# OUT AND ABOUT: YOUNG ADULTS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF LEISURE, IDENTITY, SEXUALITY AND SPACE

by

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# ABSTRACT

This thesis presents three years' work on leisure, identity, sexuality and space from a critical social psychological perspective. Using a mixture of individual and group interviews, sometimes following 'nights out' to bars and pubs, the significance of leisure and 'going out' was explored with a total of 61 young adults (aged 17-34 years). To contrast lesbian, gay and heterosexual perspectives, the sample included thirteen self-defined gay men, eight lesbian and three bisexual women (the remainder of the sample defining themselves as heterosexual or straight). Interview transcripts were subjected to a discourse analysis, identifying a) the importance of 'the discourse of authenticity' in accounts of lesbian and gay leisure, b) the use of 'the gaze' in constructing and regulating leisure spaces, c) the reproduction of class difference in territorial accounts of bars and pubs, and d) the complex and contradictory meanings of the lesbian and gay 'Scene' of bars and clubs to participants. These discursive patterns and practices are discussed in relation to the political importance of claiming lesbian and gay space, the increasing importance of consumption as a basis of identity, and the intersection of resistance and oppression in sexualised, gendered and classed accounts of commercial leisure spaces.

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# CONTENTS

# 1. INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I present the findings of three years' research on young adults' constructions of identities in relation to their leisure time and space. Throughout my research I have been particularly interested in how different sexualities (or sexual identities) are associated with different meanings about leisure and 'going out'. In investigating an apparently mundane area of everyday life such as people's 'free time' my analyses illustrate how leisure, particularly leisure *space*, is a material and symbolic domain where identities and sexualities are produced and contested, and where discourses that reflect sexualised, gendered and classed power relations intersect. The research was initially motivated by a desire to use critical social psychological techniques to investigate sexuality and identity in an everyday context, paying particular attention to the experiences of lesbians and gay men. Throughout this work these 'minority' viewpoints have been contrasted with those of heterosexual people in order to reveal assumptions about sexuality, identity and space on both sides of the hetero/homo divide.

Research on human sexuality is still relatively rare in psychology. Research that includes lesbian and gay issues is rarer still. However, with the recent formation of the British Psychological Society's Lesbian and Gay Psychology Section in 1998, there is growing recognition of the importance of research on the psychological aspects of sexuality in general, and on issues that affect lesbians and gay men in particular. Because sexuality-related research remains a minority subject within psychology, it is often necessary to look further afield for relevant research and theory. I have drawn upon and critically engaged with research in various disciplines outside of psychology

to inform my work. These include sociology, cultural studies, educational research, cultural geography and queer theory. In the review below, I introduce those areas of research that have informed my work, which include constructionist and critical approaches to sexual identity in psychology and other disciplines, critical leisure studies, and research on space, place and sexuality. It would be difficult to do justice to all of these areas in depth, so here I introduce the main arguments that contextualise my research and focus on specific texts that have informed my work.

## 1.1 SEXUALITY, PSYCHOLOGY AND IDENTITY

The critical psychological approach to sexual identity that I have employed throughout this thesis is informed by historical and cultural studies of sexuality, feminist analyses, and lesbian/gay/queer critiques. These areas (and the authors I locate within them) overlap to a certain degree, but to preserve narrative 'flow' I consider these areas separately. While contextualising my approach to identity, these areas also inform my critical or deconstructive stance towards naturalised or normalised accounts of sexuality, which is a consistent theme throughout my analytical chapters.

### *1.1.1 History, culture and the regulation of sexuality*

Historical and cultural studies of sexuality inform us that the meaning of sexuality is dependent on the social, political and historical context in which it is expressed. There is great variation in the expression of sexuality and its significance across cultures and historical periods, suggesting that much of what we understand by the term sexuality is socially constructed and symbolically mediated (Plummer, 1984). Plummer says that 'human sexuality is overwhelmingly a matter of symbolism' (p. 219) and that the

ways we think, fantasise, talk, and write about sexuality are as important as how we physically express sexuality. Emphasising the historical contingency of the way we perceive sexuality today, Weeks (1985) says:

> Sexuality is as much about words, images, ritual and fantasy as it is about the body: the way we think about sex fashions the way we live it. We give a supreme importance to sex in our individual and social lives today because of a history that has assigned a central significance to the sexual. It has not always been so; and need not always be so (p. 3)

In the West, the dominant understanding of 'normal' sexuality is of a natural essence designed for procreation, expressed in an individual's coherent and enduring sexual identity (and usually reduced to a consistent desire for members of a particular sex, or particular types of sexual activity). Despite a presumption of universality across time and cultures, this understanding of sexuality has only really gained currency since the late nineteenth century, when expert disciplines such as medicine, law and psychology began to investigate and classify sexual behaviour (Foucault, 1978). The proliferation of nineteenth century discourse on sex and sexuality was prompted by a perceived need to understand the sexuality of the populace in order to encourage population growth and vitality, at a time of capitalist expansion and industrialisation. The field of 'sexology' (literally, 'the study of human sexual behaviour') emerged to produce the required expert knowledge in this area, and focused on innate biological drives and evolutionary arguments to decide what constituted 'normal' and 'functional' sexuality, in line with the Darwinist arguments of the time (Weeks, 1985). The division of the 'normal' from the pathological was also influenced by the dominant moral concerns of the period, resulting in the promotion of monogamous marital heterosexuality as the ideal form of sexual expression. All other forms of sexual

behaviour were labelled as dysfunctional, pathological, or immoral. Foucault claimed that the legacy of this period was the *naturalisation* of marital heterosexuality as an unquestioned norm, and the investigation, classification and treatment of alternative forms of sexual expression that were seen to threaten this ideal. Sexual behaviours that prompted official concern and were pathologised included masturbation (particularly that of children), homosexuality (because it was seen as both immoral and unproductive), and 'excessive' sexual desire in women (this was seen to destabilise the 'true' roles of men and women in marriage, and the 'natural' role of a woman as 'Mother').

Foucault's (1978) analysis emphasised that sexuality is a significant realm of *regulation* and *power* in the West, rather than just a neutral or natural biological phenomenon, and that disciplines such as psychology have played a role in creating and supporting oppressive practices, ideologies and laws that limit consensual sexual behaviour. Foucault's analysis also suggested that the construction of sexuality as an important marker of personal identity (even if that identity is stigmatised) could be used to develop *resistance* to dominant discourses and practices of sex and sexuality. By attaching so much significance to sexuality, Foucault thought that power was invested in the body (what he has termed 'bio-power'), and that this could be turned against attempts to regulate and control sexuality. One of the ways that Foucault could imagine resistance was in the analysis of the types of discourses that were used to support dominant power relations, and how these discourses were deployed (this is one of the motivations for my use of discourse analysis, which I elaborate in Chapter 2). The development of feminist, lesbian, gay and queer critiques of dominant or hegemonic understandings of sexuality (and the suggestion of alternatives) seems to

reflect Foucault's idea of resistance, and it is to these that we turn next.

### *1.1.2 Feminist challenges*

In the mid twentieth century, 'second wave' feminism emerged, encouraged by the greater numbers of women entering higher education and the professions, legislation in support of a woman's right to an abortion and equal pay, and the wider availability of birth control (Kemp & Squires, 1997). Two central feminist arguments have informed my work. One is the challenge to 'naturalised' views of sexuality, and the other is the argument that gender identities are largely socially constructed, and do not rely upon biological or other essences (both debates are covered in some depth in the Kemp & Squires volume, and I merely draw out the main points here). Considering sexuality first, back in 1949 Simone de Beauvoir wrote that a woman 'is simply what man decrees; thus she is called 'the sex', by which is meant that she appears essentially to the male as a sexual being' (De Beauvoir, 1982, p. 113). De Beauvoir analysed how maleness was assumed to be the superior norm against which femaleness was defined, how women were positioned as 'Other' to men, and how women were seen as 'naturally' passive objects within heterosexual relations. This construction of women as the passive receptacles for male desire, with a sexuality derived solely from their reproductive capacities and 'natural' role as mothers, has been critiqued by feminists, who attacked the naturalisation of heterosexuality and the limitation of women's sexuality. In a radical and influential essay, originally published in 1979, Adrienne Rich argued that far from being the 'natural' way that sexual relations should be organised, heterosexuality was a 'compulsory system' in which women were oppressed by men and often had no option but to submit (Rich, 1997). She proposed that lesbianism (or 'lesbian existence' as she preferred to call it)

was historically denied and suppressed because it was a way for women to recover sexual autonomy and women-identified experience. Rich suggested that 'heterosexuality' and 'motherhood' should be considered as *political institutions* that were naturalised, encouraged and enforced by oppressive patriarchal ideologies and the power granted to men.

The call to analyse and critique heterosexuality (or in fact any form of normalised or naturalised sexuality) has inspired contemporary critical psychological studies of sexuality, including my own, although this type of work is still rare given the dominance of biological and naturalised discourses of heterosexuality in psychology. A key contribution is Wilkinson & Kitzinger's (1993a) edited collection of work by feminist psychologists, which demonstrates that it is possible to interrogate heterosexuality from a wide range of personal, political and social perspectives, and to challenge the 'unexamined heterocentricity' of psychological research and theory (see also Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1994). However, in the introduction to the volume Wilkinson & Kitzinger (1993b) reflect on the difficulty for some feminists of being labelled as heterosexual, and of being asked to account for their heterosexuality (one potential contributor, when approached by Wilkinson & Kitzinger, retorted 'How dare you assume I'm a heterosexual?'). As self-identified lesbians asking heterosexual feminists to reflect on heterosexuality, Wilkinson & Kitzinger found that reactions included 'delighted laughter', fear, hostility, and 'blank incomprehension' (1993b, p. 1). While lesbianism and other minority sexualities are seen as legitimate 'problems' or 'issues' to investigate, for many heterosexuality appears to be an 'uninteresting' or 'unproblematic' topic for research. To question heterosexuality from a lesbian or gay perspective may seem profoundly unsettling to some or irrelevant to others (as

Wilkinson & Kitzinger commented, 'what would we lesbians have to say about heterosexuality, and what would *we* know about it, anyway?' (1993b, p. 1, original emphasis). As a gay man situated 'outside' heterosexuality I have tried to think critically about heterosexuality (and minority sexualities) in examining how dominant understandings of sexuality are reproduced in everyday contexts and the dialogue of my participants. However, in doing this I have tried not to assume that heterosexuality is a uniform institution with uniform effects or that the experience of heterosexuality is the same for all who identify as heterosexual. Instead I have tried to consider the historical, social and personal contexts in which sexuality is produced and regulated, while acknowledging the diversity of sexual experiences (both oppressive and pleasurable) within categories such as 'heterosexual' (Segal, 1997; Vance, 1997). I reflect on the experience of doing research on sexuality as a 'gay researcher' in the Method.

The other feminist debate on which I have drawn is the essentialist/constructionist argument about the determinants of gender identity. Throughout the development of feminism, or perhaps I should say 'feminisms', there has been an ongoing debate about the definition of gender and sexuality in general, and the category of 'women' in particular (Kemp & Squires, 1997). This debate has been important for trying to work out a common basis for political action amongst feminists and a sense of affiliation between women, as well as recognising the differences between women of different classes, races, sexualities, generations and cultures. Although some feminists have argued that there is a common essence that unites women, as Stanley (1997) points out it is now more common for feminist theorists to acknowledge that our understanding of gender identities is largely socially constructed. Critics of the

constructionist perspective argue that it ignores common biological experiences such as menstruation or childbirth and the experience of having a female sexed body. However, from a constructionist perspective the meanings given to women's (and men's) common biological experiences are culturally and historically specific and are unintelligible unless attention is paid to the social context in which they are found. Thus, the experience of any biological substrate to sex or gender is socially mediated. Wittig (1997) argues that relying on the concept of a 'female essence' (even if this is supposed to contain positive attributes) naturalises women's oppression by reifying the distinction between 'male' and 'female'. Instead she argues that critical work should examine how sexual difference is produced and maintained, with the ultimate aim of destroying the 'categories of sex'. Wittig goes on to say that the division of male from female presumes heterosexual relations as the natural relationship between the sexes. Because of the apparent rigidity of the sexual binary and the hegemonic status of heterosexuality, Wittig argues that anyone who does not identify as heterosexual falls outside the sex/gender system. This led Wittig to famously say that a lesbian 'is *not* a woman' (p. 226, original emphasis) because of her refusal to be defined in sexual and social relations to men. The idea that gender difference relies upon assumptions of (hetero)sexuality and vice versa has informed my work, and this dependency is problematised wherever appropriate.

The poststructuralist theorising of Judith Butler (1990, 1991, 1997) has also influenced my approach to gender and sexuality. Butler's theory of 'performativity' argues that gender is a compulsory system in which we must 'display' gender through the discursive repetition of gender difference. Butler argues that our sense of a gender essence or identity is a product of this discursive work, and that although difficult to

interrupt, by analysing the discursive production of gender difference it may be possible to subvert it and reveal it as a construction. Because of its emphasis on a 'politics of subversion', Butler's work has been influential in queer theory, which I consider below.

### *1.1.3 Lesbian, gay and queer perspectives*

The lesbian and gay liberation movement emerged in a similar period to second wave feminism in the West. Key social changes that facilitated the emergence of lesbians and gay men as sexual 'minorities' with distinctive cultures and communities include capitalist urbanisation and industrialisation, the weakening of family ties, and a secularisation of morals, although these developments were not identical for men and women[1] (D'Emilio, 1983; Löfström, 1997; Weeks, 1981, 1985). One of the first targets for the lesbian and gay liberation movement was the pathological definition of homosexuality, supported by disciplines such as psychology. The adoption of identities such as 'lesbian' or 'gay' and the creation of positive meanings associated with these identities (such as 'glad to be gay') by lesbians and gay men was a direct challenge to stigmatising medical and psychological discourses about homosexuality. This valorisation of lesbian and gay existence and the assertion of the normality and

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[1] The emergence of lesbian identities and communities does not follow the same historical path as that for gay men, given that homosexual women had less power and fewer opportunities for independent living than their male counterparts. Some forms of contemporary lesbianism share roots with 'second wave' feminism rather than 'gay liberation'. However, for reasons of simplicity I bracket lesbians and gay men together here. For a discussion of some of the issues surrounding the emergence of contemporary lesbianism and its forebears (such as the institution of 'romantic friendship'), see Faderman (1991).

healthiness of homosexuality was what Foucault (1978) called a 'reverse discourse' in that it questioned the authority of powerful others to label, define and treat lesbians and gay men for their 'condition'. Through the late 1960s and early 1970s, professional bodies like the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association were lobbied to remove homosexuality from their indexes of mental disorders, such as the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM). In 1973, bowing to political pressure and mounting research evidence that supported the view that long-term homosexuality between consenting adults was not inherently dysfunctional, the American Psychiatric Association declassified homosexuality, followed two years later by the American Psychological Association (APA, 2001; Weeks, 1981).

The removal of homosexuality from the official list of psychological disorders prompted a shift in attitudes within the discipline. Today the largest association of professional psychologists in the world, the American Psychological Association (APA), has a liberal and progressive policy with respect to lesbian and gay issues. In one of its 'public communications', the APA states that 'homosexuality is not an illness, mental disorder or emotional problem', that homosexuality cannot be 'cured' with therapy, that lesbians and gay men can be 'good parents', and that prejudice and discrimination against lesbians and gay men should be tackled through public education (APA, 2001).

This shift in official attitudes within psychology has been matched by a growth in research on lesbian and gay issues, although this growth is patchy and tends to address dominant theoretical concerns within the discipline as a whole. In a recent review, Sandfort (2000) identifies the main areas of contemporary psychological research on

homosexuality. These include: theorising the origins of homosexuality; studies of homophobia and heterosexism; research on factors that affect the 'normal' psychological functioning of lesbians and gay men; 'coming out' as lesbian or gay and the maintenance of these identities; and intimate relationships and parenthood (see for example the collection by D'Augelli & Patterson 1995). Much of this research is valuable in that it attempts to demystify lesbian and gay issues within and outside psychology, and tries to address the psychological needs and concerns of lesbians and gay men who still face discrimination and prejudice in many areas of everyday life. However, as Sandfort admits, the majority of this research uses mainstream psychological methods, and has done little to challenge the heterosexual 'bias' within most psychological research, or the status of homosexuality as a minority 'issue' or 'problem' to be explained. For example, researchers investigating the origins or causes of homosexuality rarely give a theoretical rationale for their studies, assuming that their relevance is self-evident. As Sandfort acknowledges, there is a difference between 'psychological research on (homo)sexuality' that has no explicit political viewpoint, and 'lesbian and gay psychology' that has a commitment to lesbian and gay emancipation and counteracting heterosexism. Conducting lesbian and gay psychological research does not necessarily mean that a researcher is lesbian or gay (although currently that is often the case), and does not specify a particular methodology or theoretical orientation. However, when 'doing' lesbian and gay psychology it is possible to take a fairly liberal and mainstream approach to the study of sexuality and identity, or to adopt a more radical and questioning position. This latter position, with which I align myself, is inspired by the feminist critiques and lesbian and gay politics outlined above, and by the development of 'queer politics'

and 'queer theory'.

'Queer' is a term that provokes, and whose meaning is contested. It is a historically a term of abuse and a collective label (Sinfield, 1994), and has been reclaimed as a political rallying point and inclusive umbrella term since the 1980s and the challenge posed by AIDS, indicating a more 'in your face' political and confrontational approach to living. Epstein (1996) describes queerness as representing a 'politics of provocation', frequently opposed to the assimilationist project of mainstream lesbian and gay politics, and often dividing lesbian and gay communities by generation, as older members tend to feel uncomfortable with the queer approach[2]. The supporters of queer propose a more fully 'co-sexual politics' where men and women participate on an equal footing, and where queer is a convenient shorthand for all those in opposition to normative sexual regimes[3]. Epstein points out the contradiction that although queer politics is generally constructionist in its reasoning, it may also appear essentialist when 'queer' as a label becomes reified into yet another identity category describing a 'type' of person.

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[2] The media-savvy, 'loud and proud' activism of groups such as *ACT-UP* (AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power), *Outrage!* and *Queer Nation* are often held up as examples of queer politics.

[3] 'Queer' can be used as an umbrella term for 'lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals'. I also think of queer as including transvestite and transgender communities, and anyone who has to live in the margins of the sex/gender system, or has a committed opposition to its restrictions and power inequities. This last definition is obviously hazy and would potentially allow for 'straight queers' committed to disrupting compulsory heterosex, although this is contentious. For me 'queer' would currently exclude paedophiles, because of the power imbalance between adults and children, and therefore the likelihood of abuse.

The growth of queer politics has been accompanied by the development of a loose collection of academic work known as 'queer theory'. The challenge posed by this work has reinvigorated critical studies of sexuality, although many of its ideas have their roots in work conducted over 30 years ago (e.g. McIntosh, 1968). Seidman (1996) locates the 'queer project' in academia as an outgrowth of social constructionist reasoning, that questions the implicit assumptions made by *both* essentialist and social constructionist academics about sexuality. Rather than try to explain the historical background and social constitution of the 'modern homosexual', queer writing interrogates the operation of the homo/hetero binary, often switching the focus to heterosexuality as an oppressive organising principle (e.g. Hennessy, 1994; Sedgwick, 1990). This focus on heterosexuality obviously owes a debt to the work of feminist authors such as Rich (1997). Queer theory continues a project of 'denaturalising the natural', to the extent that taken-for-granted assumptions about the 'naturalness' of the body and biological sex differences are scrutinised and called into question (Cream, 1995).

Queer theorists are perhaps even more suspicious of the idea of 'essence' than critics such as Wittig (1997). Queer theory extends the critique of the unified subject and focuses it on sexual identities, questioning the coherence, applicability, social, ideological and political functions, and stability of sexual categories such as 'homosexual', 'heterosexual', 'gay', 'lesbian', or 'bisexual'. Queer theorists have considered how the drive to keep sexual identities in discrete categories often just results in the formation of new categories (such as 'bisexual'), rather than a questioning of the homo/hetero binary itself (Ault, 1996). Other theorists have attempted to draw attention to sexual forms that do question the division of homo

from hetero (and male from female). These include people regarded as intersex, transvestism and transgenderism (Butler, 1990, 1991; Cream, 1995). As Seidman (1996) says, queer theorists reject the stable unified identifiable term 'homosexual' in favour of multiple or composite identities which can be combined from 'identity-components' (such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, able-ness, nationality) in an infinite number of intersecting ways. These identities are arbitrary, unstable and exclusionary. The construction of identities necessarily entails the silencing of some experiences, and therefore identities are unstable because they are open to challenge from those who find that their experiences are not represented. Identities are not necessarily liberating; they are seen as disciplinary and regulatory structures which define 'possible ways to frame the self, body, desires, actions, and social relations' (p.12) while excluding others.

So what are the implications of feminist, lesbian/gay, and queer critiques for the development of a 'lesbian and gay psychology'? In proposing a 'lesbian/gay paradigm' in psychology, Laura Brown (1989) argues that the experiences of lesbians and gay men should be considered central to definitions of reality rather than as tangential variations of our 'basic understandings' of human behaviour. In a similar way that looking at women's experiences revealed psychology to be sexist in many of its basic assumptions, examining lesbian and gay experiences will reveal where psychology has adopted heterosexist norms. For example, Brown suggests that when psychologists investigate issues such as lesbian and gay parenting and families, rather than defining this topic area as 'lesbian and gay families', the definition of 'family' should be examined and if necessary redefined to include lesbians and gay men, and not just to focus on two-parent heterosexual families. Brown says that the experiences

of lesbians and gay men provide fascinating insights into managing 'biculturalism', the way in which lesbians and gay men manage to simultaneously exist in the heterosexual mainstream and within lesbian/gay minorities. Investigating this experience of being both 'self' and 'Other' could reveal the rules by which mainstream culture operates, and new ways of organising and managing identities. The experience of 'Otherness' remains central to lesbian and gay experiences, as lesbians and gay men cope with their difference from the heterosexual majority and articulate ways of dealing with this marginal position. As Brown says, listening to 'outsider' perspectives on the mainstream culture can often reveal inequities, exclusions and inconsistencies that can be analysed and challenged. Finally, Brown suggests that the relatively recent emergence of lesbian and gay identities and communities means that what it means to be lesbian or gay is still open to question, and that there is much potential for lesbians and gay men to 'make up the rules as they go along' in defining themselves, their lifestyles and values. Brown suggests that 'creativity' (in how to live, how to act, what to believe) is more readily available to lesbians and gay men because of their minority status. The ways in which lesbians and gay men organise their relationships, families, friendships and communities, could all reveal alternatives to normalised and naturalised ways of 'doing' identity, gender and sexuality. For instance, the diverse ways in which gay men organise their relationships to other men, at work, at home, for friendship, pleasure and sex, potentially question heterosexual norms of masculinity. Similarly, Brown argues that the study of lesbian relationships may reveal positive and functional strategies for maintaining intimacy and psychological health in *all* relationships, given the absence of power inequities based on gender (e.g. Dunne, 1996).

In a consideration of queer theory and its implications for psychology, Henry Minton (1997), echoes some of Brown's (1989) points, in arguing that an attendance to lesbian and gay experiences will widen the applicability and relevance of psychological theorising and question its basic assumptions. Like Brown's argument that lesbian/gay knowledge calls for a wide-ranging reassessment of psychology, Minton argues that the queer approach moves away from the 'minoritizing' position in which the concerns of an oppressed minority are central to theory and practice, and towards a 'universalizing' view that problematises the whole sex/gender system and *all* the identity categories located within it (Sedgwick, 1990). The queer perspective highlights the diversity within categories such as 'heterosexual' or 'lesbian' and suggests that a celebration of this diversity can 'undo' these categories by revealing their arbitrariness. Of particular importance though is queer theory's focus on regulation and the pervasiveness of power relations, following Foucault (1978) and feminists such as Rich (1997). An attention to power demands an analysis of heterosexuality as an oppressive principle and practice, but, in addition, the 'queering' of essential identities and identity politics also necessitates a critical stance towards lesbian and gay identities, particularly privileged forms of 'lesbianness' or 'gayness'. Some critical work already argues that dominant or hegemonic lesbian and gay identities are too narrowly-defined and restrictive, and may be overly reliant on essentialism, liberal humanist ideology and consumer capitalism (e.g. Kitzinger, 1989; O'Mara, 1997; Sinfield, 1998; Warner, 1993). Queer theory is suspicious of any identities that become too rigid or limiting of desire and consensual sexual expression. Minton argues that the goal for queer theorising is to 'provide participants with the discursive and performative strategies they will need to resist and contest forms of domination' (p. 349). By analysing how lesbian, gay, and heterosexual identities are

articulated and constructed, it may be possible to find new ways for 'identities to reinvent themselves to effectively resist domination' (p. 349). Thus a lesbian and gay psychology inspired by feminist/lesbian/gay/queer critiques needs to a) recover lesbian/gay and other 'outsider' experiences, b) use these minority viewpoints to critique assumptions throughout the discipline, c) analyse the power relations that support and fix in place particular identities within the sex/gender system and d) open up ways to resist domination and the regulation of identities. This is the type of lesbian and gay psychology to which I subscribe, and is epitomised by the work of Kitzinger (1987), Ussher (1997a), and Wilkinson & Kitzinger (1993a, 1994).

### *1.1.4 Mainstream models of identity*

To complete an account of my own approach to 'sexual identity', in this section I present a critique of dominant models of lesbian and gay identity, captured in cognitive developmental stage models of 'coming out' as lesbian or gay (Cass, 1979; Coleman, 1982; Minton & McDonald, 1984; Troiden, 1988, 1989). 'Coming out' is generally regarded as the process through which lesbians and gay men recognise their difference from the heterosexual norm and begin to tell others about their minority sexual identities. Taking Richard Troiden's (1988, 1989) stage model as an influential exemplar of 'traditional' lesbian and gay psychology, we can examine some of the assumptions of the mainstream psychological approach to sexual identity. Troiden constructs an *ideal-typical* account of homosexual identity formation, based on the retrospective accounts of adult self-defined lesbians and gay men and previous theoretical and empirical research. The model consists of four main stages:

*Sensitization*. The individual sees him/herself as 'different' to peers (often due to 'gender atypical' behaviour), and starts to see homosexuality as personally relevant. This stage is thought to occur before puberty.

*Identity confusion*. Often occurs during adolescence and involves a sense of anxiety, confusion and conflict about sexual identity and the self. Feelings of heterosexual and homosexual desire may both occur, and anxiety and confusion may be exacerbated by recognition of the stigma attached to homosexuality and a lack of knowledge about lesbians and gay men.

*Identity assumption*. The individual adopts a homosexual identity and begins to tell others about their sexuality (known as 'coming out'). Coming out may occur within a small circle of trusted people first to test others' reactions. Initial contact with other lesbians and gay men often occurs at this stage.

*Commitment*. The individual adopts homosexuality as a 'way of life' integrating it into their sense of self and their personal and public lives. Commitment can be expressed through happiness or pride in being lesbian or gay, and/or seeing homosexuality as 'natural' or essential. For Troiden, the participation in a same-sex love relationship is a key marker of this stage.

Troiden's (1988, 1989) model, like other models of lesbian and gay identity development, has been useful in helping psychologists to understand the different issues facing lesbians and gay men when they try to articulate their identities, particularly during adolescence, and suggesting strategies that might be employed to cope with identity issues, particularly within sympathetic clinical practice. Models like these are laudable in the sense that they are affirmative of homosexuality and are

based on empirical findings. However, they have their limitations. The proposal of 'ideal-typical' models of homosexual identity development tends to ignore contextual differences such as culture, gender, age, class or race, and implies a white, Western, middle-class, gay male ideal (although the issue of 'difference' and diversity is covered more sensitively in recent volumes such as D'Augelli & Patterson, 1995). The models also imply a uniform process of development from an 'immature' stage to a 'mature' adult identity. This may not accurately reflect the path of development, which may move back and forwards through these stages depending on context and experience, and assumes that adolescents 'lack' a sense of identity while adults have a fixed and stable one (Griffin, 1993; Lesko, 1996). The liberal humanist perspective adopted by Troiden and others can also be problematic. While generally affirmative of homosexuality, theorists like Troiden often implicitly validate certain types of homosexual expression while ignoring others (see also Bell & Weinberg, 1982). Troiden's focus on involvement in a same-sex loving relationship as a marker of 'commitment' to a homosexual identity reinforces a Western ideal of romantic love, and a type of monogamous relationship that is by no means inevitable. Kitzinger (1989) argues that the liberal humanist perspective leads theorists like Troiden to focus on individualised identities and relationships out of context, and imply that homosexuality is 'just like' heterosexuality in most respects. This reinforces a pervasive moral rhetoric that takes personal relationships out of social and political arenas and legitimates institutions such as marriage, while also depoliticising the potentially transgressive experience of lesbians and gay men.

However, it is the concept of a fixed, coherent and stable sexual identity that is most problematic in stage models of homosexual identity development. Troiden implies an

underlying, unchanging, inherent homosexual self, which the individual supposedly possesses before their 'realisation' of homosexuality and the subsequent negotiation with the social category of homosexuality; hence Troiden's use of the term 'prehomosexual' (1989, p.52). This nature/culture split allows an essentialist reading of homosexual development where it is assumed that homosexual men and women are 'born that way' then adopt a socially-defined identity (e.g. 'gay', 'lesbian') later on. Although social processes are present, these can be read as merely exposing the 'true self' that has been 'hidden' from birth or early childhood. This may reflect a liberal concern to protect the identity-based claims of the lesbian and gay rights movement, but it also serves to obscure the possible diversity in the accounts of lesbian and gay men. Although the 'born that way' account is popular (see Bailey, 1995; Cameron, 1997; LeVay, 1993), accounts of 'choosing' homosexuality are also possible, particularly from a lesbian feminist perspective (Kitzinger, 1987; Markowe, 1996; Whisman, 1996). The idea of an underlying 'real' homosexual self that exists before a homosexual identity, in conjunction with the generalised 'ideal-typical' approach to homosexual identity that Troiden adopts, allows the reification of homosexuality so that it appears as natural, ahistorical and uniform. This view of homosexuality can be seen to have particular epistemological roots and obscures the role of social processes and power relations in defining 'homosexuality' as a concept and category (Foucault, 1978).

### *1.1.5 Alternative models of identity*

Various alternatives have been suggested to the notion of coherent essential (sexual) identities, some of which I have touched upon above. Sampson (1989) says that the

idea of the unified and coherent subject has been attacked on six fronts:

1. Cross-cultural work that shows alternatives to the North American/Western European 'individual'.

2. Feminist challenges to ideas of personhood that privilege male experience.

3. Social constructionist arguments that 'the individual' is a social and historical construct.

4. Systems theory with its focus on relations rather than entities.

5. Critical theory (from the Frankfurt School) regards 'the individual' as fulfilling the functions of a capitalist ideology.

6. Deconstructionism (following poststructuralist thought) that challenges the primacy of the subject.

Looking particularly at critical theory, Sampson (1989) problematises the individual subject, arguing that we must recognise a dialectical interpenetration of the subject and society. Rather than merely examining the subject as a separate entity, it is more valid to look at the relationship between the individual and society. 'The person' is a mediated product of society, yet at the same time the person is able to reproduce or transform that society by acting within it. The structures that produce people can be changed by those people, assuming that the psychological possibility of change can be imagined. Sampson also considers the implications of deconstructionist ideas (following Derrida) for theories of identity. Derrida's notion of being/not being or presence/absence destabilises 'the subject' or 'identity' by proposing that they are simultaneously both what they are *and* what they are not (i.e. if you say, 'I am

black', you automatically imply, 'I am *not* white'). Identity can be seen as a *process* that never rests on a stable identity, but which is always moving. This makes it impossible to be fully aware of our own subjectivity, and if we accept that our subjectivity (the condition of being a subject) is indirect and mediated, this allows for an analysis where social and historical traces structure our experience of consciousness and the self. In the West, the idea of 'personhood' is permeated by ideology; an ideology that fixes the subject in place, making the individual responsible, rational and accountable for his or her actions, while denying the influence of social, historical and political factors in our lives.

### *1.1.6 Interim summary*

The review above contextualises my approach to identity, and highlights my concern with analysing and deconstructing naturalised and normalised forms of sexuality, whether they be dominant forms of heterosexuality, or minority forms such as 'lesbian' or 'gay'. 'Sexual identities' are the result of ongoing social processes, negotiated by individuals, within groups, and throughout culture. Sexual identities are culturally and historically contingent, subject to the sedimented power relations in a society, but also open to contestation and negotiation at individual and social levels. To understand how sexual identities are constructed, performed and regulated, it is necessary to consider their construction and negotiation in context. The contexts chosen for my studies were leisure time and space, and in the next two sections I introduce these areas, looking at the connections between identity, leisure and sexuality, and identity, sexuality and space.

## 1.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF LEISURE

Leisure is commonly defined as 'free time', the time 'left over' outside of paid or unpaid work and other compulsory activities such as schooling. Leisure can include various activities such as watching television, travelling, shopping, listening to music, going to the cinema or theatre, playing or watching sports, going to the pub, socialising with friends, being a member of clubs, taking part in hobbies, collecting ephemera, or just 'hanging out' by yourself or with others. However, leisure is not the automatic result of having 'time to spare'; to be 'at leisure' also reflects a subjective sense or perception of 'being at leisure' i.e. *feeling* that you are taking part in leisure. To engage in leisure usually has a positive connotation in that leisure is seen as a domain in which a person can take part in activities that give them pleasure and satisfaction, without pressure or coercion (Neulinger, 1981). As Neulinger says '[t]o leisure means to be oneself, to express one's talents, one's capacities, one's potentials' (p. xii).

For Neulinger (1981), the domain of leisure is ideal for psychological investigation because it reveals more about a person's 'true' desires and motivations than constrained contexts such as the workplace, and is an important context within which people develop and express themselves (i.e. leisure is important for the expression of identity). The idea that leisure is psychologically important is supported by repeated findings that engaging in satisfying leisure activities is positively related to 'quality of life' indicators (Roberts, 1999). Perhaps unsurprisingly however, the types of leisure activities that people engage in, their perception of what leisure is and the opportunities that people have for leisure are shaped by social and cultural factors. Neulinger lists social class, gender, age, educational level, income, occupation,

religion and race as factors that can influence the type of leisure in which a person engages, and that can affect the meaning and significance of different leisure activities to that person.

