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***Policing and Performing Gay Sexualities: How do gay men neg(oti)ate their sexual identities in the workplace and how does occupational setting frame these processes? A comparative study into the working lives of gay male police officers and performers.***

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
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## **DECLARATION**

I confirm that this thesis is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree at another university.



## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the working realities of gay police officers and performers in relation to 'gay-friendly/'gay-hostile' worksites and embodied sexual identity, developing an understanding of the meanings gay workers attach to their working lives by mobilising conceptual resources primarily from sociology.

Deep seated assumptions pervade current perceptions regarding gay male sexuality and certain occupations. The idea is that there are gay industries like fashion, nursing and the performing arts. In contrast, occupations such as the police and the armed forces are often seen as homophobic, yet a dearth of academic research investigates the lived experiences of gay men located within perceived 'gay friendly' or 'gay hostile' worksites. Acknowledging this as a missed opportunity for developing empirical insight, I bring to the fore the work realities of some of these overlooked people. Taking the performing arts as an example of a 'gay-friendly' occupation, the police as an example of a 'gay-hostile' occupation, and drawing on in-depth interview data with 20 gay performers/police officers, I show that the perspectives and experiences of these men allow us to nuance existing research on how LGB employees understand, value and experience 'gay-friendly' workplaces, an emerging construct in the organisation studies literature.

Focusing on the significance of embodied, sexual identity for the performance of the occupational roles of interest allows this study to consider the relationship between gender and sexuality at work. Literature on the gendered nature of work along with the promising literature on (homo)sexuality in the workplace have proceeded relatively separately, with the exception of the literature on sexualized labour and the commodification of women's (assumed hetero)sexuality in sales-service work (Tyler, 1997). The effect is that the experience and performance of gender and/in/through sexuality at work has been neglected as a topic of empirical investigation. Although sociologists argue that sexuality cannot be understood without reference to gender, and vice versa, few organizational scholars explore the experiences of work with this in mind. This thesis addresses this gap in knowledge. It brings together the perspectives of gay performers and police officers and highlights the prevalence of a 'gender imperative' throughout the day-to-day lives of these workers.

In detailing the workplace experiences of my participants, this thesis also builds on existing studies that tend to focus solely on the *general* working lives of gay employees. Gay workers face important *contextual* issues relating to 'passing', 'coming out' and homophobia. Although these are key areas of interest to existing literature, studies so far fail to address these concepts in detail with reference to specific occupational settings. In other words, the research contributes to the area of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) disclosure and management at work. Stigma-based models (Goffman, 1963) are particularly useful here in framing some of the empirical insights of my research.

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

This thesis explores the working realities of gay male police officers and performers in relation to ‘gay-friendly/’gay-hostile’ worksites and embodied sexual identity, developing an understanding of the meanings gay workers attach to their working lives by mobilising conceptual resources primarily from sociology. I provide detailed accounts of the perceptions of the lived experiences of gay sexuality within specific occupations. Focusing on the significance of embodied, sexual identity for the performance of the occupational roles of interest also allows me to consider the relationship between gender and sexuality at work. Such research is both timely and apposite, and contributes to two notable research gaps on lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) people at work.

### **The ‘Gay-Friendly’ Occupation: An emerging concept**

It is fair to say that within the area of organization studies, greater insights are being developed regarding the workplace experiences of LGB people (Giuffre et al, 2008; Rumens, 2008a; 2008b; Ward and Winstanley, 2003; 2005; 2006). Arguably, the working lives of an ‘invisible’ population have become distinctly visible (Woods and Lucas, 1993). Over the past five years, authors such as James Ward (2004; 2005; 2006; 2008) and Nick Rumens (2008a; 2008b) have addressed themes such as ‘coming out’ at work (the recognition and renegotiation of one’s social sexual identity) and the formation and maintenance of gay male friendships in the workplace. Indeed, homosexuality in organizations no longer appears to be a ‘taboo’ topic (Ward,

2008). Nevertheless, given the theoretically and empirically rich literature that can be found on gender, race and disability in organizations, a prevailing 'diversity hierarchy' subjugating the occupational experiences of gay men and women is apparent. Consequently, there is a need for researchers to further expand upon the *relative* paucity of studies that seek to understand how gay men and lesbians (re)negotiate their identities at work.

For as long as the area of minority sexual identity at work remains underexplored, assumptions surrounding where gay men or lesbians may or may not be found working will continue to shape popular thinking. 'The stereotypical assumption is that there are gay 'industries' such as airlines, advertising and certain areas of retail, and this assumption is often accompanied by anecdotal evidence of a high proportion of gay men, with gay women, again stereotypically assumed to be working as police officers or prison wardens' (Woods and Lucas, 1993 in Ward and Winstanley, 2003: 4). Research exploring why this may be the case has yet to emerge, however. Because of this, one is neither able to support or challenge perceptions that gay men flock to hairdressing or avoid the military, as there is a dearth of academic research that seeks to understand the lived experiences of gay workers located within supposedly 'gay-industries'/'gay hostile' occupations.

Further, and until now, literature on the gendered nature of work and the emerging scholarship on sexuality and organisation have proceeded relatively separately, with the notable exception of the literature on sexualized labour and the commodification of particularly women's (assumed hetero)sexuality in sales-service work (Tyler,

1997). The cumulative effect is that the lived experience and performance of gender and/in/through sexuality has not been thought about in any sustained way. Although sociologists such as Weeks (2006) have long since argued that sexuality cannot be understood without reference to gender, and vice versa, organizational scholars have yet to explore the interrelatedness of gender and sexuality.

