking at the Dutch society, it appears that most of the Dutch citizens have accepted homosexuality, however, when actually being confronted with homosexual behaviour, this might surface a different attitude. A study carried out by the Dutch government on the acceptance of homosexuality in the Netherlands reveals that 85% of its participants agree with the statement that gay and lesbians should be allowed to live their lives as they choose. However, half of that same group would be offended by seeing two men showing their sexual preference, e.g. kissing in the streets, whereas only 16% of those respondents would be offended by a heterosexual couple kissing (Keuzenkamp et al., 2007).

The society's view on gender roles could explain the results from Pachankis, Cochran and Mays (2015). Their two-year longitudinal study showed that men who did not reveal their sexual preference experienced less depression and anxiety in comparison to those who did. The views on gender roles, and deviation from that, held in the general society can cause problems like discrimination, possibly explaining some of the difference in depression rates.

It was, however, the long-accepted model that coming out as a homosexual man would alleviate the problems, at least to some extent. After a period of intense exploration, the actual coming out was expected to be the turning point for the better (Floyd & Bakeman, 2006). Problems which could be encountered in society aside, one would finally be around like-minded people who had to deal with similar experiences after coming out.

Interestingly, this is not necessarily true, since not only the general society can be a stressor for homosexuals, the gay community itself can be as well. The detrimental thought system concerning gender roles, is also a part of the gay community. The disclosure of your sexuality often results in finding yourself in a different social context (Cochran, 2001). The gay community, as reported by participants in another study from Pachankis (2014), is seen as inaccessible or inhospitable.

The explanation comes from another study; gay men experience pressure to appear masculine, this in order to be accepted by the general society and, more interestingly, to be regarded as more desirable by other gay men (Sánchez, Greenberg, Liu, & Vilain, 2009). Besides desire Skidmore, Linsenmeier and Bailey (2006) wrote that gay men report a negative attitude towards gender atypical fellow gay men. Thus, instead of feeling this sense of community one sees in other minority groups (Riggle, Whitman, Olson, Rostosky, & Strong, 2008), more loneliness and fewer reasons for living can be mentioned by gay men, possible due to the lack of a supportive minority group (Westefeld, Maples, Buford, & Taylor, 2001).

When this emphasis on gender roles is internalized, this could result in internalized homophobia; having negative and distressing thoughts about one's sexuality (Williamson, 2000). The fear of being judged differently on the grounds of sexual preference could rise, possibly resulting in an increased awareness of and putting an effort in detecting gender atypical behaviour and preventing that from showing (Pachankis, Goldfried, & Ramrattan, 2008).

There is a vast amount of literature on the effects on mental and physical health as a result of the problems in the above-mentioned areas (Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010, 2011). Ranging from increased violence and discrimination, higher rates of substance abuse and self-medicating behaviour (Graham et al., 2011), increased amount of cardiovascular-related issues (Hatzenbuehler, Slopen, & McLaughlin, 2014) to the major difference in depression

and suicide rates compared to that of the straight population (Aggarwal & Gerrets, 2014). Heterosexual men score lower than their homosexual counterparts on all symptoms of suicide (e.g. death wishes and suicide contemplation) and actual suicide, the latter scoring 2 to 10 times higher (De Graaf et al., 2006).

The studies mentioned above seem to sketch an image far from a desired life. Even with all the openness and tolerance in the Netherlands, these men can encounter a lot of problems. Most of the research related to homosexual men has focussed on these problems. Studies on how homosexual men actually live their life often has a narrow focus. These studies have focussed most on behaviour with the purpose to maximise pleasure and minimize pain, a rather hedonistic view (Veenhoven, 2003).

This view sees the good life as maximizing pleasure and minimizing pain. According to this belief, the good life is about enjoying oneself and experiencing the least amount of pain and obstacles in his way of experiencing pleasure (Feldman, 2003). According to Scollon and King (2004), hedonic happiness does not necessarily require a lot of effort and is often the result of getting the thing one wants. For this group that means the focus is, at least in the conducted research, on alcohol, drugs and sex, which will be discussed below.

Homosexual men tend to drink more and take more drugs in comparison to heterosexual men. Bux (1996) concluded that gay men are less likely to abstain from alcohol than straight men are. Another study shows that gay college students not only report taking more alcohol, but also more drugs compared to straight students (Reed, Prado, Matsumoto, & Amaro, 2010). An increased intake of (illicit) drugs was also found by Corliss and colleagues. Not only is the gay youth under the age of 23 taking more drugs, yet throughout the lifespan homosexuals are more likely to use substances than their heterosexual peers (Beddoes, Sheikh, Khanna, & Francis, 2010; Corliss et al., 2010).



Besides alcohol and drugs, there seems to be more emphasis on sex in homosexual men than in heterosexual men. A study shows that many gay men are not just on one, but on multiple online applications, for instance Grindr, Scruff, Jack'd or Tinder (Goedel & Duncan, 2015; MacKee, 2016), which is where most gay men meet other gay men (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012). Albright (2008) conducted research about the differences between gay and straight behaviour when it comes to online sexual behaviour. Gay people, compared to straight people, were more likely to meet up with people met online, they have more sex with people met on a sex-themed website and they are more likely looking for casual sexual talk online. Blanchflower and Oswald (2004) showed with the research they have done on a large group of Americans, that gay people not necessarily have more sex, but have more sexual partners than heterosexuals. Additionally, a study conducted by Klinkenberg and Rose (1994) looked at first dates. Gay men's first dates included more emphasis on sex than the first dates of straight people.

Alcohol, drugs and sex might result in pleasure and even serve as self-medication (Graham et al., 2011), yet the question at hand seems if it makes the lives of these men any better? And if this focus on pleasure does not, what would make life good? Veenhoven (2003) conducted an extensive literature review on hedonistic experiences. Chasing after these pleasurable experiences, like sex, drugs and drinking, can indeed give one a good feeling.

Unfortunately, this is often short-lived, possibly leaving the seeker feeling empty and lacking a new uplifting experience. Research shows that having hedonistic experiences, like alcohol, drugs and sex, does not necessarily contribute to the good life (Brülde, 2007). Examining the relationship between sexual behaviour and happiness Blanchflower and Oswald (2004) found out something interesting. The number of sexual partners in the last 12 months that might be the most beneficial to happiness is one.