Looking at leisure in a wider context, we can also see that leisure is not just important for psychological wellbeing, but is economically important (in terms of revenue, jobs and tourism), socially important (in bringing people together) and politically important (because of the above reasons and because some forms of leisure tend to be encouraged while others are regulated) (Roberts, 1999). Roberts, a leading figure in the 'sociology of leisure', argues that the contemporary organisation of leisure in Britain and other Western countries is a modern phenomenon, following capitalist development and the division of paid work from 'free time'. We now work fewer hours and earn more for our work than our forebears, thus increasing the opportunity for leisure. We also spend more than ever before, especially on what used to be considered luxuries e.g. travel, eating out and entertainment equipment. Since the Second World War, participation in and expenditure on leisure has grown dramatically, prompted by economic growth. This period is also marked by the emergence of youth subcultural styles (Abrams, 1959) and the development of what we now recognise as the 'consumer society'. Roberts argues that modern leisure is marked by trends of *commercialisation* (the shaping of more leisure goods and services as commodities that can be bought and sold), the *blurring of divisions* such as gender, class and race that used to suggest distinctive leisure patterns, *individualisation* (people have increasingly personalised leisure preferences and are targeted as such), and *pacification* (leisure has become more 'civilised').

The recognition that leisure has become increasingly commercialised and that social

distinctions such as class, gender or race do not fully determine leisure patterns means that the study of leisure is increasingly linked to the study of *consumption*, the practice of buying goods and services and related symbolic activities i.e. the meanings associated with consuming. Consumption is increasingly seen as a domain in which people attempt to differentiate themselves and display messages about status and identity (Bourdieu, 1984; Phoenix & Tizard, 1996; Slater, 1997). Writing about both leisure and consumption, Baudrillard (1998) and Adorno (1991) claim that the idea of 'free time' is a myth and that we are impelled to engage in 'productive' leisure and consumption practices to satisfy the needs of capital. These continental critics argue that the idea that identity and status can be produced and maintained through consumption and leisure is one of the enticements for taking part in consumption (even if you lack the material resources to do so) and disguises the operation of capitalism and the consumer's increasing detachment from the means of production (see Billig, 1999; Harvey, 1990). Roberts (1999) says that these critical approaches to leisure tend to overemphasise the structural limitations placed upon people and de-emphasise the agency and resistance of consumers (although the idea that 'the consumer is sovereign' is equally dubious). Taking a poststructuralist stance, we can accept that leisure is a site of regulation and increasing commercial pressure, but that it is also a means through which people can express identities and find meaning. This contradiction between commercialism and 'authentic' leisure, structure and agency, resistance and incorporation, is what makes the study of leisure and consumption so interesting (Storey, 1999).

So how has sexuality been addressed in the study of leisure? Unfortunately, there is very little to review in this area. Feminist critiques have highlighted the historical

neglect of gender in mainstream leisure studies, particularly the fact that women's unpaid labour in the home restricts the availability of 'free time' and produces quite a different experience of leisure to those who go out to work (Deem, 1995). Feminist analyses also suggest that to appreciate the operation of gender relations, leisure activities and their meanings must be studied in context, together with a consideration of the power relations that operate in leisure domains e.g. the ways in which women feel 'policed' by men in pubs and clubs. These analyses could be applied to sexuality, and there is some evidence that feminist leisure researchers in particular are beginning to investigate how sexuality affects leisure (see volume edited by Scraton, 1999). However, much of this research is still attempting to understand how heterosexual women's leisure is experienced and structured, and pays little or no attention to the leisure of lesbians and gay men, despite their apparent courting as consumers (Gluckman & Reed, 1997; Sinfield, 1998), or to the differences between heterosexual and non-heterosexual experiences of leisure. As Scraton says, research on gender and sexuality in leisure remains in the 'ghetto', both underfunded and undervalued.

Recently however there have been a few mainstream studies that have focused on lesbian and gay youth. As part of a larger study of four high schools in the south-eastern United States, Caldwell et al (1998) looked at the leisure experiences of 111 lesbian, gay, bisexual and 'questioning' youth (4% of their sample). Using Likert-type questionnaires, Caldwell et al found that non-heterosexual adolescents rated their leisure more negatively than heterosexual peers, and gay males rated the experience of leisure more negatively than lesbian and heterosexual females. Gay males rated their leisure as more boring than that of non-gay peers, reported more perceived parental control over leisure, greater loneliness, and less participation in recreational sports

than non-gay males. Non-heterosexual youth, both boys and girls, rated themselves as more sad and depressed, and more likely to engage in binge drinking than their heterosexual peers. However, non-heterosexual youth did not differ from their heterosexual peers in reported levels of participation in non-school based clubs and organisations. Unfortunately, Caldwell et al's study tells us little about what these ratings *mean* to the respondents themselves, although it does support the idea that lesbian and gay youth feel more excluded from social life, particularly at school age (Burbidge & Walters, 1981; Epstein, 1997; Khayatt, 1994; Plummer, 1989; Trenchard & Warren, 1987). A recent smaller study involving one of the authors of the Caldwell et al study, Beth Kivel, did attempt to look at the meaning of leisure for ten self-identified lesbians and gay men, aged 18-23 (Kivel & Kleiber, 2000). Kivel & Kleiber found that 'personal' leisure (such as reading or watching television) was important for this small group to find out about other lesbians and gay men, and to confirm their sense of identity as lesbian or gay. Participating in (or avoiding) sports or musical bands was also seen as a way to confirm *personal* identity, but these contexts were not seen as supportive arenas in which to *publicly* express lesbian or gay identities. For these lesbians and gay men, leisure could be a context that confirmed their sense of 'otherness', although some activities seemed to validate the idea that it was 'okay' to be different.

Studies like Caldwell et al (1998) and Kivel & Kleiber's (2000) are at least attempting to address lesbian and gay issues within the field of leisure studies, yet they are limited in terms of methodology or size. They also largely focus on non-commercial leisure, and the most popular form of leisure in Britain, attracting nearly half of all leisure expenditure, is eating out and drinking (Martin & Mason, 1998, cited in

Roberts, 1999). Roberts admits that the neglect of research on commercial leisure, such as going out to the pub, and its meaning has been a persistent problem within the field. Unsurprisingly, there is virtually no research that touches upon lesbian and gay consumption of commercial leisure in Britain from within leisure studies and the sociology of leisure. In my research I wanted to investigate the significance of commercial leisure in the lives of lesbians and gay men, and the construction of leisure meanings in context. I also wanted to see how lesbians and gay men talk about heterosexual leisure venues, how heterosexual people perceive lesbian and gay commercial leisure, and the power relations that cross-cut constructions of leisure and sexuality. To find research related to these issues, I looked further afield to cultural geography, and research on sexuality, identity and space.

## 1.3 THE SPATIAL TURN

The 1990s saw a surge of research interest in the spatial aspects of sexuality and the sexualisation of space and place, after various geographers highlighted the neglect of sexuality, particularly minority sexuality, within their discipline (Bell, 1991; Bell, Binnie, Cream, & Valentine, 1994). This 'spatial turn' in sexuality research reflected a growing interest in the links between space, place and identity in the social sciences in general, where the study of space was seen as a way to integrate social, material and symbolic contexts into studies of identity[4]. Within critical social psychology, Dixon & Durrhiem (2000) have argued that it is important to consider how places are discursively constituted, the linking of identities to places, the discursive justification

[4] Henri Lefebvre's (1991) ideas about the combined material and discursive production of space are particularly influential within this 'spatial turn' in the social sciences.

of particular social and spatial relations, and how these relations become self-evident or naturalised. Dixon & Durhheim's paper is a rare example of critical/discursive work on place and identity within psychology, and their approach has informed my consideration of sexuality, identity and space.

Recent geographical work on sexuality, epitomised by the collection edited by Bell & Valentine (1995b), has connections with my work because of its focus on sexual identities in context, the idea that meanings of space and place are discursively constructed, a commitment to poststructuralist and queer notions of identity, and a consideration of how power is expressed in the spatial organisation of sexuality. One of the major assumptions of this field is that everyday space is presumed to be *authentically heterosexual* unless shown to be otherwise. This means everyday places can be experienced quite differently by lesbians and gay men, compared to the heterosexual majority. Valentine (1993a) says that lesbians and gay men can feel quite 'out of place' in public spaces, and are often aware of the negative consequences of transgressing heterosexual norms of behaviour in public and the dangers of being 'recognised' as lesbian or gay. Valentine has shown that lesbians can be adept at managing the transitions to and from mainstream heterosexual space so as to disguise or reveal their identities. This echoes findings by feminist geographers that women often have quite different experiences of everyday spaces compared to men, feeling more at risk and aware of threats to the self in public, and looking for safe passage through spaces perceived as risky. Women also often take it for granted that they will be surveyed by men in public places (Kirby, 1996; McDowell, 1996).

Bell & Valentine (1995a) review the history of geographical research on lesbians and gay men. Referring to sociological work of the 1960s and 1970s (e.g. Gagnon &

Simon, 1967) they claim that 'the institutions and leisure services used by lesbians and gay men, especially the gay bar, were an easy target for researchers unable to or uninterested in getting their hands dirty talking to informants' (Bell & Valentine, 1995a, p. 4). Bell & Valentine argue that these studies adopted a patronising and moralistic tone to the social and sexual relations of lesbians and gay men, and 'painted a picture of promiscuity and sexual exploitation' (p. 5) when describing gay bars and their clientele. So previous research on lesbian and gay commercial leisure *has* been conducted, but not in a way that explores the significance of these leisure spaces *for* lesbians and gay men, or that reflects on heterosexual perceptions of these marginal and peripheral spaces. More recent US work on sexualities has taken a much more positive stance towards lesbian and gay issues, exploring the creation of lesbian and gay neighbourhoods in major cities (e.g. Castells, 1983; Rothenberg, 1995). This research shows that in some situations lesbians and gay men can overturn the heterosexual dominance of space and create permanent, visible communities. However, there are no obvious residential areas dominated by lesbians or gay men in Britain, and British lesbians and gay men tend to rely on a sense of 'imagined community', whereby the feeling of common belonging is a discursive reality, not a geographical one (Anderson, 1991; Bell, 1991). In British cities, lesbian and gay bars, small commercial businesses (e.g. clothes shops) and community organisations may be the only visible focus for lesbian and gay communities. Lesbian and gay bars and clubs (otherwise known as 'the Scene') are important meeting places for many British lesbians and gay men, who otherwise may feel geographically isolated. Plummer's (1989) review of research on British lesbian and gay youth supports the idea that commercial lesbian and gay leisure venues are significant for meeting other lesbians and gay men and for the expression of minority sexual identities. A study by

Trenchard & Warren (1984) showed that the majority of the young lesbian and gay Londoners they interviewed regularly went to the lesbian and gay 'Scene' of commercial bars and clubs. Respondents' first contacts with other lesbians and gay men were often the result of going to a lesbian or gay venue. The Scene was generally viewed positively by Trenchard & Warren's sample (in terms of relaxation and being with other lesbians and gay men), although nearly half of all 'Scene-goers' thought that going to the venues was too expensive.

More recent work by Binnie (1995), looking at the growth of London's 'queer' Soho during the 1990s and the marketing of Amsterdam as a gay tourist destination, emphasises the dependence of the lesbian and gay movement on the market and consumerism. The proliferation of smart, light, spacious bars and cafés in and around Soho is undoubtedly a sign of queer confidence in being seen in public, and demands for a greater choice of 'safe spaces' in which to go out. A similar explosion of visible and stylish gay commercial venues has occurred in Manchester (Whittle, 1994), although the growth of the Scene in other cities may be more limited. In general, having more gay pubs and clubs is positive in that it increases the choice of meeting places for lesbians and gay men, and provides more places to escape from a 'heteronormative' world. However, this commercial success comes at a price; the success of venues depends on profit-making and can exclude many[5]. As Binnie puts it:

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[5] Unfortunately, the increased visibility of lesbians and gay men can also make them easier targets for homophobic abuse and 'queerbashing' (Myslik, 1996; Namaste, 1996).

> As a consumer and participant in the scene, I am easily seduced by the (limited) sexual freedom gay pubs and clubs may facilitate; but I am also acutely aware of the level of economic inequality that pervades the gay commercial scene (as in any area of business). Whilst it is important to struggle for, and celebrate, the ever greater choices of safe spaces – venues where gay men can be ourselves, become ourselves – one must remain ever sanguine and cynical about the role played by pink businesses in gay life (p. 187).

Research conducted by Damien Ridge and his colleagues in Melbourne, Australia emphasises that the commercialised leisure spaces of the Scene tend to valorise a gay, white, male, middle-class standard and exclude those who do not meet this ideal (Ridge, Hee, & Minichiello, 1999; Ridge, Minichiello, & Plummer, 1997). Bell & Valentine (1995a) point out that lesbians, like heterosexual women, tend to have less economic power than their gay male counterparts, and this may be reflected in their greater spatial invisibility on the Scene and in terms of home ownership. Valentine's (1995) work on a town in the UK shows that lesbian social networks are not so focused on commercial leisure sites, and tend to be invisible to outsiders. These investigations of lesbian and gay leisure spaces suggest that the Scene is an important material and symbolic space for the expression of lesbian and gay identities, but that dominant power relations of gender, race and class can remain intact within its 'safe spaces'. Knopp (1995) says that we should expect these 'significant axes of difference' to reappear in studies of the spatial aspects of sexuality. Gender, race and class are bound to generate tensions and exclusions in queer leisure spaces, just as they would in the majority of pubs and clubs regarded as heterosexual. Knopp also argues that there is a neglect of work on the 'heterosexualising' of space, and heterosexual experiences of (homo)sexualised spaces. There is virtually no research on heterosexual experiences of British lesbian and gay leisure spaces, or a

consideration of the issues of power that are brought to bear when heterosexuals visit the Scene (or when lesbians and gay men spend time in the majority of pubs and clubs which are heterosexually coded). Discussing Manchester's popular 'gay village', Whittle (1994) has argued that the increased visibility and relaxed hedonism of the Scene make it attractive to heterosexual 'tourists', whose presence is likely to undermine the safety and security of Scene venues for lesbians and gay men.

One solitary study has examined some of the issues generated by heterosexuals, lesbians and gay men using the commercial leisure spaces of the Scene. Skeggs (1999) interviewed heterosexual and lesbian women who use Manchester's 'gay village' of bars and clubs for leisure, asking them about its place in their lives. She found that 'gay space' could be seen as a positive place to escape to and have fun for heterosexual women, space where they could avoid the surveillance of heterosexual men, and where their appearance and cultural resources were validated by 'safe' gay men. For lesbians, the predominantly male-dominated venues of the 'village' were difficult venues to maintain lesbian visibility, but were important as places to go out. The presence of 'glamorous' straight women (seen as representing normative femininity) was linked to lesbians feeling very uncomfortable in these venues and undermined the lesbians' already precarious sense of entitlement to be in 'gay space'. Skeggs' study considers how power relations of gender and sexuality make the same leisure spaces symbolically important for both lesbians and heterosexual women, but how the meanings of this leisure use differ, and how the visible presence of one set of women can potentially exclude the other. This attention to the construction of leisure meanings in the context of particular commercial locations, and how the experience of sexualised space (in this case, the 'gay village') can be represented quite differently

by those with different sexual identities, is an inspiration for much of my research. However, Skeggs did not include male perspectives in her research, and it was an aim of my work to contrast male and female, as well as homo and hetero, constructions of leisure, identity and space, within the context of Birmingham, England's 'second city'. Birmingham has a population over twice the size of Manchester[6], but has a smaller lesbian and gay Scene of bars and clubs (16 venues compared with Manchester's 25)[7]. However, as in Manchester, Birmingham's Scene is clustered on one side of the city centre (in the Hurst Street area of town), with most venues in close proximity to one another. Like other big cities, Birmingham is culturally mixed and has a large student population. Although Birmingham has a somewhat poor reputation within Britain (as 'backward', un-stylish, or working-class), the city is diverse and lively, and was a productive urban environment in which to conduct my research.

## 1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of my research was to investigate heterosexual, lesbian and gay constructions of leisure time and space, and to investigate the connections between different sexual identities and different representations of leisure spaces in Birmingham. In focusing on the popular activity of 'going out' to pubs and bars, I assumed that commercial leisure venues such as bars and clubs are sites where there is a tension between the regulation and expression of identities, and that analysis would be able to identify

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[6] The Registrar General's mid-year estimate for Birmingham's total population in 1998 was 1,013,400. The same estimate for Manchester in 1999 was 431,052. Both cities are culturally diverse, with ethnic minorities comprising around 15-20% of their total populations (Birmingham City Council, 2000; Manchester City Council, 2000).

[7] Source: *Boyz* Guide, *Boyz*, no. 497, 10/2/01. *Boyz* is a free national gay paper, published weekly.

these issues of power. In looking at commercial leisure, I was addressing a need to understand the significance of commercial leisure for lesbians and gay men, and to explore heterosexual perspectives on lesbian and gay leisure space. Throughout my research, it was important to 'give voice' to the marginalised discourse of lesbians and gay men, and to use this as a contrast with the discourse of heterosexual people. Rather than assuming that heterosexual discourse would be automatically oppressive, I sought to explore assumptions in both minority and mainstream discourse in order to criticise taken-for-granted or naturalised knowledge.

Overall, my research questions were:

- To explore the significance of commercial leisure for heterosexuals, lesbians and gay men, and how leisure spaces are discursively constituted by them, looking for similarities and differences within accounts, not necessarily just along lines of sexuality.

- To consider how the power differential between heterosexuals and lesbians and gay men structured the discursive construction of leisure and identity, and how heterosexual dominance was reproduced and resisted.

- To consider how different commercial leisure spaces (particularly lesbian and gay bars) are discursively constructed and invested with meaning by lesbians, gay men and heterosexuals, and how the discourses used to constitute these spaces are used to construct sexual identities.

- To consider whether sexualised leisure meanings are cross-cut by other 'axes of difference', such as gender or class, and explore their impact on discursive

constructions of leisure and identity in my analyses.

## 1.5 Overview of chapters

Readers may find the format of this thesis somewhat unusual given that the four analytical chapters (Chapters 3-6) were written as journal articles and have been submitted to periodicals for peer review (and hopefully publication). These papers are written in the first person plural ('we') because they were co-authored with my supervisor, Dr Chris Griffin, although I was the primary author for all these chapters[8]. Each analytical chapter stands on its own, with its own introductory literature review, analysis and conclusions. These analyses are derived from my two interview studies (Chapters 3 and 4 derive from Study 1, Chapters 5 and 6 from Study 2) and represent the strongest and most interesting findings from each, inspired by the research questions above. I consider the implications and cross-cutting issues from these analyses in the General Discussion (Chapter 7).

*Chapter 2 – Method.* Outlines my critical social psychological position in more detail and considers the choice of discourse analysis as an approach and method of analysis. Describes the design of my interview studies and includes a self-reflexive analysis.

*Chapter 3 – Discourse of authenticity.* The main finding from Study 1 was the use of a discourse of authenticity (literally, 'being true to the self') to organise and construct lesbian, gay and heterosexual accounts of leisure, particularly the use of the lesbian

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[8] As is common practice for PhD supervisors, Chris commented on and made suggestions about research I was preparing for publication, and her acknowledgement as second author reflects this pattern of work.

and gay Scene of bars and clubs. The historical background, use and implications of this discourse are explored here.

*Chapter 4 – Constructing gazes.* Participants from Study 1 used gendered and sexualised constructions of 'the gaze' (Mulvey, 1975) to construct meanings about leisure spaces. The construction of a 'heterosexual gaze' by lesbians and gay men is considered alongside discursive representations of the 'male gaze' by lesbian and heterosexual women.

*Chapter 5 – Students* vs *locals.* A surprisingly strong finding that emerged from Study 2 was the reproduction of class difference in participants' accounts of leisure venues, particularly traditional pubs. In this paper the construction of the working class as 'Other' is explored and the neglect of class in psychological research is discussed.

*Chapter 6 – Making a Scene.* In this paper the idea of the lesbian and gay Scene as a liminal space (a place of transformation, resistance and escape) is considered with reference to lesbian, gay and heterosexual accounts of lesbian and gay venues.

*Chapter 7 – General Discussion.* Overarching themes that link the analyses, and their theoretical implications and significance are discussed here. The strengths and limitations of the studies and future implications for research are also discussed.

# 2. METHOD

The principal method of data collection used throughout this thesis was semi-structured interviewing, involving both individuals and groups. The primary method of analysis used was discourse analysis, from a social constructionist and critical social psychological perspective. In this chapter I outline the basic tenets of mainstream and critical social psychological approaches as I see them, describe my choice of methods and analysis, and specify the design of my interview studies. Finally, in a self-critical analysis, I reflect on the research process and some of the advantages and disadvantages of doing sexuality-related research as an 'out' gay researcher.

## 2.1 MAINSTREAM AND CRITICAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGIES

In outlining the tenets of critical social psychology, it is perhaps useful to discuss them in the context of the basic assumptions of mainstream social psychology as I see them. In attempting to outline basic tenets of the mainstream and critical approaches within social psychology, I of course suppress much of the diversity and range of positions within both approaches. However, the simplified opposition I present here should be of use in understanding my own identification as a critical social psychologist.

The dominant perspectives in contemporary social psychology are located within the positivist paradigm, and tend to use quantitative methods and statistical analyses to investigate social psychological phenomena, such as social behaviour, attitudes, prejudice and identities (Farr, 1996). The positivist paradigm, a strong form of

empiricism derived from the natural sciences, has a realist ontology in that it assumes that there is a reality 'out there' governed by immutable laws. This reality and its laws can be discovered and described in terms of cause-and-effect relationships. In terms of epistemology (the extent to which reality can be known), the positivist approach assumes that reality can be investigated and observed directly by the researcher in an objective or bias-free manner (an 'objectivist' epistemology). Experimental work, observation, and hypothesis testing are the classic investigative methods of positivist social psychology. As Farr points out, the positivist approach in social psychology has only really achieved dominance since the Second World War and has been marked by the 'Americanization' and individualization of the discipline. Individualization in this sense means that individuals, their psychological processes, and their behaviours, have come to be seen as the fundamental *determinants* of social psychological phenomena. In this approach, any social psychological phenomenon can be understood by reducing it to the actions, thoughts, beliefs and motivations of individuals (a 'reductionist' stance). Thus in an individualized social psychology, 'the social' is seen as the *product* of 'the psychological' and 'the individual'.

Critics of the dominant approaches in social psychology have argued that an over-reliance on 'the individual' as the basic unit of analysis and determinant of social behaviour, together with an adherence to positivist philosophy, has impoverished our understanding of social psychological phenomena. It has been claimed that there have been various theoretical, methodological, conceptual and political 'crises' in social psychology since the 1970s because of the neglect of 'the social' (Parker, 1989; Spears, 1997). This has prompted many of those dissatisfied with mainstream social psychological approaches (including myself) to adopt a social constructionist stance.

Social constructionism covers a range of approaches, which adopt a range of different perspectives on the problem of realism/relativism (Burr, 1995). However, in general social constructionism either remains agnostic or assumes a relativist position with regard to reality, arguing that even if there is a separate reality 'out there', our understanding of it is always mediated by social processes and therefore is historically and culturally specific. Given our position in the world, our identities, our ideological commitments and the communities in which we live, we will construct and understand (or 'see') the world differently. This is a strong epistemological claim that reality cannot be observed directly but is always constructed by the observer. Our knowledge of the world is partial, liable to change, and will be continually renegotiated in social interaction. This subjectivist position argues that it is not possible for researchers to be 'objective' or 'bias-free', but that they should consider how they (and those they research) construct their understanding of the world. This vision of the research process as subjective and value-laden often leads the social constructionist researcher to consider the moral and political impact of the truth claims that he or she makes. In addition, the constructionist position does not see social phenomena as the products of individuals. Social phenomena and processes might either be seen as *constituting* individuals (a kind of 'top-down' determinism) or the individual at the very least would be seen to be embedded in, dependent on, and constrained by social processes (a dialectic between individual and social). In practice this means that we cannot understand the individual (and the psychological) without exploring the ways in which society constructs, positions and constrains individuals.

There has been a slow but steady emergence of critical work in social psychology since the 1970s, although it would be foolish to claim that all this work shares the

same theoretical, methodological and political commitments (as it would be equally foolish to claim that all mainstream psychological work is identical in its philosophy). However, there are common threads to the loose mini-discipline of critical social psychology (Spears, 1997). Critical social psychologists tend to subscribe to a version of constructionism, as outlined above. In rejecting the positivist paradigm and its methods, critical social psychologists often replace quantitative and experimental methods with qualitative methods, such as interviewing or media analysis, in order to capture some of the richness, complexity and messiness of social life. Qualitative methods are considered more useful in trying to understand how selves and identities are constituted in social interaction. A consideration of the socio-political ramifications of research necessitates a degree of self-reflexivity on the part of the researcher, in particular considering the effects of conducting research on the researcher and participants, and the status of knowledge claims that the researcher makes (see 2.5 and 7.3 below). Critical social psychologists, influenced by post-structuralist attacks on 'grand narratives' in academic theory, tend to be suspicious of universalising tendencies in mainstream psychology that claim there are ahistorical psychological processes that underpin the self. Instead, critical psychologists have begun to consider how the 'subject' or 'self' of mainstream psychology tends to reflect dominant and oppressive ideologies such as individualism, capitalism, imperialism, and heterosexism (Hollway, 1989; Kitzinger, 1987; Parker, 1999; Wexler, 1983).

An important feature of critical social psychology is its attempt to interrogate oppressive social practices that exclude various social groups and privilege others. Mainstream psychology has been accused of privileging Western, white, male,

heterosexual and middle-class versions of psychological knowledge, while excluding the experiences of those who do not fit this norm and positioning them as 'Other' (Sampson, 1993). This focus on and reproduction of the normal and the mainstream implicates psychology in the maintenance of the status quo, rather than challenging processes of marginalisation and exclusion. Recovering and exploring the experiences of women, black people, lesbians, gay men and the working classes in different cultures allows us to create a more inclusive social psychology that can accommodate psychological difference and diversity, and is important in challenging oppression and critiquing our ideas of 'the normal'. In my research, I have interviewed lesbians, gay men and heterosexual people in order to a) include marginalised lesbian and gay voices alongside heterosexual perspectives, b) contrast the differences and similarities produced by sexuality in accounts of leisure, c) uncover taken-for-granted assumptions about sexuality, and d) to challenge heterosexist discourse. However, in doing this, it became apparent that other differences, particularly gender and class, were also significant in organising my participants' accounts of their leisure, and I address these in the analytical chapters that follow.

Finally, a striking feature of critical social psychology is the 'turn to language'. In rejecting positivist and experimental approaches to social psychology, many researchers began to study language (both spoken and written) as a way to look at social interaction and the production and negotiation of social meanings and identities in context. This is based on the assumption that the social construction of knowledge and understanding about the world and ourselves is principally mediated by language and takes place in communication between people (Spears, 1997). In the following section, I consider the approach and technique of discourse analysis, which I have

used to analyse interview material in my research.

## 2.2 Discourse analysis

The term discourse analysis is used to refer to research from a wide range of philosophical and theoretical roots, and is often accompanied by a baffling array of terminology (see Potter & Wetherell, 1987). However as Nikander (1995, p. 4) succinctly puts it:

> The key idea in all discursive research is to highlight the ways in which language constructs, limits and guides our understanding of our worlds and ourselves, and to examine the ways in which people actively use language in their everyday meaning construction.

As Nikander (1995) goes on to say, language becomes a site for the active and dynamic negotiation of meaning and identity in everyday life, and is not a transparent window to an individual's mental state or cognitive processes. The focus of attention is thus shifted from positivist research on internal psychic structures to relational processes between people located within a particular historical period and culture. Rather than trying to get to the meaning behind the words (often based on the assumption that language is 'transparent'), discursive approaches consider how language is used and the effects particular patterns of discourse have. Language is assumed to be complicated and often opaque, and the dialogue of participants is assumed to have multiple meanings that the speaker cannot always control. Thus, in the analytical chapters that follow, I consider particular patterns of discourse (usually just referred to as 'discourses') that I identified in the interview transcripts of my participants. I address what these discourses were used for, particularly in the construction of identities, sexuality, and leisure spaces, and how participants

positioned themselves within and were positioned by these discourses. In addition, most discursive approaches assume that when people are 'discourse users' they are not consistent or reliable in their utterances; contradiction and inconsistency is the norm in everyday speech and language. This is convincingly demonstrated in Potter & Wetherell's (1987) critique of attitudinal research in social psychology.

To be more specific about the particular 'flavour' of discourse analysis that I employed, I should mention the common, if somewhat arbitrary, distinction that is often made between 'macro' and 'micro' level discourse analysis. Macro-level discourse analysis tends to focus on large amounts of text, and attempts to situate it in a wider cultural context. Macro-level discourse analysts identify patterns in discourse, perhaps considering their historical roots and origins, and work out ways in which these discourses position individuals. Macro-level discourse analysis is known for its interrogation or deconstruction of discourses that support dominant power relations and ideologies, the exploration of minority and resistant discourse, and the political ramifications of particular discursive configurations. This approach is the one most commonly associated with critical psychology. It tends to draw on Foucault's (1972, 1978, 1980) conception of discourse and is exemplified by the work of Burman & Parker (1993a). Discourses are seen as "practices which form the objects of which they speak" (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). Discourse becomes the medium in which meaning is produced and in which subjectivity (a person's sense of self or identity in a given context) is enabled or limited.

The Foucaultian concern with power is often revealed in macro-level discourse analysis with a consideration of how discourses are deployed and supported by institutions and disciplines such as medicine, law and psychology. Examining

dominant or repressive discourse can open the possibility of *resistance*:

> Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it, any more than silences are. We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it (Foucault, 1978, p.100-101).

The workings of power can also be examined at an interpersonal level by considering how discourses facilitate and constrain who can say what, where and when. In contrast, micro-level discourse analysis concentrates upon conversational strategies and the minutiae of interactions, tending to analyse small chunks of text in great detail, and employing a narrower definition of discourse that usually just refers to written and spoken text. Micro-level discourse analysts are often referred to as conversation analysts or discursive psychologists and are exemplified by Antaki (e.g. 1996), Schegloff (e.g. 1997) and Edwards & Potter (e.g. 1992).

In this thesis I use macro-level discourse analysis to identify discourses, look at their uses, how participants are positioned within them, and situate these discourses within a wider cultural and political context. In using macro-level discourse analysis, I make use of the definitions of discourse I outlined above, and adopt a relativist position to my participants' dialogue and the truth claims I have produced in my analyses, although this relativism is limited by an awareness of material constraints on discourse and the body (Ussher, 1997a). I am more comfortable with this type of analysis as it allows a consideration of power and ideology, which micro-level discourse analysis is sometimes accused of avoiding (Nikander, 1995). Macro-level

discourse analysis also allowed me to consider how discourses about sexuality, leisure and space facilitated and constrained the construction of (sexual) identity by my participants. Throughout this thesis I have rejected essentialist ideas about (sexual) identity and have assumed that identities are socially and discursively constituted and reproduced (see Introduction).

The steps I took in preparing and gathering material for, then conducting a discourse analysis are based on the stages outlined by Potter & Wetherell (1987). These are detailed below:

*Stage one: formulating research questions* – outlined in Introduction

*Stage two: sample selection* – in order to gain a range of opinions about sexuality, leisure and identity, I deliberately recruited a range of lesbians, gay men and heterosexual men and women in both Studies outlined below (see sections 2.3 and 2.4). However, to limit other aspects of my analysis, I mainly recruited white and middle-class participants (although I did make class a central feature of my analysis of Study 2; see Chapter 5). The aim was to generate sufficient material to conduct an interesting and productive analysis, not to recruit a statistically representative sample of young adults or to simply add people to the number of participants in order to justify the research in terms of quantity. Recruiting stopped when there was sufficient material for analysis and including extra participants would add only to the labour of interviewing and transcription without contributing anything further to the analysis. Participants were recruited by posters, word of mouth, introductions made by friends, colleagues and participants, and by approaching lesbian and gay youth and student groups directly. Details about participants are given in the sections on Study 1 and

Study 2 below. All participants were told that the purpose of the research was to investigate leisure, identity, sexuality and space and were told that they had the right to withdraw from the research at any time.

*Stage three: interviews* – I conducted interviewing in two phases (Studies 1 and 2 outlined below). I chose to interview participants because this a) enabled me to deliberately question my participants on the same topics (which allowed greater comparability in responses, and simplified initial coding), b) produced material of everyday speech and discussion, and c) because the interview situation allows room for active intervention by the researcher i.e. following up leads and interesting topics that arise during the interview, probing participants for extra information, clarifying points with participants, and responding to participants' enquiries. I used semi-structured interviewing in both studies, whereby I had a schedule of topics and questions I wanted to ask participants that was prepared in advance. However, during interviews I adopted a conversational style with participants to put them at ease and encourage discussion, and I asked my prepared questions in whichever order seemed most appropriate at the time, exploring relevant areas in more depth as they arose. A mixture of individual and group interviews was used in Study 1, and group interviews only in Study 2. The rationale for this is explained below. All interviews were tape recorded after gaining consent from and ensuring the confidentiality of participants (see Research Contract in Appendix A). Participants were paid expenses (five pounds) for participating in interviews, and were encouraged to ask questions about the research and the interview if they so desired.

*Stage four: transcription* – to conduct a detailed discourse analysis it is necessary to preserve as much of the detail, ambiguity and messiness of everyday speech as is

possible, therefore I created verbatim transcripts of my interviews using a transcription machine and a word processor. Because I did not intend to carry out detailed micro-level analyses of speech utterances, I did not use the symbols and notation of conversation analysis to denote the tone of dialogue, glottal stops, the simultaneous speech of multiple participants and so on. Throughout my transcripts I used three full stops (...) to denote a pause in a participant's speech or to indicate they were interrupted or talked over by others. I also used comments in square brackets to give extra information about interviewees' dialogue e.g. [coughs], [laughs].

*Stage five: coding* – in order to make manageable the hundreds of thousands of words of transcripts produced, for each Study I initially organised the transcripts into chunks or sections of text that I gave general codes related to my research questions. Typical codes were 'sexuality', 'going out', 'lesbian and gay Scene' and so on (an outline of the coding schedule for Study 1 is given in Appendix B). The unencoded remainder of the transcripts was then examined to identify any patterns of discourse that were repeated, and these sections were given a code. In addition, any areas that seemed anachronistic or contradictory, but which related to my research questions, were also identified and coded. This initial coding system provided the basis for a more in-depth theoretical analysis and elaboration of discursive patterns, and the coding was revised and refined based on the subsequent analysis. Thus, there was some degree of cycling between coding and analysis. To aid the coding process in Study 1 I made use of Atlas/TI, a PC-based text analysis program. In Study 2, because of the greater quantity of transcript material, I found it easier to print transcripts out and code them by hand, sometimes cutting transcripts up and arranging similarly coded quotes together.