### ***Development of an idea***

Since the introduction of the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, replaced by the Equality Act 2010 (section 12), employers have become particularly concerned with eradicating institutionalised homophobia at work. The regulations, which apply to all employment and include recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, dismissals and training, make it unlawful on the grounds of sexual orientation to discriminate directly against anyone – that is, to treat them less favourably than others because of their sexual orientation, discriminate indirectly against anyone, subject anyone to harassment, or victimise someone who intends to make a complaint of discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation. These regulations were introduced to protect LGB individuals, but also cover heterosexual orientation.

It is only recently, however, that researchers have examined the growing number of organisations that are cultivating gay-inclusive work environments, demonstrating their commitment towards engaging with the needs and interests of LGB employees through policy (such as through written equality policy statements barring discrimination and specifically stating ‘sexual orientation’, establishing LGB

networks for support and consultation, auditing policies and procedures for employees in line with Equality Act 2010, or running diversity awareness training that refers to 'sexual orientation'). Striking, then, is an emerging scholarship that is shedding light on these organisations, by identifying good practice concerning equality, diversity and sexual orientation and its effect on LGB employees who are 'out' at work, and who describe their workplaces as 'gay-friendly' (Colgan et al., 2007, 2008, 2009; Correia and Kleiner, 2001; Giuffre et al., 2008; Rumens, 2008a; Williams et al., 2009; Wright et al., 2006). Noting progressive shifts in public opinion towards LGB people, legislation that bans employment discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and the growing number of employers engaging with the needs and interests of LGB employees (Raeburn, 2004), researchers have started to investigate the experiences of those employed in what Giuffre et al. (2008) pronounce as a 'new type of workplace...called 'gay-friendly''. Characterised by, among other things, an intolerance of homophobia and heterosexism, management commitment towards issues of equality, diversity and sexual orientation, research shows that one major benefit of working in a 'gay-friendly' workplace is the openness experienced by employees in developing LGB identities (Colgan et al., 2007, 2008; Giuffre et al., 2008).

The concept 'gay-friendly' here applies to organisations that have implemented diversity policy (Colgan et al., 2007, 2008), or alternatively, on participants in research studies self-identifying their occupations as gay inclusive (Williams et al., 2009). 'Gay-friendly' work settings are of interest to me, but I come at the topic from a slightly different angle to much of the research currently published on the subject. While the study of how LGB employees have responded to the recent efforts of

employers to foster ‘gay-friendly’ workplaces is a productive line of inquiry, I explore the work realities of gay men within a profession that has long been understood as ‘gay-friendly’ – the performing arts, and compare these to the work realities of gay men located in a traditionally considered ‘gay-hostile’ occupation – the police. Indeed, this thesis is partly about unpacking deep seated assumptions that pervade current popular thinking relating to gay sexuality and performing/policing.

At the heart of discussions on the ‘gay-friendly’ occupation, emerges the concept of ‘normalisation’. The above legislative and policy developments suggest that many gay men and women can live ‘beyond the closet’ in twenty-first century worksites (see Chapter Three). Certainly, and as Seidman observes, the identity of the ‘normal gay’ has been integrated into society as a respected identity, and is increasingly nurtured within a number of occupational contexts:

The normal gay is presented as fully human, as the psychological and moral equal of the heterosexual... [He] is expected to be gender conventional, link sex to love and a marriage-like relationship, defend family values, personify economic individualism, and display national pride (2002: 133)

Using the concept of normalisation, Seidman reminds us that gay sexuality is increasingly becoming a small part of an individual’s self, and is no longer seen as the crux of identity. He alludes to the wane of ‘the closet’, and highlights that LGB persons routinely live ‘out’; they are socially accepted; and above all, they are seen as normal. As a result, individuals are able to ‘comfortably and rather passively inhabit their homosexuality at work’ in a range of contexts including retail, law, nursing, hairdressing and teaching (Williams et al., 2009: 31). The concept of what constitutes

the ‘normal gay’ worker is an undeveloped empirical question, however. Even ‘gay-friendly’ worksites can be characterised by the ‘gay-friendly’ closet (ibid.). In other words, to be accepted within ‘gay-friendly’ workplaces, individuals must embody and maintain particular performances of gay identity. This is an important point that I revisit time and time again throughout my thesis in terms of the interrelationship between gender and sexuality at work.

### **Why study gay men at work?**

The development of the research questions (see below) has been incremental over the years. Musing over what might be interesting to study, going back to the literature, I found that very little had been written around research topics that caught my attention.

I remember being asked on an application form at the age of 20 how I would define my sexual orientation. At the time, I wondered how other gay men might feel being asked this potentially emotive and personal question. This originally sparked my interest in the area of (homo)sexuality at work. Around the same age, I struck up a number of friendships with gay police officers. I would often talk to these individuals about their experiences of being gay in the police. What I found to be most striking was that many were out at work and exuded confidence in their jobs, even taking the time to reveal sexual identity to offenders in ways such as ‘You’ve just been nicked by a poof!’ Yet I also learnt that being a ‘gay copper’ was not altogether straightforward. Recounting particular instances, the conversations would always

come back to the same question: “Would you have been treated in the same way had you been a straight police officer?” The response was always “No”, suggesting that (homo)sexuality affected how police officers experienced work life. All the while, these officers would speak as though they were ‘lucky’ to be a police officer at all, let alone out at work. It seemed to be acceptable to them that the police might treat gay officers differently given the occupation’s historical hostility towards those of minority status. The contradictions in Adam, Christopher, Elliot and Wayne’s experiences (see Appendix) captivated me – such as the accounts suggesting that the police had implemented a range of policy initiatives directed towards levelling the playing field for gay men (LGB networks, diversity awareness training: see Colgan et al., 2007), versus the idea that some officers felt they experienced persistent and indirect forms of heterosexism. It is fair to say that my interest in the neg(oti)ation (I use this term to stress the negation associated with navigating minority identity at work according to gay men) of gay identity within policing contexts stems from personal relationships forged with these gay men. Going back to the academic literature, it also surprised me that existing research had yet to consider how the lives of gay officers might have changed since the intervention of equality initiatives, thus alerting me to a research gap I felt I could contribute to.