What could make life good then, if it is not necessarily hedonism? In contrast to a hedonistic orientation on the good life, there is eudemonia. In this view, true happiness entails identifying one's values, cultivating them, and living in accordance with them (Aristotle & Crisp, 2000). Aristotle held the firm belief that all things hedonistic were but a fleeting and superficial way to live life. In his view base pleasures, the lowest form of pleasure, like having sex or drinking for the sake of just that, did not add any value to a life (Aristotle, 2004). Living up to one's values, on the other hand, which could include coming out, being open and honest about your sexual orientation, is Aristotle's way to experiencing the good life.

A recent approach which makes use of this ancient philosophy is Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). This model distinguishes itself on mainly two aspects. Acceptance, being the willingness to experience all the emotions that occur at any given time, is one of the two. The other one, commitment, is about actions based on values, something similar to the eudemonic perspective on a good life (Hayes, Luoma, Bond, Masuda, & Lillis, 2006).

Values, in this case, are seen as a global, chosen direction someone wants to move towards. The ACT processes are utilized to elicit committed actions. These actions might help individuals to find a meaning within the act, not so much in the outcome. One of the rare studies available on sexual orientation and values is from Yadavaia and Hayes (2012). A value, in this case, could be openness, so even if the result is not what one wished for, he stayed true to himself and put a step in a direction that is important to him. Emmons (1986) found that having valued goals, independent of past success, was associated with higher life satisfaction. Research done by Diener and colleagues confirmed that; making steps towards valued goals is one of the parts of a good life (Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003).

To conclude, the knowledge we have about the lives of homosexual men is mostly limited to the problems they face. This research, on the contrary, will make use of five interviews to see what the good life entails for these men. With these interviews, the relation between the good life and both hedonism and eudemonia will be investigated. Also, this study will try to explore whether values and living accordingly are perceived as a part of the good life. The last focus is on the role of the participants' sexuality in relation to the good life. With these answers and subsequent analysis more insight in how these men perceive the good life might be gathered.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

This study was conducted in July and August of the year 2017 and focussed solely on homosexual men. Hence, all five participants were male and identified themselves as homosexual. A convenience sample was used for this study. The participants were known to the researcher well before the interview took place. None of the participants received a reward for their participation.

The youngest participant was 24 years old, the oldest was 29, with an average age of 27.8 years. All of the participants were highly educated, three of them graduated from a university of applied sciences and two graduated from a university. The Dutch nationality was held by all of the participants, and the interviews were conducted in Dutch. Besides a shared nationality, the participants also were Caucasian. At the time the interviews were conducted, three of the participants were in a relationship and two were single.

### **Interview**

A semi-structured interview guide, which can be found in Appendix A, was developed

for this study. The aim of the interview questions was to investigate the participants' view on the good life. The ethical commission of the University of Twente approved this study. All this was explained to the participants in the introductory text which preceded the actual interview. Information on their rights and anonymity was given on the informed consent as well, which can be found in Appendix B.

The interview started with three background questions. Participants were asked about their age, highest level of education and sexual preference. The next five to six questions, depending on the given answers, were about the good life. The first question: "Have you ever thought about the good life?" determined whether the following question would be "How come you have not given much thought about the good life?" or "How come you thought about the good life?". The following questions investigated what the good life entailed in more depth, until a point was reached where the participant mentioned all aspects that were important to him and had talked about why that was so. Several probes, like: "What is it that makes this so important for you?", were used to elicit more information about what is meaningful to the participants.

The next six questions concerned an investigation on values. A short introduction on how ACT sees values, as voluntarily chosen, global directions in life, preceded the question: "Have you ever thought about your values?". Depending on the given answer, the participant was asked to elaborate on these values, or a short exercise was done to clarify the values. This exercise came in the form of a single question, namely: "What would you do with 50 million euro's?", a question taken from Jansen, Batink, Delwel and Klerk (2017). The answers to this question was used to further investigate the participants' values. The remaining questions asked how and if these values became apparent in the behaviour of the participants.

Preceding the next questions, a two-sentenced introduction was given in order to ease the transition between talking about the good life and the opposite. The first question inquired

whether the participant has had experience with a period of feeling sad or a time when things appeared to be bleak. The next question asked the participant what it is they did when having experienced such a period, what had helped them?

Literature pointed out that the homosexuals consume higher amounts of alcohol and drugs, as well as having different sexual behaviours in comparison to straight people. The following questions, between five and seven, again depending on the answers given, first asked the participants if they consumed alcohol and drugs. These initial questions were followed with: “What role does alcohol play in the good life, according to you?”. The same question was asked for drugs. The last part of this section focused on romantic relationships and intimacy in relationship with the good life.

The final question in the interview was a more general one: “How do you perceive homosexuality playing a role in the good life?”.

## **Procedure**

A text message was sent to the participants. In this message, they were asked whether they wanted to help the researcher by participating in a study concerning the good life and homosexuality. Upon agreeing an appointment was made. Four different settings have been used for conducting the interview, determined by where the participant lived. The settings had in common that they were private, nobody would enter unexpectedly, and it was quiet. Three of the five interviews were held in the participants’ home, the other two were conducted in the researcher’s house. The latter two participants had all been in that room before, so tension caused by being in an unfamiliar environment was not to be expected.

Before the start of the interview, the introduction, see Appendix A, was read aloud to the participants. Following that the informed consent was presented to the participant and signed by both participant and researcher. After signing the researcher pressed the record

button and started the interview. The interviews lasted between 27 and 47 minutes, with an average of 37 minutes. Most of the participants were quite talkative. One of the participants, participant 3, struggled with giving very concrete answers and often replied with in an abstract manner. Some participants mentioned some darker periods in their life. There was not too much emphasis laid on these periods, this in concordance with the aim of this paper.

Probes were used to get a deeper understanding of what mattered for the participant. At first, some of the participants could have experienced this as slightly uncomfortable. All but participant 2 opened up more as the interview proceeded.

After the final question, the participants were thanked for their contributions. They were asked whether they wanted to change any of the given answers and if they had any other questions. Participant 4 mentioned that he would like to read his interview and see the final product. Both have been given to the participant. That aside, there were no further questions, nor changes in the given answers desired.

## **Analysis**

The recorded interviews have been transcribed. In all five interviews, the first two answers, regarding age and level of education, have been anonymised. Two of the transcriptions had a section which needed further anonymisation. In one case the name of a city had been edited, in the other the name of two friends were changed. After the transcription of the interviews, analysis was conducted with the help of the programme Atlas.ti.

Codes were assigned to the transcripts, in order to compare them and to answer the research questions. The length of answers of the participants varied from a few words to multiple sentences, hence the unit of analysis varied across the interviews.