*Stage six: analysis* – as Potter & Wetherell (1987) point out, "there is no mechanical procedure for producing findings from the archive of a transcript" (p. 168). They go on to say that it is difficult to "convey the analytic process in abstract" (p. 168), but it is generally agreed that the first stage is reading and re-reading transcripts to become familiar with them. After becoming familiar with the interviews, I looked at similarly coded sections, trying to decide which parts were significant and why, and then tried to elaborate the consistencies and inconsistencies within discursive patterns, and across transcripts. Systematic patterns that appeared significant in the participants' dialogue, both from the point of view of my own research questions and to the participants themselves, were tentatively labelled as discourses and then subjected to further study. A particular feature of identifying a discourse was looking for variability and consistency *within* a discursive pattern. An obvious contrast I used was considering whether the accounts of lesbians and gay men were different from those of heterosexual men and women. However, I also considered the degree of similarity within lesbian, gay and heterosexual accounts. Other differences, such as gender, would often disrupt the consistency of discourses, or reveal a different perspective, and I have tried to elaborate these differences within my analyses.

*Stage seven: validation* – developing the analyses into the four analytical chapters that follow required constant reflection on why I thought particular discourses were significant, why they might be occurring, and how they fitted in with the research questions I had set myself. Conducting literature searches to find evidence that would support or contradict my findings helped refine the analyses and locate them within existing research. To 'test' the validity of my findings, I questioned a) the *coherence* of my analyses i.e. how well do they appear to explain the patterns of dialogue I am

examining? Are there features of the dialogue that appear to be relevant which I cannot explain? b) the *significance* of the discourses I was elaborating in my participants' dialogue i.e. whether the discourses appeared to be important in or central to participants' discussions, and c) the *fruitfulness* of the analytic scheme I was developing i.e. were the analyses opening up new perspectives on existing problems, identifying new areas, or filling in gaps in the literature? Once satisfied that these criteria had been met, I knew I had established a sound basis for the analyses that follow.

## 2.3 STUDY 1

The first two analytical chapters that follow (Chapters 3 and 4) are based on the first stage of interviewing that I conducted between February and August 1998. The initial motivation for these interviews was to gather young people's accounts of their leisure time, asking them about the significance of 'going out', the types of places they went to and why, and the people they went out with. The interviews were initially piloted on a few people to check that the interview schedule was tapping into the desired kind of material, and that participants were happy with the content of the questions. The interview schedule for Study 1 is shown in Appendix C. Interviews, on average, lasted about an hour. I recruited 19 people, aged 17-27 years (mean 21.4 yrs) for this Study. The overwhelming majority of this sample was white and British born and lived in Birmingham, England. Most participants were middle-class. Six of the participants were male and thirteen female. All the men defined themselves as gay. Five of the women defined themselves as lesbian, two as bisexual, and six as heterosexual or straight. A number of the lesbian and gay participants were recruited through a Birmingham youth group, which generated some concerns for me about the

appropriateness of conducting one-to-one interviews with younger people who were potentially still 'coming out' and possibly vulnerable. For this reason I conducted group interviews with these younger lesbians and gay men. This did not seem to affect the quality of material generated in interviews, and in fact seemed to be a better way for me as a researcher to avoid intefering with a discussion, and to 'sit back' and let friends or acquaintances debate particular topics. Group interviews therefore potentially capture a more naturalistic form of dialogue than when an interviewer questions a single interviewee. For these reasons I decided to use only group interviews in Study 2.

## 2.4 STUDY 2

Most of the interviews in Study 1 were conducted at university, in participants' homes or at youth groups. However, a few interviews were conducted in places where people would normally 'go out' i.e. bars and pubs, usually because I was meeting an interviewee near their place of work. These interviews gave me the opportunity to ask interviewees what they thought about the venue in which we were, and this seemed to be a useful way to get people to reflect on leisure venues in general. I decided to integrate this into the design of Study 2, in which I wanted to explore people's experiences of different types of venues in more detail. However, I was concerned that conducting interviews in bars and pubs could result in poor quality recordings. Therefore, I decided on an unusual design that would expose groups of people to contrasting bars and pubs and allowed for an interview in calmer surroundings at a later time. I decided to take groups of participants (usually in groups of 3-5 people) out to three bars or pubs of my choice, usually on a Friday night, then interview them as a group the next day to generate a group account of the 'night out', and to explore

the way in which participants constructed leisure spaces, particularly unfamiliar venues. Sets of venues were chosen that were geographically close to one another (for convenience) and that would provide a contrast in terms of style, atmosphere, décor, clientele, and size. To maintain the contrast of sexuality in this phase of the research, I often, but not always, used a combination of lesbian and gay, 'mixed' and 'straight' venues as a contrast within the 'night out'. A typical 'night out' could therefore start with a modern café/bar, move on to a traditional public house (both regarded as heterosexual venues), and then end with a lesbian and gay bar. Participants were told to treat the visits to venues as part of a 'normal night out', were encouraged to relax and enjoy themselves, but were asked to pay attention to the venues and the people in them in order that they could give their opinions of the venues the next day. There were some ethical concerns in taking participants to lesbian and gay venues, and I discuss these below.

Most interviews for this Study were conducted in participants' homes. The interview schedule for this study is shown in Appendix D. Twelve group interviews were carried out between March 1999 and March 2000 with 42 people in total (20 male, 22 female, age range 18-34 yrs, mean age 25.2 yrs). The majority of these participants identified as heterosexual (N=31), seven identified as gay, three as lesbian and one as bisexual. The overwhelming majority of these participants were white and middle-class. The deliberate focus on middle-class respondents also allowed me to consider how those who are relatively privileged in terms of social position and opportunity construct leisure meanings, and this is addressed in detail in Chapter 5. Because participants were being taken out to venues that sold alcohol, I only recruited participants aged 18 or over.

## 2.5 Reflexivity: reflecting on the research process

As outlined earlier, a key feature of critical social psychological work is the inclusion of reflexivity within the research process, reflecting on the impact of research on you, the researcher, your participants, and the wider social and political climate. In conducting research as an 'out' gay man on issues related to sexuality, I have encountered a number of incidents that have made me consider how my research is perceived, the problem of maintaining boundaries between my personal life and my research, and the politics of taking participants to unfamiliar places (such as the lesbian and gay Scene).

### *2.5.1 Doing 'gay research'*

An occasional problem I encountered from the beginning of my research was the assumption, made by others, that my research was predominantly 'gay research' in its subject matter, perspective and relevance. This often seemed to be the sole outcome of being open about my sexual identity as a gay man, rather than a result of asking questions about lesbian and gay bars and clubs in Study 1, or the chance that participants might be taken to lesbian and gay venues in Study 2. It seemed to be an assumption of some (usually heterosexual) participants, and sometimes colleagues and friends, that the sole motivation for my research was to explore aspects of 'being gay' because I was gay as well. The fact that the majority of my participants in both studies identified as heterosexual, and that I didn't always use sexuality as a contrast in the choice of venues of Study 2, did not seem to be sufficient for some people to perceive the wider relevance of my research. Occasionally when conducting interviews I had the feeling that participants had a very different idea of the

motivations behind my research, and were pitching their responses to me as a 'gay researcher'. This was most obvious when heterosexual participants would spontaneously introduce lesbian and gay issues into an interview, even when they seemed to have little relevance to the ongoing conversation or to their own experiences. Although I didn't usually mind being positioned as a 'gay researcher', and had consciously decided to be open about my sexuality to participants, occasionally I felt it necessary to reiterate the wider applicability of my research i.e. the interrogation of heterosexual assumptions about identity, space and leisure, albeit from a lesbian and gay psychological perspective. While it is true that most lesbian and gay psychological research is conducted by lesbian and gay identified researchers, this does not always have to be case (although it can have its advantages, see England, 1994). Similarly, lesbian and gay psychology does not always have to concern itself solely with the lives of lesbians and gay men, or even just sexuality; as in feminist and other critical research it is important to use insights from these 'minority' or outsider perspectives to examine assumptions in mainstream psychology and everyday life, and to consider other forms of difference if they become important. The significance of social class in the construction of leisure space, a feature that emerged during the research, is a case in point (see Chapter 5). Overall, my experience of being positioned as a 'gay researcher' doing 'gay research' highlights the difficulty in getting people to accept the wider relevance of lesbian and gay psychology, and the radical idea that the (heterosexual) mainstream could be questioned from a 'minority' perspective (see for example, Wilkinson & Kitzinger, 1993a).

### *2.5.2 Boundaries between researcher and the researched*

One of the difficulties I experienced in conducting research that considered questions

of sexuality and leisure was maintaining boundaries between my role as a researcher and my personal life. Given that I was committed to treating leisure time and space as subjects for critical enquiry, I often felt that I could not disengage from my research when I was 'out and about' in bars and clubs during my own free time. While this could be positive in prompting me to think critically about my own leisure, I did not foresee that occasionally I would feel extremely cynical and detached from the 'innocent' pleasures offered by bars, pubs and clubs. It was as though while engaged in the subject of my research, I was simultaneously *distanced* from what I was studying, or adopting an observer's role. At times it felt as though my research was 'taking over' aspects of my personal life, particularly when I was taking groups of participants out to venues on a regular basis. 'Going out' seemed more like a chore than a pleasure. Also, as an 'out' gay man, used to frequenting lesbian and gay bars and clubs, I found it especially difficult to 'go out' on the lesbian and gay Scene after deconstructing aspects of the Scene in my analyses, and after interviewing groups of lesbians and gay men. I had to think about my own position as both a researcher and consumer of the Scene, and how I 'fitted in' to that context. This combination of identifying as a gay man and having intimate knowledge of lesbian and gay spaces meant that I felt like an 'insider' on the Scene, which in general was a strength in my research. However, the position of 'researcher' in many ways made me an 'outsider' within the familiar context of the Scene. This tension was a constant reminder of the difficulty in researching that which is 'close' to you symbolically, and made me keenly aware of the responsibility I had in constructing 'truths' about lesbian and gay issues (see Kanuha, 2000).

There were also occasions when the reinforcement or blurring of boundaries between

me and my research threatened to be more physical than theoretical or psychological, revealing the complex interplay of power relations between researcher and researched. On one occasion, a teenage gay man who I had interviewed some months before tried to 'chat me up' in a lesbian and gay club. Although flattering, this attention was unwelcome. At the time I was in a long-term relationship, and I was also somewhat uncomfortable with the idea of thinking about participants as potential sexual partners, particularly younger men who were relatively inexperienced compared to me. This incident highlighted for me the often unequal power relations between researcher and researched. In this particular situation I felt both powerful (in being able to accept or reject this young man's offer) and vulnerable (at being propositioned by a participant). The strategy I normally adopted with participants was one of *supplication*; I made it clear that I was dependent on them for information, and sought to establish interactions based on mutual respect (England, 1994). As England points out, adopting a supplicant position often removes concerns about the exploitation of participants and transfers power to the researched. However, this can expose the researcher as vulnerable in certain situations. For example, a memorable incident occurred after taking a group of gay men on a 'night out' and ending up in a lesbian and gay club in Birmingham. One participant made it quite clear that he found me sexually attractive and started to flirt with me. The situation, which I had not anticipated or encouraged, was not helped by the fact that one of the other group members was this participant's current boyfriend. This created a fair degree of discomfort and awkwardness for me, and I was torn between my personal and professional roles. Given that I was in a relationship, if I had not been on a research 'night out', I would have happily told this man to 'get lost' or something similar. However, I felt compromised in this position because of my desire as a researcher to

interview this group of participants the next day. Not wishing to antagonise the participant and potentially prompt his withdrawal from the study, I was left trying to deflect his attentions from me while not saying what I really thought about his behaviour. These incidents made me much warier about the personal and sexual politics of my research, and I was subsequently more attentive to the ebb and flow of sexual interest while in the company of participants.

### *2.5.3 The politics of 'gatekeeping'*

The unusual nature of my research design, particularly Study 2, prompted a degree of self-reflection about my responsibility for participants' wellbeing on 'nights out', the effect on others of taking participant groups to different venues, and whether I was legitimising participants' access to venues to which they would not normally go. I was always concerned not to take groups of participants to venues that would make them feel very uncomfortable, and made a point before going out of asking participants about any concerns they had. Generally participants seemed happy to be taken to any venues, as long as they were given some prior notice. I was also aware that I was responsible for the effect participants might have on other patrons, and I was mindful of others' reactions to interview groups as we visited different venues. In general, the majority of participants seemed happy with the experience of 'going out' for research purposes, and often was pleased to be taken to unfamiliar venues. There were no incidents of adverse reactions from other patrons in any of the venues we visited, and the biggest hazard to research participants seemed to be the risk of consuming too much alcohol (something I generally discouraged due to the difficulty of conducting an interview with hungover interviewees). Apart from participants having *too much* of a good time, the only other incidents that seemed to provoke a negative reaction were

as a result of going to traditional public houses. I took a number of interview groups to traditional British pubs (the kinds of places with 'old' décor, draught beers, and public and lounge bars), and some interviewees seemed to find the experience of walking into these places somewhat challenging. This seemed largely due to the perception of predominantly middle-class participants that they were entering working-class leisure space. This perception of class difference and the construction of certain leisure spaces as classed are discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

However, a more frequent concern in conducting Study 2 was prompted by taking heterosexual participants to lesbian and gay venues. In this particular study heterosexual participants did not have to negotiate their access to lesbian and gay venues because as a 'gay researcher' I invited them to accompany me. This legitimised the participants' access to the Scene, indeed, one participant labelled me a "gatekeeper", positioning me as controlling and monitoring access to lesbian and gay space. This highlighted some political concerns about approving heterosexual access to the Scene and potentially threatening the idea of the Scene as a 'safe space' for lesbians and gay men (Whittle, 1994). However, given the paucity of research in this area, I feel my study was justified in trying to explore heterosexual representations of the Scene. If, as Whittle argues, the Scene is becoming a more popular destination for heterosexual revellers, it is important to understand how the Scene is 'seen' by these visitors, and this is something I explore throughout the thesis.

# 3. THE DISCOURSE OF AUTHENTICITY IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S TALK ABOUT THE LESBIAN AND GAY 'SCENE'[9]

## 3.1 ABSTRACT

Authenticity or 'being true to the self' has become a key cultural discourse in the arenas of sexuality, identity, leisure time and consumption. In this paper we discuss how young people employ a discourse of authenticity when talking about the lesbian and gay Scene of bars and clubs. The discourse of authenticity we describe reflects different strands of contemporary culture, principally the belief in authentic, essential sexual identities, and the increasing marketing of authenticity through consumption, leisure and lifestyle. The contradictions inherent in contemporary notions of authenticity are examined through interview extracts, and the utility of the discourse of authenticity is discussed.

> This above all: to thine own self be true (Shakespeare, Hamlet, I, iii, 75)

## 3.2 THE PROBLEM OF AUTHENTICITY

Authenticity is a concept that has particular relevance in contemporary culture, given the social changes that mark the transition from the modern to the postmodern, and the alleged resultant 'loss' of authenticity in the cultural domain (Erickson, 1995). One of the dominant understandings of authenticity is the idea of 'being true to the self', of being a 'real' or 'true' person, an idea that has its roots in the Romantic

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[9] This is a revised version of a paper submitted to the journal *Sexualities*.

period (Taylor, 1991; Trilling, 1972). Authenticity in this sense explicitly refers to an individual's *relationship to their own self,* as an *end in itself* for that individual, as opposed to say, sincerity, which implies representing the self 'truly' or 'honestly' *to others* (Erickson, 1995). Given the dominance of the discourse of individualism in the West, it is perhaps not surprising that there is now a *responsibility* or *imperative* for being authentic that rests upon the individual. This implies that a person's sense of self or identity may be at risk if they do not find or create the kind of authenticity that is culturally valued. And therein lies the 'problem' of authenticity; authenticity is no longer seen as an automatic or 'natural' experience in a world where selves are multiple, fragmented, and 'saturated' by postmodern culture; identities are 'projects' to be undertaken reflexively and are often contradictory; and where authenticity is itself commodified and used to sell products, places, and lifestyles (Baudrillard, 1998; Gergen, 1991; Giddens, 1991; Harvey, 1993; Slater, 1997; Weeks, 1995). Indeed, the cultural discourse of authenticity while being concerned with the individual's relationship to the self, is also implicated in diverse areas such as art, leisure, politics, sexuality, tourism, consumption, space and lifestyle (e.g. Jameson, 1988; Markowe, 1996; Munt, 1994; Taylor, 1991). The problem of and search for authenticity are now seen as issues to be resolved by individuals and throughout culture, debated and fought over in discourse, and enacted in individual lives, through consumption, and in social and political movements. The discursive configuration around authenticity will necessarily be complex, and at times contradictory. We would expect this to be reflected in people's talk, as they draw on different cultural ideas about authenticity and attempt to position themselves as authentic.

The lesbian and gay commercial 'Scene', predominantly of bars and clubs, is often the

prime focus for the leisure activities and consumption of lesbians and gay men. The Scene is also a set of places that is politicised and invested in by lesbian and gay communities, as a kind of 'home' in a predominantly heterosexual world, and as somewhere to display and negotiate dissident sexual identities. Perhaps because of this combination of consumption and leisure, politics and identity, the Scene can also be seen as a focus for debates about authenticity. Ideas, representations and experiences of authentic sexuality, identity, lifestyle, leisure time and consumption meet and clash on the Scene. In the following discussion, we investigate some of the various strands of authenticity that converge on the Scene, and analyse the talk of young people to explore how they engage with the discourse of authenticity when describing their leisure time and sexuality.

## 3.3 LESBIANS AND GAY MEN AND THE SEARCH FOR AUTHENTICITY

It is perhaps no surprise that authenticity has been of particular significance for lesbians and gay men. The early stages of the lesbian and gay rights movement, from the late 1960s onwards, were instrumental in encouraging people to 'be true to themselves' and 'come out' as lesbian or gay. At the same time, the identities 'lesbian' and 'gay' were being 'worked out' and constructed in political and academic debate and through the lived experience of the diverse members of this 'new' minority. What it meant to 'really' be lesbian or gay was up for grabs (and in many ways, still is). This search for authenticity in the lesbian and gay movement was echoed in academic work on lesbian and gay identities at the time, which represented sexual identities as things that could be masked, but which fundamentally were inborn or essential and were immutable (Escoffier, 1992). Although there have been many challenges to this idea of a fixed and unitary (sexual) identity (e.g. Bell & Valentine,

1995b; Butler, 1990; Foucault, 1978; Sampson, 1989; Weeks, 1985), the belief in an essentialised sexuality is still dominant and popular amongst lesbians and gay men and in Western culture in general (Plummer, 1995; Sinfield, 1998; Whisman, 1996).

With the persistence of homophobia and the argument for consistent political pressure to achieve rights, there is a continuing movement to encourage people to 'come out of the closet' and recognise their 'true' selves as lesbian or gay (see Signorile, 1993). Yet with the advent of a contestatory queer politics and the recognition of 'difference' as an issue that is poorly encompassed by old-style identity politics, the definition of authentic lesbian or gay identities is now more problematic (Seidman, Meeks, & Traschen, 1999). What does is mean to be an authentic lesbian or gay man today? And who decides what is authentic? It is now possible to criticise the notion of 'normal' or 'unified' lesbian and gay identities as too rigid, exclusionary, and reflecting liberal humanist ideology (Kitzinger, 1989; O'Mara, 1997), and to advocate a more ambiguous and questioning approach to sexual identity that embraces other forms of sexual difference such as bisexuality or transgenderism (Ault, 1996; Fuss, 1991; Queen & Schimel, 1997; Seidman, 1996; Simon, 1996). Therefore, for some lesbians and gay men, a 'traditional' lesbian or gay identity may be viewed as historically and politically authentic, but also as overly-limiting and restrictive. Conversely, a queer and ambivalent sexual definition may offer greater possibilities for self-actualisation and authenticity, but may be politically awkward (Edwards, 1998; Hennessy, 1994; Walters, 1996). The difficulty for contemporary lesbians and gay men is not in accepting or rejecting one type of sexual identity that confers or excludes authenticity, but to negotiate a path through the dense web of discourse encompassing sexuality and authenticity in a way that can include diverse sexualities and identities. The

discourse of authenticity may have its roots in modernist ideas of selfhood, but it is likely to have mutated and accommodated more postmodern conceptions of personhood. As Erickson (1995) says, 'being authentic in today's world does *not* necessarily mean that one is remaining true to some sort of unified or noncontradictory self' (p. 135, original emphasis).

## 3.4 YOUNG PEOPLE, IDENTITY AND AUTHENTICITY

Youth is commonly represented as *the* period in which identities are presumed to be in transition and turmoil, especially around sexuality, as young people are assumed to move towards the 'straight and narrow' path of 'normal' heterosexuality (Erikson, 1971; Griffin, 1993; Lesko, 1996). Over the last thirty years 'youth' has become a more ambiguous and wide-ranging category in Western culture. The social changes in consumer culture, schooling, higher education, employment and the family mean that the period of 'youth' can now extend well into a person's mid-twenties (Bynner & Wallace, 1999; Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). This means that young people are assumed to experiment or negotiate with identity well into and past late adolescence. This can provide many opportunities, but it is also assumed to expose youth to identity-threatening 'risks' for an extended period of time, and complicates the routes through which young people experience and establish a sense of self. Thus young people find that as an amorphous group they are positioned as inadequate or inauthentic in relation to adults, and are expected to be involved in 'identity work', the end goal of which is presumed to be a relatively unitary and authentic adult identity. To be young or to deal with 'youth' as a concept necessitates dealing with discourses about authenticity and the self.

## 3.5 LEISURE, THE YOUTH MARKET, AND QUEER CONSUMERS

The shift in emphasis from production to consumption under postmodernity is well documented (e.g. Harvey, 1990). Part of the expansion of consumption is most notable when looking at people's 'free time'. As Baudrillard (1998) and Adorno (1991) have both noted, people are impelled to spend their 'free' or leisure time *productively*, spending wages and building social status. By consuming goods and services, consumers attempt to differentiate themselves from one another, and build individuality and identity. Contemporary advertising and marketing rely on people subscribing to the idea that they can construct an authentic, 'real me' through consumption. Consumption practices (and leisure time in particular) appear to offer the possibility of 'being yourself' and of 'being authentic' in ways that existing distinctions (such as race, class or gender) may not anymore (e.g. Furlong & Cartmel, 1997).

Yet authenticity may be a 'fundamental problem' of consumer culture in that the demand for authenticity means that 'we are scrutinized not only for our fashionability, but also for our consistency' (Slater, 1997, p. 95), or to put it another way, 'we must really be what we seem and must appear as we really are' (p. 95). Given the rapidly changing trends and fashions in consumer culture, and the pluralist world in which we live, it is almost impossible to live up to this imperative for authenticity. 'Increasingly intrusive strategies' (p. 95) are required to cohere fragments of self into a single authentic story, and the task of seeking authenticity through consumption may be 'unsupportable and unjust' (p. 95). However, given the uncertain foundations of identity in other domains, such as class or race, individuals are likely to rely on consumption practices more than ever in the process of identity construction. This

may be particularly the case for young people, who have become an established consumer group since the Second World War, and for lesbians and gay men, who have emerged as 'niche' consumer groups relatively recently.

Since the 1950s, the 'youth market' has emerged as a significant target for manufacturers, leisure industries and marketeers (Abrams, 1959). The generation of subcultural styles *by* young people has in many ways become supplemented and even supplanted by the mass marketing of music, fashion and lifestyles *to* young people (Nava, 1992). Young people are increasingly likely to differentiate themselves using consumption and lifestyle signifiers in the absence of clear class boundaries (Phoenix & Tizard, 1996). Following changing fashions may confer social status and help to secure identities, but some young people may be excluded from these status-enhancing processes by material barriers, such as poverty or unemployment (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). In addition, the positioning of youth as inferior to adults may make the authenticity offered through consumption appear attractive, but the contradictions inherent in authenticity-through-consumption may problematise its adoption by young people.

A specific set of issues concern lesbian and gay consumers, who as a market niche may not be as financially significant as the youth market, but who are increasingly targeted as a source of previously untapped capital (Gluckman & Reed, 1997; Sinfield, 1998). It has been noted by several commentators that the development of lesbian and gay identities and communities is entwined with the social changes brought about by capitalism, such as urbanisation, industrialisation, the weakening of family ties and a secularisation of morals (e.g. D'Emilio, 1983; Knopp, 1995; Löfström, 1997). Of course, the political side of lesbian and gay life is somewhat

irrelevant from the point of view of capital, but can create dilemmas for contemporary lesbians and gay men. The current period of 'hyper-commodification' (Escoffier, 1997) of lesbians and gay men as 'super consumers' appears, on the one hand, to recognise the power of sexual minorities as consumers and as cultural producers of style. On the other hand, it is debatable whether consumer rights are any substitute for civil rights, and there is a danger that a widespread adoption of consumption as a way of life will actually fracture an already diverse political movement along the lines of consumer 'haves' and 'have-nots', reproducing existing inequalities and losing sight of the materially inferior position of many lesbians and gay men (Binnie, 1995; Sinfield, 1998). The focus on lesbians and gay men as consumers also brings into conflict different dimensions of authenticity; namely that concerned with a collective and political identity such as 'lesbian' or 'gay' and that derived from consumption.

## 3.6 The Scene as a site to investigate the discourse of authenticity

In recent years, there has been a surge of interest in the spatial aspects of sexuality and identity, and the construction of sexually-coded sites (e.g. Bell & Valentine, 1995b; Duncan, 1996; Pile & Thrift, 1995). Work on the 'queering' of space has demonstrated that everyday space is presumed to be *authentically heterosexual* unless shown to be otherwise (Bell et al., 1994). The presumed natural and authentic heterosexuality of public spaces, and the potentially violent consequences of transgressing heterosexual norms of behaviour in public, means that lesbians and gay men may often feel 'out of place' in everyday spaces (Valentine, 1993a).

In many ways as a response to the heterosexual assumption in space, lesbians and gay

men have claimed some spaces as their own, creating places where lesbians and gay men do not need to manage their behaviours according to heterosexual norms and may feel 'in' rather than 'out' of place. The most striking examples are in areas of North American cities where lesbians and gay men have moved in to run-down areas and 'gentrified' them, claiming them as residential and commercial areas (Castells, 1983; Rothenberg, 1995). However, the development of lesbian and gay neighbourhoods is still fairly rare; in the West (and Britain in particular) it is more likely that the homes of lesbians and gay men will be dispersed and that the number of public places where they can meet will be limited (Bell, 1991). In major towns and cities queer meeting places tend to be centred on commercially-run cafés, bars and clubs, usually located in a specific and small area of town, and called the 'Scene' for short (Escoffier, 1997; Hindle, 1994). These venues may be the only social spaces in which local lesbians and gay men can openly express their sexual identities, and the limited area of the Scene may come to be imbued with special significance as a kind of home and focus for the dispersed lesbian and gay 'community'[10].

Of course, the mainly commercial nature of venues on the Scene raises conflicts about the 'authenticity' of such spaces. Like other leisure sites, lesbian and gay bars and clubs are in general run for profit by 'big' (read: straight) business, such as major breweries. The growth in the number of Scene bars and clubs is in many ways a reflection of the exploitation of lesbians and gay men as a previously untapped

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[10] By 'community' we mean an 'imagined community' which has symbolic meaning for those who identify within it, but is not easily grasped or located within a specific geographical space (e.g. Anderson, 1991).

consumer market, and not just a sign of greater confidence among lesbians and gay men (Binnie, 1995; Edwards, 1998).

The experience of lesbians and gay men feeling that they 'belong' in the queer spaces of the Scene may also reflect the marketing of leisure sites as places to 'be yourself'. In attempting to attract and retain niche audiences, leisure sites such as bars and clubs may offer a 'constructed authenticity' (Harvey, 1993, p. 12) to cultivate a sense of place and belonging. This experience of authenticity is offered to us as a commodity, rather than the product of a 'true' community that creates and maintains its own places. However, Harvey proposes that this marketing of authenticity in social life is likely to be resisted and contested with 'alternative constructions of place' (p. 12). The investment of lesbians and gay men in the queer and commercialised spaces of the Scene may actually reflect the 'search for an authentic sense of community' (p. 12) rather than an acceptance of manufactured authenticity. Commercial spaces can be appropriated by the public to become 'authentic place[s] of representation with a distinctive hold on the imagination' (p. 18), where the quest for profit underlies the material construction of the places in question, but the active investment of people in the meaning and value of the places can support 'all kinds of othernesses' (p. 21). Reworking Harvey's analysis to take account of gender and sexual relations, Knopp (1992) says that gay bars 'represent a small victory in the representation of space for certain sexual dissidents, yet they have (potentially) profound material consequences as well' (p. 664).

The queering of space can create a 'home' for lesbians and gay men, and may in turn make the implicit sexual coding of space visible to others. Of course, this assertion of queer space is not without its risks. Areas regarded as 'safe space' and home to

lesbian and gay venues may simultaneously have a higher risk of homophobic assaults because of increased visibility (Myslik, 1996). Rather more insidiously, the success and popularity of a queer entertainment area may actually be its own undoing. An open and non-exclusive Scene cannot police those who frequent its venues. In a description of Manchester's 'Gay Village', Whittle (1994) implies that the presence of straight people threatens the authenticity of Scene venues for lesbians and gay men:

> The Gay Village 'idea' has promoted a marketplace in which queer people are now seen as cultural consumers, just another tribe amidst and like all other cultural consumers. In the past a Gay bar, was a safe place inside for lesbian, gay and other queer people - *a place where you could finally be yourself* - you could drop the mask. But now, the village is open to all. Everywhere you go there are straight people using the gay scene for entertainment... which means that for many gay people it is no longer a safe place inside to go, *nor can you just be your (political) self.* (Whittle, 1994, pp. 37-38, emphasis added).

Thus 'the Scene' is a set of locations in which lesbians, gay men, other sexual dissidents and straight outsiders can negotiate complex discourses about the authenticity of the places themselves and the people in them. The Scene provides a site where lesbians and gay men can contest the construction of heterosexuality as natural and authentic and valorise their own sexual identities, debating and producing different forms of authenticity. Some of these forms will derive from political ideas of authenticity and the call for essentialist identities, other forms will reflect the authenticity offered through consumption and marketing in commercial leisure spaces. In addition, the reversal of sexual coding in the Scene will position straight people as 'outsiders', but may also allow them to reflect on authenticity in ways that are not available in heterosexual and dominant space by bringing these issues into relief. We now move to illustrating some of these points with an analysis of the

discourse of authenticity in young people's talk about leisure time and the Scene.

## 3.7 Methodology

The ideas and analysis presented here are the result of ongoing research into the construction of young people's sexual identities in leisure time (and space). A discourse analysis was carried out on the transcripts of semi-structured individual and group interviews about sexuality and leisure time conducted with 19 young people (aged 17 to 27 years) through February-August 1998. Six of the participants were male and 13 female. All the men defined themselves as gay. Five of the women defined themselves as lesbian, two as bisexual, and six as heterosexual or straight. The participants were recruited through word of mouth and by contacting local youth groups in Birmingham, England. The sample was therefore not randomised, but was selected for a range of opinions, and the specific inclusion of non-heterosexual youth. A discourse analytic approach was chosen as a way to explore 'common sense' assumptions in talk and the relations between identity construction and discourses of leisure and sexuality. The procedure followed for the discourse analysis was similar to that outlined by Potter & Wetherell (1987), involving reading and re-reading transcripts looking for common themes, and connections between these themes. The discourse of authenticity emerged as a pervasive feature in many interviews, and was examined in greater detail for contradictions as well consistencies. The extracts used in our analysis are typical of our participants' arguments, and have been chosen as clear examples of the use of the discourse of authenticity. The analysis focuses on the micro-level features of the participants' talk, but should be seen as part of the cultural context outlined earlier. This concern with wider cultural issues rather than just an intense focus on the micro-level of dialogue locates this work within the Foucaultian

stream of discourse analysis in social psychology (Burman & Parker, 1993b). All names have been changed to protect participant confidentiality, including the names of venues. The interviewer is indicated by the initials MH.

## 3.8 The Scene as a place to 'be yourself'/the authentic nature of homosexuality

The first extract is taken from a group interview with teenagers (aged 17-19 years) at a West Midlands-based lesbian and gay youth group. The participants (led by Karen) are trying to emphasise the limitations of straight places and the importance of 'being themselves' on the Scene. The dialogue both plays upon *and* reinforces the homo/hetero binary (Sedgwick, 1990), attempting to portray homo as 'open' and hetero as 'closed'.

> <Karen> One of the things when you're in a straight pub, even if you know you're gay at the time, you still got quite a closed mind, and that's when people go out on the Scene, you really do open up a hell of a lot
>
> <Siobhan> Yeah, you have to fit in to be yourself, you have to like be straight like if a mate goes 'Oh, he's nice' you have to go 'Oh yeah, yeah, he's OK' but like you said, you're thinking 'God, he's a man, ugh'
>
> <Karen> I don't think it's a case of... *knowing* rules, I don't think there are rules, it's just a case of you gotta understand you go out on the Scene *everybody is themselves* and it's, there's no issues, you put them like to one side whereas, if you're in a straight pub it is, when you go out on the Scene you kind of learn to *be* open...
>
> <MH> Right
>
> <Karen> ...and whatever cos otherwise it's not going to work out

<Siobhan> Just go with the flow, see how things happen

Karen's begins her argument by introducing the homo = open, hetero = closed argument with regard to straight *vs* gay pubs. This implies the liberal/idealistic notion of lesbian and gay life as superior to straight existence, being more encouraging of diverse experiences and having fewer restrictions on behaviour. The statement "...when you're in a straight pub, even if you know you're gay at the time, you still got quite a closed mind..." implies that you might *not* know that you're gay at the time, and thus implicitly introduces the idea of an essential, true sexual identity that can be masked or even remain 'undiscovered' by its bearer. However, if you *do* know that you're gay and are in a straight pub, the assertion that "you still got quite a closed mind" implies that the experience of being in a straight environment may make a 'true' gay person *be* closed rather than just *act* closed.