I started to wonder what it might be like for gay men working as cabin crew, nurses, hairdressers or performers; occupations synonymous with gay sexuality. As a teenager, I had taken part in a number of amateur theatre productions and two professional shows. Of these, *Carousel!*, I remember being faced with overt displays of homosexual behaviour in the green room. At 15, it was shocking to see how acceptable gay sexuality appeared backstage, since at school it was so taboo. Once,



whilst I was waiting at the stage door for a friend, two male members of the cast came out for a cigarette and began to kiss, quite passionately. As a child, this was perhaps the first time I had ever seen two men kiss in public. After reflecting on the space within which such behaviour had taken place, I, like many of my participants (see Chapter Five), began to understand certain areas within the performing arts as ‘home’ for gay people. When it came to my decision to conduct a comparative study on occupations commonly (dis)associated with gay sexuality, this experience as a child replayed in my mind. Further, given a fair amount of research has been carried out on the airline industry (Taylor and Tyler, 2000; Tyler, 1997) and nursing (Simpson, 2005), I was to find no academic research on the experiences of (gay) male performers. This excited me, and presented me with an opportunity as an aspiring researcher.

In 2007, I conducted a small scale literature search on minority sexual identity in the workplace for an MA dissertation (Broomfield, 2007), a project I saw as a pilot study to my PhD work. This was when it struck me that academic research on LGB workers has been keen to stress that gay men are notoriously difficult to study *since they represent an ‘invisible’ population* (unlike those of an ethnic minority, for example). I was perplexed at how often this assumption was made or used to justify a smaller sample of respondents. (Homo)Sexuality as invisible does not bear testimony to how I have experienced my own sexuality. Many of my close friends would agree. My frequent trips to gay venues also provide a different perspective. A significant number of gay men experience their sexuality as something very visible, primarily due to their effeminacy; an overt sign of gay identity (see Chapter Two). I believe, on the whole, academics have been *too* careful to shy away from the (re)inscription of such a

stereotype. Put differently, I agree that gay identity is experienced in multiple and fluid ways, but this is no justification for overly stressing that homosexuality is *largely* invisible at work. Although gay men can blend into the heterosexual milieu of organisational life, many gay men prop up the stereotype that relates gay sexuality to effeminacy. I believe scholars have been preoccupied with challenging the idea that gay sexuality translates to effeminacy at the expense of locating the conditions under which effeminate gay men experience the realities of work. In other words, they ignore the interrelationship between gender and (homo)sexuality in the workplace. There are merits in this project, but these merits are eroded when researchers begin to sideline the voices of camp gay men, where prioritising their stories is felt to reify undesirable stereotypes that 'disadvantage' other (gender conformist) gay men.

Having located my personal investment in the study, it is clear that I am neither an objective researcher nor detached from the research itself. My understanding is that who we are and what we believe affects our research. My biography constitutes part of and has influenced the research, having partly shaped the study's agenda. I return to this point later in the thesis (Chapter Four), where I sketch out how I align the research strategies with feminist epistemology.

### **Policing and Performing**

Over the years, the British Police Service has received criticism from academics in the fields of criminology, sociology and organisation studies regarding the position of

women, ethnic, racial and sexual minority employees (Brown, 1998; Burke, 1994; Dick and Cassell, 2002; Cashmore, 2001; Loftus, 2008; Metcalfe and Dick, 2002). Many of these articles, which focus on the truncated career trajectories of minority officers, stereotyping, bullying, harassment and loss of employment, are startling reminders that workplace discrimination on the grounds of sex, race and sexuality has plagued the UK police service. In discussing these realities, scholars relate their findings to particular aspects of police culture; including ‘canteen culture’; the more informal attitudes that find expression around the canteen tables of the police service, held to pervade the everyday working realities of police officers (Davies and Thomas, 2005; Dick and Jankowicz, 2002; Kiely and Peek, 2002). As Fielding (1995: 47) notes, the stereotyped cultural values of the police canteen have been read as an almost pure form of hegemonic masculinity (the normative ideal of male behaviour - see Chapter Two). Indeed, police work is generally characterised as physically ‘tough work’ associated with images of white, working class masculinity (Dick and Jankowicz, 2001; Kiely and Peek, 2002; Loftus, 2008).

Due to some of these more tricky aspects of police culture, and ‘in part because police departments have regulated heterosexuality in society’, policing has traditionally exuded exceptionally strong norms of compulsory heterosexuality (Miller et al., 2003: 359). As a result, the British Police Service has represented one of the quintessential examples of a heteronormative organisational culture, in so much as ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ (Rich, 1980) has subordinated all other sexualities including and predominantly, gay masculinities. Overall, the case has been made clear by authors such as Burke (1994) and Miller et al. (2003): LGB officers struggle to become ‘respected’ police officers, yet with very few exceptions, scholarship on LGB

sexualities within police organisations is largely confined to the US (Belkin and McNichol, 2002; Colvin, 2009; Hassell and Brandl, 2009; Leinen, 1993; Lyons et al., 2008; Miller et al., 2003; Myers et al., 2004). Few UK studies chart the lived experiences of LGB officers; and not since Burke conducted research on the British Police Service in 1994 revealing it as distinctly homophobic.