At first, the researcher started reading two transcripts freely. Some words were

highlighted, some thoughts were scribbled down and emerging themes were looked for. Preliminary codes were assigned, mainly using the words of the participant. After finishing the first transcript, the same was done with the second transcript. In the first interview this open coding resulted in 31 initial codes, taking the second interview into account added another 14 codes.

It was now possible to group some initial codes together into the first emerging themes which had a similar topic, the process of axial coding. Another interview was read and wherever the answers given by that participant seemed to fit into already existing codes, they were coded as such, the process of constant comparison. When they did not seem to relate to anything that was mentioned before they were kept as separate. In this fashion, with open and axial coding, all five interviews were provided with codes.

In the analysis, an inductive approach was taken. After going through all of the interviews the codes had taken a more definite form. In some cases, the answers given contained aspects of both eudemonia as well as hedonism, and yet belonged to the same code. For some codes, it seemed reasonable to make a division within the code. Even when the code's topic seemed to be a rather obvious example of either eudemonia or hedonism, both ends of the spectrum, ranging from hedonism to eudemonia, were to be found in the given replies. At this point the theory was bracketed and the seemingly conflicting answer was considered to be variation within the code.

Until the end of the analysis, the process of constant comparison applied, all interviews have been reviewed and several adjustments have been made. The amount of new information gained by analysing the last interview was low. Most of the themes that had been found in the previous interviews could be encountered in the last interview as well. This might speak in favour of saturation. To therefore assume that an additional participant could not offer new information would be false, especially when considering the diversity of the population. It,

however, exceeded the scope of this study to include more participants. In the next section the 4 themes and the 10 codes that emerged will be explained in more detail.

## **Results**

The aim of this research was to investigate what makes life good for homosexual men. Besides having investigated if eudemonia was perceived as playing a role in the good life, the role of hedonism and its perceived relation the good life was also a topic this research was concerned with. The last aims were to explore whether values and living accordingly were perceived as a part of the good life and the role of the participants' sexuality in the good life.

The first theme that will be discussed are the elements of the good life, followed by the assigned role of alcohol, drugs, and sex in that context. Next, values will be discussed and, lastly, the role of homosexuality in the good life will be discussed. The background information gathered during the interviews is reported before the theme it relates to. Tables are provided for each theme, displaying the codes that belong to that theme, as well as the number of times the codes have been applied in the interviews.

### **Elements of the good life**

This first theme described is the good life and the elements belonging to that, according to these five men. A total of five codes have been assigned throughout the interviews. These being *pleasure & freedom*, *progression & development*, *partner*, *safety & balance* and *social contact*, an overview can be found in Table 1.

All the participants had, allegedly, thought about the good life. Only participant 1 had not given much specific thoughts to it. He argued that he saw everything rather positive and simply did not let the 'bad life' take the overhand. Participant 4 had given more thought to what the good life meant to him after a period of intense conflict within his family and



Table 1

*Codes Relating to the Elements of the Good Life*

Theme	Name of the code	Interviews					Total
		I	II	III	IV	V	
Elements of the good life	<i>Pleasure &amp; freedom</i>	23	17	7	14	16	77
	<i>Progression &amp; personal development</i>	2	6	33	21	12	74
	<i>Balance &amp; safety</i>	3	6	4	3	27	43
	<i>Partner</i>	21	12	6	15	9	63
	<i>Social contact</i>	7	3	3	8	7	28
Total		56	44	53	61	71	285

participant 3 had started thinking about it due to the researcher sharing the topic of this thesis at an earlier time.

Besides the question whetherS the participants had given thought to what the good life meant, they have been asked if they were it living. Almost all participants stated they were living the good life. The only participant who was not entirely sure, was participant 5:

*“Yes and no, I think. [...] Fundamentally I am always unsatisfied with my life, however well things are going. The grass is always greener on the other side and all that.”*

**Pleasure & freedom.** Upon asking the participants what the good life looked like for them, their initial answer included, in all cases, elements of enjoyment, pleasure or happiness. Enjoying oneself and being unrestricted in how to achieve this was one of the first things that came to mind.

Besides enjoyment and pleasure, freedom seemed to be an important element for the good life. Freedom was referred to in a sense that one can do as he pleases and without being restricted by any force from the outside. Participant 1 spoke of how he felt restrained in pursuing more pleasure, which had a negative impact on his experience of the good life. A lack of freedom meant a decrease in pleasure. That same participant is quoted below, answering what the good life means according to his experience:

*“Being happy with what you’re doing. Without having too many obstacles which hinder you in being who you are [...] I think that everything you do in life must make you happy.”*

To accent the commonalities between the participants, participant 2 is cited here:

*“The good life for me is a life where I can do what I want. What I feel like, actually. Just to have the freedom to do as I please.”*

The good life is about pleasure and the freedom to pursue that what gives you pleasure in a way the participant deems fit. The emphasis on pleasure and pleasure optimisation is

found throughout all interviews to a different extent. For participant 1 the focus on pleasure seemed to be different. More so than the others it looked like he was most eager on maintaining a high level of pleasure. When looking at Table 1, it can be seen that this code was applied most in interview 1. Participant 3 did not speak of this as much as the other participants, an explanation for this might be that he experienced very little restrictions in his pursuit of pleasure. Nonetheless, both aspects, pleasure and freedom, were found in all five interviews.

**Progression & personal development.** This code was appointed to all expressions of progression, self-analysis, and development. Examples of this which are mentioned in the interviews are studying, traveling, moving to another city, discovering new things, developing new technology.

This code is most apparent and pronounced in interview 3 and 4, while also mentioned by the others. Participant 3 shares that having the chance of developing simply makes him happy. In the following quote he elaborates:

*“I recognise it in everything I do. When we look at an easy example, like my work. When I encounter new projects or new research questions I quite easily sink my teeth into that and I really want to keep on working. Past experiences taught me that I find the sense of wonder interesting. It is new, something I do not know and I can learn something from. You run into something which makes me pause and think ‘wow, what is this?’.”*

What we see here is that this opportunity to develop results in gratification or some sort of pleasure. Something that others also recognised. Participant 4 explained how this is important for the good life:

*“It is important to do things you like and find challenging, so that life will not turn into a rut. That you won’t do the same thing over and over, unlike the eat, sleep, rave, repeat concept. That is something which really won’t make you happy.”*

Again, to some extent, elements of progression and personal development were mentioned by all participants as a part of the good life, yet the difference between them was greater than in the previous code, as can be seen in Table 1. Participants 1, 2 and 5 spoke less of progression and development and seemed to put less emphasis on it. Participant 1 and 2 mentioned getting a feeling of satisfaction and fulfilment upon making progress at work. Participant 5 spoke of a desire to go to university for the sake of developing himself. A different form of self-development was mentioned by participant 2 and 3. Both of them had spent time figuring out who they were by means of exploring the self, e.g. by courses provided by their work. This, in turn, helped them to deal with life’s less pleasant moments.