Siobhan then expands on Karen's statement with the key phrase "you have to fit in to be yourself". The phrase merges both the idea of a natural essential self ("be yourself") with *learning* how to "fit in". Siobhan then gives an example of *being* lesbian in a straight pub and *passing* as straight by pretending to agree that a man is attractive ("Oh yeah, yeah, he's OK"); the essential lesbian self underneath this display of 'straightness' is preserved as the more authentic subject by rejecting the man as desirable ("God, he's a man, ugh").

In her next turn in the dialogue, Karen makes a much bolder declaration in favour of authentic sexual identities and attempts to reject the idea that social norms have an influence on the behaviour on the Scene ("I don't think it's a case of... *knowing* rules"). However, she then implicitly admits that there is at least one rule in that "you gotta understand... *everybody is themselves*". The implication is that participants on

the Scene have to observe and accept that people are displaying their true selves - you have to "learn to *be* open". This apparent contradiction (of learning to be open *vs* naturally being open) could be seen as a legacy of living in a predominantly straight world: "there's no issues, you put them like to one side whereas, if you're in a straight pub it is". This invokes the possibility that you *learn to be closed* in a straight environment and that this needs to be *un-learnt* on the Scene. The idea that homo = open = natural = authentic, and hetero = closed = learned = artificial, carefully protects the idea of an essential 'gayness' and an authentic Scene against a closed 'straightness' and restrictive straight pubs, while also allowing an explanation of why some things ('being open') might need to be learned on the Scene (to undo the inauthenticity of the straight world). This valorisation of the homo over the hetero using a discourse of authenticity could be seen as a *reverse discourse* (Foucault, 1978); challenging the dominant discourse of hetero as natural and superior. However the 'naturalness' of sexuality is defended, playing on the traditional idea that nature = good and culture = bad. Thus, although the dominant conception of homo = bad, hetero = good is challenged, the actual division of homo from hetero (the homo/hetero binary) is *strengthened.*

## 3.9 THE APPEAL OF THE AUTHENTIC SCENE: ESCAPING THE HETEROSEXUAL MALE GAZE

If leisure is constructed as a 'realm of freedom' in which to 'discover yourself' and seek authenticity (Baudrillard, 1998), it is perhaps not surprising that the kind of discourse of authenticity offered on the Scene might be attractive to those who are in many ways 'outsiders' on the Scene i.e. heterosexual people.

The following extract illustrates how a self-defined straight woman (aged 27 years) uses a similar discourse of authenticity as that described in the last section to valorise the Scene as a place to 'be yourself', contrasting its 'freedom' with the restrictions she experiences in straight venues.

> <MH> Have you ever gone out and felt um... self-conscious or uncomfortable about, about your sexuality, y'know have you been in a place where you've suddenly thought 'Oh'?
>
> <Judy> Er... no, I don't think so, no...
>
> <MH> You were just about to say...
>
> <Judy> ...I thought when I went to Club Central it was good cos you could just... I don't know like you could dance or something and it was just like, 'Well, I just don't give a shit', you can do what you like, really good, no-one's gonna watch you [laughs], especially cos I'm not a bloke, no-one's gonna watch what you're doing at all, it's really good, you can dance as crappy as you like, get mascara running down your face... yeah
>
> <MH> So was that, was that quite good, was that like a good experience?
>
> <Judy> Yeah, I thought it was really good, I thought it was really good and I don't know, and I think I, I know this is a generalisation, that I took with me, but definitely people were more friendly as well... definitely thought people were more smiley and chatty and you look at the bar as well, I don't know, I heard people say 'Ooh, I like your lipstick', something like that, I think it's great [laughs] I was like, oh that's good, yeah

This section of dialogue is opened by the interviewer asking Judy whether she has ever felt "self-conscious or uncomfortable" about her sexuality when she has gone out, an experience common to lesbians and gay men in heterosexually-coded sites (Myslik, 1996; Valentine, 1993a). Judy replies "no, I don't think so". This is perhaps unsurprising for someone who is defined as straight, as the dominance and assumption

of heterosexuality in most locations means that it is made *invisible* and not attended to. Heterosexuality is often only visible to those who are defined *against* it (Bell et al., 1994; Myslik, 1996; Valentine, 1993a). Judy then invokes the discourse of authenticity to describe her experience of going to a Birmingham gay club, Club Central. Being in the gay club is represented as a 'free' and enjoyable experience, and is opposed to some of the restrictions experienced by women in straight night clubs. For Judy, being in a gay club makes her aware that she is not subject to the (straight) male gaze usually present when she goes out; her appearance (used to judge her attractiveness *for* heterosexual men) is not under scrutiny, so she can "dance as crappy as [she] like[s]" and "get mascara running down [her] face"[11]. Within the discourse of authenticity, surface appearance and make-up are 'false' and therefore not having to worry about these things allows a more authentic and enjoyable experience. However, the awareness of the male gaze in Judy's account also reveals the simultaneous invisibility of a lesbian gaze: "...no-one's gonna watch you [laughs], especially cos I'm not a bloke, no-one's gonna watch what you're doing at all". In the gay club, people are still looking at each other, but this is represented specifically as *men looking at other men*. The gaze of others is constructed as *male*; the idea that women might be looking at Judy or any other woman as an object of desire is entirely absent from her account. This could reflect the relative invisibility of lesbians on the Scene in general or in this club in particular, the similar invisibility of lesbians in dominant cultural representations, or it may reflect the historically conservative idea that it is

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[11] Kirby (1996) describes how women are rarely able to 'forget the body' in public spaces, and that when this occurs (such as when Judy goes to this gay club), it is 'a real relief' from 'a perpetually wearing aspect of femininity' (pp. 52-53).

not 'proper' for women to be agents of their own desiring gaze (Kaplan, 1983; Mulvey, 1975).

Returning to the discourse of authenticity, Judy constructs the other (presumably gay) people in the club as more friendly and open: "[I] definitely thought people were more smiley and chatty". The comparison is implicitly with straight people in straight clubs, who therefore are positioned as less friendly and less open (see first extract)[12]. However, the gay club's inhabitants are not entirely positioned as authentic subjects, as Judy negotiates with cultural stereotypes about gay men (lesbians are notably absent in this account). In saying "I know this is a generalisation, that I took with me...", Judy acknowledges having expectations of how gay people behave in gay environments, in particular the representation of gay men as outgoing, gossipy and forward in approaching people. Gay men are *feminised* in Judy's account; the image of camp and effeminate gay men is completed with Judy reporting a comment about her make-up, aligning gay men with the stereotypical female concern with appearance. The 'authentic' and carefree experience of "mascara running down your face" is contrasted with the attention paid to her lipstick, leaving the 'superficial' concern with appearance intact. Once again, an attempt to define gay space and its occupants as authentic is moderated by 'culture'; it requires work to maintain pure, untainted, natural authenticity, principally because the construct of 'authenticity' is no more 'natural' than 'culture', and requires active construction and maintenance at a symbolic level.

## 3.10 NEGOTIATING AUTHENTICITY: THE DISCERNING SELF *VS* HEGEMONIC 'GAYNESS'

So far we have considered two examples of attempts to construct lesbian and gay identities and space as 'authentic', partly through valorising homosexuality as an essence, and the construction of homo = open and hetero = closed. Attempts to maintain a 'natural' authenticity are subverted by cultural expectations about sexuality and space, playing through the nature/culture binary opposition. In particular, the attempt to enact an authentic, essential, lesbian or gay sexual identity is confused by the implicit acknowledgement that you have to *learn* certain styles of 'authentic' expression and behaviour in lesbian and gay spaces, such as on the Scene. The following example explores the restrictions a young gay man (Ian, 21 years old) experiences in dealing with the version of 'gayness' he encounters in the commercialised spaces of the Birmingham Scene, and how he tries to construct an alternative self based on *discerning* consumption and style preferences.

> <MH> Uh-huh, OK so... you mentioned like you used to go out, with a group you've got from home, like your best friend Simon and stuff, who you say you could go out anywhere with, I mean, who would you go out... who would you go out with in Birmingham then... I mean, a different group of people or... ?
>
> <Ian> Um... it's calmed down a lot, because with Simon, I remember... he came up here last year, it was Bank Holiday weekend, and we were going to go to Sorted [mixed club night], <snip>... and Sorted was full, so the only place, and then, there was loads of stuff on but

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[12] Note that the "people" in this section of the dialogue are curiously un-gendered. Given that the presence of women seems to be absent or denied in Judy's description of the club, it would appear that, in this case, people = men.

> anyway the only place that we ended up getting into, um, was the The Place, which both us of thought 'Oh my God' and we had the *best* time ever, um and that was actually the first time I enjoyed the The Place, um...
>
> <MH> But why is that, why did you enjoy it?
>
> <Ian> Because... because... before I'd been there *purely* because I was gay and I hated that fact, and felt very just like... it is a shit, I think it's a shit club for me, it's not my idea of a good club, it doesn't play music I like, it's hideous decor, it doesn't have anything I like about it to be quite honest with you, the only reason I've been there is purely because I'm gay, um, and I've never seen past that fact, and I've always resented that fact, and um also it makes me hate being gay because it's just, it's just what I'm not, I can't find anything that I think is at all me, so just because of Simon, like and and it's not really that much to it, I hadn't seen him for ages and appreciated it and we would have had, we do, we literally will have a good time pretty much anywhere... <snip>

Ian sets the scene by explaining how he came to be in the The Place (a Birmingham gay club) on a Bank Holiday weekend, and intimates that usually this would have been an undesirable option ("both us of thought 'Oh my God'"). Before explaining why he enjoyed that particular night, Ian elaborates on his dislike of the club. He says that the *only* reason he would have been at the The Place before was because of his gay identity, and that he resented that "fact". It is possible that for Ian, going to a club "purely" on the basis of his gay self means enacting authenticity solely through sexual identity and no other part of himself, and this is insufficient for enacting the kind of authentic self he desires; an *individually distinctive* self that is both gay *and* enjoys 'good' music and decor. Ian is constructing a *discerning* and *choosing* gay self based on the rhetoric of individual style and consumption (Baudrillard, 1998; Bourdieu, 1984) and seeking to enact authenticity at this individual level, rather than just at the collective level offered by his sexual identity. Ian positions himself as being able to

decide if a club is 'good' on the basis of its style and class signifiers (music and decor), and he rejects the The Place *on that basis.*

The problem for Ian in taking on the persona of a discerning gay consumer or club-goer is that he is coming into conflict with what he sees as the dominant version of gayness in the club, which privileges "being gay" above all else, and has a set of style and class preferences that he doesn't feel he shares. This version of gayness that privileges sexuality as a primary identity and way to be authentic is difficult for Ian to 'see past'. The effort to be true to himself and authentic as a discerning gay man means that Ian finds the sexuality-only authenticity of the The Place quite aversive, and even threatening to his own gayness ("...it makes me hate being gay because it's just, it's just what I'm not, I can't find anything that I think is at all me..."). In embracing the rhetoric of individual distinction and authenticity based on discerning consumption, Ian must hold an ambivalent position to the dominant or *hegemonic* forms of gayness he perceives in the The Place (see O'Mara, 1997, for an example of how particular contexts privilege specific forms of gay and lesbian identity to the detriment and exclusion of others). Thus in positioning himself differently within the discourse of authenticity, Ian is forced to question the Scene as an appropriate site to 'be himself', in stark contrast with the earlier examples.

## 3.11 Discussion

We have shown how a discourse of authenticity was variously employed in young people's talk about leisure and sexuality. The concept of 'being true to the self' is particularly important for many young lesbians and gay men, and 'the Scene' is represented as a set of material and symbolic locations where authentic lesbian and gay selves can be enacted, and the heterosexual dominance of space can be escaped. In addition, by constructing homosexual identity and space as more authentic than heterosexuality, lesbians and gay men resist negative cultural conceptions of homosexuality. Heterosexually-identified women may also draw on a similar discourse to construct the Scene as a place to be authentic and a place to escape the restrictions experienced by women in straight leisure sites (see Skeggs, 1999). This can involve negotiation with dominant expectations about gay men, and the relative invisibility of lesbians. Finally, 'being true to the self' for some gay men may involve rejecting the Scene as a location to be authentic, and may involve seeking a more individualised sense of authenticity and 'gayness' through discerning consumption, although this may be an uneasy position to maintain.

The roots of the modernist concept of authenticity in the Romantic notion of 'being true to the self' were probably concerned with the individual's spiritual or moral sense of authenticity (Taylor, 1991; Trilling, 1972), but we have demonstrated how the discourse of authenticity when examined through the talk of young people reflects contemporary debates about the politics of sexual identity, the influence of consumption on identity and the importance of leisure sites as places to enact and contest authentic selves. This involves complex debates about the appropriateness of different sexual identities, the value of consuming selves, and the gendered and

sexualised coding of leisure spaces. The discourse of authenticity is influenced by dominant ideologies, but we must not forget the agency of individuals and groups who negotiate with and deploy this discourse. Although reflecting the dominance of liberal humanist ideology in discussions of sexuality (Kitzinger, 1989) and the pervasiveness of individualism and consumerist rhetoric, we would argue that the discourse of authenticity is employed to cope with a number of contemporary concerns for people in general, and lesbians, gay men and young people in particular. The functions of the contemporary discourse of authenticity could therefore include:

- constructing coherence in multiple selves
- debating the basis of sexual dissident group membership and political action
- resisting the dominant conception of heterosexuality as superior to homosexuality (this can focus on identities, places, styles and norms of behaviour)
- articulating different ways of being lesbian or gay (and potentially straight), while remaining 'true to the self'

The discourse of authenticity that we examined reflects dominant cultural conceptions of lesbian and gay identities as having a coherent essence, and the growing influence of consumerist interests in promoting 'leisure' and 'lifestyle' as appropriate domains in which to be authentic. Yet our analysis also shows how the discourse of authenticity can support *different* constructions of authentic selves, and can be used to rework dominant conceptions of sexuality and space (across the homo/hetero divide and within the gay Scene itself). These negotiations occur in the dialogue of our participants and reflect ongoing concerns about the authenticity of sexuality, identity, space and consumption. Overall, we are struck by the irony that although authenticity as a word seems to imply coherence and stability, in practice and in discourse it is a

complex and often contradictory concept, reflecting its roots in many different strands of history and contemporary culture. We have shown how a small group of young people draw upon and are positioned by some elements of this contradictory discourse. While the concern over the 'loss' of authenticity in contemporary culture remains, the discourse of authenticity continues to diversify and proliferate, and remains of particular relevance for young people, and especially lesbians and gay men.

# 4. CONSTRUCTING GAZES: YOUNG PEOPLE'S GENDERED AND SEXUALISED ACCOUNTS OF LOOKING[13]

## 4.1 ABSTRACT

The concept of the 'male gaze', derived from feminist film theory, is considered in relation to young people's constructions of the gaze in interviews about their leisure time. Using a discourse analytic approach, we explore gendered and sexualised discourses of the gaze, and how these discourses are used to construct particular meanings about leisure spaces. In particular, we consider how the lesbian and gay Scene of bars and clubs is constructed as lacking oppressive gazes, and contrast the construction of male heterosexual gazes with gay male and heterosexual women's accounts of looking. In considering both gender and sexuality, our analysis incorporates more than one form of difference, a need recognised by feminist researchers.

## 4.2 BACKGROUND

Looking at other people is an activity that is often taken entirely for granted. Wherever we go, the sighted can derive pleasure from watching, following, appraising, and consuming other people visually. For many of us, looking at one another may seem innocuous, benign, even natural. Yet for those who experience the gaze of others these looks may not seem so innocent. A woman who walks past a

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[13] This chapter has been submitted as a paper to the journal *Feminism & Psychology*.

building site accompanied by a chorus of cat calls, wolf whistles and 'Cheer up love, it might never happen' may or may not feel that the 'admiring' looks of the predominantly male employees are particularly charming or unthreatening. Women who work may resign themselves to being both judged on their appearance as well as their job performance, by both male and female colleagues. And lesbians and gay men who feel unable to be open about their identities at home, work or in other spheres of public life may manage their appearance and behaviour so that 'signs' of their sexuality are not recognised by others. These examples illustrate some of the types of look or ways of looking we can imagine; the 'gaze' of others can be experienced as objectifying or acknowledging, recognising or ignoring, disciplining or approving, and including or excluding. Given that we 'see' people differently through the lenses of gender, class, race, sexuality and so on, it is perhaps not surprising that the gaze can be used as a mechanism of power, marking people as similar or different, objectifying the desired, and excluding those perceived as dangerous, threatening or simply 'Other'. Our identities and ideological commitments shape the way we look at others and our experiences of being looked at, and this will be reflected in the way we represent and discuss the gaze discursively.

Historically, feminists have been concerned with the representation of women in the media, the use of appearance as a way to assess and devalue women, and the presumed right of men to look at women for their own pleasure. Feminists working within film theory from the 1970s onwards developed critiques of the representation and objectification of women in films (see Doane, Mellencamp, & Williams, 1984). This paper considers one aspect of the theory generated within feminist film criticism, namely the idea of the 'male gaze' (Mulvey, 1975). Much of the early work on the

gaze uses psychoanalysis as a theoretical basis from which to analyse processes of looking, pleasure, desire and so on. However, the psychoanalytic approach is not without its difficulties, particularly the danger of reifying the gaze as inherently male or theorising forms of difference other than gender (we elaborate on the difficulties of the psychoanalytic approach below). Within this paper we use a discursive analysis to show that the male gaze is only one form of construction of the gaze, albeit a dominant one. To illustrate this, we examine the construction of different gazes by young lesbians, gay men, and heterosexual women, particularly the 'classic' male gaze and a non-gender-specific *heterosexual* gaze, but also whether lesbians, gay men and heterosexual women articulate their own gazes. We therefore address a key feminist question of incorporating more than one aspect of identity, social belonging or 'difference' into a critical analysis of 'the gaze'; a need recognised by other feminist theorists (hooks, 1992; Kaplan, 1997).

To contextualise our discussion of the gaze, we first consider some of the early theoretical approaches to the male gaze, and highlight some resultant issues. We consider how looking may not only be gendered, but affected by other forms of difference too. We then analyse some constructions of the gaze derived from young people's accounts of their leisure time, highlighting the difference between 'male' and 'heterosexual' constructions of the gaze. We then consider how these different discourses are used by our participants to construct particular meanings about their leisure space, specifically the lesbian and gay Scene of bars and clubs, which is constructed as *lacking* oppressive gazes. The accounts of our participants include some reference to gay male and heterosexual women's gazes, and we contrast these with the discursive construction of male heterosexual gazes. Finally, we consider the

implications of our analysis for studies of 'the gaze', the way space is constructed, and the potential effects of power in dominant discourses of looking.

## 4.3 THEORISING THE MALE GAZE

Much of the early critical work on looking or 'the gaze' emerged in feminist film theory, using gender as the primary dimension of analysis. The literature in this area, and related fields, is prolific, so we will outline the first key paper to address 'the gaze' from a feminist perspective, Laura Mulvey's (1975) 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema', and some of the issues it subsequently raised[14]. Mulvey's basic argument was that the ways of seeing in mainstream films reflect the male prerogative to impose meaning on women and use their objectified images as sources of pleasure. Mulvey adopted a Lacanian psychoanalytic framework for her critique of cinema 'as a political weapon, demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form' (p. 6). Mulvey made the point that cinema offers both *scopophilic* or voyeuristic pleasure (in looking at other people as objects of sexual stimulation) and *narcissistic* pleasure (in identifying with the image seen). The pleasure in looking can be seen as inherently gendered; the 'male gaze' is seen as determining and active (involving filming, looking and projecting), while the female Other is seen as passive and looked at or displayed. Men are encouraged to look at female characters in a desiring way and identify with the actions and viewpoint of the male characters (thus avoiding the implication of desiring looks aimed at other men). Mulvey also argued that women characters are often punished, devalued or fetishised in mainstream films because they represent the unconscious fears of men; principally

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[14] For more in-depth consideration of Mulvey's (1975) paper and its consequences, see Stacey (1994).

that of castration. By analysing and laying bare the male-orientated 'pleasures in looking' that films offer, Mulvey aimed to destroy these pleasures or make them unworkable, thus opening up a space for new representations of women (and men).

Other theorists, still using gender as the primary focus of their analyses, have considered whether 'the gaze' is inherently male, whether women could use the gaze and what that would mean, and whether less exclusionary forms of looking can be imagined. Those following Mulvey in using a similar psychoanalytic approach wrestled with the difficulty in conceptualising women as using the gaze when it is seen as inherently male (Doane, 1992; Kaplan, 1983). This led variously to conceiving women as *masochistic* if they identified with female characters in films, *sadistic* if they identified with male characters, or taking on an uneasy 'transvestite' role when using the gaze because of its association with maleness (Kaplan, 1983; Mulvey, 1993). After the initial impact of critiques that highlighted the objectification of women in films and the lack of articulated spectatorial positions for women, theorists seemed to come up against the limits of a psychoanalytic framework. Stacey (1994) highlights the difficulty in acknowledging the 'woman in the audience' (and arguably, 'the man' too) rather than abstract 'textual spectators', the assumption of strict male/female and masculine/feminine binaries (linked to an all-encompassing heterosexuality), and the ahistorical and asocial theorising of psychoanalytic approaches as particularly problematic in relation to theories of the gendered gaze.

Some of the writers themselves acknowledged the problems in using the psychoanalytic perspective as a political tool. Kaplan (1983) tried to defend the approach by arguing that although psychoanalysis is a bourgeois, sexist discourse and a product of capitalism, it is precisely because of this that it is useful to interrogate

cinema, which is itself a product of capitalism. Doane (1993) however acknowledges the lack of a socially-based analysis of looking in psychoanalytic work on spectatorship and highlights the 'confusing array of concepts' (p. 167) deployed to theorise the relation between female spectator and film. This is in part due to the 'male' or 'masculine' subject of the gaze being 'consistently theorized as a *pure*, unified, and self-sufficient position' (p. 170), thus demanding that women always operate in relation to this supposedly stable position. This of course ends up reifying the subject of the gaze as always male or masculinised, leaving little room for change. Doane instead points out the flexibility in subject positions:

> Women spectators oscillate or alternate between masculine and feminine positions... and men are capable of this alternation as well... [F]eminine and masculine positions are not fully coincident with actual men and women. (1993, p. 169-170)

## 4.4 ALTERNATIVE WAYS OF LOOKING

If we do not consider the gaze as inherently male, it may be more useful to regard it as *masculinised*, and that this conception of the gaze is the dominant gendered discourse about looking in our culture (Ussher, 1997b). From a feminist point of view, seeing the masculine gaze as dominant rather than universal opens up the space to find practices that resist the masculine gaze. These could include resistant and alternative forms of female spectatorship in the media, popular culture and everyday life (e.g. Fiske, 1987; Gamman & Marshment, 1988; Stacey, 1994), and men's accounts of the gaze that attempt to overcome male-centred privilege (e.g. Middleton, 1992). We might also consider how the ascendancy of 'the visual' under postmodernity has increased our preoccupation with spectating (Jameson, 1984), or how the concern with visual appearance encouraged by consumerism is turning the gaze of men back

on themselves (Mort, 1996; Nixon, 1996).

However, for the purposes of this paper, we wish to consider alternative constructions to the male or masculine gaze. It has been accepted that the gaze is not only gendered, but can be sexualised, classed and shaped by other forms of difference too. Kaplan (1997), for example, has acknowledged the absence of race and sexuality in accounts of the gaze, and has explored the co-dependency of the 'male' and 'imperial' gazes. In this paper we mainly consider gender and sexuality, and the discourses of the gaze that are deployed by our participants in talking about their everyday lives. By using a discourse analytic approach (e.g. Burman & Parker, 1993b) which aims to be sensitive to 'common sense' assumptions and meaning construction in our participants' talk, we hope to avoid some of the pitfalls of the psychoanalytic approach to gaze theory, particularly the difficulty of theorising non-male and non-heterosexual spectatorship. As Gamman and Marshment (1988) point out, when attempts are made to explain lesbian or gay desiring looks or 'the female gaze' through the psychoanalytic approach of Mulvey (1975) and others, these phenomena 'are explained in terms which seem more concerned to fit the facts to the model than the other way around' (Gamman and Marshment, 1988, p. 6). Rather than assuming that the gaze is principally (hetero)gendered, and is concerned with scopophilic pleasure or desire, we argue that the gaze can also be judgmental or disciplinary, and that this may be more significant when considering how the gaze operates across the hetero/homo divide. The combination of these gendered and sexualised aspects may be what makes the looks of heterosexual men seem so powerful.

Thinking of certain discourses of the gaze as dominant also allows us to consider how looking is regulated, to examine who has the right to look and the conditions of

possibility for various ways of looking. Foucault (1977) explored how the disciplinary gazes and discourses of institutions (such as the penal system) became possible and were deployed to police populations. The discourses generated to justify aspects of 'the disciplinary society' are of course an effect of power, and power (in Foucault's conception) is both repressive and productive (e.g. Foucault, 1978). The discourses that specify the forms of looking tell people who should look and who should be looked at, and where and when they can look. For the most effective type of regulation, considered in Foucault's treatment of the 'Panopticon', people are encouraged to discipline and police themselves by internalising the dominant discourses and practices of looking. For Foucault, in getting people to regulate themselves, power contains the seeds of resistance. By investing power in people to look at themselves and others, the conditions of possibility are created through which people might use the gaze for different ends to those of the dominant order. The development of feminist and non-heterosexual discourses of looking and spectatorship are examples of such resistance.

However, the emergence of alternative discourses (and practices) of looking does not mean that the dominant conceptions are swept away. Even in spaces which disrupt the assumption of male and heterosexual ways of looking, such as the lesbian and gay Scene of bars and clubs, the dominance of traditional forms of the gaze will need to be contested. Can the looks of lesbians and gay men, and of heterosexual women, escape the influence of the objectifying masculine gaze? In the following analysis, we consider young people's accounts of looking and being looked at in relation to their leisure time. We focus specifically on descriptions of looking from the perspective of young lesbians and gay men in the (heterosexual) world at large and on the lesbian

and gay Scene, and the accounts of heterosexual women who experience the spaces of the Scene. We first distinguish between the objectifying and judgmental (or disciplinary) aspects of the masculinised heterosexual gaze, and relate these aspects to gendered and sexualised experiences of being looked at. We consider how the discourses of male and heterosexual gazes are used to construct the spaces of the Scene as more desirable than heterosexual spaces. Finally, we consider some examples of gay male and heterosexual women's ways of looking in relation to the Scene, contrasting them with male heterosexual gazes.

## 4.5 METHOD

The following extracts are taken from individual and group semi-structured interviews conducted with 19 young people (aged 17-27 years) between February and August 1998 in Birmingham, England. Six of the participants were male and thirteen female. All the men defined themselves as gay. Five of the women defined themselves as lesbian, two as bisexual, and six as heterosexual or straight. The topics of the interviews were leisure, identity and sexuality. Participants were recruited by word of mouth and by approaching local youth groups in the Birmingham area. The sample was not randomised, but was selected for a range of opinions, and the specific inclusion of non-heterosexual youth. The procedure followed for the discourse analysis was similar to that outlined by Potter & Wetherell (1987), involving reading and re-reading transcripts looking for common themes, and connections between these themes. Although not directly questioned about 'looking' and 'the gaze', many of the participants used discourses about looking to construct particular meanings about the social spaces they frequented, and discourses of looking were therefore examined in greater detail for contradictions and consistencies. The extracts used in our analysis

are typical of our participants' arguments, and have been chosen as clear examples of the use of discourses of the gaze. The analysis focuses on the micro-level features of the participants' talk, but should be seen in relation to the theoretical context outlined earlier. This concern with wider 'macro' issues (including power) rather than just an intense focus on the micro-level of dialogue locates this work within the Foucaultian stream of discourse analysis in social psychology (Burman & Parker, 1993b). All names have been changed to protect participant confidentiality, including the names of venues. The interviewer is indicated by the initials MH.

## 4.6 THE OBJECTIFYING AND JUDGING GAZE

The first extract comes from an interview with a self-identified lesbian woman, Justine, aged 24 years. Justine seems to construct the 'classic' description of the male gaze, and uses it to differentiate between heterosexual night clubs and a lesbian and gay club to which she goes. The gaze that Justine constructs is both objectifying and judgmental because it is aligned with men *and* with heterosexuals; her experience of the gaze therefore reflects her identification as a woman *and* as a lesbian. In the preceding dialogue, Justine has just described how she "hates night clubs" because they make her feel "pressured" and "uncomfortable":

> <MH> And what, what [in] particular about the experience of going to, the clubs where you feel pressured, makes you feel uncomfortable?
>
> <Justine> Just the whole cattle market kind of thing, looks basically, objectifying you, making me feel like a lump of flesh... and usually being amongst the chaps in straight clubs, I haven't been for years but, um... people who are much younger than you, I mean I hate that, and everything is, that that I don't the like music they play, I don't like the people that are there, I don't like the feeling that I have to dress a particular way just to fit in... it's too expensive, I

hate them [laughs]

Justine constructs the image of a "straight" night club as a "cattle market", where the experience of being looked at by men ("the chaps"), is "objectifying" and makes her "feel like a lump of flesh". The cattle market metaphor is particularly powerful in implying that men survey and judge women in the 'sexual marketplace' of these clubs, like farmers at a livestock auction. The idea that her appearance is being surveyed and judged is reinforced by her later comment that she has "to dress a particular way just to fit in". Thus the gaze of men in these straight clubs is constructed as denying women any subjectivity and positioning women as objects of male desire. The male gaze is seen as active, humiliating and judgmental; in these spaces the male gaze is allowed to consume and judge women visually, assessing their worth as sexual commodities. This gaze is also seen as universal; all "the chaps" in Justine's account are implicated as heterosexual spectators of women. Given that she feels she is being treated as a commodity in these clubs, it is probably no surprise that Justine finds it particularly 'hateful' that it is "too expensive" to go to these clubs[15]. Yet Justine also professes to dislike the people in general who go to these straight clubs, and the music that is played in them. Justine's dislike for straight clubs is made in forceful terms, using the gaze as a particular reference point, and is contrasted by her description of a Birmingham lesbian and gay club, Club Central:

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[15] The practice of some heterosexual night clubs holding 'ladies' nights', when women do not pay a fee to enter the club or receive free drinks, emphasises woman's role as commodity in these spaces. While the women who attend these nights may benefit from the reduced financial cost, the nights are not marketed as women-only. On the contrary; the assumption is that men will pay to come and see the women there, reinforcing the idea of women as spectacle in the heterosexual marketplace.

<MH> Would you say those issues are uh, completely disappear in Club Central?

<Justine> No... I mean, some of the music is, I don't like... but you just have a good time, the atmosphere is good, if you bump into somebody on the dancefloor, it's like no big deal, if you, if you, you know, happen to push into somebody then it's, it doesn't matter, nobody has an attitude in there... it's like, I feel much more comfortable... I mean and I certainly don't feel pressured, about the way that I look, y'know I feel, I can just go in there, have a dance and nobody's gonna bother me or look at me or... y'know, give you hassle, yeah, so much more comfortable

Although the "issues" of straight night clubs don't completely disappear in the lesbian and gay space of Club Central, it is constructed as "attitude"-free, "comfortable", and with a "good atmosphere". This is a common theme in the accounts of our participants (lesbians, gay men and heterosexual women) and is often linked to the presumed *authenticity* of lesbian and gay spaces (see Chapter 3). The benefit of being in a lesbian or gay space is particularly linked to people looking; when Justine says that "nobody's gonna bother me or look at me" and that she doesn't feel "pressured" about the way she looks, she implies that the judging gaze present in her account of straight clubs is absent, or at least diminished. This is most likely due to the assumption that in a lesbian or gay space there are no (or few) heterosexual men present, and therefore there is no male heterosexual gaze to seek out Justine. The idea that anyone else in the club might be looking at Justine does not seem to be constructed as a problem. Thus the presumed other occupants of the club, lesbians and gay men, are not seen as possessing gazes that have the same problematic impact as heterosexual men. This does not mean that lesbians and gay men (and heterosexual women for that matter) cannot use an objectifying or judgmental gaze, but that in using the *discourse* of a dominant male heterosexual gaze to construct straight night clubs as unpleasant and

the lesbian and gay club as pleasing, Justine only talks in terms of the presence or absence of the male heterosexual gaze.

The male heterosexual gaze that Justine constructs is seen as *both* objectifying and judgmental. These qualities have often been seen as necessary components of the gaze. Yet in Justine's account it may be the *combination* of gender and sexuality that necessitates a gaze that is both desiring/objectifying and judging/assessing. As we will see in the next extract, if sexuality becomes the primary 'lens' through which the gaze is constructed, the salience of sexual desire/objectification is diminished, replaced by a much greater emphasis on the judging, disciplinary and surveying aspects of the gaze.

## 4.7 THE JUDGMENTAL HETEROSEXUAL GAZE

Many of the young lesbians and gay men in the study expressed concerns about being looked at by heterosexual others in their everyday lives. The extract below, taken from an interview at a lesbian and gay youth group in Birmingham[16], is typical of the accounts of the heterosexual gaze. Here the gaze seems to have little reference to scopophilic pleasure or being positioned as a sexual object of desire. Instead, the gaze of heterosexual people in general (rather than say men *or* women) is constructed as invasive, judgmental and marking lesbians and gay men as different. Thus the meaning of the gaze is constructed through the hetero/homo binary (Sedgwick, 1990), rather than the binary of male and female:

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[16] The participants in this extract defined themselves as either lesbian or gay and were aged between 17 and 19 years.

<Michael> ...for gay people, going home, specially like if you're going home... on the train, it's such a downer

<Karen> Cos you start worrying don't you, that somebody's looking at you because, y'know, you maybe don't look, look straight or whatever, so you're really conscious, well whether anybody is or not, you always feel conscious, cos if you're gay and you do act not bothered about it, you do sort of get a comment

<Michael> Yeah it's really depressing

<Siobhan> Yeah I mean, I only have to get from like my house to the stop, I've gotta walk through the park, and like you walk through, and you just know that people are looking at you, and they're thinking 'Oh no, look at her, she's a lesbian', anyway you walk through, you act exactly the same, you think 'They ain't gonna do anything', but it makes you look *so small* just the expression on your face as you walk through, it makes you feel so small and so like *different*, I mean we shouldn't be made to feel like that

<Karen> It makes it easy for them to have a go and whatnot at you

The concern of the participants here seems to be that if they are *recognised* as lesbian or gay by some visible signs (such as their appearance), then this will incur a presumably negative response from 'other people' i.e. heterosexuals. When Karen says "you start worrying... that somebody's looking at you... whether anybody is or not, you always feel conscious" she implies that lesbians and gay men assume that they are being looked at constantly by heterosexuals, and that this self-consciousness is permanent, regardless of the actual behaviour of heterosexuals. Similarly, Siobhan 'knows' that people are looking at her when she walks through the park, and that these people 'know' that she is a lesbian. Thus it is assumed that the heterosexual gaze is omnipresent and omniscient, demanding and revealing the 'truth' of these lesbians and gay men's identities. The gaze, in 'discovering' these lesbians and gay

men, is seen to mark them as Other, and distances them from heterosexuals ("it makes you feel so small and so like *different*").