At the time, it is fair to say that Burke's (1994) informative research offered a much needed insight into the lives of gay officers. Nearly two decades on, it is still claimed that policing remains 'gay-hostile', even though the landscape of policing has changed dramatically since diversity discourses have proliferated. A strong desire for change has meant that the service has been at the forefront of the drive to recruit, retain and promote LGB employees, and particularly gay male police officers. The police has since been singled out as having best practice concerning equality, diversity and sexual orientation, and has even been described as 'gay-friendly' (Colgan et al., 2007, 2008, 2009; Giuffre et al. 2008). The enthusiastic attempts to engage with gay men and women tie in with the general endeavour to 'correct the numbers', as stations now aim to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Given these developments, contradictions are evident in terms of the current academic literature, exposing the police as heterosexist, and the changes that have occurred throughout the service. This provided me with a dynamic environment within which to consider ongoing and visible processes of identity negotiation.

In contrast to policing, performing has a well-established reputation for providing welcoming contexts for the exploration and expression of sexualities (see Chapter

Four). Indeed, performing work is often described as bohemian and liberal, and has long been associated in historical research with LGB people (Friedman, 2007; Dyer, 1990; Miller, 1996; Sinfield, 1996). Strangely, organisational researchers appear to be much less concerned with this particular observation or, more generally, with performing as an occupation of empirical investigation, the bulk of academic attention being directed by cultural studies scholars towards how LGB sexualities and genders are represented on screen and stage (Becker, 2006; Dyer, 1990; Pullen, 2007; Sinfield, 1996). Yet there are many LGB people working front and backstage in theatres not to mention those employed before and behind the film and television camera, provoking unanswered questions about how LGB employees experience and negotiate occupational life in the performing arts. Having said this, organisational scholarship on performing is slowly emerging (Dean, 2005, 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006; Swanson et al., 2000; Thomas, 1995).

Returning to the draw of performing for LGB people, this is more apparent in accounts of the historical significance of theatre and stage for expressing LGB sexualities (Sinfield, 1996: 1). Taking theatre as an example, before the cultural invention of homosexuality in the latter part of the nineteenth century as an identity (see Chapter Two), playwrights had long been dramatising issues of same-sex desire on stage. In that sense, performers explored 'homosexuality' front stage, even if it had to be represented in a coded manner intelligible to some but crucially not all theatregoers (Clum, 2000). Thus, in his influential text on homosexuality in Renaissance England, Bray (1982) points out that the London playhouses and the public houses that mushroomed around them were one of a few sites for individuals to congregate and develop same-sex intimacies. The last few decades has particularly

seen an explosion in performing of different types of ‘queer’ theatre, dance and film, which has done much to break social taboos surrounding the representation of homosexuality on stage and screen (Bernstein, 2000). With this in mind, it is easy to see how LGB performers might view segments of the performing arts as political and personal havens, not least as valuable networks of LGB people.

Although we tend to speak of performing as a profession, performing work differs markedly to jobs that are referred to in the same terms (such as lawyers, doctors or accountants), yet the work can be defined with reference to a number of identifiable general characteristics: ‘Work in performing is largely short-term, frequently casualised (without formal recruitment processes or employment contracts) and unpredictable, with very few long-term fixed workplaces’ (Dean, 2007: 253). Crucial to these characteristics is the competitive nature of performing work since the labour market is perpetually oversupplied, restricting access to work (Dean, 2005). As the research goes on to find, these structural realities are important and worth highlighting here, given the experiences of some gay performers. I detail further the two occupations of interest in Chapter Four.

Given the above, I derived one primary research aim and two secondary research aims. These aims looked to address a number of underdeveloped issues. Primarily, I wanted to investigate the perceptions of the lived experiences of gay police officers and performers. I then wanted to compare these experiences to stereotypes surrounding gay sexuality and the occupations of policing and performing. Stereotypes of a ‘gay-hostile’ police service or ‘gay-friendly’ performing arts have

been supported by various pieces of research (see above). Accounts of police culture reveal it as distinctly homophobic (Burke, 1994) or historical references to gay sexuality imply a 'gay-friendly' performing landscape (Bray, 1982; Clum, 2000). Yet very little, or no research explores the perceptions of the lived realities of LGB police officers or performers. As I have stated, where research has been conducted on LGB police officers, these studies are outdated given the changes that have occurred in terms of diversity policy and sexual orientation in the British Police Service.

As I have already stated, I was also interested in the area of the relationship between gender and (homo)sexuality at work, and diversity policy with regard to the case occupations. For example, what types of gay identity are permitted within the occupations of policing and performing? Given the hegemonic masculine nature of policing culture (see Burke, 1994) versus one idea that 'camp' can structure the interactions between performers (see Layder, 1993), I was keen to explore how this might affect what types of gay identity can find expression according to police officers and performers. Further, and due to the changing landscape of policing, I was keen to address how diversity policy has mediated the expression of gay identity at work here. I also wanted to explore what types of diversity policy can be found in the performing arts, given very little has been written on the area of managing diversity and performing work.

**P1.** To what extent can the occupation of performing be characterised as 'gay-friendly' and the occupation of policing be characterised as 'gay-hostile'?

**S1.** What significance might embodied, sexual identity have for the performance of particular occupational roles?

**S2.** In what ways is diversity policy perceived as a mediating force in the working lives of gay male workers?

It has been made clear by now: this piece of research is a study on gay men. The research focuses exclusively on the lived experiences of gay male police officers and performers, providing a much needed insight into issues surrounding gay men at work and specific occupational groups (see Chapter Three on the key gaps regarding LGB identity at work). In detailing the workplace pressures that gay men and women experience, the organisation studies literature is at risk of homogenising the experiences of the LGB population. Scholarly research elsewhere has been quick to note that gay men and women *do not* face identical struggles throughout society or the workplace (Burn et al, 2005). Omitting the experiences of LBs (lesbians and bisexuals) as subjects of empirical investigation from my research then, should not be viewed as a careless oversight. On the contrary, I feel there needs to be increasing recognition of the fact that interests and experiences of sexually diverse groups diverge in important ways within the workplace, such as along the lines of gender. Moreover, in considering the research aims, the research takes as its focus the ‘gay-friendly’ / ‘gay-hostile’ dichotomy or the working lives of gay police officers and performers. Importantly, engrained perceptions relating to sexuality in the police and the performing arts diverge with regards to gay men and lesbians. I consider this point in more detail in Chapter Four in terms of the research parameters, and an argument is put forward as to why I centre on gay men.