**Safety & balance.** A code that appears to be contradicting *progression & personal development* at some level and is yet found in all interviews as a part of the good life is *safety & balance*. This code is applied most to interview 5, by far. However, even participant 3, who was keen on renewal and exploring, spoke about safety even before articulating his desires for change. Part of his answer to what the good life looked like for him, was the following:

*“[...] I think that as a basis you need a sort of steady foundation. From there you can explore and pursue your desires. So, in this society, that would mean some financial guarantee, knowing that you’ll have a place to live, having the security of friends... Those are the basics.”*

Participant 2 and 5 spoke of enjoying the security that is being offered by living in a society that has your back when things go wrong.

Finding balance and its benefits is the other part of this code, mentioned by participant 1 and 5. For them, balance played a big role in their experience of the good life. It was about maintaining an equilibrium between work and leisure, between activities and rest, as participant 1 remarked:

*“A division of your time in a way that is right, ensuring an optimal balance between partner, friends, work, spare time, holidays. When the balance is gone, there is not much point to it. Everything has to be in balance in order to make it good. When something is too much, or too little, it is not good.”*

Participant 5 seemed to agree, yet added that having periods of rest enabled him to appreciate and enjoy his life more. Finding more balance resulted in a more pleasurable life.

**Partner.** One of the questions close to the end of the interview was on romantic relationships. Only participant 3 did not mention romantic partners before that point. Where the participants agreed on pleasure being of importance to the good life, they were not unanimous when it came to partners. Participants 1, 2, 4 and 5 consider having a partner and sharing their life with him, or imagine having a partner to do that with, as an addition to the good life. Participant 2 spoke of an aspect that having a partner means for him:

*“[...] it is just very nice to share your life with somebody. To be together with someone. That makes everything a lot nicer. Even the small things become nicer when you can share it with someone [...] like having breakfast together.”*

What this quote tries to illustrate is that having a partner is seen as something that makes life more enjoyable. Participant 5, who was single, expressed something similar upon asking him what having a partner would add to his life:

*“You’ll always have someone to do things with. There are things, either due to biology or a societal norm, that are nice to share with somebody. Going on a holiday together, stay in bed till three in the afternoon, all that silly stuff. Something you see in a Disney movie.”*

The single participants have the expectation that having a good relationship offers some sort of protection or is seen as beneficial when it comes to experiencing negative emotions. A partner is seen as the person to fall back on when in need and the absence of one is experienced as a lack. Interestingly, participant 1 and 2, both in a relationship, do not explicitly mention their partner as the person they go to when they feel sad or down.

As can be seen in Table 1 participant 3 does not speak of partners as much as the other participants. This participant does not ascribe the same amount of importance to a partner in comparison to the other participants. As he himself puts it, after being the only one who had to be explicitly asked about romantic partners:

*“Need to have, nice to have.”*

He, and the other participants, said that only a good relationship, which is not specified by the participants, would be able to compensate for the possible restrictions that come along with being in a relationship. Participant 1 sees an open relationship as the perfect

middle ground. In that case, he can experience the comfort of having a partner as well as not being held back by him in his pursuit of pleasure.

Having a partner can add something to the good life and is experienced as such by those in a relationship. It offers more pleasure as well as supposed protection against negative emotions. Even though not having a partner can be experienced as a serious lack, for none of the participants did the good life depend on having a partner, something which they emphasised.

**Social contact.** The last element of the good life that was mentioned is social contact. Social contact is, once again, mentioned by all participants. Having contact with friends, family and other people is considered a part of the good life. Participant 3 talks about how he experiences the good life:

*“The way I experience the good life [...] can’t be done by myself. I need contact for that.”*

The participants differ in their description of with whom that social connection has to be with. All participant spoke of friends fulfilling a role in this. Family, on the other hand, is mentioned by only two participants.

Besides being associated with fun, social contact is mentioned most as being helpful. When life is not going as desired, talking to friends, and especially sharing of what is bothering the participant, offered new perspectives and helped the participant to move on again. All except participant 2 mentioned falling back on their social contacts social contact when they are feeling down. Participant 3 said:

*“At a certain point, I will talk about it. I am not the kind of person that will specifically mention it, but at a certain moment, there is a point I will confide in someone. I tell them I feel like shit because things aren’t going in the way I want it; it just won’t happen. And in many cases, when I talk about it and take the time to talk about it, it creates new insights because of the dialogue. That makes me continue what I was doing and makes me try to accomplish it again.”*

Social contact is not only the place to turn to when feeling sad, for participant 4 mentioned social contact playing a different role. This participant came out as a homosexual quite recently. He found himself in a world different from what he was accustomed to. He met a couple whom he befriended and who helped him with his adjustment and his struggle with finding a partner. They had become a mentor of some sort to him:

*“It was partly because of them that I now have a sense of who I am, I know I am okay, I know I am intelligent, and it will happen, there will be someone eventually. You just have to persist, persist, persist.”*

Both he and participant 5 mentioned that having contact with friends helped them deal with the fact that they did not have a partner.

### **Role of Alcohol, Drugs and Sex in the Good Life**

The next section will deal with the role the participants attributed to the consumption of alcohol and drugs and to having sex, an overview can be found in Table 2. On average the participants drink almost 11 units of alcohol per week, with a range from 1 to 2 units for



Table 2

*Codes Relating to the Role of Alcohol, Drugs and Sex*

Theme	Name of the code	Interviews					Total
		I	II	III	IV	V	
Role of alcohol, drugs and sex	<i>Nihil ad rem</i>	2	7	0	11	2	22
	<i>Joie de vivre</i>	18	7	14	0	10	49
Total		20	14	14	11	12	71

participant 4 up to 24 units for participant 3. These units were mainly consumed during the weekends.

Only one of the participants, participant 4, did not experiment with any kind of drugs. The other participants had all experimented with soft and hard drugs. Participant 2 had not felt the urge to use drugs for a while in sharp contrast to participant 3. He is taking XTC, cocaine and ketamine, and often combined, every other week. Participant 5 only consumes XTC every six months and participant 1 combined XTC with GHB at sex-related gatherings around 4 times a year.