The presumed power of the heterosexual gaze is probably a sensible precaution against homophobic ridicule or worse. Unfortunately, it also runs the risk of reifying the distinction between 'hetero' and 'homo' and the power relationship between these categories. The looks of *all* heterosexuals become a threat, and therefore the mere implication of the heterosexual gaze becomes sufficiently powerful to make lesbians and gay men self-conscious, to monitor their behaviour, and in effect, to police themselves. The discourse of the all-knowing and invasive heterosexual gaze could be seen to be an operation of the disciplinary society, whereby those marked as 'different' from the heterosexual norm internalise this badge of difference and attempt to alter their behaviour to avoid confrontation with the feared heterosexual majority (Foucault, 1977; 1978). Although the dominance of heterosexual looks is resented ("we shouldn't be made to feel like that"), it remains unchallenged, and the difference between homo and hetero is reinforced from both sides of the 'divide'.

However, it may be that the discourse of the heterosexual gaze is not just a reflection of these lesbians and gay men's sense of oppression and positioning as Other by heterosexual people. Discourses of the gaze may also important in constructing the meanings of lesbian and gay leisure venues for our participants, by positing the *absence* of oppressive gazes, as seen in the first extract and in the following section.

## 4.8 THE LESBIAN AND GAY SCENE AND THE ABSENCE OF THE GAZE

In the first interview extract we considered how the gendered and sexualised components of the male heterosexual gaze were seen as objectifying and judgmental,

respectively. In the last section we explored a purely sexualised discourse of the gaze which focused on the judging and disciplinary aspects of looking. In the two extracts below, Jonathan, a 26 year-old gay man, and Judy, a 26 year-old heterosexual woman, both talk about their experiences of going out in the lesbian and gay Scene in Birmingham. Both extracts construct the Scene as *lacking* a particular type of gaze; for Jonathan it is the heterosexual and classifying gaze that is missing, while for Judy it is the lack of a male heterosexual gaze that is noticeable. Each of these participants uses discourses of the gaze that reflect and construct their own identities; Jonathan focuses on a sexualised account of the gaze, while Judy is concerned with a gendered discourse of the male heterosexual gaze. First we consider Jonathan describing the lesbian and gay pubs near one of Birmingham's largest theatres, The Pavilion[17]:

> <MH> Yeah, well so the types of places you go, like say the... the pubs or the theatre bar or wherever, um what do you like about them, what do you like about the places that you go out to?
>
> <Jonathan> Well I... tend... the vast majority of people of my friends will go to... will be very similar to me in that they will enjoy places like city centre pubs like, uh, y'know around the Pavilion area, and the bars and clubs that are there, ah, and I like the fact that you can go there er, into those bars and just feel *totally relaxed*, er, in that you can wear what you want, say what you want, and just relax without anybody... looking at you as a separate group of people, you just... mix in, and nobody's sort of looking at you, that's what I like, in that you, so I would feel rather than sort of possibly going into a um, a pub say, say in Erdington or Sutton Coldfield, which is where I originate from, with a group of my friends, I would feel more on edge in that situation because, y'know, it's very much sort of um... lots of er...

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[17] This area of Birmingham is regarded as its 'gay quarter' or 'Scene', and is the focus for Birmingham's lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Pride celebrations.

> y'know twenty year old lads and their dolly bird girlfriends and that sort of thing all like from a night out, I would, I would feel, with my group of friends, on edge in that sort, hence I like the, that... area of pubs of bars and er, it just makes me feel relaxed. So that's what I like, that relaxed atmosphere, and, yes, to a certain amount, the music that they put on in those places as well

Jonathan contrasts being "totally relaxed" in the city centre bars near The Pavilion theatre with feeling "on edge" in the suburban pubs of Erdington and Sutton Coldfield, where he grew up. This is a sexualised distinction; although there are many different venues near The Pavilion, Jonathan is referring to the lesbian and gay Scene which is in the same area as the theatre, Birmingham's Chinese Quarter, and many other bars, pubs, night clubs and restaurants. The suburban pubs are constructed as traditionally heterosexual by invoking the idea of "twenty year old lads and their dolly bird girlfriends"; this is a peculiarly British, gendered and class-specific image of 'strong' working class men and their 'pretty' women. Jonathan focuses on looking to construct the Scene venues as 'better' than the heterosexual pubs. He says that "you can wear what you want" and that there aren't other people "looking at you as a separate group of people" in the Scene bars. The idea that the heterosexual gaze can separate out lesbians and gay men from the heterosexual majority is strong here; when Jonathan says "you just... mix in, and nobody's sort of looking at you", he implies that gay people *can't* "mix in" in heterosexual venues, and that this mixing might be prevented by the gaze identifying them as "a separate group of people". Thus the heterosexual gaze of these 'lads' and 'dolly birds' is assumed to be powerful enough to reveal and detect homosexuality, to make lesbians and gay men feel uncomfortable, and to reinforce the difference between homo and hetero. However, in constructing this gaze as heterosexual, oppressive and judgmental, the non-heterosexuality,

openness and 'relaxed' atmosphere of the Scene is reinforced through the presumed *absence* of this gaze in lesbian and gay venues. The discourse of the heterosexual gaze is therefore used to construct the Scene as a desirable space, by positing the Scene as a set of locations where this oppressive gaze is absent.

In the next extract, Judy is struck by the absence of the male heterosexual gaze when she talks about being in one of Birmingham's city centre gay bars:

> <Judy> ...but that's funny, cos when I went there, I did say to Helen or somebody, I said, I did notice, it was really really strange, I'd never thought I'd notice it, when I went to the toilet I noticed, *nobody* looked at me... and it's not something I'd think 'Oh yeah, everyone looks at me' but I did notice, cos you have to walk, we were in that little room at the back, you have to walk *all* the way round the bar, all the way round, normally if, that would worry me a bit, if it's a pub I don't know as well...
>
> <MH> Right
>
> <Judy> ...and I thought 'Oh' and I really don't like that in a pub, when you've got to walk, they always put the ladies' toilets at the far end of anywhere, I'm sure they do it on purpose, so you have to walk through the entire pub or restaurant or whatever to get there, and I came back and went 'That's really funny, I *really* noticed that nobody looked, isn't that great' [laughs] incredible, it was really good, and then someone went 'But did any women look?' and I went 'Oh, I dunno, I didn't think about it like that', that's the truth [laughs] I don't know

In going to this gay bar, Judy finds it very strange that "nobody looked" when she walked round the bar to go to the toilet. From her previous experience, Judy is *expecting* to be looked at when she goes out to a pub, and that pubs are designed so that women are 'on show'. When it appears that 'nobody' is looking at her, she finds the experience "really strange", but "really good" as well. This echoes Kirby's (1996) assertion that women are rarely able to 'forget the body' in public spaces, but that

when this occurs, it is 'a real relief' from 'a perpetually wearing aspect of femininity' (pp. 52-53). However, Judy is not expecting women to look at her ("I didn't think about it like that"); as a heterosexual woman she is assuming that men will look at her in a desiring way, and that women do not look at other women "like that". Thus Judy constructs a space which is free of a male heterosexual gaze, but does not specify whether there are other forms of looking (such as lesbian or gay looks). These alternative looks might undermine her account of the bar as a "really good" space to be in; a lesbian gaze would position her as a potential object of sexual desire, and a gay male gaze might not 'recognise' her as desirable at all. The important thing is to be free of the objectifying gaze of heterosexual men; the desirability of the space flows from this freedom in Judy's talk about the Scene.

## 4.9 LOOKING AND BEING LOOKED AT ON THE SCENE

We have shown how discourses about the gaze can be used to construct the Scene as a desirable place to be, free of the objectifying and judgmental gazes of heterosexual space, and how the discourses used to construct the Scene as desirable may be gendered or sexualised according to the identities of those who are talking. Of course the idea of the Scene as a place lacking oppressive gazes is an unstable one; the boundaries of the Scene are not policed to keep people out, and therefore there is a risk of the presumed same-sexuality (or at least non-heterosexuality) of the Scene being disrupted by unwelcome gazes:

> <Michael> Mm... what I think gets to me sometimes is like you're sat in NeoBar, sort of on the settees, and you'll get like a group of male/female people, obviously straight, just come out of the theatre with their like bunch of pamphlets, and if you're sat in there with your boyfriend, you feel really uncomfortable, you can't do anything, cos you've got like ten

> straight people there looking at you, if you start summat, even though you're in a gay pub... you can't

The introduction of "obviously straight" people into NeoBar, one of Birmingham's gay bars, makes Michael feel on display, helpless ("you can't do anything") and "uncomfortable". How he tells that these people are "obviously straight" is unclear, but it may be that theatre-goers are not regarded as likely Scene visitors for Michael. However, in deciding that these people are heterosexual, he feels vulnerable when subjected to their gaze. Once again, the gaze of people believed to be heterosexual is experienced as unpleasant, disrupting the assumed safety and relaxed atmosphere of the Scene. Michael implies that he wishes to resist this intrusion into gay space ("if you start summat..."), but he feels unable to do anything; a challenge to straight people and their gaze is probably seen as too risky, and besides, what would his course of action be? Would the straight people feel that they are doing anything other than 'just looking'?

Even when the presumed non-heterosexuality of the Scene is maintained (or heterosexual gazes can be ignored), we must assume that other forms of looking take place; those of lesbians, of gay men, and other visitors on the Scene. Heterosexual women who visit the Scene may find the opportunity to enjoy the power of a female gaze without the potential repercussions of looking at heterosexual men:

> <Judy> ...Yeah I went to a few places in Berlin where we didn't know it was gay until we got in, and they let us in as well, and that was a bit of a bonus... it was just completely full of men, and that was great, 'They're all gay but we can just look at them all!' [laughs], it's good isn't it? And you look at them all and they won't come over and go 'All right, darling' [laughs]

<MH> Exactly

<Judy> 'Oh, look at them' [laughs]

<MH> Completely hassle-free

<Judy> Yeah... that's a bit hard, isn't it? Shouldn't really say that, should I? Go there to ogle them [laughs] being a bit of a lass... but for a different reason isn't it? Yeah, like you say, you can do it and they're not gonna come and talk to you afterwards, whereas, not like blokes going out going 'All right, let's pull'

Judy and her friends enjoyed 'ogling' the men in some of Berlin's predominantly men-only gay venues, to which they were pleased to be granted access ("they let us in as well, that was a bit of a bonus"). A contrast is implied between gay and straight men; if Judy looks at straight men in a desiring or objectifying way, she expects her gaze to be treated as an invitation to be approached and 'chatted up'. Looking at gay men is not seen as having the same consequences. It is interesting that Judy makes the point that she was looking at the men "for a different reason" in these gay clubs. We assume that the comparison is with heterosexual men; Judy indicates that she is looking at men for a different reason than when straight men look at women. There is no intention of 'chatting up' gay men or otherwise harassing them. Judy's gaze may be desiring, or even objectifying, of these gay men, but she does not assume to have the right to approach them. The heterosexual female gaze, unlike the gaze of heterosexual men, is constructed as desiring and admiring, but not invasive or proprietary.

Perhaps we should not be surprised that there is little mention of gay or lesbian gazes in the accounts of leisure time and space that we gathered from young people. As we have shown in previous sections, discourses of the gaze, particularly the male and

heterosexual gazes, are used to construct particular meanings about the Scene in contrast to heterosexual pubs and clubs. In constructing the Scene as a gaze-free environment, it is only likely to undermine that account by introducing non-heterosexual gazes that could be desiring, objectifying or excluding. However, of the few accounts of looking on the Scene by lesbians and gay men, the following is an example:

> <MH> What was it about The Garden that you liked, apart from it being the first place that you went to?
>
> <Jonathan> It was just such an unusual place, it was just, I mean cos of course it had been a zoo at one stage, under those arches, those old arches, and er it had still got the old water gardens in them, it was just, it was slightly sort of damp, sort of musty smell, um such a range of characters, y'know I mean um... people in full drag and men of sort of like in their sixties, seventies, I'd never seen anything like that, and it was just a real people-watching place and er... it fascinated me and er the characters in there, it was the people er that really er made me intrigued and made me go back on several occasions because it was just so entertaining and er, old Laurie the host there, I mean he used to be absolutely... wicked with his humour, and er... it used to just make me laugh and er, again just made me, having never been anywhere like that before, just start, I used to go there, when the minute I got through the door I felt totally relaxed and I could have drink, and no-one would be looking at... you as such, and y'know just too busy looking at everybody else but uh, it was a, that was really the reason, it was a, just a fascinating place for meeting different people, and seeing different people

Jonathan is recalling going to a now defunct Birmingham gay club, The Garden, which had a men-only door policy (note that in Jonathan's account, 'people' = men). The description of the club, previously used as a zoo and water garden, is rich with atmosphere; it is constructed as a "fascinating place", full of "characters", located under the railway arches, slightly damp and musty, and with a "wicked" host. Part of

the attraction for Jonathan was that it was "a real people-watching place", a place where he felt "totally relaxed". Notice that Jonathan reports that he didn't feel that anyone was looking at him, but that he was "busy looking at everybody else". This image of a gay male space is lacking a judgmental and objectifying heterosexual gaze, but Jonathan's gaze is present, watching the "fascinating" drag queens, the older gay men and other "different people". Jonathan's gaze could therefore be seen as seeking out exotic Others and consuming the display of "entertaining" characters, similar in many ways to a *tourist* gaze (Urry, 1990). However, it might also be seen as celebrating the diversity of the men on display, recognising them as fellow outsiders and enjoying the performance of non-heterosexuality. There are likely to be elements of both exotification and celebration or recognition in this discourse of the gay male gaze; The Garden emerged in an era when there was still great wariness about the 'public display' of homosexuality, and probably had an air of secrecy and the bizarre attached to it. Yet, at the same time, this peripheral or outsider status would have made the club an important place to go to meet other sexual dissidents, to feel a sense of belonging, of connection and brotherhood. Jonathan sums up this contradiction when he says the club was "a fascinating place for meeting different people, and seeing different people".

## 4.10 Discourses of the gaze, constructing space, and power

Early feminist theories of the gaze, derived from film theory, focused exclusively on gender as the structuring dynamic of looking between subjects. This early research was important in identifying the negative portrayals of women in films, and explaining the positioning of women as passive objects of the male gaze through psychoanalytic theory. This critique allowed resistance to the limited and formalised

depiction of women, and questioned the male prerogative to look at women as objects for pleasure. While this early work is undoubtedly important in the feminist canon, it is now recognised that feminists need to engage with other forms of difference, belonging and oppression that have importance in people's lives (e.g. hooks, 1992; Kaplan, 1997). With respect to the gaze, we should always consider the gendered aspects of looking (that predominantly affect women), but we can also analyse the gaze to consider other differences, such as race, class or sexuality (Gamman and Marshment, 1988). Our study has explored discourses of looking in relation to people's leisure time, and revealed how the gaze can be constructed as masculinised or heterosexualised or both, and how gay male and heterosexual women's gazes might vary from these dominant discourses.

We have shown how focusing on sexuality can introduce different constructions of the gaze, and how these constructions or discourses are linked to particular meanings about places. The identities of our participants, whether they were lesbian or gay, male or female, related to the discourses of the gaze that were most obvious in their descriptions of their leisure time and the bars, clubs and pubs they frequented. Thus heterosexual women talked of the discourse of the desiring and objectifying male heterosexual gaze, and its presence and absence in different venues. Our lesbian participants could also talk of escaping this male gaze, but, along with gay men, were also likely to talk of the non-gender-specific heterosexual gaze and its oppressive, judgmental features. The *absence* of these gazes was posited as a feature of the lesbian and gay Scene, and given as a reason for the Scene's desirability and 'good atmosphere'. This absence could be undermined by heterosexual outsiders 'breaking in' to the Scene, and by the gazes of lesbians, gay men and heterosexual women being

articulated in relation to the Scene. The production of contrasting meanings about heterosexual and non-heterosexual leisure venues using discourses of the gaze could be regarded as an example of the discursive production of space, an idea originally articulated by Lefebvre (1991), and reworked by feminist and cultural geographers more recently in relation to lesbian and gay spaces (e.g. Bell & Valentine, 1995b; Duncan, 1996).

The specific representation of the heterosexual gaze by lesbian and gay participants as oppressive and judgmental also relates to Foucault's (1977) description of the Panopticon, and the internalisation of the gaze as an operation of power and control. The internalisation of dominant gendered discourses of looking can be considered as a way in which women are oppressed e.g. by expecting to be looked at and judged on their appearance (particularly by men), and by being denied an agentic gaze of their own. The accounts of women in this study do not clearly imply self-regulation in relation to the discourse of the male gaze, but do imply that the idea that 'men look and women are looked at' is still pervasive, particularly in relation to certain heterosexual venues. In contrast, the representation of the heterosexual gaze as all-encompassing and all-pervasive by our lesbian and gay participants, and their sense of being watched and surveyed by unspecified heterosexual others, does imply self-regulation. If lesbians and gay men believe that they are being watched for signs of 'deviance', then they may alter their behaviour to prevent 'unmasking' in certain social spaces (e.g. Valentine, 1993b). As an effect of power, this can keep lesbians and gay men silent and invisible by their own actions (or inaction). Of course, we do not assume that this type of regulation is coherent and universal; our lesbian and gay participants did articulate their own desiring and celebratory discourses of looking,

and lesbians and gay men have 'won' limited battles for the control of space and the visible display of same-sexuality (e.g. Knopp, 1992; Rothenberg, 1995).

Throughout this paper we have tried to shift the emphasis from the idea of the gaze as purely male or masculine, to thinking of the male gaze as *one* of the dominant discourses of looking in our culture. For our lesbian and gay participants, the heterosexual gaze was of primary concern in their accounts. The idea that the gaze may be oppressively heterosexual (or raced or classed) should not be overlooked in feminist analyses; gender may not always be the primary 'lens' through which accounts are structured, or it may be operating in conjunction with other forms of identification or difference. The discourses of looking we examined generally represented being subjected to the gaze of others as a negative experience, yet at the same time were used positively to construct important meanings about places (such as the lesbian and gay Scene). This contradiction should be expected; while discourses of the male (and heterosexual) gazes are dominant, and alternative discourses of lesbian, gay or female gazes are less easy to articulate, then the dominant discourses are likely to be reworked to serve the needs of lesbians, gay men and heterosexual women. Constructing the lesbian and gay Scene as a place free from oppressive male heterosexual gazes is important in creating 'authentic' places to belong (see Chapter 3) and can be seen as indirect resistance, rather than a direct challenge to the dominant discourses of the male and other gazes.

In contrast to earlier analyses of the gaze that focused purely on gender, our research indicates that the practices of looking in everyday life are complex, discourses of the gaze are multiple, and their use in discourse can be influenced by the needs of those with marginalised identities, as well as reflecting dominant power relations. The 'male

gaze' is a dominant discourse of looking in our culture, but it is not the only one. We have tried to illuminate the potential complexity of an everyday activity such as 'looking' through the accounts of young people, and in relation to feminist theory. We hope our study has contributed in making some of these issues more 'visible' for feminists and psychologists alike.

# 5. STUDENTS *VS* LOCALS: YOUNG ADULTS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE WORKING-CLASS OTHER[18]

## 5.1 ABSTRACT

Social class is a relatively neglected topic in social psychology. In this paper a critical/discursive approach is employed to show how analysing an aspect of everyday life such as leisure and 'going out' can reveal the reproduction of dominant discourses about class. Forty-two middle-class young adults were taken on 'nights out' to bars and pubs and then interviewed later to generate group accounts of the people and places they encountered. An analysis of participants' talk about 'going out' to bars and pubs is used to illustrate the reproduction of class difference in their dialogue. Focusing on the relationship between 'students' and 'locals' we consider how working-class people are constructed as 'Other' and how discourses of mobility and territoriality are used to specify dominant class relations in places. We also identify a discourse of risk and reward that constructs working-class venues as potentially exciting places for middle-class people to visit. We consider how this may reflect a shift towards consumption as a means of class expression, as well as locating our findings in the context of existing research.

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[18] A version of this chapter has been submitted to the *British Journal of Social Psychology*.

## 5.2 INTRODUCTION

Class is a peculiarly neglected topic in social psychology. While significant attention has been paid to race and gender, social class appears to be a topic that has occasionally generated a brief flurry of interest within psychology, only to disappear again into the background. As Frable (1997) succinctly puts it:

> Psychologists use class in two ways: to describe research participants (often with the ubiquitous phrase "most subjects were white and middle class") and as an independent variable (to control uninteresting variation or to show that class does not interact with "more important" constructs). With few exceptions, class as a meaningful identity is simply absent from the psychological literature (p. 154)

We suspect that this absence of class from the psychological literature may be the outcome of a number of commonly held assumptions: that class as a social issue is too complex to study; that it is the traditional domain of sociology and is not a 'proper' subject for psychological investigation; and that a consideration of class necessitates dealing with the messy world of politics. While class may indeed be a highly complex subject, we contend that psychologists have the expertise, methods and experience to study the effects of class and its significance in people's lives. Psychologists have spent much time and effort considering complex and political issues such as race and ethnicity, and therefore should be capable of approaching class. In this paper we illustrate one way of considering the 'class issue', by looking at how white, mainly middle-class and educated young adults (arguably the majority of participants in psychological research) draw upon and reproduce specific class distinctions and prejudice in their talk about leisure time. A critical/discursive approach is employed to consider how our respondents construct the relationship between themselves and

working-class Others, and how this relationship is constituted in ways that justify existing class inequalities.

To frame our research we will consider the few relevant psychological studies in the area, examining both the 'traditional' and 'critical' social psychological approaches to class. In doing so, we draw out some definitions of the term 'social class', noting in particular how the significance of class for people's identities may have changed in recent times. We consider why looking at middle-class constructions of class and the working-class Other may be instructive in order to understand how dominant understandings of class are reproduced. Our analysis of mainly middle-class young adults' accounts of their leisure time focuses on the construction of the relationship between 'students' and 'locals', the supposed qualities of these two groups, and the discourses used to structure and justify this relationship. We show how, in attempting to make sense of their experiences of places like bars and pubs, our respondents reproduce dominant assumptions about class.

## 5.3 THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF CLASS

A review of research in mainstream psychology reveals little that is explicitly concerned with social class. However, there are a few notable exceptions, such as *The Psychology of Social Classes: a Study of Class Consciousness* by Richard Centers (1949) and *The Psychology of Social Class* by Michael Argyle (1994). Although Centers' research is somewhat dated (particularly in its exclusive focus on a white male population) it is worth mentioning because it introduces the traditional view of social class used in the social sciences, namely that derived from Marxist theory. Centers called this the 'interest group theory of social classes'. In this model, a

person's occupational status within the capitalist system (their relation to the means of production) determines their class position and a sense of common interest or 'class consciousness'. Using occupation to determine class status means that, crudely put, manual workers are thought to make up the working classes, clerical workers, professionals and managers are regarded as middle-class, and those who control or own the means of production are regarded as the upper or ruling class. Class position is assumed to determine individual attitudes and political affiliation, as well as a collective sense of class membership and shared values with others perceived to be in the same class. In addition, due to their lack of control over the means of production, members of the working classes are supposed to be more inclined to desire social and political change. This has been the dominant model of social class in the social sciences throughout the twentieth century, and is acknowledged by Argyle (1994) in his wide-ranging review of research on class in the British context. Argyle discusses the problems involved in defining social class, highlighting how official measures of class usually focus on occupational status (Britain), income or educational level (USA), but that people usually have a clear *subjective* sense of class status which does not always match up with these objective measures. For the British, the way people speak, where they live, the friends they have, their appearance, family background, political views and 'style of life' are all implicated in how people assess class status (Reid, 1989). Class cannot automatically be 'read off' from a person's occupational status, but is constituted through diverse social and cultural practices.

Argyle's book (1994) is a useful resource, but, for us and other authors, his theoretical approach is lacking in some respects (Prilleltensky, 1997; Ussher, 1996). His review of psychological models of class compares hierarchies in animals to those in human

groups and organisations, and then uses this research on hierarchies as the basis of a "social psychological model of the class system" (Argyle, 1994, p. 62). The inclusion of animal models seems to reinforce the assumption that class hierarchies are in some way 'natural' and *inevitable*, rather than actually helping us to understand class stratification as something that is *produced* and that can be *changed* by historical, social and political processes. The extrapolation of human behaviour in dominance hierarchies and organisations to explain the entire class system seems somewhat naïve; as Argyle himself says "[t]hese are not classes, but dominance relations between a number of individuals" (p. 51). These 'psychological models' try to collapse class relations that operate simultaneously and dynamically at social, cultural *and* psychological levels into individual behaviours that can be measured and understood with traditional social psychological theory. This results in the erasure of the social and cultural dimensions of class.

The consideration of Tajfel's (1978) Social Identity Theory (SIT) as a way to approach class (Argyle, 1994, pp. 223-226) might seem more appealing, given the theory's more explicitly 'social' focus. Acknowledging that social psychologists using SIT have been more interested in race than class, Argyle argues that the "race model fits classes quite well" (p. 224) and goes on to elaborate the similarities and differences between SIT interpretations of race and class relations in society. Yet there are problems here too. Argyle says that SIT has difficulty in explaining why "[s]ubordinate groups are very likely simply to accept their inferior status" (p. 226). He goes on to say that:

> We have seen that lower-status groups not only accept their position in the hierarchy, but agree that middle-class people are superior in intelligence, leadership and other desirable

> qualities. And about a third of lower-class people accept the class system as just and legitimate, have no desire to change it and vote Conservative. (p. 226)

We suggest that SIT's difficulty in explaining the tolerance of class inequality is related to an impoverished view of social processes that impinge on the individual. What is missing here is an appreciation of how class inequalities are constituted, justified, naturalised and reproduced at a discursive level, by individuals and throughout culture. 'Common sense' arguments, media representations, political rhetoric and 'theoretical' research from universities and policy units all contribute to the *discourses* or *ideologies* about class that circulate in society that tell us, for example, that working-class people are less intelligent, do less valuable work, and are less refined and cultured than their middle and upper-class counterparts, while at the same time displaying 'virtues' of integrity and stoicism. These kinds of arguments justify the maintenance of a socio-economic system that privileges some and excludes others.

However, class ideology does not only justify the status quo; discourses about class are important in informing and shaping the individual's experience of being a classed subject as they try to make sense of their material position. Argyle's (1994) comment that the working classes 'accept their status' ignores the role that ideology has in mobilizing people "to desire their own exploitation and fail to act to change the conditions that perpetuate personal misery as well as physical brutality" (Parker, 1999, p. 292). As psychologists we can try to understand how class ideology positions people as working, middle or upper-class, and how people accept this positioning or negotiate it in their identities. We deliberately list the middle and upper classes as worthy of study too so that the 'problem of class' is not solely aligned with the

working classes; it is important to understand how the relatively privileged deal with or ignore class inequalities so that we can understand the justifications and evasions used to maintain class ideology.

An appreciation of ideology can help us to understand how those views of class that benefit the privileged come to be seen as 'just and legitimate' by many. It is worth noting that psychology's status as a discipline that produces expert knowledge is implicated here. As Parker (1999) points out, without an appreciation of the ways in which ideology permeates *psychological theory* as well as culture, as psychologists we stand the risk of either reproducing ideology that helps to maintain oppressive conditions, or blaming the under-privileged for not simply recognising their own oppression and doing something about it.

## 5.4 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES TO CLASS

In contrast to traditional social psychological approaches to class, psychologists taking a critical view of class have considered how significant the *social* and *cultural* aspects of class are in contributing to people's experience of being a classed subject, and how the experience of class in everyday life is integrated into identity. Research conducted by feminist psychologists is notable here in developing theories of classed subjectivities and for 'giving voice' to the viewpoints and experiences of those neglected by mainstream psychology, particularly working-class women (see Walkerdine, 1996). Critical psychologists have also considered how class ideology passes by unchallenged or unnoticed in theory and in people's lives, seeking to identify and deconstruct taken-for-granted assumptions about class. These approaches have also considered the difficulties in developing adequate critique and opposing

oppressive discourse and practice (see Parker, 1999).

Recognising that class is enacted at a social and cultural level necessitates a consideration of how class relations change historically. For a while during the 1980s, a number of social theorists, notably Zygmunt Bauman (1982), argued that class was increasingly irrelevant in the West, and that a new generation was growing up whose identities were not defined by what they *produced collectively*, but by what they *consumed individually* (see Miles, 1996). Consumption includes diverse practices such as shopping, eating, drinking, listening to music, watching television and film, tourism, hobbies, decorating, DIY and clubbing. This focus on people's 'lifestyles' and leisure time as important for identification and expression was significant in that it encouraged new work on popular culture and everyday life. The 'decline of class' thesis also recognised that political beliefs were no longer solely based on class divisions, and that class did not necessarily have primacy over other inequalities such as gender, ethnicity, age, sexuality or able-bodiedness (Jamieson, 2000). As Bradley (1996) notes, class identities have become "submerged identities" (p. 72). This does not mean that class is forgotten, but that it may not be spoken about; as Bradley says "people are often reluctant to talk in class terms in a society in which classlessness, though not attained, is seen as the desired ideal" (p. 72). This ideal of 'classlessness' may have been propagated for political reasons; Beynon (1999) has suggested that it was politically useful for those on the Right to promote consumption and classlessness, particularly during the Thatcher and Major eras. The 'attack on class' served to disguise the fact that class was still seen as a source of inequality by the majority of the population.

Other empirical work suggests that consumption and class are actually inter-related,

and that notions of consumer freedom, choice, and self-expression are derived from a middle-class aspirational ideology. Bourdieu's (1984) in-depth study of consumption in France suggests that 'taste' and 'style' are seen as expressions of class, and that those from different classes have markedly different consumption patterns. Consumption is an arena for self-expression, but it is also used to demonstrate social worth and status, and thereby reinforce class position (see also Baudrillard, 1998). Other work in critical psychology has investigated this tension between consumption and class. For instance, Phoenix & Tizard (1996) concluded that the young Londoners they interviewed saw themselves as belonging to discrete social class groupings, but the boundaries between these classes were constructed using consumption-based signifiers such as behaviour, lifestyle, housing, speech and dress, as well as economic standing. Phoenix & Tizard agreed that consumption has 'symbolic significance' because it gives messages to others about status and identity.

Traditional social psychological approaches to class tend to represent the working class as a problem and the middle class as the norm, leaving middle-class accounts of class unchallenged. Phoenix & Tizard (1996) noticed that class seemed to be a particular source of insecurity or anxiety for middle-class young people, and that "class was more likely to constitute a conscious identity position for middle-class than for working-class young people" (p. 439). Middle-class youth thought that their relatively privileged position was resented by working-class people, and this was a source of fear. This insecurity about middle-class identity was accompanied by accounts of working-class lifestyles as inferior or incomprehensible to middle-class people. Walkerdine (1995) has argued that this combination of middle-class insecurity and construction of the working class as inferior is the basis for the regulation of the

working classes. The way that the working class is described as a problem 'Other' to the middle-class norm tells us about "the fears and fantasies of the regulators, the bourgeoisie" (pp. 316-317; see also Sampson, 1993). For Walkerdine, the middle-class imagination "sees threat and annihilation around every corner because of its shaky position in between the aristocracy and the proletariat" (p. 317). The fears and hopes of the middle class are projected onto the working-class Other, constructing working-class people as "lower, more animal, less civilised, less rational" (p. 317). This defends middle-class identity, assuring the middle classes that they are inherently better than the working classes, and should aspire to and can expect more from life. The creation of a 'problem' working class also justifies its investigation, monitoring and improvement, by specialist disciplines such as psychology (see Blackman, 1996). In addition, the investment in constructing the working class as Other means that what it means to be middle-class is ignored or unchallenged in theory and everyday life. As Hey (1997) puts it, the middle class is "the class that is invisible to itself" (p. 142).

## 5.5 THE STUDY

In this paper we would like to examine how young middle-class people construct the working class as Other, as a way to interrogate dominant assumptions about class. This locates our approach within the critical/discursive strand of social psychology, one of the aims of which is to deconstruct dominant discourses that aid oppression (Burman & Parker, 1993b). Discourse here is not just talk, rhetoric and arguments about particular topics that lie outside the individual, but is the medium within which our understanding of the 'individual' and the 'social' are constructed. Given that the meanings we create through discourse shape our understanding of who we are as people *and* the world we live in, there is no separation between the 'individual' and

'social' in this type of discursive approach (Wetherell, 1999).

The analysis which follows uses data from a project on young people's identities in relation to sexuality, leisure and place. Our focus on leisure reflects contemporary arguments that consumption is increasingly important in the constitution of identities, and that leisure is a domain in which people display messages about status and identity (see above). Our consideration of place reflects a 'spatial turn' in the social sciences in general, and the idea that people feel a connection with places where they can display their identities. People's sense of belonging in places is mediated by inequalities such as gender, sexuality, race or class. In a recent issue of the *BJSP*, Dixon & Durrheim (2000) elaborated the concept of place identity and showed how discourses about the organisation of space in South Africa reflect and reproduce dominant arguments about race. Our analysis here principally focuses on class.

Our 'subjects' in this phase of research were predominantly white, middle-class young adults. Their official class status (as in much psychological work) was inferred from their occupational status and educational attainment; they were either students, working in higher education or were employed in professional, managerial or contemporary service industries (such as marketing). The majority of employed interviewees at the time of the study were graduates, and had attended university. This was deliberate, rather than an accident of the research or because of a failure to recruit a more diverse group of participants; we wanted to be able to look at the dialogue of predominantly middle-class young people to look for discourses about class and its relation to leisure. Our assumption that respondents were exposed to middle-class ideology because of their experience of higher education is reinforced by the testimony of those from working-class backgrounds (particularly women) who have

struggled to succeed within academia, and who have had to adjust to the middle-class prejudices and privileges they encounter there (Morley, 1997; Reay, 1997; Ussher, 1996; Walkerdine, 1995), as well as research that shows that middle and upper-class children are still significantly more likely to attend university than lower-class children (Marsh & Blackburn, 1992).