In a quest for research data on the work experiences of gay men located within ‘gay-friendly’ and ‘gay-hostile’ occupations, twenty gay male performers were recruited from the principal areas of performing work (musical theatre, subsidised repertory theatre and terrestrial television). However, participants had experienced a range of other forms of work including film, cabaret singing, drag artistry, contemporary dance and clowning. Two female casting directors within television and theatre were also interviewed, and two agents, who provided valuable data on how other gatekeepers mobilise normative constructions of sexuality and gender during the auditioning process (‘gatekeepers’, such as casting directors and agents, arguably stand in the position of managers to performers, in that they have ‘power of recruitment, direction and control of aspects of the performer’s labour process’ - see Dean, 2004: 4). Twenty gay male police officers were also recruited from a number of different constabularies across the country. All participants had experience of ‘street duties’, but were now working throughout a range of divisions including CID, traffic, sexual offences, victim support, firearms, neighbourhood policing and anti-terrorism. I conducted semi-structured interviews with these individuals, as part of a qualitative, exploratory study that contained principal lines of questioning about how participants understood and experienced their industries as ‘gay-friendly’ or ‘gay-hostile’. In order to preserve anonymity of participants, brief biographies are presented in Appendix 1.

### **A note on: Terminology**

Throughout the thesis, I have chosen to use the term sexual identity rather than sexual orientation; gay as opposed to queer; and camp to describe those of effeminate gender

identity. I chose to use sexual identity as opposed to sexual orientation as I feel this captures the fluidity of sexuality, while 'orientation' implies an element of fixity (this point is revisited in Chapter 8, however). I use the term sexual orientation to discuss gay sexuality alongside issues of equality and diversity policy. Literature on diversity prefers to use this phrase, possibly as a result of legal frameworks (particularly the introduction of the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, since replaced by the Equality Act 2010). I was uncomfortable using 'queer' as my own respondents identified themselves as gay. Further, queer implies a broader study on the experiences of a range of non-heterosexualites. I also find myself agreeing with Taulke-Johnson (2009) - that 'homosexual' retains clinical and pathological connotations, and so I seldom use this term. Having said that, a number of my older participants did use 'homosexual' to describe their attraction to members of the same sex, and so I found using the phrase less problematic than queer. I also found that 'camp' was used synonymously to describe those individuals who represent the visible face of gay sexuality, or the effeminate gay man. Thus I use the terms effeminate and camp interchangeably in my study. On a final note, I use the terms 'dissident sexual identity', 'minority sexual identity' and 'transgressive sexual identity' – largely for stylistic purposes so as to avoid the repetition of the term gay.

## **Chapter Outline**

Chapter Two begins by reviewing the theoretical perspectives that underpin the research. Here, I explore the essentialist/constructionist debate surrounding the area of sexuality. Situating the research within a constructionist paradigm, I review symbolic

interactionist theories of sexual identity as well as Goffman's 'life-as-theatre' analogy - perspectives I find to be heuristically valuable in mapping the perceptions of the lived realities of gay men at work. I then bring into the discussion poststructuralist understandings of gender and sexuality, addressing the performance versus performativity debate; a bone of contention between symbolic interactionists and poststructuralists.

Chapter Two then goes on to associate the research with sociological understandings of the relationship between gender and sexuality. I show how theorists writing around the areas of 'camp' and gay masculinities view the relationship between these concepts as inextricably interwoven. Here, I also consider the ever burgeoning influence of queer theory. This position has been accused of being asocial, interested only in a suspension of identity categories and a radical separation of gender and sexuality, whereas sociologists claim this contradicts the reality that individuals *do* congregate around certain labels. Queer theory, however, has been celebrated for considering hegemonic power structures and is useful when it comes to revealing the conditions under which silenced and excluded gender and sexual identities are experienced. For this reason, I show the research to engage with sociological perspectives *and* queer theory, associated with a 'queer-sociology' (Stein and Plummer, 1996, see also Chapter Four).

Chapter Three goes reviews the area of organisation sexuality, and in doing so captures the heteronormativity of organisational life. Here, I highlight some pertinent gaps relating to the area of minority sexual identity at work; gaps my study appositely

addresses. Indeed, existing organisation studies research perpetuates the idea that homosexuality remains invisible in organisations, that *all* gay workers face disclosure dilemmas, and in light of this, manage their sexuality by passing, covering or concealing. I also show that current understandings of the contextual issues under which gay sexualities are experienced in the workplace remain sketchy at best. In other words, research has glossed over the experiences of gender in/and/through sexuality at work, or the experiences of the gay police officer, performer, nurse, teacher, lawyer, accountant, etc. While I acknowledge that a handful of studies touch upon the working realities of ‘butch’ lesbians, I find there to remain a ubiquitous assumption that gay male sexuality is imperceptible at work. To conclude Chapter Three, I discuss emerging literature on the ‘gay friendly’ occupation, and emphasise that further research is particularly required in this area.