The participants have not been asked about the frequency with which they have sex. Nonetheless, some inferences about the level of sexual activity can be made. Participant 1, 2 and 3 were in a relationship. Participant 1 desired to have sex with casual partners as well, whereas participant 2, just like participant 3, were monogamous. The differences between the latter two participants is, that when single, participant 3 has mentioned to look for casual sex

quite frequently, whereas participant 2 said to find it unfulfilling. In comparison to the other participants, participant 4 has been the least sexually active, only having had one sexual partner for a brief amount of time. Participant 5 admitted that he does look for casual sex, the frequency with which this happens is unknown.

When it comes to the ascribed role of drinking, using drugs and having sex in relation to the good life, the participants differ in their opinions. Therefore, two codes have been created which describe the perceived role of alcohol, drugs and sex. Both codes seem to be in sharp contrast with the one another. The first code that will be discussed is *nihil ad rem* and the second will be *joie de vivre*.

**Nihil ad rem.** This code has been assigned to all segments where participants expressed the lack of importance in the good life of either of these elements.

Out of all the participants, four do not see having sex with others, meaning people with whom they are not in a relationship, as an important contribution to the good life. Participant 2 spoke of the difference between intimacy with his partner and intimacy with casual partners:

*“That is vastly different. Yes, I have tried that, but that is way less... I do not think it is an important part of the good life for me.”*

Participant 1, 4 and 5 share the opinion of participant 2. Having sex with others is not fulfilling when compared to having intimacy with a partner and it is not a necessary part of the good life. Participant 4's opinion went a bit beyond that, not only does not it satisfy him, he dislikes it:

*“[...] there is a lot of sex in the gay community. If you put just a little effort into it, you can be in bed with a different partner every night. There are so many short relationships, open relationships, which I, quite frankly, detest.”*

The same four participants agreed on the role that taking drugs has in their lives. Participants 1, 2, 4 and 5 admitted that they could all live without consuming drugs. Participant 4 seems to be the only participant who does not see any of these three elements mentioned in this section, including alcohol, playing a role in the good life. Here is his reply to the question if alcohol played a role:

*“No, I always find it very... special... that people are completely wasted and only then they can have a good time in a bar. In my opinion, you can have fun without that as well. I do not think alcohol has a positive contribution. I think that it destroys more than...”*

When looking at Table 1, we can see that this code has been applied most in interview 4. In contrast to interview 3, where it has not been used at all.

**Joie de vivre.** All, even including participant 4, are in one way or the other exposing themselves to either of these factors, be it in drinking alcohol, experimenting with drugs, or having sex with casual partners. Everything related to one of the three elements and expressing some sort of positive effect as a result of that encounter has been coded as *joie de vivre*.

As mentioned in the previous code participant 4 did not see the added value of drinking, notwithstanding the fact that, even he, is drinking. The other participants saw the consumption of alcohol being related to company. Some of the common effects of alcohol

were mentioned, like experiencing less barriers and less restrictions. Participant 1, for example, had deeper conversations when drinking as well as more flirtatious, sexually orientated talks. This took him out of his daily routine and offered a welcome change.

A change in perspective is also mentioned by the participants consuming drugs. Participant 5 spoke of the mind-expanding effects caused by drugs:

*“You are contemplating things differently. Other options are taken into consideration and you’re getting different sensory input. Things are looking different, they feel different, they feel more intense. Besides that, it can also increase the intimacy with someone.”*

This is recognised by participant 1 and 3 as well. Participant 5 even learned from using drugs that the good feeling one will get when using it, can also be experienced without the consumption of drugs.

Participant 1 also spoke of having taken drugs in order to elevate his sexual experiences when having sex with several people simultaneously. Upon asking him what the appeal in that was, he replied:

*“[...] sometimes I am aroused and I, quite instantly, want to do something fun. [...] No strings attached, just to be able to do your thing, without any consequences.”*

Only participant 3, deemed those three elements vital for the good life. For participant 3 alcohol, drugs and sex are part of what he called ‘social euphoria’, a buzz that drives him to place himself in situations like gay-parties or exploring Grindr, where he has the opportunity to encounter those elements. Even though he considers his work rewarding, he spends his weekends looking for these euphoric feelings. This code appeared in only 4 interviews.

## Role of Values

Regarding the good life, participants had not given a lot of thought about values. All participants considered their values and living in concordance with those values as important, yet not everyone had made their values explicit. An overview of this theme can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

*Codes Relating to the Role of Values*

		Interviews					
Theme	Name of the code	I	II	III	IV	V	Total
Role of values	<i>Values</i>	18	8	7	7	13	53

Participant 1 and 4 had given substantial thoughts to their values, respectively due to training at work and a family crisis. The other three participants merely had a vague idea.

Participant 3 spoke of when he was reminded of his values:

*“No, I think that values become more explicit at a moment when there is someone who is violating your values.”*

With a short exercise the participants were asked to elaborate on their values. This particular exercise had a materialistic focus, which elicited reaction with a similar focus.

Nonetheless, all participants could come forth with some of their values.

Participant 1, 3 and 4 mentioned ‘being open and honest’, participant 3 spoke of ‘exploring/researching’ and all but participant 3 expressed ‘helping’ as a value of theirs.

Living in concordance with your values made the participants feel good. According to participant 1, not living in line with those could result in instability and insecurity.

### Role of Homosexuality

This theme is concerned with the question whether homosexuality was seen playing a role in the good life and its subsequent answers. The given replies share these men’s perceived consequences of being gay. Two codes have been assigned to these answers, namely *intrapersonal consequences* and *interpersonal consequences*, which can be found in Table 4. Both will be discussed below.

Table 4

*Codes Relating to the Role of Homosexuality*

		Interviews					
Theme	Name of the code	I	II	III	IV	V	Total
Role of homosexuality	<i>Intrapersonal consequences</i>	4	4	1	6	2	17
	<i>Interpersonal consequences</i>	0	2	2	12	4	20
Total		4	6	3	18	6	37

**Intrapersonal consequences.** This code entails all fragments that mentioned the feelings and thoughts of these men regarding their own sexuality and the relation to the good life. In the view of the participants, homosexuality was not regarded to be influencing the good life.