## 5.6 METHOD

Twelve group interviews with 42 people in total (20 male, 22 female, mean age 25.2 yrs) were conducted between March 1999 and March 2000 in a city in the Midlands. Given that the overarching thrust of the project was to look at the connections between sexuality and leisure, we also maintained a sexually-diverse sample; the majority of our participants identified as heterosexual (N=31), 7 identified as gay, 3 as lesbian and 1 as bisexual. Interviews took place after taking groups of participants (around 3-5 people per group) out on a 'night out' to three city bars or pubs chosen by the first author. Sets of bars and pubs were chosen that were a) different from one another in terms of design, size and clientele, and b) located near to one another to allow enough time to visit all the venues in an evening. Participants were told to treat the night out as a 'normal' social occasion, but that they would be asked about their impressions of the different venues and the people in them during the interview. Interviews were conducted the following day (or as soon as possible) in a convenient location where a group discussion could be tape recorded. Expenses were paid on completion of the interview.

Interviews were semi-structured and centred around generating a group account of the 'night out'. This included what the participants thought of the different venues, and

how this compared with their own usual leisure activities. Interviews lasted on average just over an hour. The tapes were transcribed verbatim and the transcripts were subjected to a discourse analysis, the procedure similar to that outlined by Potter & Wetherell (1987). This involved reading and re-reading transcripts looking for common phrases or arguments that occurred throughout the interviews, then focusing in on key phrases or code words (such as 'student' or 'local') around which common arguments were constructed. Using the research described above, we developed theoretical accounts of the student/local relationship presented by our participants, exploring its relation to class, and detailing the discourses used. The following analysis uses typical interview quotes to explore how the student/local relationship was constructed through the particular discourses we identified. Names of participants, venues and places have been changed to protect anonymity. The interviewer is indicated by the initials MH.

## 5.7 Constructing the working class (as) Other

In talking about the venues involved in the study, and their leisure time in general, respondents often used 'code words' to refer to places or groups of people. The way that they were used suggested that participants had a shared understanding of these terms, and that their meaning was supposed to be 'obvious' to the interviewer:

> <Nick> But you do, don't you, I mean... cos the gay Scene, you don't, I mean on the straight scene you normally have a young type club, like somewhere like the Dome, where it's, you don't go in unless you're under twelve type thing, I think gay places you...
>
> <Ben> It's Kevs and Trevs and it's Sharons and Tracys, isn't it?
>
> [Nick & Ben – both 24 yr old gay men, IT consultant & marketing executive]

<MH> Why is it that the front bar looks scary?

<Julie> Cos it's full of people that I don't know [laughs], and I've never been in there, so I don't know... I don't know what it's like

<Jim> Well it's kind of full of locals isn't it?

[Julie – 25 yr old heterosexual woman; Jim – 31 yr old heterosexual man; both postgraduate students]

<MH> How would you characterise what it was like?

<Celia> Towny? [laughter]

<Sarah> I was going to say that

[Celia – 20 yr old bisexual woman; Sarah – 18 yr old lesbian woman; both undergraduate students]

The extracts above show the kinds of terms that participants often used to describe other people in particular venues. 'Kevs, Trevs, Sharons, Tracys', 'locals' and 'townies' were often used as shortcuts in interviews to imply groups of people or places with particular qualities. When they were asked to define them, it was rare for participants to be able to explain what they meant by such terms. Sometimes the terms were used interchangeably or inconsistently. However overall we felt that these terms were being used to indicate groups of people who were seen to be working-class or as a way to refer to places where working-class people went. This was confirmed on the few occasions when the terms were explicitly linked to the concept of class:

<MH> You mentioned quite a bit about the class thing, so how, and you mentioned like Kevs and Shazzes, y'know I have to like ask a question about Kevs and Shazzes [laughter], seriously, when you say Kevs and Shazzes, what do you mean?

<Michelle> Just, just... I mean I, yeah, it's just sort of the people that are, are sort of, live locally, always going to live locally, kind of, kind of a bit more working-class but that sounds like really, really snobby, but um... y'know they, they've just left school at sort of sixteen, gone into a...

<Robert> Yeah

<Michelle> ...a job, um, probably never had any career prospects in a way, and also resent people, therefore people who have got on to, y'know, do a further degree etcetera, y'know all this kind of 'fucking students' type thing, um...

<Robert> Yeah, otherwise they just don't get do they, they just don't see the attraction

<Sam> They leave school and, and they don't see why anyone would ever want to stay on...

<Robert> Yeah

[Michelle & Sam – 21 yr old heterosexual women; Robert – 23 yr old gay man; all postgraduate students]

In this particular extract, Michelle links the category of 'Kevs and Shazzes' to the idea of working-class people who live locally. This allows us to read the top three quotes as coded references to class. In this and other interviews, we found that explicit references to class were relatively taboo; talking about class was often accompanied by nervous laughter or an apology. In the quote above Michelle qualifies her use of the term 'working-class' with the phrase "but that sounds like really, really snobby". Coded terms (such as 'towny' or 'local') may be used more frequently as a way of avoiding embarrassment or discomfort in talking about class directly.

Returning to the above quote, we can see a construction of working-class Others that centres around the discourse of *fixity*; these 'Kevs and Shazzes' are seen as

geographically static ("always going to live locally") and unlikely to have the upward career trajectory that is a common assumption of middle-class youth ("never had any career prospects"). The apparent lack of prospects of these working-class Others is then connected to a resentment of students by Michelle. However Robert and Sam suggest that anti-student feeling is a result of a *lack* of understanding or appreciation of higher education ("they just don't see the attraction"). These two comments derive from commonly-held ideas about class; either that those 'lower down' the class hierarchy resent those 'higher up' because of differences in material conditions and prospects (Phoenix & Tizard, 1996), or the more reactionary position that the working classes are *incapable* of appreciating the educational and cultural training that the middle and upper classes receive (such as university education). The latter argument once again emphasises the fixity of working-class 'Kevs and Shazzes'; unable to "see the attraction" of university, they are constructed as unlikely to be able to 'escape' their class position.

## 5.8 STUDENTS *VS* LOCALS: THE DISCOURSE OF MOBILITY

The idea of an opposition between students and locals (or 'townies' or 'Kevs and Shazzes') was reproduced by many of our respondents. This opposition is worthy of further attention in that it reveals how specific class relations (in this case between students and working-class Others) are constructed and reproduced. The construction of the student *vs* local opposition by our participants involved specifying the qualities and relationships between different classes of people, as well as defining certain classed spatial relationships and a division between places:

> <MH> So do you think your whole sort of like expectations of, well, particular in relation to like where you go out and stuff, has changed a lot, since becoming a student?
>
> <Sam> I think, there can, there always is in certain cities, there's always a tension isn't there, between locals and students, 'they're the ones that do all the violence and make a noise at night', and, and we're only there temporary and so they have their permanent places and they're their places, and we've got our places, and we shouldn't go into theirs, and they won't come into ours...
>
> [Sam – 21 yr old heterosexual woman, postgraduate student]

The extract above is typical of a negative construction of the relationship between students and local people. The "tension" between the two groups is seen as universal and inevitable, and is characterised by a spatial relationship whereby students go to "our" places and locals go to "their" places. As in the extract in the previous section, the *fixity* of local people is emphasised; they have "permanent places". In contrast, students are "temporary" and therefore belong somewhere else. The fact that students *are* often temporary residents in university towns and cities (as another interviewee put it, "I've had five addresses in four years") is not enough to explain why they are not supposed to go to the same places as local people; 'temporary' students and 'permanent' locals are assumed to have different lifestyles and qualities and to have little in common. We suspect that the idea that locals are 'fixed' and students are not is part of a wider *discourse of mobility* in our culture; students are seen as middle-class and *mobile* in terms of education, leisure, career and geographical location in a way that working-class people are not (Jamieson, 2000). Consider the following quote:

> <Scott> ...I mean I suppose an obvious thing is that people, especially young people, move around a helluva lot more than they used to, in much greater numbers, so again it's that...

> y'know local pubs are... probably not geared to most of those younger people, y'know whereas the locals' pubs are I mean y'know, pubs for locals...
>
> [Scott – 24 yr old heterosexual man, researcher]

Changes in the job market and education mean that young people *do* have greater opportunities for mobility than in the past, however this ability to "move around" is still skewed to those who traditionally have had better educational and career opportunities i.e. middle-class youth (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997). Thus the reason that local pubs are seen as "not geared to" young people is not just a result of students being temporary residents; the assumed mobility of students and other young adults is an indicator of their social class, and this perceived difference in class status between students and locals means that the two groups are supposed to have different tastes and therefore not go to the same places.

## 5.9 STUDENTS *VS* LOCALS: TERRITORIALITY AND CONFLICT

As well as being constructed through the discourse of mobility, the student/local opposition was reinforced by a *discourse of territoriality* (see the quote from Sam above where she talks of "their" places and "our" places). Participants often described students and locals as having separate places to go out, or not going to the same places at the same times:

> <MH> You were saying about Saturday night being a town night, is that something...?
>
> <Catherine> Yeah, I don't know, I haven't felt it that much this year, maybe I'm not bothered, but I used to really feel that you couldn't, as a student, you couldn't go out on Saturday night cos, cos of prices, because of, y'know you used to get like, if you got IDed on the door, you'd present your student card and that was it, you weren't getting in, regardless if you were old

enough or not, things like that, I think there's a real anti-student feel and, y'know you're meant to go out on a Wednesday, that's when student nights are and stuff but, I mean I didn't feel that last night, and y'know it's something I had in my mind when I was younger, but I still think of the weekends as being like 'oh, other people's night out'

[Catherine – 22 yr old heterosexual woman, undergraduate student]

<Julie> The students have gone home now though…

<Jackie> Yeah

<Julie> …haven't they? And you tend to find that in studenty pubs, once the students go, the locals will go…

<Lucy> It changes

<Julie> …because they can get, because they can get a drink easier, and so you get local people in the so-called student pubs over the summer, and then they all leave, when the students come back in September

[Julie – 25 yrs old; Jackie & Lucy – 23 yrs old; all heterosexual women; all postgraduate students]

Catherine suggests that door policies may be implicated in keeping students out of clubs in the city at the weekend, and that midweek student nights are when students are "meant to go out". In the second quote, Julie suggests that local people voluntarily avoid students and pubs regarded as "studenty", apart from during the summer university vacation. Both quotes imply that local or 'towny' people *decide* to exclude or avoid students through actively limiting access to 'local' places, or choosing to avoid student venues.

In the following quote, Sam goes somewhat further, blaming locals for aggressive and

territorial behaviour. The disruption of student and local territoriality, by 'invading' each other's spaces, is seen to result in antagonism or conflict:

> <Sam> I think they bring a bit of it on themselves, I think as well, because somewhere like the Black Horse, people go there for a lot of drinks but... if there was like a couple of locals in there, I don't think the students would be particularly aggressive towards the locals, quite so much, as perhaps the locals are sort, they're much more, 'they've invaded our, they've invaded my pub', whereas we perhaps don't think quite so much, especially if you go somewhere like the University Arms, which is a bit quieter, you don't bat an eyelid, I don't certainly and there are groups of people that I drank with that wouldn't bat an eyelid at three middle-aged men sat in the University Arms...
>
> <Robert> Yeah, no, yeah
>
> <Sam> ...whereas they might think 'oh bloody students have come in again' and...
>
> [Sam – 21 yr old heterosexual women; Robert – 23 yr old gay man; both postgraduate students]

The three extracts above illustrate a common device in participants' accounts of the territoriality of students and locals; local people were often constructed as the *agents* of territorial behaviour, while our respondents generally positioned themselves as passive or reactive. Constructing locals as the perpetrators of territoriality implies that students are less responsible for the maintenance of the student/local divide, thus making local people easier to blame for any antagonism. Thus the discourse of territoriality can be used to justify or legitimise the opposition between students and locals as solely the fault of local people, and ignores the difference in status and power between students at a large British 'red brick' university and the local people living in the often run-down, student-dominated residential areas adjacent to it. This difference in power is somewhat acknowledged by Michelle in the same interview

as Sam; Michelle is more sympathetic to the idea that the creation of student venues near to the university has displaced local pubs:

> <Michelle> Cos I can understand their point, because a couple of years back, The Old Cannon used to be like a local pub...
>
> <Sam> Yeah
>
> <Michelle> ...and that seems to be where they used to go, and that's fine, y'know cos obviously if they came into a student pub, then they're gonna get hassled, and they're gonna feel out of place, and so they had that, The Old Cannon, and the Black Horse, and It's A Scream came over and took it over, and it became a student place, and The River's Edge was always like beforehand was a student place, and the University Arms, whatever, so we've taken all their pubs and not left, y'know not left anything for them, and so it really really was a really kind of aggro situation, we had like sort of locals driving up in a car, um hurling abuse at students, and students responding back, so it wasn't nice
>
> [Michelle & Sam - 21 yr old heterosexual women, both postgraduate students]

Drawing on the discourse of territoriality, Michelle constructs bars and pubs as spaces to be 'won' or 'lost' in a battle for the control of space. *Both* students and locals are presented as active agents in this extract. Students are described as 'hassling' locals coming in to student pubs and as 'taking over' previously local venues. The locals meanwhile are described as "hurling abuse". However, the two groups are not represented as equal in power in this account; there is a sense that students have the right to grant or deny access to places, while the locals can only react aggressively to the dominance of student pubs. This is indicated in the phrase, "we've taken all their pubs and not left... anything for them".

## 5.10 Going to locals' pubs: the gaze of the working-class Other

For many of our interviewees, interpreting the student/local relationship through a discourse of territoriality (with the antagonism and conflict that this implies) seemed to be the most obvious response available to them when trying to make sense of unfamiliar surroundings. This was particularly the case when interviewees described going in to 'traditional' pubs that they felt were locals' venues. These accounts often mentioned being 'uncomfortable' or ill at ease when in close proximity to the working-class Other:

> <Julie> No, I don't, the only pub I've ever felt uncomfortable in is this place called The Rocket, y'know it's out... as you go towards... past Smithfields, down there, and um it's sort of in the middle, it's like on a... there's a triangle and it's there and there's a roundabout next to it, and we went in there and... had a drink and we came straight out [laughs], because it was just full of local people who all knew each other and they all looked at us as we came in and we were students then, just a group of students, and it was so obvious that we weren't welcome there, and that we didn't really want to be there, so that's the only place I've ever felt uncomfortable, really
>
> [Julie – 25 yr old heterosexual woman, postgraduate student]
>
> <Dan> Yeah it did, it felt like 'ooh we don't like strangers round these parts'
>
> <Alan> 'We don't like your sort round here'
>
> <Tom> Yeah
>
> <Dan> It was, it just felt like 'oh dear, we're students', kinda, I felt like a student, or y'know like we're sort of invading someone else's territory, and I s'pose I wasn't that amorous, y'know, we don't belong, it's obvious we don't belong there

[Dan & Alan - 28 yrs old, clinical trainee & researcher; Tom - 24 yrs old, analyst progammer; all heterosexual men]

<MH> Right, so what was that like, you sort of walked in...

<Michelle> It felt like there was sort of like, everyone sort of stopped and all the music turned off [laughter] and they turned round and we went 'oh' [laughs]

<MH> So did you have the impression you were in the right place when you went to that bar?

<Michelle> No [laughter]

<Sam> We had the impression we should leave very quickly

[Michelle & Sam - 21 yr old heterosexual women, both postgraduate students]

These narratives invoke a familiar storyline, similar to that used in Hollywood Westerns; a group of strangers enters an unfamiliar bar, the locals turn round and look, and the strangers are 'obviously' not welcome, eliciting a frosty reception or worse. Once again, these accounts are structured through a territorial discourse of the relationship between students and locals, where the students 'invade' local territory and are 'out of place'. In representing themselves as violating local space, participants construct themselves as unwelcome and not belonging. What is particularly interesting in these extracts is the attention paid to the *gaze* of Others; in each of these extracts local people are constructed as *looking* at or paying attention to participants as they walk in to the pub. In adhering to a rigid division between student and local, and aligning themselves with the student side of this divide, our participants construct the gaze of these working-class Others as threatening, or at least making the participants feel marked and vulnerable. This does not necessarily mean that the participants *were* being watched, but that they construct specific spaces as locations

where they are monitored and put under surveillance by 'local' Others.

The sense of nervousness or discomfort in these extracts reveals a negative consequence of maintaining the construction of locals as working-class Others. Throughout the extracts quoted here, many of our participants have represented Others as different from themselves (in terms of mobility, prospects, educational attainment, and of course, class). The 'local' or 'Kev' or 'towny' is a figure that represents what our participants are not, or more accurately, *what they do not want to be*, and is a visible reminder of the persistence and importance of class difference for middle-class people in general, and for our participants in particular. Faced with these Others 'up close' in a locals' pub, our participants report feelings of discomfort and sometimes threat. However, this uneasy relationship with the working-class Other is complicated still further when we consider in the next section how some respondents (including those already quoted above) report *seeking out* 'risky' local places.

## 5.11 Risk and reward: the appeal of the locals' pub

Not all the accounts of going to traditional pubs given by our respondents were constructed simply through a territorial discourse where local people were represented as inferior working-class Others. Some interviewees expressed a preference for 'traditional' and 'local' pubs. Here the 'risks' of going into 'local territory' were offset by the idea of being 'rewarded' for 'making an effort'. Consider the quote from Sheila below, who is describing why she likes a traditional pub near to where she lives:

> <Sheila> I know, but it's a nicer pub, I'd *much* prefer that kind of environment to have a drink in, so it's worth the risk of going to a pub which isn't pleasant, it's not just like you're joining

> the club because... it's not like if you go to a bar or a pub like that once or twice you're immediately one of the locals and you're very welcome and everything, but um... I think it's more that y'know if you want a certain type of drinking experience where you can talk to people, like you don't get that going into chain pubs, and... I don't know, it being, it being quite informal I think's quite important...
>
> [Sheila – 25 yr old heterosexual woman, postgraduate student]

Here Sheila suggests that the risk of going into a pub that might be unpleasant is offset by the quality of "drinking experience" that you gain from finding an "informal" locals' pub where "you can talk to people". This is apparently lacking in "chain pubs". While the idea of an informal place where you can talk to people is probably appealing to many, the *way* this is expressed by Sheila is interesting, and relates to the idea of a shift from older class divisions towards consumption as a way to think about leisure. The idea of *choosing* between places to find a desirable leisure 'experience' is part of the rhetoric of consumer choice, where different bars and pubs are not just places to drink, but are offering different experiences (in terms of setting, décor, atmosphere, choice of drinks, clientele, price etc) for consumers to decide between before placing their custom. In consumerist terms, the ability of the consumer to appreciate, locate and go to more 'difficult' or risky places gives him or her more credibility and status, similar to the idea of the tourist finding 'authentic' places to visit (Munt, 1994). This is a *discourse of risk and reward* that other participants expressed. In the following extract we see a group of young men debate the relative merits of risky places versus chain pubs:

> <Alan> ...if there is a genuine quantity, y'know when you go into the Banks's pub, an Ansells pub, a Firkin pub, y'know or an O'Neill's, you know what it's gonna be like because they *control* the, the atmosphere in there so precisely, basically it's kill it, and um, and so because

you go well, y'know I know some of these pubs, these y'know, the, there's the one round where I used to live, um y'know it's like it's just this, it's a prison basically [laughs], where all the inmates went y'know every Friday night and had a fight, and like you just didn't go in there, sort of thing, and when people did they got, they got thrown out before the fight started in case they got killed or something...

<Dan> Where's that?

<Alan> ...um it's just round, there's this housing estate just, just round the corner from where I used to live...

<Dan> In [the city]?

<Alan> ...in, yeah in um, in Handley, Fenbridge area, which of course y'know, you get that kind of, you get that kind of thing in those pubs cos they're not controlled, they're not sort of, y'know there's no corporate...

<Tom> There's no bouncers

<Alan> ...exactly, there's no [laughs], in fact if there are, they're starting the fight, and so like y'know it's sort of an unknown quantity, you feel like 'oh god, y'know what am I stepping into here', y'know, it's like a dangerous sport to go into these, into these places, um, but once you go in there and you find it's okay, then it's like such a much more rewarding experience than...

<Tom> It's much more rewarding, but you have to make the effort in the first place...

<Alan> Yeah, yeah...

<Tom> ...to actually go into the bar, y'know

<Alan> ...that's that's, y'know that's it

[Alan & Dan - 28 yrs old, researcher & clinical trainee; Tom - 24 yrs old, analyst programmer; all heterosexual men]

Alan argues that the problem with chain pubs is their predictability and their lack of atmosphere, because of the way they are "controlled". It is implied that there is nothing at risk if you go to one of these pubs because "you know what it's gonna be like". He then offers an alternative construction of a place to go out; a pub that he describes as a "prison" where there are regular fights. Its apparent location near a housing estate implies that the "inmates" of this pub are likely to be poor and working-class, as well as aggressive. Emphasising the potential risk, the pub is described as an "unknown quantity" and going there is called a "dangerous sport". Linking risk to reward, the participants agree that successfully negotiating this type of harsh environment is a "rewarding experience". Tom reiterates the idea of risk and reward by saying "you have to make the effort... to actually go into the bar". Our participants are expressing a kind of *tourist gaze* in relation to local space (Urry, 1990). The locals' pub and the working-class Others in it are seen as dangerous, but also as *exotic*, because they are relatively unfamiliar. Our respondents are performing a form of 'class tourism' in representing the experience of going to a locals' pub as risky and rewarding. Entering this territory becomes an exciting experience for our respondents to recount later, like tourists on safari, or travellers visiting far-flung places 'off the beaten track'. Being able to say that they have been to a 'rough' locals' pub may be a way for our participants to position themselves as successful middle-class consumers.

## 5.12 Discussion

The design of our study, in taking participants out to bars and pubs, then interviewing them about these venues later, is unusual by the standards of contemporary social psychology. However, we believe our focus on places and how people experience and represent them was valuable in allowing us to consider how social relations such as class are represented *spatially* in discourse. In particular, the discourses of mobility and territoriality that we identified are reliant upon a shared understanding that space is organised by social class, and that people belong in particular places because of their class. Some places are meant for local people and others for students, and this separation is constructed as inevitable. When students and locals meet, antagonism and conflict is expected because of class differences. This is similar to Dixon & Durrheim's (2000) finding that white South Africans expected blacks and whites to live in separate communities, and that the encroachment of black townships into white suburbs was viewed as a violation of the 'proper' organisation of space. We were surprised at how significant class was when our participants 'made sense' of bars and pubs, but perhaps we should not have been. Historically, class has been a significant source of inequality in Britain and an important dimension through which people locate themselves and others, and by many measures still is (Reid, 1989). If we accept that leisure is not just a neutral domain for play and relaxation, but has always been affected and organised by power relations, we should expect that leisure venues are marked by inequalities such as class, race, sexuality and gender.

Our findings have connections with the few studies on class in the critical social psychological literature. Like Phoenix & Tizard (1996), we found that our predominantly middle-class interviewees appeared uncomfortable in talking about

class directly, often apologising or making a joke about direct references to class. Code words such as 'towny' or 'local' were used to represent working-class people. The way these words were used indicated that participants had a shared understanding of these terms, and used them as a way to avoid talking about working-class people directly. This may be a result of what Bradley (1996) calls the 'ideal of classlessness'; people are reluctant to talk about class when 'officially' it is supposed to no longer exist. Yet our analysis of how local people are represented and how the student/local relationship is constructed reveals the significance of class in imagining and reproducing social relations; local people were constructed as unwelcoming and aggressive working-class Others, and local pubs were often represented as unpleasant or dangerous places. We agree with Walkerdine (1995) that this probably reveals more about the fears and anxieties of the middle-class imagination than what working-class people are 'really like'. Through the discourse of mobility, working-class locals were constructed as static or fixed in terms of education, opportunities and location, while middle-class students were represented as upwardly mobile. Through the discourse of territoriality, students and locals were constructed as belonging in separate territories, which could be defended and fought over. This reinforces a traditional view of the class system where everyone 'knows their place', and middle-class people have high expectations for their prospects. The working class Other in the form of 'the local' represents everything that the aspiring middle-class subject does not (and should not) want to be. In talking about their experiences of bars and pubs, our participants collectively drew on shared meanings about working-class people and spaces, and used these to reinforce their understanding of how social relations should be. Therefore the 'classist' discourses we identified are not just expressions of prejudice; in positioning working-class people and places as 'Other'

our participants were also attempting to position themselves. The discourses of territoriality and mobility are resources through which our participants could identify as middle-class in contrast with the working-class Other.

While the discourses of mobility and territoriality reinforce a traditional view of class relations, the discourse of risk and reward reflects changes in the way class can be expressed. The idea that it can be 'worth the effort' of going into the 'rough and risky' terrain of the locals' pub because the experience is potentially 'rewarding' reflects consumerist ideology and the increasing importance of consumption in constructing identity. We would argue that some of our participants positioned themselves as 'class tourists', exposing themselves to the apparent 'dangers' of the working class Other. The risk of going to a locals' pub was opposed to the safety and predictability of chain pubs, suggesting that it was important for some participants to prove that they were not passive and boring consumers, but were discerning and exciting. Munt (1994) has commented that the growing middle classes may use leisure activities as a way to distinguish themselves from others, visiting exotic and risky locations for excitement, and to enhance their status in the eyes of their peers. Our finding that some participants treat locals' pubs as risky yet rewarding locations supports this idea.

We introduced our research by noting the relative neglect of social class by psychologists. Using a critical/discursive approach, we have shown that investigating an apparently mundane area such as 'leisure' and 'going out' with a group of 'mainly white, middle-class subjects' can reveal how dominant class relations are constructed and reproduced in talk about everyday life. A reticence to talk about class on the part of participants (and perhaps, psychologists) does not mean that social class is no longer relevant; it lurks beneath the surface, and coded references to it are readily

understood by respondents. We have found that class is an important dimension around which people organise their relation to leisure and place. It is likely that class will continue to be a significant source of social meaning and identification in other arenas of people's lives. A return to the 'class issue' could be productive both for psychological theory and for challenging oppressive practice.

# 6. MAKING A SCENE: SEXUALITY, IDENTITY AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF LESBIAN AND GAY LEISURE SPACE[19]

Many urban areas in North America, Europe and Australasia have groups of lesbian and gay bars, clubs, shops and other meeting places that are regarded as centres for lesbian and gay socialising, commerce, support and activism. In English-speaking countries, these centres for queer social life are often referred to as 'the Scene' by lesbians and gay men. 'The Scene' can be used as a shortcut term to refer to a specific set of lesbian and gay venues within a particular town or city, and to lesbian and gay bars and clubs in general[20]. In this paper we discuss the relationship of lesbians, gay men and heterosexuals to the lesbian and gay Scene, considering the different representations of 'the Scene' constructed by these groups of people. Our approach is innovative in that we took groups of lesbians, gay men and heterosexual people to Scene venues, and interviewed them later. In looking at the discourse of our participants, we show that there is no single unified understanding of 'the Scene'. Instead there are multiple representations of lesbian and gay space which reflect the different needs and priorities of dissident and normative sexual identities, and the variations within identities such as 'lesbian', 'gay' or 'straight'. The idea that the Scene is a carnivalesque leisure space or *liminal zone*, where the 'normal' rules of the

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[19] A version of this chapter has been submitted to *GLQ: a Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies.*

[20] In Britain, 'the Scene' as a term tends to refer more to commercially-run lesbian and gay venues which are seen as sites of enjoyment, pleasure and consumption, rather than non-commercial advice and support centres for lesbians and gay men, although this distinction is not fixed.

wider world are suspended or challenged, is introduced below (Shields, 1991). Reflecting on the importance of the Scene for lesbian and gay identities, the reproduction of difference and inequality, and the challenge to heterosexual identities, we consider how multiple representations of the Scene affect its liminal or transformative potential.

## 6.1 LIMINAL SPACE

In *Places on the Margins*, Rob Shields (1991) argues that the binary Central/Marginal dominates much of Western discourse about space and place, whereby some places come to be situated on the periphery in relation to the dominant centres of culture. These marginal spaces do not necessarily have to be geographically or topographically peripheral, but are constructed as 'zones of Otherness' to contain activities and people regarded as socially marginal or deviant. This containment, both spatial and symbolic, of the culturally marginal allows for the purification of the cultural centre, through the exclusion of devalued people and activities that are not socially sanctioned in everyday life:

> The social 'Other' of the marginal and of low cultures is despised and reviled in the official discourse of the dominant culture and central power while at the same time being constitutive of the imaginary and emotional repertoires of that dominant culture (Shields, 1991, p.5)

If we consider homosexuality as a social 'Other', then Shields' argument has obvious similarity to Eve Sedgwick's (Sedgwick, 1990) thesis that heterosexuality as an institution, identity and set of dominant discourses depends on the historically

devalued category of homosexuality against which to define itself[21]. Shields (1991) goes on to say that peripheral sites and regions become imbued with the image and stigma of their marginality, readily understood and reproduced by people through shared discourses of space. Although creating stigma about marginal places, the concentration of Otherness in the margins can mean that these places become foci for the celebration of Otherness and the transgression of dominant norms. This can take the form of agitation, unrest, or carnivalesque displays of desire, hedonism and pleasure. When marginal places become sites for transgression, they can also become *liminal* (literally, 'on the threshold') sites for personal and collective transformation. Shields derives the idea of a liminal zone from Turner's (1978) study of pilgrimage, where the pilgrim's journey to a sacred space removes him or her from the routines of everyday life, exposes them to new experiences, and is therefore potentially transforming. The individual's immersion in a liminal zone and their potential transformation is aided by adopting stylised rituals of dress and behaviour.

Shields (1991) considers a number of case studies of liminal zones, but of particular relevance here is his focus on the popular seaside resort of Brighton, located on the South Coast of England. Brighton's proximity to London and its history as a Regency resort has facilitated its current image as a place to escape to from the city, somewhere to find clean air and seaside fun during the day, and somewhere to go out eating, drinking and clubbing at night. Rather more seductively, Brighton has also historically been regarded as a place to go for illicit sex and 'dirty weekends' away from prying eyes. Brighton's geographic and symbolic distance from 'normal life'

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[21] Readers may also be reminded of Diana Fuss's (Fuss, 1991) reflections on the binary inside/outside.

allows a suspension of some of the mores and niceties that can restrict behaviour. This combined representation of Brighton as a place for relaxation, fun and more risqué pleasures is probably part of its current appeal. What Shields does *not* address is Brighton's association with lesbians and gay men. This is arguably a significant element of Brighton's contemporary image; that of a lesbian and gay resort, place of residence, and site for queer hedonistic pleasures and excess. Many lesbians and gay men choose to live in Brighton, given its reputation for a relaxed attitude and tolerance of sexual diversity. Still more visit there for holidays, seeking out its highly developed lesbian and gay Scene. The town's marginal and exotic status is heightened by its association with the lesbian and gay Scene and it is strange that Shields does not explore this further.

## 6.2 THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SCENE

The lesbian and gay Scene of bars, clubs and other venues that we find today in Brighton and other towns and cities may seem mundane to many contemporary lesbians and gay men. However, the Scene can still play a significant role in lesbian and gay 'coming out' stories, as a location where early experiences of performing 'lesbianness' or 'gayness' are tried out (Trenchard & Warren, 1984). The Scene may also be an important location in the ongoing construction of lesbian and gay narratives of the self, although there is little research on the significance of the Scene in the everyday lives of lesbians and gay men (although see Ridge et al., 1997; Ridge et al., 1999). In most major towns and cities, there are number of lesbian and gay venues that offer somewhere to meet, to drink, to dance, and the possibility of erotic contact. The growth of queer confidence and cultural visibility in the West (despite continuing and at times vociferous opposition) means that more of us have come out and more of

us go out than ever before (Plummer, 1995). At the same time, the queer capacity for socialising, drinking, dancing, drug-taking, cruising and out-and-out hedonism has taken on a mythic status in the mainstream. In Britain, lifestyle magazines such as *The Face* and *i-D* popularised lesbian and gay clubs like *Heaven*, *Trade* and *Flesh* as cool and cutting-edge through the late Eighties and Nineties. In addition, more recent television series such as *Queer As Folk*[22] and *Tinsel Town*[23] have made representations of the Scene more widely available to straight audiences. These popular, if still controversial, images of the Scene have reinforced the idea that lesbians and gay men's lives revolve around a Scene of drinks, drugs, sex and partying. Enjoyable and sometimes transgressive activities are indeed a significant part of the Scene (Sinfield, 1998), with the parading of young and old, lesbian and gay bodies in bars and clubs, the consumption of intoxicants, dancing and cruising, often to a soundtrack of thumping disco beats. The claiming of space to perform and celebrate 'lesbianness', 'gayness' and other dissident forms of sexuality is still an act of defiance and resistance, despite the propagation of this hedonistic image in the mainstream. Out in the wider world, lesbians and gay men must face the 'heterosexual assumption' in the majority of leisure and other spaces, where places (and the people in them) are presumed to be authentically heterosexual unless proven otherwise (Bell et al., 1994). This can necessitate lesbians and gay men having to manage their identities or 'pass' as heterosexual to avoid disapproval or downright hostility (Valentine, 1993b). For those who are not 'out' where they live, work, or study, the Scene can be refuge, a 'safe space' to belong, and a place to perform lesbian, gay and

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[22] First shown on Channel 4, 1999.

[23] First shown on BBC2, Summer 2000.

other dissident sexual identities (Whittle, 1994). Even for those who are fairly open about their non-heterosexuality, the suspension or overturning of the heterosexual assumption on the Scene may be a relief from the constant reinforcement of heteronormativity in everyday spaces.