Chapter Four outlines my methodological approach to investigating the workplace experiences of gay police officers and performers. Here, I make clear in more detail why I chose to conduct such a comparative analysis before providing a detailed account of the alternative landscapes of policing and performing. Of particular interest to other researchers might also be how I gained access to the study’s respondents, since the area of minority sexual identity at work is viewed as a sensitive research topic. Chapter Four dedicates some time to setting out how I encouraged participation, and also reflects on the challenges some of the more novel methods of recruitment presented.

Chapter Five is the first of three data chapters, and takes a detailed look at the experiences of my performer participants. Here, I explore the work realities of gay men within a profession that is known for being ‘gay-friendly’. As I have suggested, performers are thought to be working within boundaries defined by ‘homonormativity’ or even ‘homophilia’. These are terms I have coined to describe an industry that appears in stark contrast to other heteronormative occupations. Generally, however, these perceptions amount to conjecture as virtually no research charts the qualitative experiences of gay male performers. Pertinently, data analysis in Chapter Five problematises the concept ‘gay-friendly’ as applied to performing, and suggests that this term is insufficient when considering the processes of neg(oti)ation that take place according to gay male performers. In contrast to the improving conditions for gay police officers, I show that common perceptions portraying performing work as inherently accepting of dissident sexuality may not be entirely accurate. It is clear that a significant minority of my performer participants suffer anxiety as a result of possessing a potentially ‘stigmatized identity’, and expend unusual amounts of energy attempting to ‘pass’ as straight, particularly throughout the audition process (Goffman, 1963).

Chapter Six continues to explore the work experiences of gay men within an occupation commonly disassociated with minority sexual identity. Data here questions negative notions concerning ‘homophobic’ police culture by showing that many constabularies look to energetically recruit gay graduates and staff, and simultaneously nurture the endeavours of internal gay staff networks. Moreover, certain organisational procedures ensure gay officers are strongly supported in combating incidents of workplace homophobia (if and when they occur), meaning

many of my respondents appear increasingly comfortable negotiating an 'out' gay identity at work. Indeed, and given their prevalence throughout the police force, officer accounts allow me to address the secondary research questions concerned with investigating the experiences of diversity initiatives that can impact upon the construction of workplace minority sexual identity (Colgan et al., 2007). In doing so, I discuss how far, if at all, this reveals the occupation as 'gay-friendly' (as opposed to homophobic) by drawing upon interesting contradictions, such as the evidential pressure placed on gay officers to appear heteronormative in certain circumstances. Importantly, Chapter Five and Chapter Six consider the *contextual* issues at play relating to the key themes of the existing literature: passing, coming out and homophobia. Put differently, I unpack the perceptions of the lived realities of two specific groups of gay workers, and show how occupational setting frames identity neg(oti)ation.

Chapter Seven focuses on the key similarities that structure the working lives of gay workers across both occupations. Regarding the neg(oti)ation of homosexual masculine identities and the embodiment of gender, the voices of gay performers and police officers suggest that primarily due to the nature of their work (in that performers are expected to represent *mainstream* images of maleness on screen as much as police officers are expected to represent hyper-masculinity on the streets), worksites can become 'hostage' to the production of 'doing' gender appropriately (West and Zimmerman, 1987). On the one hand, this ensures that some gay workers find it necessary to sacrifice a favoured gender performance, managing their sexuality through the active policing of their gender identity (processes of normalising gay identity and embodiment are discussed here). This is felt to counteract assumptions

surrounding gay sexuality as a reduction in masculinity. On the other hand, some gay men find that their non-normative gender performances are rejected in the workplace. In other words, by emphasising that heterosexual hegemony overtly structures the negotiation of gay sexuality in policing *and* performing work, I show the management of sexuality to be an active strategy in the performance of gendered identities (Pullen and Simpson, 2009: 580).

Strikingly, I show that what constitutes a gay identity at work is rendered problematic by something other than a gay ‘sexual orientation’ – namely a transgressive gender identity. Chapter Seven goes further, and takes a closer look at the experiences of effeminate workers who are shown to live under alternative conditions, most notably the ‘homosexual assumption’. Indeed, I prioritise the otherwise silenced voices of the effeminate, illustrating that butch and effeminate gay men do not face synonymous issues at work.

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In conclusion, Chapter Eight revisits the study’s main empirical and theoretical contribution with regards to the ‘gay friendly’ occupation and the relationship between gender and sexuality at work. Specifically, I draw together the central themes discussed using the concepts of ‘the heterosexual matrix’ (Butler, 1990), ‘hegemonic masculinity’ (Connell, 1998) and normalisation (Seidman, 2002). Throughout this final chapter, I also suggest future lines of inquiry that may develop academic knowledge about the experiences of gay identity at work.

## **CHAPTER 2: (HOMO)SEXUALITY AND GENDER**

The first half of Chapter Two focuses on demonstrating that since the nineteenth century, sexuality has come to be ‘known’ as something that distinguishes one person from another, to the extent that there are a number of sexual ‘types’ (Hancock and Tyler, 2001). In the Victorian era, sexology, criminal codes and societal developments played a key role in constructing sexual subjects, effectively marking the moment at which sex was ‘taken charge of’, tracked down, legally exposed and discussed in relation to ‘norms’ (Wuthnow, 1984: 171). As British sociologist Jeffrey Weeks (1991; 69) avers, the implications of medico-legal understandings of sexuality can be viewed as political entrapment. He suggests that the discursive explosion concerning sex at this time ‘imprisoned’ humans into ‘rigid and exclusive categorizations’, since it became widely agreed that sexuality has a strict biological base (Plummer, 2003).