None of the participants mentioned struggling with the fact that they are homosexual. Participant 5 spoke of the relation between his sexuality and the good life:

*“I do not see the connection. You can have a good life as a straight person and a gay person as long as you can shape it in a way you want to.”*

All of the participants seemed to agree with this. In their opinion, one is able to live the good life regardless of your sexual preference. The only difference their sexuality made according to participant 1 and 2 is that instead of having romantic relationships with men they would be romantically involved with women.

For participant 4 there was more to it, he elaborated on feeling special in a positive way because of his sexuality:

*“There is beauty in being different from the norm. Instead of the normal male/female, I find it special to have feelings for men. Something that others do not always understand. I find it extraordinary that it is even possible.”*

Besides that, he mentioned that his behaviour had changed for the better after coming out. He became more open and outgoing, something he considered to be of added value to his life.

**Interpersonal consequences.** Where the previous code was about the participants' view of them being homosexual, this code is assigned to all felt external changes and the relation to the good life. The interpersonal consequences are ranging from negative to positive consequences.

Starting with the latter we have participant 3. He expressed how him being homosexual made him attend different parties, something he likes to do. On a more neutral note, we have participant 2, who mentioned feeling that he belonged to a minority group now, yet he did not experience this as having negative consequences. He stated this was mainly due to the society he lived in. Participant 1 did not mention any interpersonal consequences.

On the other hand, we have participant 4 and 5, who mention more negative consequences.

*“When I came out of the closet, everything was new. When I went to this dating site I thought: ‘O my God, where did I end up?’ Really... what was this... I had received the strangest requests on one of those sites. It made me doubt if this was what I wanted, did I really want to belong to this group?”*

Thus, spoke participant 4. That group that he doubted wanting to belong to, had also turned into the group where he expected to find a romantic partner. In his opinion, it is a difficult group to do that in. He had experienced his partner cheating on him, dating with people who were still occupied with their ex-partner and dating men who were not openly gay.

Participant 5 also mentioned a problem with finding a partner in the gay community:



*“It is hard to find a partner. Because there are fewer people out there and everybody knows everybody, you might be dating an ex of your ex. Or someone who is a good friend of a friend of yours. It could get... messy rather fast. There is a guy I like, but I am not taking any steps because he is a good friend of a good friend of mine. [...] If I would pursue this and it would not work out, I am at a real risk of losing a big part of my network of friends, I will lose them.”*

As can be seen, the changed social environment can have an impact on the experience of the good life. This code was mainly applied to interview 4 and 5.

## **Discussion**

The aim of this research was to investigate what makes life good according to homosexual men. Interviews were conducted to gain information on the good life and the role of eudemonia and hedonism in that context. The other topics of interest were the role of values and homosexuality within the good life.

Eudemonia and hedonism both seemed to play a role in the good life. Other elements which were regarded to contribute to the good life were romantic partners, balance, safety and social contact. Values were considered to be important, yet they remained for most participant, implicit. Contrary to the image sketched in the introduction, being homosexual was not seen as a major influence on the good life. Homosexuality was, however, regarded as a factor that made finding a partner difficult for the two single participants.

Interestingly, in the good life, as experienced by the participants, hedonism, as well as a form of eudemonia, seemed to be important. The clear distinction that was made in the literature between the two, did not seem to be as apparent as assumed.

It was apparent for all the participants, that the good life should feel good. A good life consists of enjoying yourself, having fun and the freedom to pursue that which gives you pleasure. It was this state of joy and feeling good that was not only an element of the good life, it was the first thing that came to the participants' mind when asking what the good life was for them. This, at first glance, resembles a hedonistic perspective on the good life, namely, a life that is all about enjoying yourself and experiencing little pain and obstacles (Feldman, 2003).

However, when the participants were queried about three hedonistic elements, it appeared that the good life had more to it than hedonism. Participants had to be asked about the role they ascribed to alcohol, drugs and sex in relation to the good life, because none of these elements were spontaneously mentioned as contributing to the good life. When they were asked about these elements it turned out that four out of the five participants deemed them not to add to the good life. Having sex with casual partners was even referred to as unfulfilling. Alcohol, drugs and sex might be mere examples of hedonism, but they are common, especially among gay people (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004).

Here, the respondent's answers regarding hedonism seemed to be more in line with Aristotle's thoughts. According to him, hedonism was a superficial and fleeting way to live life. Pleasures like having sex or drinking for the sake of just that, did not add any value to a life (Aristotle, 2004). Besides, giving in to chasing pleasure after pleasure could easily result in addiction (Bux, 1996). Other research shows that the strategy of maximizing pleasure and avoiding pain is not a good predictor of the good life (Peterson, Park, & Seligman, 2005; Vella-Brodrick, 2007).

Whenever the participants spoke about parts of their lives associated with eudemonia, developing themselves, progressing towards something that mattered to them, intimate relationships, be it cooking a new recipe or moving abroad for different job opportunities, it

resulted in feeling good. These eudemonic actions were considered, by all participants, to be an element of the good life.

Years of psychological research has proven that the good life is, indeed as reported by the respondents, not achieved by ceaseless pursuits of pleasure (Kesebir & Diener, 2008). Robbins (2006) states that living in a way that Aristotle intended the good life does not create immediate pleasure, yet it enhances the capacity to experience deep and enduring happiness and joy. This could even be independent of any pleasant affects (Scollon & King, 2004).

However, the eudemonia mentioned by the participants differed on some points from Aristotle's view. Not only were their eudemonic acts regarded as pleasurable, moreover, moving in a direction of something that could be considered as a value received such emphasis that this bared a close resemblance to Veenhoven's view on hedonism. The strive for innovation appeared to be as much a need that the participants longed to have fulfilled as any other. Upon satisfying this need, the participants would feel content for a while, before moving on to the next challenge they deemed fit to be appeasing, just as Veenhoven (2003) characterised hedonism.

The good life as described by the participants seemed more in line with Feldman's perspective (2003). In his view, a good life is a life that the person who is living it enjoys living. He defends a view called attitudinal hedonism. This view is different than the aforementioned hedonistic perspective. Here, the seemingly hedonistic take on the good life is combined with elements from an eudemonic perspective (Feldman, 2003). Moving in a direction one deems to be in concordance with the values they hold adds to their enjoyment and their experience of the good life.

This bears resemblance to one of the main elements of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, namely valued based action. Even though the participants had difficulties naming their values, moving in the direction of their values, was important for them. This could

explain why the hedonistic actions, like consuming drugs and having sex with casual partners, did, for most of them, not contribute to the good life. A reason for this might be that it is not in line with any of their values, which could explain why the much-sought for progression and innovation, which was more in line with held values, was regarded as an element to the good life.