## 6.3 THE SCENE AS LIMINAL SPACE?

Does the combination of carnivalesque activities and the suspension of rules of the normal (i.e. heterosexuality) make the Scene a liminal zone? For this to be the case, the experience of being on or in the Scene needs to promote personal or collective transformation, or at least a questioning of identity, before a return to the heteronormative outside world. The experience of the Scene may be challenging or transformative for those deemed to be 'outsiders', i.e. heterosexual people. The stripping away of the heterosexual assumption, the re-ordering of sexual relations between men and women, and the visible display of queer sexuality, may all contribute to a questioning of heterosexual identity. As far as we are aware, there is little or no research on heterosexual perceptions and experiences of the lesbian and gay Scene, especially in relation to the construction of sexual identities (although see Skeggs, 1999). By taking heterosexual participants to lesbian and gay venues and looking at the way the Scene is constructed by them, we consider whether the Scene could be regarded as a liminal space for straight 'outsiders'. In addition, we consider the way the Scene is constructed by our lesbian and gay participants. The Scene may certainly be an important space for people coming out as lesbian or gay, providing a base for trying out lesbian or gay identities and styles of behaviour. The Scene may also help in the maintenance of dissident sexual identities, in its role as a refuge from heterosexuality and as a place to celebrate lesbian and gay sexuality. Looking at the

Scene from both 'homo' and 'hetero' perspectives, we consider the similarities and differences between our participants' representations of the Scene.

## 6.4 METHODOLOGY

The analysis presented here is part of a larger study of young adults' identities in relation to leisure, sexual identity and place based in Birmingham, England's 'second city'. Twelve group interviews with 42 people in total (20 male, 22 female, mean age 25.2 yrs) were conducted between March 1999 and March 2000. The majority of our participants identified as heterosexual (N=31), seven identified as gay, three as lesbian and one as bisexual. The overwhelming majority of participants was white and middle-class, and was recruited by word of mouth, introductions from friends, colleagues and other participants, and by approaching university-based lesbian and gay social groups. Interviews took place after taking groups of participants (around 3-5 people per group) out on a 'night out' to three Birmingham bars or pubs chosen by the first author. Sets of bars and pubs were chosen that were a) different from one another in terms of design, size and clientele, and b) located near to one another to allow enough time to visit all the venues in an evening. Lesbian and gay bars and pubs on the Birmingham Scene were regularly included in these sets of venues. Participants were told to treat the night out as a 'normal' social occasion, but that they would be asked about their impressions of the different venues and the people in them during the interview. Interviews were conducted the following day (or as soon as possible) in a convenient location where a group discussion could be tape-recorded. Expenses were paid for completing the interview.

Interviews were semi-structured and centred around generating a group account of the

'night out'. This included what the participants thought of the different venues, and how this compared with their own usual leisure activities. Interviews lasted on average just over an hour. The tapes were transcribed verbatim and the transcripts were subjected to a discourse analysis, the procedure similar to that outlined by Potter & Wetherell (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). The following analysis uses typical interview quotes to explore how the Scene was represented and constructed discursively. The names of participants and venues have been changed to protect anonymity. The interviewer is indicated by the initials MH.

## 6.5 From the inside out: lesbians and gay men construct the Scene

Most of the lesbians and gay men who were interviewed described the Scene and its venues in varying terms, some positive and some negative. Positive representations of the Scene were most often generated when comparing the Scene and its venues as a collective whole to heterosexual places i.e. by contrasting 'homo' with 'hetero'. Overall, the Scene was seen as a preferable destination compared with heterosexual places by our lesbian and gay participants. For example, the following quotes from gay men introduce the idea that the Scene is somewhere to *escape* to from the restrictive 'straight' world:

> <Roger> I enjoy the Scene, it depends on how much you do it and all the rest, I enjoy the Scene because I can from my, I say closeted world of work, I can then at night, sit in a place and I don't have to think about what I say, whether y'know someone's listening, I can just completely relax...
>
> <Benjamin> It's a relaxed environment

<Roger> ...now if I go in a straight place...

<Benjamin> It's like being at work

<Roger> ...it's like being at work, so I've got to think about, y'know, who's sitting behind, I'm always really, not on edge, that's the wrong word, er I enjoy going to straight bars, but I'm not fully relaxed in the sense that I can just be myself, and that's where I like going into a gay bar, even if it's just for a couple of drinks...

[Roger – 33 yrs old, Benjamin – 24 yrs old; gay men]

<MH> So it does make a difference it being a gay venue?

<Graham> Yeah, definitely

<MH> What difference do you think that makes, what...?

<Graham> Just that people do what they want there, they can kiss and hold hands and whatever there, but somewhere else like, just round the corner, say Blue Bar [straight bar], if you did that you'd get a lot of funny looks, so...

<MH> Mm

<Graham> ...I think that's why

[Graham – 21 yr old gay man]

These gay men articulate the idea that the Scene is somewhere to escape the *heterosexual gaze* (the "funny looks" of others), and where the management of identity could be relaxed to incorporate the display of homosexual behaviour, such as kissing. The discourse of an oppressive heterosexual gaze and its absence on the Scene has been articulated by other participants in our research, and could be thought of as part of the 'core image' of the Scene generated by our participants (see Chapter 4). Similarly, the argument that there is a lack of restrictions on behaviour and that

you can 'be yourself' on the Scene compared to heterosexual bars and clubs is part of a discourse of authenticity about going out on the Scene that many of our other participants have used, and is supported by other research (see Chapter 3; Markowe, 1996). The Scene was also talked about in terms of it being somewhere that was tolerant and accepting of diversity, often in comparison with straight bars and pubs:

> <Benjamin> ...and that, is again it's a gay Scene, again isn't it, because it's, it's full of just so many different, diversity and whatever types of people
>
> [Benjamin – 24 yr old gay man]
>
> <Marion> Yeah the gay Scene, I mean anything goes on the gay Scene and people are more accepting, therefore we get sort of y'know...
>
> <Amber> I don't know, I don't think...
>
> <Marion> ...all the kind of oddbods of society in there as well, like y'know you get the transvestites and you get um goths and um y'know...
>
> <Sarah> Mm
>
> <Marion> ...people from all extremes and it's just sort of a very tolerant kind of accepting atmosphere
>
> [Marion – 22 yrs old, Amber – 20 yrs old, Sarah – 18 yrs old; lesbian women]

The construction of the Scene as a liberating and tolerant place to escape from heterosexuality and 'be yourself' is understandably important for lesbians and gay men, who can feel 'out of place' in heterosexual venues (Valentine, 1993a). The Scene may have particular significance in lesbian and gay 'coming out' narratives, and could be represented as somewhere to construct a new identity:

<MH> Do you, do you think it [the Scene] was more important when you were younger? We were talking about this yesterday

<Nick> Yeah, I mean when you first come out it's um, it's basically making your identity for yourself, isn't it?

<Paul> Oh god yeah, I wouldn't be here today if I hadn't gone out

[Nick – 24 yrs old, Paul – 29 yrs old; gay men]

The valorisation of the Scene as a positive and desirable symbolic and material space can be considered a strategy of resistance or even defiance. However, this portrayal of the Scene as a liberating and inclusive space seemed most stable and consistent when the Scene as an idea and set of locations was compared to heterosexual space. When our lesbian and gay participants talked about and compared venues within the Scene itself, then it became apparent that there was no single representation of the Scene, and that its inclusiveness was easily destabilised. Our lesbian and gay participants routinely differentiated between Scene venues and their clientele along lines of 'style', gender, age and class. This created the conditions for venues and groups of people on the Scene to be classified *hierarchically*, and allowed our lesbian and gay participants to position themselves as individuals within the overall location of the Scene. Consider the following challenge to the idea that the Scene is universally accepting of the 'marginal' or 'deviant':

<Amber> Well, yeah, but then I don't, some, I don't think that the gay Scene is that accepting to kind of all oddballs or whatever, um, I mean it depends which part of the gay Scene as well...

<C> Yeah, there's bits of both aren't there?

<Amber> ...I mean some of it, if you look a certain way as a snob, you get funny looks and...

<C> Yeah

<Amber> ...I mean I used to go to the place called Fusion [lesbian and gay bar] and I used to wear, say if I wore a dress or something, I'd get the most horrible looks...

<C> Yeah

<Amber> ...off like a lot of the women...

[Amber – 20 yr old lesbian woman, Celia – 20 yr old bisexual woman]

Amber emphasises that there are different parts of the Scene, and that the tolerance of 'difference' might vary according to which part of the Scene you are in. The example she gives suggests that wearing stereotypically 'feminine' clothing such as a dress might be frowned upon in some Scene venues, particularly by lesbians. Amber's talk of "funny looks" and "horrible looks" constructs the idea that lesbians (and perhaps gay men) have a judgmental gaze of their own, used to police each other's appearance and behaviour. In highlighting this apparent policing of gender behaviour in this bar, Amber also positions herself as non-conforming in this particular location of the Scene. Paul and his friends highlight a similar limitation of the Scene:

<Paul> ...they won't feel comfortable going to gay places even if they are gay...

<Roger> Yeah, oh yeah, no, no that's true

<Paul> ...they won't go because they don't dress up...

<Nick> Yeah, yeah

<Paul> ...y'know, John my ex, John goes into a, into a gay bar, John's an ex of mine, goes into a gay bar and he looks completely out of place, cos he doesn't dress up...

[Paul – 29 yrs old, Roger – 33 yrs old, Nick – 24 yrs old; gay men]

The idea that a failure to "dress up" and wear the right clothes can result in feeling "out of place" and uncomfortable in gay venues contradicts the idea that the Scene is universally welcoming and tolerant. Ethnographic research has argued that within the Scene there are dominant 'in' or ' cool' styles that individuals are encouraged to display to gain credibility and acceptance. A failure to display the right kind of 'cultural capital' through clothing and appearance can result in exclusion (Ridge et al., 1999; Ridge et al., 1997). Outward appearance can be used as a gauge of social value, whereby those deemed physically attractive are seen to have more worth and status. Other qualities such as ethnicity, gender and social class can also be used to classify and divide Scene venues and the people within them. Ridge et al's research suggests that white, male and middle-class styles are most valued in Western Scene venues.

When compared with each other, Scene venues were arranged in informal hierarchies by lesbian and gay interviewees; some places were seen as more desirable than others and these differences, although not always made explicit, seemed to be readily understood. The construction of informal arrangements of Scene venues along lines of gender, class or 'style' was a way for lesbian and gay participants to differentiate themselves. By aligning themselves with particular venues and the people in them, lesbian and gay participants could position themselves within the different versions of 'lesbianness' or 'gayness' that were thought to exist in different parts of the Scene. For example, in the following extract we see Paul challenge his friend Nick's negative view of 'gayness' by implying that the Scene venues to which Nick chooses to go have given him a negative impression of gay men:

<Nick> Yeah, yeah, I mean from my point of view I look at gay, and I sort of think about dirty lecherous old men, sitting in backrooms and toilets and, but I mean that's what...

<Paul> But how? But how, because that's not what you've been brought up with...

<Nick> No, cos that's what I've been...

<Paul> ...*except* for the fact that you used to work in the bloody Junction and you choose to go to Fusion and you choose to go to NeoBar...

<Nick> No, not for ages

<Paul> ...and you choose to go to The Place...

<Benjamin> Last night

<Paul> ...they're all your choices, I don't think of gay Scene and think of lecherous old men because that, that's not my choice, I *don't* drink in The Junction, I've never, I don't drink in Fusion...

<Nick> No

<Paul> ...I don't go to NeoBar, I don't go to The Place

<Nick> Well I, yeah

<Paul> ...my gay Scene is... OK fair enough it's quite, it's quite shallow, it's usually young... and clubby, and... yeah, a little bit shallow as well, yeah, but not lecherous old men, my gay Scene is, when I think gay I think totally different to you...

<Nick> Yeah, that's right

[Nick – 24 yrs old, Paul – 29 yrs old, Benjamin – 24 yrs old; gay men]

Paul makes it clear that he believes the kind of venues that Nick has gone to has contributed to his view of 'gayness' as "dirty lecherous old men, sitting in backrooms

and toilets". The idea of *choice* and that there is more than one type of gay Scene to choose from are forcefully argued by Paul. Paul constructs a division between a 'young and clubby' Scene to which he chooses to go, and an 'old and seedy' Scene where Nick has worked. Paul concedes that the places on the Scene he goes to can be 'shallow, young and clubby', but still asserts that his version of the Scene is more positive than Nick's 'old' Scene. By emphasising the choice that Nick has between venues, Paul positions Nick as *responsible* for the negative image of gay men which he apparently holds. Paul thus simultaneously implicates the venues he names as somehow seedy or seamy relative to other venues, implies that Nick's negative image of 'gayness' is a result of going to these venues, and that this is Nick's responsibility because he has chosen to go to these venues. Paul also positions himself as a more discerning subject by arguing that he has chosen to go to relatively more desirable places on the Scene. This division between a 'young and clubby' Scene and an 'old and seedy' Scene was used by other participants. Some lesbian interviewees also differentiated between different Scene venues in this way. Consider the following discussion about Coastal, a bar on the Scene in Birmingham:

> <Marion> But I think when you walk in there and you see, look at the way it's decorated, it just screams 'gay' to you [laughter]
>
> <Amber> Is, I mean is that like The Swan? [That] screams to me
>
> <Marion> Mm, it screams gay in a different way, cos The Swan is extremely tacky I think
>
> <Sarah> There's a different like old Scene and Blackpool today, and Coastal is more like the new trendy Scene
>
> <Marion> No, a lot of people I've, a lot of sort of lesbians particularly, um, of a similar age to me, they've said they won't, they won't go into Coastal cos it's full of pretentious people, and

those are the kind of people that hang out in The Junction and stuff, um

[Marion – 22 yrs old, Amber – 20 yrs old, Sarah – 18 yrs old; lesbian women]

What is constructed in this extract is a contrast between old and new images of the Scene. The "tacky" bar, The Swan, and The Junction (mentioned earlier by Nick and Paul) are aligned with the "old Scene", epitomised by Blackpool. Blackpool, a seaside resort in the North of England, has a reputation for its cheap and cheerful entertainment. In particular, Blackpool's popular lesbian and gay Scene is regarded as being dominated by 'unsophisticated' entertainment such as drag shows, disco music and drinking. This idea of an old "tacky" Scene is contrasted with a newer, "trendy" Scene, exemplified by the bar, Coastal. The implication is that this 'new Scene' is more fashionable and sophisticated, relative to the old Scene. Although the women distance themselves from the older, tacky Scene, Marion then questions the appeal of the stylish new Scene by suggesting that it attracts "pretentious people". Whatever the veracity of their argument, using concepts such as 'tackiness' or 'pretentiousness' suggests that these women were assessing the Scene in terms of social class signifiers. The idea that Scene venues, and by implication, the people in them, can be arranged by social class is reinforced by a more explicit comment from the same group of women:

<MH> Have you ever been to The Junction or Percy's?

<Amber> No, I have actually been in The Junction once, and it was...

<MH> [inaudible] [laughter]

<Amber> ...experience, no it was just, y'know, dark and a bit dingy...

<Marion> I'm feeling that, I don't know...

<Amber> ...I found it a bit scary

<Marion> ...but there might be something of a class thing going on there, not in terms of, economic class, maybe educational class or something...

<Sarah> Yeah

<Marion> ...but um The Junction tends, you kind of associate that with sort of... people at the lower end of the um [laughter]

<Sarah> That's the [inaudible] as my sociology tutor would put it

<Marion> Oh right okay, yeah, yeah the lower end of the kind of socio-economic and intellectual spectrum possibly...

Here a place that Amber finds 'dark and scary' is explicitly associated with lower-class people by Marion. The use of class to differentiate leisure venues and the people in them is something we have already considered in another phase of our research, and is not limited to lesbians and gay men (see Chapter 5). Class is used here to reinforce the idea of a 'seedy' Scene from which these lesbian women are distancing themselves. This differentiation of Scene venues along lines of class and other forms of difference is likely to be important for lesbians and gay men in order that they can position themselves within the multiple meanings of 'the Scene'. However, the use of 'differences' to demarcate Scene venues and the people within them can reproduce class, gender and other inequalities, by excluding those Others not deemed desirable. In the extracts above we have seen the potential exclusion of those deemed Other in terms of gender and class. These examples undermine the idea of the Scene as a transformative and liberating liminal space, although they reinforce the idea that the

Scene is an important space for lesbians and gay men to construct identity. While the Scene may be an important space to contest heteronormativity and assert lesbian and gay identities, this does not necessarily mean that other inequalities will be challenged there.

## 6.6 From the outside in: heterosexual people construct the Scene

The majority of heterosexual participants who were taken to lesbian and gay venues gave positive accounts of their experiences of the Scene. For some of the heterosexual participants, taking part in the research project involved going to a gay bar for the first time. Consider the following quotes from James:

> <James> My first impressions of the gay places were there were less rules of what you can and can't do, again I say the people seemed a lot more open, and a lot more honest, whereas in most sort of straight sort of pubs, the men are very manly, very stand-offish, and the girls are always really giggly in the corner sort of thing, not wishing to be stereotyped [laughter]. But it did seem, yeah that's right, seem you could be a lot more yourself in those sort of places, so, I'd say that's what I've drawn, that little glimpse I've had
>
> <James> ...y'know, it was OK, I found them really friendly, sort of the more sort of gay pubs, I found those very friendly and the people seemed a lot more open as well, like body language-wise, mm yeah it was good
>
> <James> Mm, yeah, like I saw blokes, I mean I know it's gay, but blokes were sort of putting their arms round other blokes, and, it just generally seemed a lot more... open, and a lot less sort of blokes standing there sort of being big men sort of thing...
>
> [James – 29 yr old heterosexual man]

James was apparently struck by the "open" and "friendly" nature of the Scene venues

to which he was taken. Like the lesbian and gay participants in this phase of our research, he drew on the discourse of authenticity to construct the Scene as a space to "be a lot more yourself" (Chapter 3). This idea of a lack of restrictions on behaviour is most notable for James when he compares the gendered behaviour of men and women in heterosexual pubs to that of people on the Scene. The stereotypical image of heterosexual men acting in a "reserved", "manly" and "stand-offish" manner and heterosexual women being "giggly" is contrasted with people on the Scene who are seen as having more "open" body language. Specifically, James represents men on the Scene as more physically intimate than their heterosexual counterparts. The idea that going to the Scene may be a release from stereotypically gendered forms of behaviour for heterosexual men and women is also mentioned by Diane when she talks about the Scene:

> <Diane> I think you have a perception that you're just not going to get hassled, I don't, like I've never been hassled by... say a lesbian or anything like that, I never ever, I've had people come up and chatting, but never in a sort of way that, say if you go to a heterosexual bar, a drunken man [laughs], decides he wants to dance with you and wraps his arms round you no matter how many times you tell him to 'piss off', they just don't take no for an answer, so I think in a way you just feel more... I feel more relaxed almost, you just be yourself, be whatever and...
>
> [Diane – 23 yr old heterosexual woman]

Once again, the idea that the Scene is a place to be authentic, to relax and 'be yourself' is deployed by Diane, who asserts that she has not been "hassled" by men or women when she has visited the Scene. This 'hassling' is related specifically to the behaviour of drunken men in heterosexual bars, who Diane constructs as acting in a sexually objectifying and invasive manner with women. This lack of 'hassle' from

heterosexual men was a common reason given by women, whether heterosexual or lesbian, to explain the appeal of the lesbian and gay Scene. However, some heterosexual participants admitted that the image of the Scene as a relaxed and open space was not its only attraction:

> <Mark> There's a bit of a, an association now, I don't know how old it is, but being gay is almost cool, isn't it, sort of and, and you wonder how many people dabble in the Scene, because of the credibility, and I don't mean in sexuality necessarily, cos the credibility is the association with it...
>
> <Diane> Right yeah, I see
>
> <Mark> ...because the, it's the fashion, and not so much musically, I don't think necessarily, but definitely from a fashion point of view, it's sort of leading the way
>
> [Mark – 32 yr old heterosexual man, Diane – 23 yr old heterosexual woman]

Mark suggests that other heterosexual people might "dabble in the Scene" in order to gain the "credibility" derived from the idea that "being gay is almost cool", in fashion terms at least. Mark was also concerned that parts of the Scene might be treated as a 'freak show' by heterosexual people, particularly one lesbian and gay bar where he was taken:

> <Mark> Y'see you've got to care for the fact that, because you can say that Fusion, 'oh let's go and have a laugh and look at the freaks', that's kind of the attitude that's easy to develop about it...

In the extracts above, Mark suggests two different constructions of the Scene. In one the Scene is 'cool' and desirable, where heterosexual people want to be associated with 'fashion credibility' and therefore seek, if only temporarily, to be recognised as

part of the Scene. In the other, the Scene becomes a 'freak show' to visit, and from which people maintain a distance. Although in both constructions heterosexual visitors are consuming aspects of the Scene, in the former construction the Scene is represented as having something of value (credibility). In the latter construction, the Scene is represented as a place of deviance and heterosexual people are positioned in a more patronising tourist role. However, our heterosexual participants did not express this kind of exotifying gaze in relation to the Scene venues where they were taken. Most seemed sensitive in varying degrees to the idea of the Scene as a 'safe space' for lesbians and gay men, and did not talk as though they had a right of access to Scene venues. Consider the quote from Suzy below:

> <Suzy> Yeah... yeah, I think I would draw the line at sort of three or four of us, on a sort of girly, wanting to go out for a chat type night, any more than that I think, you would start sort of mayb-, well not necessarily getting reactions, maybe getting looks, I don't know, or... or you might feel, like you were saying, it might just be, y'know, you might just feel that you're kind of... pushing the limit...
>
> [Suzy – 25 yr old heterosexual woman]

Suzy is talking about with whom she might go to a lesbian or gay bar. She has ruled out taking her heterosexual male friends saying that they "wouldn't enjoy it". Suzy says she would take a small group of her heterosexual female friends on a "girly" night out, but any more than three or four people might get "reactions" or "looks". A larger group would be "pushing the limit". This constructs lesbians and gay men as *policing* the spaces of the Scene, and being able to detect the heterosexuality of participants. Similar concerns were expressed by other heterosexual participants who said that they would prefer to go to a lesbian or gay bar with someone else who was

lesbian or gay, or in a small group to avoid being "impolite" or "making an imposition". This suggests a certain respect for venues regarded as lesbian and gay territory; as one participant put it she thought that lesbians and gay men might feel that Scene venues were "their space and they rule that environment". We have considered elsewhere how a discourse of territoriality can be used to construct leisure spaces using social class divisions (Chapter 5). Perhaps here sexuality is being used as a way to construct space territorially.

Because our heterosexual participants were accompanied by one of the authors, Martin Holt, an 'out' gay man, they did not have to negotiate access to the Scene. However, our heterosexual participants still found some aspects of the Scene quite challenging or disruptive to their assumptions about the organisation of space, and their own identities. Consider Michelle's account of being in a Birmingham gay bar:

> <Michelle> It was just like y'know, it's like normally if you walk through a sort of straight club, y'know, females are eyeing up the males, males are eyeing up the females and y'know, you sort of wander around scooting, looking to your left, looking to your right, seeing who's around, and y'know you couldn't do that, so it's just like walking places, walking to the toilet, you didn't really know what to look at, who to look at, you didn't, y'know
>
> [Michelle – 21 yr old heterosexual woman]

Michelle constructs this Scene venue as a space where the heterosexual gaze of men and women is disrupted or absent. The apparent performance of heterosexual desiring looks is constructed as a 'normal' feature of "straight" night-clubs, and Michelle implies that this would not be acceptable in a gay bar by saying "you couldn't do that". This disruption of 'the normal' for Michelle means that she positions herself as not knowing where to look or who to look at. The idea that lesbian or gay desiring

looks might replace the heterosexual gaze is absent in Michelle's account. Other participants said that they became more aware of their own behaviour and, by implication, their heterosexuality while on the Scene:

> <Kate> I s'pose in Fusion I was far more aware of my behaviour with Pete, cos I didn't know whether I was going to *really* stand out if I suddenly turned round and kissed Pete, if I was, y'know, or just... like I didn't really change it but I was just more, far more aware, whereas, y'know, or in The Pit Stop I mean I just didn't, didn't think twice about it, but suddenly I was like 'oh yeah'... like what was going on around me or, y'know, how I might fit into all this
>
> [Kate – 22 yr old heterosexual woman]

For Kate, the act of kissing her boyfriend, an unremarkable act in a bar such as The Pit Stop, takes on a new significance inside the lesbian and gay venue, Fusion. Here kissing a man could identify Kate as heterosexual (or bisexual) and potentially locate her as an outsider within the bar. Kate says she was "far more aware" of her actions and that she had to question how she 'fitted in' to this unfamiliar space, something that she didn't have to think about in The Pit Stop. Heterosexual participants also had to deal with the idea that they might *not* be recognised as 'obviously' heterosexual in lesbian and gay space. Consider another quote from Kate:

> <Kate> We did go in as our two couples as well, with the four of us, so we, I s'pose if people saw you [Diane] talking to Mark and me probably talking to Pete then, then that would have made it more obvious
>
> <MH> But then you also would have, y'know, but two men and two women y'see..
>
> <Kate> Mm, so we were also dancing together and, they were both together... yeah... mm
>
> [Kate – 22 yr old heterosexual woman]

The obviousness of Kate and her friends' heterosexuality is questioned by the interviewer, who points out that other people might have interpreted the group as a lesbian couple and a gay male couple. Kate recalls dancing with her female friend (Diane) and that Pete and Mark were dancing together, and has to face the implication that they might have been perceived as lesbian or gay couples. While heterosexual people may have to accept that they might not be recognised as such in a Scene venue, it is also possible that they will have to convince others of their heterosexuality:

> <Diane> People thought Mark was gay, there was one guy, sorry [laughter], who I had to really like convince was, I had to convince him that Mark was my boyfriend, and he was like 'Well, you're joking, he's gay isn't he?' [laughter]...
>
> <MH> Really?
>
> <Diane> ...[laughing] and I'm like 'No, he's my boyfriend, we've been going out nine months', and this guy was like 'Oh, come on love', I was like 'really', he didn't believe me, he really thought, well I generally think that he did think Mark was gay, he wasn't just sort of, but eventually he realised
>
> [Diane – 23 yr old heterosexual woman]

In the spaces of the Scene it is reasonable for people to assume that most of the people there are *not* heterosexual. The effort that Diane says she had to put in to convince a (presumably gay) man of her boyfriend's (hetero)sexuality emphasises that a person's sexuality is not always 'obvious' to others. This reversal of the heterosexual assumption in a lesbian and gay bar is a source of some amusement to Diane, but can create uncertainty for others when the 'taken-for-grantedness' of heterosexuality is stripped away. Michelle is recalling a visit to a lesbian and gay bar and how she coped with having her expectations about appropriate behaviour destabilised:

> <Michelle> Yeah, I mean it really did, I mean cos I did... I mean at the end of it I got used to it, it was all right, but I still really, I don't know if I felt a bit awkward, like I was trying to sort of put my heterosexuality on [laughs], on to people, and I was y'know gonna get beaten up cos I was heterosexual or something
>
> [Michelle – 21 yr old heterosexual woman]

Michelle expresses the concern that she was projecting her heterosexuality on to the (lesbian and gay) people in the bar. The consequences of performing heterosexuality in this space are uncertain for Michelle, and she suggests that if she had been recognised as heterosexual she could have been put at risk of physical violence in the bar. The experience of being in the bar was described as "all right" by Michelle, yet the uncertainty of what to do and how to behave in lesbian and gay space creates ambivalence in Michelle's account of the Scene. Overall our heterosexual participants regarded the Scene positively, seeing it as friendly and lacking restrictions on behaviour. However the experience of being on the Scene could lead to participants reflecting on the 'obviousness' of their heterosexuality, having to justify their sexuality to others and feeling uncertain about the appropriateness of displaying heterosexuality in lesbian and gay space. Having been taken to the Scene, these heterosexual young adults have been given limited insights into some of the uncertainties and anxieties that lesbians and gay men face on a regular basis, whereby their sexualities are ignored, disapproved of or have to be justified to others. These experiences all question the heterosexual assumption that many people take for granted, and which lesbians and gay men have to face in the majority of leisure spaces.

## 6.7 Discussion

This study was unusual in that it considered heterosexual as well as lesbian and gay constructions of the Scene. By taking groups of heterosexual, lesbian and gay people out to bars and pubs we were able to examine some of the multiple meanings of 'the Scene' from both 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives. From the perspective of lesbian and gay 'insiders', the Scene was represented as a place of refuge and escape from the predominantly heterosexual world, and a space in which to create and sustain lesbian and gay identities. This was quite a stable representation of the Scene, but this stability was largely a result of comparing the lesbian and gay Scene as a whole with heterosexual leisure spaces in general i.e. the comparison was between the symbolic categories of 'hetero' and 'homo'. When lesbian and gay respondents talked about venues within the Scene, this stable, unified image of the Scene became fragmented. Venues and the people in them were differentiated from one another, particularly in terms of age and class. Images of an 'old and tacky' Scene were contrasted with a 'young and clubby' Scene, with most of our respondents devaluing the former and positioning themselves within the latter.

Like our lesbian and gay participants, heterosexual interviewees saw the Scene as a positive place to escape oppressive elements of heterosexuality, particularly 'macho' or 'leering' heterosexual men. This was also found by Skeggs' (1999) research on the consumption of the Scene by heterosexual women and lesbians. Perhaps aware of their status as 'visitors' or 'tourists', our heterosexual participants did not spend much time discussing individual venues and positioning themselves within a particular version of the Scene. Compared to our lesbian and gay participants, heterosexual participants were less likely to differentiate between Scene venues, were more likely

to represent the Scene as a uniform whole, and did not distinguish between 'old' and 'new' Scenes. This seemed to reflect a lack of 'insider' knowledge. However, representations of the Scene as 'cool' and the Scene as a 'freak show' were mentioned. The former idea, of fashionable, trend-setting lesbians and gay men, has had some currency since the 1990s, when editorial teams of style magazines and advertisers began using 'gay-positive images' to target both the heterosexual majority and lesbians and gay men (Gluckman & Reed, 1997). Whether this is a desirable development is questionable; as Alan Sinfield (1998) points out, the raiding of gay cultural imagery for marketing purposes tends to sanitise it, focusing on attractive, straight-looking, white gay men. Even if the imagery is apparently gay-affirmative, it is invariably divorced from any radical or political message, leaving lesbian and gay culture as merely something to *consume*. Potentially, this could encourage heterosexual people to "dabble in the Scene" as tourists, turning their gaze on the display of same-sexuality as a spectacle to be enjoyed, but from which they remain detached (Urry, 1990). However, our heterosexual participants were sensitive to their status as 'outsiders', and appeared aware that going to the Scene as a heterosexual person could be regarded as invading lesbian and gay space. More unsettling for heterosexual people was the experience of the heterosexual assumption being overturned. Some participants had to negotiate with the idea that their sexuality was not visible or obvious to others, and that the performance of heterosexuality could not be taken for granted, and might even be opposed, on the Scene.

For all our participants, spending time in Scene venues highlighted issues of sexual identity construction. Our lesbian and gay participants asserted the superiority of the Scene over heterosexual venues, constructing lesbian and gay venues as having

special and desirable qualities, and thereby reinforcing the value of lesbian and gay identities. This valorisation of 'homo' over 'hetero' can be seen as a sign of resistance and as symptomatic of the confidence of young contemporary lesbians and gay men. Differentiating the Scene into parts (such as 'old' and 'new') and aligning themselves within these sections of the Scene allowed our lesbian and gay participants to differentiate themselves in terms of style, age, class and gender. This allows for variation in lesbian and gay identities, although of course, the kinds of people and places that were seen as valued often reflected wider cultural power relations i.e. our participants valorised young over old, and middle over working-class. For our heterosexual participants, the experience of being in lesbian and gay venues highlighted the 'taken-for-grantedness' of heterosexual identity. Heterosexuality is so dominant and normalised in everyday spaces that it is paid scant attention (Bell et al., 1994). For some of our heterosexual participants the reversal of the heterosexual assumption on the Scene meant that they had to accept that others might not recognise them as heterosexual, and that the performance of heterosexuality (to make it 'obvious' to others) might be unacceptable on the Scene. This meant that some of our participants had to deal with the possibility that others might think that they were lesbian or gay on the Scene. The idea that our heterosexual participants might have to *justify* or prove their heterosexuality to others on the Scene calls into question the 'obviousness' of their heterosexual identity, and asks them to consider how their heterosexuality is expressed or perceived by others.

The idea that the Scene is a space where dissident sexual identities can be expressed, and where heterosexuality is suspended or challenged, supports the notion of the Scene as a liminal zone (Shields, 1991). However, the potential liminality of the

Scene may be constrained. Although the challenging and overturning of heterosexuality may be liberating or transgressive for some, for others the carnivalesque qualities of the Scene may confirm the historically-ingrained prejudice that lesbians and gay men are morally lax, depraved and deviant (Weeks, 1985). Heterosexual visitors to the Scene may not come as 'pilgrims' to be challenged, enlightened or supportive, but as *tourists*, to consume the carnival delights or gaze at the exotic Others on display. The presence of heterosexual tourists may also be regarded as undermining the authenticity and safety of the Scene by lesbians and gay men (Whittle, 1994). Our heterosexual participants did not position themselves within this tourist role, but were aware that they could be seen as invading lesbian and gay space.

The dominant representation of most of the Scene given by our interviewees was of a relaxed, tolerant and diverse space, of particular importance for the expression of dissident sexualities. However, in privileging sexuality this representation of the Scene ignores the use of gender, race or class differences in 'insider' representations of Scene venues. While the Scene may indeed be a transformative space in terms of sexuality, this does not mean that the dominant power differentials constructed along lines of gender, age, race or class will be challenged or overturned. This is reflected in the way that lesbians and gay men organised venues in terms of an 'old and tacky' Scene and a 'new and trendy' Scene. Popular Scene venues in many Western cities are often dominated by white gay men, who adopt middle-class standards of dress and behaviour. This may marginalise lesbians, people of colour and those from working-class backgrounds (Ridge et al., 1999). The commercial nature of most Scene venues also puts limits on the transformative potential of these places. Drink prices and door

levies can be prohibitive for some, while the standards of dress and styles of consumption encouraged in many Scene venues can be alienating for others (Ridge et al., 1997). Tensions between liberation, transgression, suppression of difference and exclusion are all present in the Scene, and this problematises the idea of the Scene as a liminal zone. It might be better to think of the Scene as a *liminoid* space, where it is possible to transgress norms of sexuality and celebrate dissident sexualities, but where other forms of difference and exclusion may pass unnoticed. Regarding the Scene as a liminoid space may be more useful in highlighting the tension between the potential for transgression and the reproduction of inequalities in lesbian and gay venues.