In contrast, authors including Weeks, propose constructionism as a theory. This theory recognises that sexuality ‘as we know it’ has been shaped by social processes, culturally variable meanings, power relations and discourses that are embedded in societal institutions and ‘instantiated in individuals in particular ways’ (Brickell, 2006a). By providing a genealogical account of sexuality, certain scholars now emphasise that identities, such as the homosexual, are only seen to exist due to unique socio-historical factors, and so we have witnessed a ‘social constructionist turn’ (Plummer, 2003: 515). In this sense, critical reflection upon key developments exposes the contingent nature of sexuality. Rather than residing in the biological constitution of the body, ‘the homosexual’ or gay identity is a historical, and not a



natural, fact. In light of these two competing traditions, I show how the research adopts a social constructionist position within sexuality and gender studies (Jackson, 1999; Weeks, 1985, 2007). In particular, I align the theoretical perspective of my study to symbolic interactionism.

Section Two brings into the discussion poststructuralist understandings of gender and sexuality. To borrow from Brickell (2006b: 88-89), a whole host of work has been credited with displacing assumptions about gendered, sexual and bodily ‘essence’, critiquing scientific claims, asserting the constitutive role of language, and deconstructing established social binaries. These works require consideration. Here, I reflect on the work of Judith Butler whose theory of gender and sexual identities as a performative process has had marked implications on the field of sexuality.

Finally, Section Three returns to discussing the relationship between gender and (homo)sexuality, touched upon briefly in Sections One and Two. I align the research to social constructionist understandings of this relationship as opposed to queer theorist understandings. In other words, although I question a natural order linking sex, gender and sexuality, I agree that these concepts are inextricably interwoven, and do not suppose that research should be looking to disengage the two concepts of gender and sexuality. Nevertheless, not all poststructuralist theory calls for a ‘radical separation’ of gender and sexuality as queer theory does, and I suggest that acknowledging certain tenets of this tradition is useful in considering issues of neg(oti)ating homosexuality at work; for example, understanding gender and sexuality

in terms of performativity can reveal the ‘interimplication’ of these two concepts (Richardson, 2007: 465).

## **Section One: Contested Understandings of Sexuality**

### ***The Science of Sex***

In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries, a scientific approach dominated understandings of sexuality (Richardson, 2007; Seidman, 2010). During this period, the field of sexology aspired to build a ‘science of desire’ to the extent that sexuality has even been viewed as an ‘invention’ of nineteenth century ‘sexological pens’ (Weeks, 1999: 63; Bristow, 2002). These early accounts were based on the assumption that sexuality is a natural phenomenon, and meant that certain ‘disreputable’ sexual identities were defined in terms of moral insanity, sickness and disease (Weeks, 1983: 23).

At the time, a number of influential figures such as Kraft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis and Alfred Kinsey aimed to provide ‘sexual enlightenment’, and claimed that sexuality is part of the biological and genetic makeup of all individuals (Weeks, 1999: 69; Seidman, 2010). Their studies culminated in a fresh discourse<sup>1</sup>, preoccupied with the idea that humans are *born* with a sexual identity (ibid.)<sup>2</sup>. Importantly, this sexual

identity was largely presumed to be heterosexual, in that sexologists argued, and continue to argue, that there is a ‘natural’ attraction between men and women.

It is fair to say that naturalistic approaches to sexuality (Richardson, 2007) produced classifications that implicitly drew upon religious ideas of sex. In that regard, the seemingly ‘new’ claims of sexology were also based on moralistic ideologies in that Christian values provided the ‘benchmark by which the discourse of sexology was to measure the range of the perverse’ (Weeks, 1999; 65)<sup>3</sup>. As Seidman (2010: 3) notes, however, sexologists have particularly influenced the way many of us think about sex today, in part because their work has been ‘stamped with the imprimatur of science’.

With regards to same-sex desire, first referred to as ‘homosexuality’ by Karl Kertbeny in the 1860s, one of sexology’s main endeavours was to establish whether or not this was *either* congenital *or* acquired. Certain sexologists refuted that homosexuality was a vulgar instance of vice or insanity (Ellis, 1928; Kraft-Ebing, 1998). Ellis perceived same-sex desire to be a congenital anomaly of gender; an ‘organic variation’ which was by no means pathological in nature (Ellis, 1928). For this reason, it was argued that this *innate* ‘condition’ should not be punished. Other sexologists were less inclined to regard homosexuality as socially acceptable. Lombroso saw ‘sexual inversion’ as an ‘episode (syndrome) in a more fundamental process of hereditary degeneration’<sup>4</sup>, and compared it to a number of other social deviations such as alcoholism (Ellis, 1928; 68).

Overall, there was an exhaustive attempt by sexology to derive ‘natural truths’ from, what have since been viewed as ‘cultural phenomena’ (Bristow, 2002). By drawing a distinction between normal and abnormal, heterosexual and homosexual, sexology contributed in transforming the ‘sodomite’, a person who indulged in homosexual behaviour, into ‘the homosexual’, replete with a universal, singular identity. In a bid to establish the parameters of what is natural, homosexuality quickly emerged as a distinct aberration, as same-sex relations had no place in the natural order of things (Weeks, 1999). In that regard, nineteenth century psychiatry ‘played a key role in constituting ‘the homosexual’ as a new sexual ‘species’ (Brickell, 2006a: 426), as homosexuality became one of the most intense target and anchorage points for the venture of knowledge (Foucault, 1976).