The aforementioned casual partners did not seem to play a big part in the good life, all the more so did romantic partners. As mentioned, the latter were seen as an element greatly capable of contributing the good life. Almost all the participants mentioned romantic partners as an element of the good life without being asked about this. In this, they are not alone. Data from largescale surveys showed that getting and maintaining a close relationship with a partner is of high priority for most gay men (Fisher & McNulty, 2009). Research by Wienke and Hill (2009) confirmed that partnered men, regardless of their sexual orientation, reported more happiness than single men.

Besides expecting romantic partners being an element of the good life, the single participants in this study had uttered the expectation that having a partner would offer them some sort of protection when dealing with negative feelings. A survey amongst homosexuals did reveal that men in a monogamous relationship demonstrated psychological health benefits compared to single men and men in open relationships. Rates of depression proved to be lower, substances abuse was less mentioned and general satisfaction of life was higher relative to single men (Parsons, Starks, DuBois, Grov, & Golub, 2013).

Perhaps to little surprise then, it were only the single participants that mentioned to be struggling with some consequences of their sexuality. Even then, these complaints were mostly limited to their difficulties with finding a partner. The fact that these men now had to

date amongst other homosexuals was their main issue. A focus on sex, a small sample to choose from, and complicated relationships their potential partners could have with their friends or ex-partners made it cumbersome. No references were made regarding possible hospitable atmospheres, a focus on masculinity, financial success or on physical attractiveness which were reported in the study by Pachankis (2014).

Further implications for their mental and physical health, as mentioned by Newcomb and Mustanski, were not mentioned by any of the participants (Newcomb & Mustanski, 2010, 2011). The same goes for the earlier discussed gender roles. Nowhere during the interviews was there any mentioning of these suggested causes for the issues which could befall homosexuals (Herek, 2000; Terry, 1999). Nor did they speak of any negative consequences encountered in the general society, even though one participant did feel like he belonged to a minority group. None of the consequences of homosexuality were reported as having a negative influence on the good life. Whenever the participants did experience problems or a more difficult time in their lives, it were their social contacts the participants turned to.

Several reasons, besides methodological ones, which will be discussed later, can be brought forward as possible explanations for the fact that the participants did not mention as much problems as might have been expected for this population. First of all, the fact that 3 of the respondents were partnered at the time of the interviews might account for the lack of reported issues from their side. This could be understood in the light of the previously mentioned psychological health benefits found in partnered homosexual men (Parsons et al., 2013; Wienke & Hill, 2009). Secondly, the problems which were mentioned focused mostly on the hardship related to finding a partner. The research conducted by Fisher and McNulty (2009), pointing out the high priority given to getting a partner, could explain why problems of this nature are very relevant to the participants.

## **Strong points and limitations**

Research conducted on homosexuals who are interviewed by fellow homosexuals can have benefits. Shared experiences, such as coming out, can enable a special empathy, which according to LaSala (2003), encourages the trust and honesty of a participant. This might be enhanced by the fact that the participants were known to the researcher before the start of the study. Sensitive information, which could have been uncomfortable to mention to other researchers, was openly discussed during the interviews.

Another possible strong point is not having defined the good life. Where Feltz and Feltz (2016) see this lack of definition as something problematic, in this research that absence of a framework enabled the participants to share their opinion on the good life without being hindered by imposed definitions. The sparse research conducted on homosexuals in relation to the good life, requires an open approach to this currently uncharted territory.

There are, however, limitations to this study. First, generalising findings from this study, with only 5 participants, to the broad spectrum of gay people would falsely take them for a far more monolithic group than they are. The five men that were interviewed in this study appeared to be rather stable. Little problems, other than those concerned with finding a partner, were mentioned. This lack of diversity could be a methodological explanation for not having found problems as stated in the introduction.

A second explanation and limitation could be the focus of this paper and the question asked. The fact that issues were not mentioned by the participants does not necessarily mean that there are none. The emphasis of this research has been on the good life and contributions to that. This could have resulted in a skewed image. The questions leading up to the one that queried the participants about the role homosexuality played in the good life concentrated on

the good life. Possibly resulting in a response bias (Furnham, 1986), which could have hindered the participants to mention more issues they experienced.

The last limitation which will be discussed also concerns a question asked. The question with which values were investigated might have been appropriate for a therapeutic setting. In this study, however, the answers it elicited were mainly focussed on wealth and sharing that material profit. Nonetheless, values were considered important.

### **Future research**

Recommendations for future research can be derived from the limitations mentioned above. Future research should include more and a more diverse group of participants. Thereby covering a bigger part of the spectrum on which homosexual men can be found. Next, the focus could be widened. Questions on what could be preventing the experience of the good life should be placed next to the ones informing about what could add the good life. Both of these recommendations could give reveal a broader image than that which has been drawn here.

Besides that, it would be interesting for a follow-up study to investigate the way the much-desired good feeling is acquired amongst different homosexual men. This study could possibly distinguish the effect of the different routes to the good life. Thereby answering the questions if values are indeed a better predictor of the good life. If that were so, this could be important information for professionals working with homosexual men. This would not necessarily have to be limited to a homosexual population. It could be interesting to conduct the same study amongst a heterosexual population. This could reveal similarities and differences which could offer valuable information.

Lastly, it might be worthwhile to further investigate the view posed by Feldman (2003) and see if this theory can offer a perspective on the good life which could be generalised to different populations as well as used in a therapeutic context.

## **Conclusion**

Hedonism and eudemonia are both aspects that were separately regarded as important elements of the good life according to homosexual men. The good life, however, seems to be a combination of hedonism and eudemonia, in concordance with Feldman's view (2003), making pleasure and fun, as well as values and committed actions, important. Besides that, romantic partners could be of great benefit to the experience of the good life of homosexual men.



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## **Appendix A**

### **Interview Guide**

#### **Introductie**

Ik doe onderzoek naar het goede leven van homoseksuelen mannen. Hierbij ben ik geïnteresseerd in hoe jij het goede leven ziet en hoe momenten eruitzien die je wellicht niet als het goede leven ziet. Door de antwoorden die je geeft te analyseren hoop ik beter inzicht te krijgen in wat het goede leven is voor deze mannen.

Voordat we beginnen wil ik graag het een en ander toelichten. Het gaat om jouw persoonlijke ervaringen, dat betekent dat er geen goede of foute antwoorden zijn. Jij bent de expert op het gebied van je eigen leven. Tevens staat het je vrij om geen antwoord te geven op een vraag.