Our study focused on how the Scene is made and remade by a small group of heterosexual, lesbian and gay young adults. The representations of the Scene constructed by our respondents and the analysis we have presented here are of course situated in both a particular time and place, namely the British city of Birmingham in the year 2000. However, although this places limits on the applicability of our findings, we believe that our analysis has wider relevance to studies of lesbian, gay and heterosexual leisure, lifestyles and identities. Our research has shown that there is no single unified representation of the lesbian and gay Scene and that the Scene takes on different meanings depending on those who are speaking. The Scene needs to be constructed and negotiated discursively in order that the variety of identities that are performed there can be supported and sometimes contested. The representations of different 'Scenes' will vary according to their contexts, and the identities of those 'making a Scene'. Any given Scene will be located in a specific social, political and geographical context, necessitating a consideration of the specific lines of sexuality, race, age, class, gender and disability that intersect there. However, key features of the

lesbian and gay Scene will remain, such as the privileging of dissident sexuality as a means of identification and the challenge to heterosexuality. What has become apparent through conducting this research is that there is little published on the contemporary significance of the Scene to lesbians and gay men, and how heterosexual visitors experience and represent it. In order to understand the place of the Scene in lesbian, gay and other identities, and how these identities are situated in relation to the Scene, we need to explore how the Scene is made and remade in different times and locations. Then we will have a richer understanding of how lesbians and gay men go about 'making a Scene', and the role these Scenes play in the formation of our identities and communities.

# 7. GENERAL DISCUSSION

The work I have presented in this thesis has investigated young adults' constructions of leisure, identity, sexuality and space. In the Introduction I set out the background to my work, and identified a lack of research on commercial leisure spaces, especially research that contrasts heterosexual, lesbian and gay perspectives on 'going out' and identity. In interviewing people about their leisure, often after taking groups of people out to bars and pubs, I have generated insights into the significance of commercial leisure spaces for my participants' identities, particularly bars and pubs coded as lesbian or gay (or pubs seen as working-class). My analyses have identified various discourses that are used to construct meanings about the commercial leisure spaces that my participants frequent. These discourses are also used to position my participants along lines of sexuality, gender and class, and are therefore important in identity construction. In this final chapter, I recap the main findings from my research, consider their implications, strengths and limitations, and suggest possibilities for future research.

## 7.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Chapters 3 and 4, which focus on the discourse of authenticity and constructions of 'the gaze' respectively, were analyses based on the interviews I conducted in Study 1. These interviews were about participants' leisure time in general, but focused on 'going out' to bars and pubs, and asked participants to describe their experiences of lesbian and gay venues. The paper on the 'Discourse of authenticity' (literally, 'being true to the self') considered one of the strongest features of these initial interviews. Lesbian, gay and heterosexual participants all talked of needing to 'be themselves'

when they were out in bars and clubs. This was particularly the case when participants discussed the lesbian and gay Scene. This notion of authenticity was contradictory, given its roots in political ideas of authenticity (discovering your 'true self' in order, say, to 'come out' as lesbian or gay) and consumerist ideology (in which leisure is seen as a domain to express your 'real' self through consumption) (Slater, 1997; Weeks, 1977; Whisman, 1996). Using the discourse of authenticity, the Scene was constructed as a better space to 'be yourself' than heterosexual venues, because of the apparent absence of certain elements of normative heterosexuality, such as the behaviour of boorish or 'laddish' men. In general, the Scene was constructed as desirable for lesbians, gay men and heterosexual women, although a few participants did reject this representation of the Scene. Although valorising the Scene, some heterosexual women constructed stereotypical images of the gay men they encountered there, and ignored or downplayed the visibility of lesbians. In a minority of cases, the discourse of authenticity could be used by gay participants to reject the dominant forms of 'gayness' perceived to be present on the Scene in favour of a discerning, consuming gay self. However, in general the discourse of authenticity was used to valorise 'homo' spaces over 'hetero' ones, and was therefore an example of resistance (Foucault, 1978).

The other major feature of the interviews from Study 1 was the use of discourses of the gaze to construct meanings about leisure spaces, particularly the lesbian and gay Scene, and I considered this in the paper 'Constructing gazes'. The Scene was constructed as lacking both male and heterosexual gazes. Heterosexual women were more likely to talk of the male gaze (the sexually desiring and objectifying looks of men e.g. Mulvey, 1975). Lesbian respondents also talked about the male gaze, but

along with gay men constructed a discourse of the heterosexual gaze. The heterosexual gaze was seen as judgmental and invasive, putting lesbians and gay men under surveillance and marking them as Other. Lesbians and gay men did not seem to articulate their own desiring gazes to the same extent as male and heterosexual gazes, but this may have been because it was important to construct the Scene as a 'gaze-free' environment in order to valorise 'homo' over 'hetero' again.

The analyses based on the 'nights out' and subsequent interviews of Study 2 were presented in Chapters 5 and 6. A surprisingly strong feature of the interviews conducted for Study 2 was the reproduction of class difference in participants' accounts of traditional pubs. In the paper 'Students *vs* locals', I considered how my mainly middle-class participants differentiated themselves from working-class Others and represented these Others and the spaces they frequented as risky or scary. Working-class 'locals' were seen as fixed in place while students were constructed as mobile, and the student/local divide was expressed in territorial terms. Entering traditional pubs was often represented as worrying or threatening and was associated with exposure to the gaze of working-class Others. However, some participants talked about working-class pubs in terms of a discourse of risk and reward, representing the risks of entering these spaces as being potentially rewarded with an 'exciting' consumer experience. These discursive patterns served to reinforce middle-class identities, confirm the inevitability of class difference to participants, and reflected a shift towards consumption as a means of expressing status and identity (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Phoenix & Tizard, 1996).

The final analytical chapter, 'Making a Scene', looked at the variety of constructions of the lesbian and gay Scene deployed by participants, comparing lesbian/gay and

heterosexual accounts of the Scene, and considering whether the Scene was a liminal or transformative space (Shields, 1991). Lesbians and gay men were generally positive about the Scene when comparing it to heterosexual spaces, seeing it as a set of locations to be authentic, escape oppressive gazes, and to perform lesbian and gay identities. However, when talking about different venues within the Scene, lesbian and gay participants constructed an opposition between a 'new and trendy' Scene and an 'old and seedy' Scene. The division of venues by class and gender suggested that although the Scene was a place that supported minority sexualities, it was not necessarily a location where other inequalities were challenged. Like lesbians and gay men, heterosexual participants were generally positive about their experience of the Scene, representing it as a relaxed and fun environment. Heterosexual participants were aware that they could construct themselves as 'tourists' on the Scene, but attempted to distance themselves from the idea that they were treating the Scene as a 'freak show'. Some heterosexual participants found that the 'obviousness' of their sexuality was called into question by going to a lesbian or gay venue, because of the reversal of the 'heterosexual assumption'. Overall, I concluded that the Scene was a *liminoid* space, given that it could provoke a questioning of heterosexual identities, supported the display of lesbian and gay identities, but was also a space where other inequalities (such as class difference) could be maintained.

## 7.2 Contributions to Theory and Method

My research is significant because it addresses a gap in the literature on leisure, identity and sexuality, and includes heterosexual men and women as well as lesbians and gay men in a discursive study of sexuality and commercial leisure spaces. The findings outlined above highlight the importance of commercial leisure spaces as a

context in which to construct sexualised, gendered and classed identities. They also suggest that leisure space is a domain cross-cut by power relations, power relations expressed in discourses that specify where particular people belong. This discursive 'ordering' of leisure space can be viewed benignly or positively, as simply a way to make leisure space intelligible to people, so that they know where they will 'fit in', where they will be accepted, and where they can express their identities. However, the ordering of leisure space also entails the *regulation* of this space. In attempting to specify where people 'belong' and will feel most comfortable, discourses about leisure and space also impose restrictions, telling people where they can't go and where they will be unwelcome or uncomfortable (and possibly unsafe). This idea of leisure space as a domain of regulation and possibility relates to Dixon & Durrheim's (2000) call to consider how constructions of place and identity reveal power relations, how the 'taken-for-grantedness' of the ordering of space is achieved, and how dominant conceptions of space might be resisted. I consider some of these and other implications of my work in this section, in particular looking at the difficulties of asserting the Scene as a space of resistance, and contrasting this resistant territorialisation of space with the reproduction of class difference in my participants accounts of leisure. I go on to consider how the gazes of Others are posited as important elements in the regulation and policing of leisure spaces, and finally consider how the unusual method I adopted (particularly in Study 2) was invaluable for drawing out some of these issues.

### *7.2.1 The Scene: pleasure, resistance and instability*

The construction of the lesbian and gay Scene as a refuge and place of enjoyment for lesbians and gay men (and some other visitors) is the first area I would like to

consider. Given the taken-for-granted heterosexual dominance of space, and the dispersed nature of lesbian and gay communities, it is understandable why lesbians and gay men construct lesbian and gay bars and clubs as important places to meet, and 'belong' (Bell, 1991; Bell et al., 1994). My participants valorised the Scene by using the discourse of authenticity to construct it as a better place to 'be yourself' and by constructing the Scene as an environment free of oppressive male and heterosexual gazes. These discursive practices, in valorising 'homo' over 'hetero', could be seen as 'reverse discourses', in that they challenge the dominant conception of homosexuality (and its related cultural practices) as inferior to heterosexuality (Foucault, 1978). The discursive construction of the Scene as a safe and enjoyable 'home' for lesbians and gay men, and somewhere where minority sexualities can be articulated, is important in resisting the heterosexual dominance of space. However, the valorisation of the Scene as a relaxed, enjoyable place to consume and take part in hedonistic leisure, away from some of the oppressive aspects of normative heterosexuality, potentially makes the Scene attractive to non-lesbian and gay 'outsiders'. The visibility of the Scene as an exciting space for leisure and consumption has increased throughout the late twentieth century as lesbians and gay men have become associated with fashion and dance culture, and the popular media have devoted more coverage to (and appropriated) the 'cool' aspects of queer culture (Sinfield, 1998).

In particular, the construction of the Scene as lacking the oppressive 'male gaze' makes it a space that is desirable for heterosexual women (see Chapter 4). In my research, I found that heterosexual women visitors to the Scene can relish the opportunity to be free from the surveillance of heterosexual men, and to be able to look at other (gay) men without fear of reprisal. However, as Skeggs (1999) found,

the presence of heterosexual women on the Scene is not without its problems. In finding a space to escape 'laddish' masculinity, heterosexual women may destabilise the safety of the Scene for lesbians and gay men. By articulating a heterosexual gaze in the spaces of the Scene, heterosexual visitors may leave lesbians and gay men feeling vulnerable and exposed, and that they are 'on show' or being judged. Heterosexual women who visit the Scene may also exacerbate the relative invisibility of lesbians on the Scene, by failing to acknowledge lesbian desire (Chapter 3) or, as Skeggs found, by simply being present as visual symbols of normative femininity. The presence of heterosexual men could be equally problematic, even if, as some of my male heterosexual participants said, heterosexual men might find the Scene liberating from the strictures of normative gender behaviour (see Chapter 6).

The spaces of the Scene are still a political necessity in a cultural climate that is still often negative towards homosexuality, and in which the open display of same-sex desire in public is still risky. How can the Scene be maintained as a space of resistance when the attraction of heterosexual visitors potentially undermines its status as safe, queer space? There is some indication from my findings in Study 2 that going to the Scene can call into question the taken-for-grantedness of heterosexual identity (see Chapter 6). The questioning of the 'obviousness' of heterosexuality on the Scene may make heterosexual visitors more aware of their behaviour and what is regarded as acceptable within lesbian/gay space. However, it may be the construction of the Scene as lesbian and gay *territory* that most discourages heterosexual access. The idea that the Scene is lesbian and gay territory is in part the result of efforts by lesbians and gay men to claim some public space as their own, making use of the discursive strategies outlined above. In addition, the historical concern to limit the expression of

homosexuality in public space encourages the Scene to exist on the periphery, isolating lesbians and gay men from the mainstream, and specifying sites to which heterosexual people should not want to go for fear of 'contamination' by the lesbian or gay Other (Shields, 1991; Weeks, 1981). The legacy of the stigma attached to homosexuality will still discourage many heterosexual people from venturing out on the Scene, while the liberal concern to respect the rights and privacy of lesbians and gay men will also limit access by more 'open-minded' heterosexual people. Most of the heterosexual participants in my research located themselves within this liberal position. No heterosexual participant said that they had the 'right' to go to the Scene, and most said that they would usually only go to a lesbian or gay bar when they were invited by lesbian and gay friends or acquaintances. When talking about being on the Scene, most heterosexual participants positioned themselves as respectful of lesbians and gay men, and distanced themselves from heterosexual 'tourists' who were there to treat the Scene as a 'freak show'. However, the Scene will remain as an attractive, entertaining space to some, and its appeal is likely to grow. Certainly the heterosexual men and women who took part in Study 2 generally seemed very at ease in lesbian and gay bars. The maintenance of the Scene as a resistant space is constantly called into question by its commercial basis and appeal to outsiders. It remains to be seen whether the lesbian and gay bars of Birmingham become as popular to heterosexual revellers as Manchester's 'gay village', and whether this will create the same political concerns about the 'authenticity' and safety of the Scene as expressed by Whittle (1994).

### *7.2.2 The territorialisation of leisure: interlocking resistance and oppression*

The construction of lesbian and gay territory in the commercial leisure spaces of the

Scene is a discursive and political *struggle* because lesbians and gay men start from a culturally dissident position where they lack power and influence. Despite the risks of 'ghettoisation' and further isolation, any success in claiming lesbian and gay space is generally a step towards more cultural visibility and recognition. Thus the territorial account of lesbian and gay space (or the division of 'homo' from 'hetero' space) is quite different from the discourse of territoriality used by middle-class respondents to position middle-class and working-class people in different leisure sites (see Chapter 5). In this case, the use of class difference to territorialise space is not driven by a political concern to create space for an oppressed minority (as with the maintenance of lesbian and gay space), but instead by an ideology that seeks to reproduce and justify dominant middle-class interests. The language of territoriality suggests that the middle and working classes cannot mix in leisure spaces, because they have nothing in common and mixing will inevitably generate conflict between 'us' and 'them'. Working-class 'locals' and 'townies' were positioned as without opportunities, literally 'going nowhere', and tied to particular pubs and bars that were seen as threatening or at least risky for middle-class subjects to enter. In contrast, middle-class respondents positioned themselves and middle-class students as mobile in terms of education, leisure and opportunities. Locating the working-class Other as fixed in specific locations (such as traditional pubs), while emphasising the mobility and choice available to middle-class consumers, reinforces a view of the class system where everyone knows their place, and justifies the territorial arrangement of leisure spaces by suggesting that conflict is inevitable if it is disrupted.

Classist constructions of leisure spaces were used by the majority of respondents, including lesbians and gay men when they differentiated between different types of

lesbian and gay venues (see Chapter 6). This is interesting theoretically because it a) shows that the use of territoriality in accounts of leisure space can be *both* resistant and oppressive depending on the type of difference (such as sexuality or class) that one focuses on (and the social position from which subjects are speaking), and b) suggests that class and sexuality intersect, particularly in the spaces of the Scene. The ease with which my heterosexual participants negotiated lesbian and gay space may be partly due to the fact that the dominant valued 'style' of the Scene is regarded as middle-class (Ridge et al., 1999; Ridge et al., 1997). The majority of my heterosexual participants were middle-class, and seemed 'at home' in comfortable, stylish café/bars or well-appointed pubs, while they distanced themselves from 'rough' working-class pubs or brash 'meat markets'. In general, the lesbian and gay venues that were involved in the study were smart and modern bars, which belonged to what middle-class lesbian and gay participants represented as the 'new and trendy' Scene (see Chapter 6). It is unlikely that middle-class heterosexual participants would have been so enamoured of the less polished and more insular venues associated with the 'old and seedy' Scene, just as my mainly middle-class lesbian and gay participants distanced themselves from this apparently less desirable space. My research shows that an attendance to one form of difference, such as sexuality, cannot ignore interlocking differences such as class or gender, echoing feminist debates about multiple oppressions and 'difference', and Foucault's discussion of the complex interplay of power and resistance (Foucault, 1978; Kemp & Squires, 1997). Resistance against one form of oppression, such as lesbians and gay men asserting queer space, may be undermined by other forms of resistance (such as heterosexual women escaping the male gaze on the Scene), or even complicit with certain forms of oppression (the perpetuation of class distinction). The theoretical challenge is to

capture some of this complexity and unpick it, if possible.

### *7.2.3 'The gaze' and the regulation of leisure space*

A striking feature of my participants' accounts of their leisure is the attention paid to the gazes of others, and the association made between these gazes and the regulation or policing of space. Participants associated feeling uncomfortable or unwelcome in leisure spaces with the invasive, judgemental or objectifying looks of others, and the absence of these gazes was associated with being in a desirable space (see in particular Chapters 4 and 5). The concept of 'the gaze' was elaborated by feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey (1975), who considered how the 'male gaze' was a device used in film to sexually objectify women and position men as the active bearers and women as the passive receivers of the gaze. In my paper on gendered and sexualised accounts of 'the gaze' (Chapter 4), I considered how the sexually objectifying male or masculinised gaze was reproduced in lesbian and heterosexual women's accounts of certain heterosexual bars and clubs. The gaze of men in heterosexual 'meat markets' was represented as making women feel like 'lumps of flesh' and the avoidance of this gaze was seen as a significant attraction of the lesbian and gay Scene. For my participants, the gaze was not just a technical or cinematic device used to objectify women in media representations, but was a *practice* they experienced all too regularly in certain leisure spaces. However, lesbian and gay participants also constructed a discourse of a 'heterosexual gaze', in which the looks of heterosexual men and women were represented as making lesbians and gay men feel policed and vulnerable. This confirmed that the gaze could be sexualised as well as gendered, and the linking of the gaze of the working-class Other with the discomfort experienced by middle-class respondents in locals' pubs confirmed that the gaze of others could also be

classed (Chapter 5).

These findings support the arguments of theorists such as Gamman & Marshment (1998), who argue that the gaze is a general mechanism of power seen in media representations and everyday life, and can be gendered, sexualised, classed and raced in order to police, objectify, judge and desire. In my research, the gazes of others were often constructed as supporting and policing the territorialisation of leisure spaces. The looks of others were represented as a way to gauge the atmosphere of a venue, and work out whether you belonged there or not. For instance, working-class local people were constructed as having set territories in certain pubs, and middle-class respondents often said that entering these spaces would be marked by locals giving them 'looks' (Chapter 5). These looks seemed to be interpreted by middle-class participants as a warning that their presence had been noted and that they should respect the leisure space in which they were. When participants constructed the experience of being in a locals' pub as scary or threatening, this was often linked to being stared at by other patrons. Similarly, some heterosexual participants said that they would be wary of 'getting reactions or looks' from lesbians and gay men if they went to a lesbian or gay bar, and this implied that lesbians and gay men were seen as policing queer space (Chapter 6). Lesbian and gay participants rarely articulated their own desiring or objectifying gazes in accounts of their leisure, possibly in order to construct the Scene as a 'gaze-free' space (see Chapter 4). However, some lesbian and gay participants did suggest that the 'looks' of other lesbians and gay men could be used to assess, judge and police appearance and behaviour on the Scene, reinforcing particular styles and norms (Chapter 6). Overall, these findings suggest that one of the ways that people see that space is regulated is through the gaze or looks of others.

This echoes Foucault's (1977, 1978, 1980) writing on the disciplinary gazes of powerful institutions such as the penal system, and the judging, assessing and questioning gazes of professionals such as psychiatrists and doctors. Foucault suggested that individuals were encouraged to submit to the gaze of others and to police their own behaviour by thinking that they might be observed. The construction of desiring, objectifying, invasive and judgemental gazes by my participants reflects a more mundane and localised operation of power, but suggests that a perception of being watched by others can lead to self-monitoring and the regulation of behaviour in leisure spaces. Considering these discursive practices and operations of power may be valuable in helping us to think of how everyday spaces such as 'the pub' or bar are informally policed and regulated.

### *7.2.4 'Going out' as a productive research method*

By the standards of mainstream social psychology, the design of my research is somewhat unusual, in that it combines semi-structured interviewing and discourse analysis with elements of ethnography and participant observation (in taking people out to commercial leisure venues). Some of the findings presented in this thesis, particularly the accounts of class difference given after participants went to traditional pubs, or the heterosexual perspectives on the lesbian and gay Scene, are unlikely to have been generated by isolated interviews, or more traditional methods such as questionnaires. My suspicion is that the 'ideal of classlessness' that Bradley (1996) describes would have limited the degree to which my mainly middle-class participants would have talked about class or class-related matters if they had not been taken to unfamiliar locals' pubs, and been 'face-to-face' with the working-class Other. Similarly, taking heterosexual participants to lesbian and gay venues was a much

more direct way to prompt a reflection on the 'heterosexual assumption', rather than asking participants to speculate how they would feel in lesbian and gay space and what the implications would be for their identities. As I stated in the Method, I did not set out to shock or disturb participants by taking them to unfamiliar or threatening environments, but I was hoping that it would make it easier to discuss the specific ways in which leisure is organised and experienced, and how participants situated themselves within different spaces. I believe my methodology succeeded in this respect, and I would encourage other researchers to incorporate the use of everyday contexts in their research, especially when they are attempting to discover the meanings and significance of everyday activities out in the 'real world', rather than in the laboratory. The current predominance of experimental and quantitative methods in contemporary social psychology is misguided in my opinion, given that it often removes social activities from their social context. Talking to people and participating in the activities that we seek to describe and analyse are essential if social psychologists wish to understand the meaning of social phenomena from the perspective of those engaged in them.

## 7.3 LIMITATIONS

It is of course necessary to highlight the limits of my research and its findings. Although I believe that my analyses have a wider relevance beyond the immediate context from which they were taken, I do not see my findings as universally applicable or supporting a set of unchanging facts or 'truths' about leisure, identity, sexuality and space. My research was located in Birmingham during the late 1990s, and was based on the talk of a relatively small number of young and predominantly white and middle-class participants. This talk about sexuality, identity and leisure

space should be seen as grounded in a particular context; changing that context is likely have produced different priorities, concerns and meanings, although some overarching themes (such as a concern about authenticity) are likely to have remained, due to their contemporary significance in wider British and Western culture. Relocating this research to a small town, rural area, or different country, or recruiting a mainly black and/or working-class group of participants may have drastically shifted the emphasis of the research and revealed a different set of priorities and meanings about leisure spaces, identity and sexuality. Talking to younger school-age participants or older adults who have greater restrictions on their use of commercial leisure (because of a lack of income or family and job commitments for example) is also likely to have produced quite different accounts. However, some of the discursive processes I have discussed, such as constructing territorial accounts of leisure spaces or the regulation of these spaces through different gazes, are likely to have relevance in other contexts, even if their expression is specific to the material context, identities and ideological commitments of those who are speaking. My research should also be seen as historically situated; for example, the tension between political authenticity and commercialism on the lesbian and gay Scene is a debate that will continue to have relevance while lesbian and gay men are dependent on commercial leisure spaces in which to meet. However, changes in the material and political circumstances of lesbian and gay minorities would probably alter this debate. Similarly, the shift in emphasis from class to consumption as a marker of status and identity, particularly in leisure, is a contemporary trend that may continue in the advanced capitalist West, but as Roberts (1999) and Slater (1997) point out, the utility of consumption as the basis of identity may be limited. Research must continue to follow these changing cultural

debates and social trends.

Aside from these general limitations, there are a few specific points in the research design that I would have liked to address, given the opportunity to repeat the research over a longer period or 'start over'. I had great difficulty recruiting heterosexual men for the early stages of the research, and it would have been desirable to include them within Study 1 to widen the available contrasts between participants at that stage. In addition, due to the limitations imposed by conducting a PhD over a three-year period, I have been unable to explore every aspect of the interviews I conducted; it would take considerably longer than I have available to do justice to the enormous complexity of discourse contained within the transcripts of my participants' interviews. The findings I have presented here are therefore a partial rendering of my participants' contributions, although I believe that I have presented the strongest features of my participants' accounts, given my political and theoretical commitments as a white, middle-class gay man and critical social/lesbian & gay psychologist. A different researcher, with different commitments and constraints, is likely to have produced a quite different account of the area I have investigated (or to have not bothered to investigate it at all). However, given the political and ethical concerns raised by 'outsiders' researching groups to which they do not 'belong' (such as white researchers attempting to research groups of predominantly black people), I feel that I have appropriately exploited my position as gay, white and middle-class, and researched that which is culturally and symbolically close to me.

## 7.4 Implications for Future Research

The research I have conducted was limited in contrasting heterosexual, lesbian and

gay perspectives on commercial leisure amongst predominantly white and middle-class men and women. Currently there is little or no published research examining the significance and use of commercial leisure that incorporates a combination of lesbian/gay, working-class and/or black perspectives (although see Ridge et al., 1997; Ridge et al., 1999; Skeggs, 1999). In order to achieve a fuller understanding of (sexual) identity construction in relation to leisure spaces (particularly lesbian and gay spaces) and the regulation of these spaces, the neglect of working-class and black perspectives must be challenged.

Throughout my research, I have focused on one of the most popular forms of commercial leisure, namely 'going out' to socialise in pubs and bars. As I indicated in the Introduction, the study of leisure is increasingly connected to the study of consumption, and throughout my analytical chapters I have drawn on the ideas that a) consumption practices are increasingly important for identity, and b) that lesbians and gay men are increasingly targeted as consumers and must negotiate the dependence of lesbian and gay communities on commercialism and the market (Gluckman & Reed, 1997; Miles, 1996; Sinfield, 1998; Slater, 1997). A natural outcome of these concerns would be a focus on the integration of consumption in contemporary lesbian, gay and heterosexual identities, considering the significance of wider consumption practices (such as shopping, consuming media and fashion) as well as leisure. At present, I am expecting to address some of these issues in a two-year project on 'consumption, sexuality, youth and identity' in the context of Sydney, Australia, making use of the methods and critical perspective I have developed throughout this thesis[24]. I hope to

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[24] This research is funded by a Leverhulme Trust Study Abroad Studentship, 2001-2003, and will be based at the Centre for Critical Psychology, The University of Western Sydney.

explore more fully the theoretical and cultural links between class and consumption, and to consider how lesbian, gay and heterosexual youth negotiate the pressures to base their identities on consumption within an advanced capitalist society in general, and the vibrant multicultural context of Sydney in particular.

Finally, I would to suggest another area of research that I feel would benefit from further investigation. Skeggs (1999), in her consideration of Manchester's 'gay village', observed that heterosexual women sought out the company of gay men on the Scene to fulfil the role of 'safe' male companions, and to validate their appearance and cultural resources. The mutual appreciation of gay men and heterosexual women is becoming more culturally visible, and I have observed similar connections between heterosexual women participants and gay men during my research[25]. I believe that a study of the meaning of these relationships would be a fruitful way to consider the politics of contemporary gendered and sexualised relationships between men and women. The friendships of gay men and heterosexual women seem predicated on the assumption that they are non-sexual, and that they provide a mutual source of support and enjoyment that is resistant to oppressive heterosexual masculinities. The idea of gay men and heterosexual women forming an alliance against oppressive aspects of heterosexuality is appealing, however this simplifies the potential complexities of these relationships. Maintaining gay male/heterosexual female relationships as non-sexual probably requires interesting discursive negotiations, given that on the surface at least, we would expect some women with gay male friends to find them sexually attractive, and it has been known since the days of Kinsey that some gay-identified

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[25] It should be noted that because of their apparently incommensurate political and social positions, it is rare to find the same kind of mutually admiring friendships between lesbians and heterosexual men.

men occasionally sleep with women (e.g. Kinsey et al., 1982). On a more explicitly political level, there is also the question of whether the position of gay men *as men* within the sex/gender system (despite attempts to undermine them as 'effeminate' and so on) still gives them more cultural power than the heterosexual women with whom they associate, and how this power differential is negotiated. Gay men have had a chequered history of engagement with feminist issues, and the legacy of misogyny within gay male circles is still likely to exert an influence (Edwards, 1990). This can be seen in the use of the derogatory term 'fag hag', used to describe heterosexual women who are 'obsessed' with gay male culture and their gay male friends. The relationships between heterosexual women and gay men raise a number of issues about power, gender politics and sexuality, and it could be productive to investigate a range of these relationships in depth, looking at how mutual resistance and support are discursively enabled or constrained, and the possible pitfalls generated by power inequities and unexamined misogyny or heterosexism.

## 7.5 Concluding remarks

Investigating leisure, identity, sexuality and space has been a stimulating although at times frustrating enterprise. During my research I have examined an apparently mundane aspect of everyday life, namely 'going out', and shown that it is a domain where identities are negotiated and performed, and where subjects seek to express themselves in spaces of regulation and possibility. Throughout my research, I have contrasted the accounts of lesbians and gay men with those of heterosexual men and women, considering why spaces like the lesbian and gay Scene are so important for lesbians and gay men, the issues raised by heterosexual visitors on the Scene, and the tensions generated by the commercial basis of bars and pubs. In considering the

middle-class status of most of my participants, I have also explored the way that territorial accounts of leisure space can be classed as well as sexualised. Although leisure is increasingly regarded as a domain of fluid, consumption-based identities, culturally entrenched differences such as sexuality, gender, class and race still have meaning, and the power to exclude or limit the expression of identity. It is for this reason that I believe social psychologists and other social scientists should continue to investigate leisure and other neglected domains, exploring people's everyday lives, and making the experiences of lesbians, gay men and other marginalised groups central to their analyses.

# APPENDIX A

## Research Contract and Consent Form

I, the researcher, Martin Holt, in the course of research for my PhD in Psychology at the University of Birmingham (1997-2000) undertake to:

- Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of all the participants in my research, using substitute names to identify interviewees and withholding unnecessary personal information that might otherwise identify participants.

- Acknowledge the right of participants to withdraw from the research process at any time.

- Exclude any material contributed by a participant (in interviews or otherwise) if that participant deems that material is inappropriate, offensive or unrepresentative.

- Represent my participants' viewpoints and opinions as honestly as possible without wilful distortion or misrepresentation.

- Make the analysis and findings of the research available to participants wherever possible and appropriate, or if requested by participants.

- Make a clear distinction between my own opinions and position (both academic and political) and those of my participants wherever possible and appropriate.

- Store securely any materials (e.g. interview recordings and transcripts) contributed by participants.

I, the undersigned, consent to participate in the research of the above named researcher. This consent includes:

- The tape recording of any interview (whether one-to-one or in a group setting) conducted by the researcher.

- The transcription of any interview in which I participate and the use of this transcribed material in the analysis and write-up of the research, which may be made publicly available at presentations, conferences and in publications.

- The secure storage of recorded and transcribed interview material.

- Acknowledging the right of the researcher to interpret and analyse my contributions in a way which may not represent my own opinions, but that should respect my viewpoint and position.

Name (print): _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

# APPENDIX B

**First Interview Study - Coding Outline**

| *Leisure time/consumption* | *Identity* | *Place* |
|---|---|---|
| Leisure time as time to express 'authentic self' (relaxation, freedom to be your 'real self') | Authenticity (constructing your 'true self') | Coding of places by sexuality, gender, race, class, age etc |
| Discerning self vs. undesirable other (choices of leisure activities/places, opposed to what other people do, builds picture of person as discerning - class related) | Sexuality (sexual identity constructed using opposition of gay/str8) | Meanings and representations of the Scene (as constructed by LGBs & str8s) |
| Leisure time/consumption practices as indicators of class or 'lifestyle' | Boundaries of acceptable/appropriate behaviour for different sexual identities | Boundaries of acceptable/appropriate behaviour in particular places e.g. str8 vs. gay |
| Leisure time/consumption practices as indicators of gender/sexuality e.g. dress codes in bars/clubs, who buys the drinks | Gaze (presenting self to others, and being subject to Gaze of others) | Gaze in different places (presenting self to others in place, looking at others in place) |
| | Visibility of minority sexual identities e.g. heterosexual assumption | Visibility of sexuality in places |
| | Constructing the self as what you're *not* | Surveillance/policing of space |
| | Coherent/unified self vs. contradictory/fragmented selves (commitment to former, instances of latter) | Strong class codings in Birmingham particularly e.g. Broad St vs. other places |

# APPENDIX C

## Interview Schedule for Study 1

Tell me some details about yourself - a first name, your age, where you live (and for how long), what you do for a living, your religion (if you have one) and your ethnic origin.

1) Do you go out much (to socialise/for entertainment/leisure activities)?

2) Where do you go?

3) Who do you go with?

4) What do you go out to do/like to do?

5) Why do you like the places you to?

6) What kinds of people go to the places where you go out? (Describe them for me)

7) Do you think you fit in with this type/these types of person/people? (why?)

8) When you go to these places, how do you behave/how do you feel?

9) Is this important for you?

10) Is this different from how you would act/feel in other places you go to (e.g. work, home, other pubs)? If so, then why?

11) Are the places you go to now different from the type of places you used to go to?

12) Do you seek out particular types of places to go to? i.e. do you monitor places opening etc?

13) Do you know places that lesbians and gay men can go to?

14) What do you think of these places? Do you go to them? (why?)

15) How do you behave/feel when you go to these places?

16) Do you know of places that are 'mixed'? Have you gone to these places?

17) Can you tell me of an occasion when you went out and felt uncomfortable because of your sexuality? (where? why?)

18) How would you define yourself sexually?

19) Does this affect where you go out?

20) Do you feel limited by the choice of places you can go to?

21) If you could design a new place to spend your leisure time, what would it be and where would it be? (who would you try to attract and why?)

# APPENDIX D

**Interview Schedule for Study 2**

1) Describe the places we visited last night/the other day. What things stood out to you? How would you describe them to other people?

   Further prompts:

What kind(s) of people were in the places we visited?

What did you think about the décor, layout, drinks, prices, music etc?

What were the similarities and differences between the venues?

[Which criteria were used by participants – why are these important?]

1) Would you normally go to any of these places? Why?

2) Would you recommend them to others?

3) Which place did you like the most and why?

4) Did you feel comfortable in any or all of these places? Why? Do you feel like that anywhere else?

5) Did you feel you fitted in with the clientele in the places we visited? Why?

6) Do you think anyone could go to the places to which we went? If not, why not?

7) Would you see/meet different people in the different venues?

8) If you went again, who would you go with?

9) Would you dress differently if you went to these venues again? How would you dress?

10) Do you think that these kinds of venues are changing or have changed? If so, how have they changed/are they changing and why do you think that might be?

11) Do you think there are 'unspoken rules' in venues like these (or in general)? What are they and how do they vary e.g. for men and women?

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