Daarnaast zou ik het gesprek graag op willen nemen, zodat ik het later woord voor woord kan uittypen. Dit maakt het analyseren van de verschillende interviews makkelijker. De begeleiders van deze studie hebben ook zicht in de data, voordat ze die zien zal ik zorgen dat al je antwoorden geanonimiseerd worden. Namen, data en plaatsen zullen vervangen worden. Niemand die het onderzoek leest zal het terug kunnen voeren tot jouw antwoorden. Ook de citaten die gebruikt worden in de uiteindelijke tekst zullen geanonimiseerd worden. One of the participant remained quite vague in his answers. Some participants mentioned some darker periods in their life, on which not too much emphasis was laid.

Het interview is op ieder moment te stoppen en na afloop is er de mogelijkheid om je terug te trekken uit het onderzoek, of gegeven antwoorden te veranderen.

Het onderzoek is goedgekeurd door de Commissie Ethiek van de universiteit Twente.

Zijn er nog dingen onduidelijk? Dan zou ik je nu graag willen vragen het toestemmingsformulier te ondertekenen.

*Allereerst zou ik graag wat achtergrondinformatie willen hebben.*

1. Hoe oud ben je?
2. Wat is het niveau van je hoogst voltooide opleiding?
3. Hoe zou je jouw seksuele voorkeur definiëren?

*Dan zou ik het nu graag willen hebben over het goede leven.*

4. Heb je weleens over het goede leven nagedacht?

- Nee en alle ontkenningen **vraag 5 en 6**

- Ja **vraag 5 en 7**

5. Hoe komt het dat je daar (nog niet) over na hebt gedacht?

6. En als je daar nu over nadenkt, hoe zou het goede leven er dan uit moeten zien? (Probes:

zie vraag 7)

7. Hoe ziet het goede leven er voor jou uit?

- **Probes:**

- Alles wat in je op komt is goed.

- Het is ook een lastige vraag, neem je tijd om er even over na te denken.

- Is er nog iets anders dat in je op komt als je nadenkt over wat het goede leven voor jou zou zijn?

- Je omschrijft dit gebied van je leven, zijn er nog andere gebieden van je leven die je kunt omschrijven?

8. Wat maakt (eerdergenoemde aspecten) voor jou tot het goede leven?

- **Probes:**

- Wat maakt het voor jou zo belangrijk?

9. Is het leven dat je nu leeft het goede leven?

10. Wat zou je leven zoals dat nu is meer in de richting van het goede leven brengen?

*Het kan soms zo zijn dat we zo opgaan in de waan van de dag, dat we vergeten wat belangrijk voor ons is. Waarden zijn een globale, gewenste en gekozen richting in het leven, dingen die echt belangrijk voor ons zijn. Ze kunnen ons helpen om op een gewenste koers toe blijven.*

11. Heb je weleens over waardes nagedacht?

- Nee en alle ontkenningen **vraag 12**

- Ja **vraag 13**

12. Als je het goed vindt dan zou ik graag een oefening met je willen doen die mogelijk meer zicht geeft in je waardes. Denk eens na over wat zou je doen met 50 miljoen?

- **Probes:**

- Wat maakt (genoemde aspecten) voor jou zo belangrijk?

13. Wat zijn deze waardes?

14. Welke van deze waarden komen tot uiting in je gedrag?

15. Hoe komen deze tot uiting?

16. Hoe is het voor je als je volgens deze waardes leeft?

17. Hoe is het voor je als je niet volgens deze waardes leeft niet volgens deze waardes leeft?

18. Draagt het leven volgens je waardes bij aan het goede leven?

*Soms zijn er periodes dat het wat minder goed gaat, dan lijkt ons leven helemaal niet op het goede leven. Onze stemming kan dan somberder zijn dan normaal.*

19. Ken je periodes van somberheid?

20. Wat doe je in een periode dat het minder gaat om daar verandering in aan te brengen, wat helpt er?



*Er volgen een paar vragen over drank, drugs en intimiteit in relatie tot het goede leven.*

21. Drink je alcohol?

22. Zo ja, hoeveel (eenheden per week)?

23. Eerder ging het over het goede leven. Welk verband is er voor jou tussen het drinken van alcohol en het goede leven?

24. Gebruik je weleens drugs?

• Ja **vraag 25**

• Nee en alle ontkenningen **vraag 27**

25. Om welke drugs gaat het dan?

26. Hoe vaak gebruik je drugs?

27. Welke rol speelt het (wel/niet) gebruiken van drugs in het goede leven?

28. Heb je op dit moment een relatie?

29. Draagt dat bij aan het goede leven?

30. Wat zou het tegenovergestelde bijdragen aan het goede leven?

31. Op welke manier speelt seks een rol voor jou in het goede leven?

32. Hoe zie jij homoseksualiteit een rol spelen in het goede leven?

*Dit was het einde van het interview. Zijn er nog dingen die je zou willen toevoegen of wijzigen?*

*Hartelijk dank voor je deelname.*

## Appendix B

### Informed Consent

#### Toestemmingsverklaringformulier

**Titel onderzoek:** Het goede leven volgens homoseksuele mannen  
**Verantwoordelijke onderzoeker:** Niels Siebelt

#### *In te vullen door de deelnemer*

Ik verklaar op een voor mij duidelijke wijze te zijn ingelicht over de aard, methode, doel en [indien aanwezig] de risico's en belasting van het onderzoek. Ik weet dat de gegevens en resultaten van het onderzoek alleen anoniem en vertrouwelijk aan derden bekend gemaakt zullen worden. Mijn vragen zijn naar tevredenheid beantwoord.

Ik begrijp dat de geluidsopname uitsluitend voor analyse en/of wetenschappelijke presentaties zal worden gebruikt.

Ik stem geheel vrijwillig in met deelname aan dit onderzoek. Ik behoud me daarbij het recht voor om op elk moment zonder opgave van redenen mijn deelname aan dit onderzoek te beëindigen.

Naam deelnemer: .....

Datum: ..... Handtekening deelnemer: .....

#### *In te vullen door de uitvoerende onderzoeker*

Ik heb een mondelinge en schriftelijke toelichting gegeven op het onderzoek. Ik zal resterende vragen over het onderzoek naar vermogen beantwoorden. De deelnemer zal van een eventuele voortijdige beëindiging van deelname aan dit onderzoek geen nadelige gevolgen ondervinden.

Naam onderzoeker: .....

Datum: ..... Handtekening onderzoeker: .....