### *The Birth of the Homosexual*

We are reminded by Weeks (1999: 72) and Seidman (2010) that sexology has always had a social purpose, reflected in the development of punitive legal sanctions at the time. These laws focused on perpetuating an oppressively hostile public opinion of ‘homosexuality’, now made possible due to the new classifications of sexology (Weeks, 1983: 11). For example, prior to the introduction of the ‘Labouchere Amendment’ (see below) in 1885, the only legislation directly affecting same-sex behaviour referred explicitly to sodomy, yet all acts of anal intercourse were regulated. Persecution against those who practiced anal sex was structured around the perceived non-normalcy of sodomy and theological dogma. Handbooks of penance condemned the act, but did not refer to any *illicit homosexual relationship*<sup>5</sup>. Anyone

found guilty of such a 'sin against nature' was condemned; whether it was found to be between man and man, man and woman or man and beast. As noted above, these primitive (moralistic and religious) laws filtered through to sexology (Gilbert, 1980). The issue here, however, is that law made no reference to a particular 'type' of person, having no concept of 'the homosexual'. It was in fact sexology, and then the legal system, that coined such an identity through 'the intrusion of expert knowledge into the fabric of daily life' (Elliot, 2009: 131).

In 1885, the Criminal Law Amendment Act, or the 'Labouchere Amendment', made all male *homosexual acts* punishable by a prison sentence, and anyone found participating in such behaviour would be guilty of a misdemeanour, the effect of which was to create and publicise the *homosexual identity* that was beginning to gain prominence in the field of sexology. Indeed, the passing of the law marked a key moment at which society appeared to recognise the prevalence of the 'homosexual', an identity established in contradistinction to the heterosexual.

In drawing on research produced by sexologists, it is thought that Labouchere implemented such oppressive law due to wider social changes that were occurring. During the late nineteenth century, social attitudes towards the position of children, women and particularly the family were being renegotiated, and so it is no coincidence that the legislation of homosexuality tied in with changes in social roles and sexual attitudes. The purity campaign, which reached its zenith during the Victorian era, viewed sexuality to be the 'beast' that destroyed home life and it became an important target for social reform. Social purists believed that abnormal

sexual liaisons, such as homosexuality, threatened the institution of the family, which had become the overarching paradigm of a stable society (Weeks, 1983). There were also fears of economic and national decay, and social reformists advanced concerns that made very clear associations between national decline, abnormal sexual indulgence and homosexuality<sup>6</sup>.

Nevertheless, Greenberg (1988) notes that doctors were expected to legally represent the 'sexually perverse' in court, and so many opted to actively shape society's control apparatus through sexology, which in turn enabled them to gain increasing legitimacy. As a result, doctors chose to adapt theories of sexuality to fit their own purposes, masking some of the truths they uncovered in order to advance their own economic position and status (Wuthnow, 1984). Given the social climate, it was in their interests to associate themselves with a conservative sexual morality. This helps to explain why certain theories, such as degeneracy theory, gained authority, for they tied in with the social and economic backdrop of the nineteenth century. Due to anxieties concerning urbanisation, class conflict and immigration, for example, degeneracy theories gained widespread support from the middle class, who feared civilization was collapsing (Greenberg, 1988). Sexologists, in effect, provided a mental landscape within which the middle class and the legal system could attribute societal woes to a restricted class of degenerates. Overall, sex was either restricted to the marital relation or declared illicit and regulated to brothels or insane asylums (Wuthnow, 1984)<sup>7</sup>. McIntosh (1996) highlights this as evidence that the identity of the homosexual has been used as a social control mechanism at certain points in time<sup>8</sup>. Through predominantly labelling the homosexual as an aberration, the law provided 'a clear cut, publicised, and recognisable threshold' between the permissible and

impermissible, believing certain disreputable identities had led to the current state of social unrest (McIntosh, 1996: 35). Such identities therefore needed to be held in check. Crucially, the homosexual identity did not exist *a priori*, but was coined and consolidated into a particular type of person with a case history through the intrusion of social scientific knowledge and relations of power (Brickell, 2006b). In that regard, homosexuality is a discursive product of societal and medico-legal preoccupations.

The evolution of 'the homosexual', increasingly identified with reference to a particular lifestyle, did not exclusively revolve around legislative changes and experiments in medicine, however. By 'revealing' or upholding that there exists an 'innate' homosexual identity, medico-legal discourses also allowed individuals to identify with each other (Elliot, 2009). Individuals were now able to attach themselves to previously unidentifiable modes of existence (identities), and paradoxically, greater recorded incidences of homosexuality began to emerge (McIntosh, 1996). 'The tightening grip of the law and the force of public disapproval which it stimulated was beginning to create a community of knowledge, if not of life and feeling, among male homosexuals' (Weeks, 1983: 22). Similarly, with medical definitions suggesting that homosexuality was a condition, men found themselves professing to their doctors that they thought themselves to be 'affected'. Men could now stand up and identify and define themselves according to an emerging sub-culture. Ultimately, medico-legal institutions 'provided the springboard for self-definition and individual and collective resistance' (Weeks, 1999: 75).

Foucault (1976: 101) again refers to these developments, suggesting that although discourses can be both an instrument and an effect of power (such as those that sought to legislate and medicalise homosexuality) they can also form a starting point for an 'opposing strategy'. The appearance in nineteenth century psychiatry of a whole series of discourses on the 'species' of homosexuality made possible the creation of a 'reverse discourse'. 'Homosexuality began to speak on its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or 'naturalness' be acknowledged' (ibid; 101). As society sought to define people by distinct types, the social categorisation 'homosexuality' became a 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (McIntosh, 1996). Homosexuals formed communities and began to fight for recognition based on a 'politics of identity' (Weeks, 1983). In the late fifties and sixties, the alternative term 'gay' came into everyday use in association with the struggle for same-sex equality. In similar fashion, embracing the concept of a gay and/or homosexual identity became a method through which individuals gained access to social tolerance, law reform and sub-cultures in the form of gay liberation. Indeed, in the 1970s, gay writers utilised the fixed category of 'the homosexual' to assert that 'homosexuality' was psychologically and socially equivalent to 'heterosexuality'. This standpoint embraced all in the mainstream who viewed the homosexual as a distinct (usually pathological, essentialist) identity, but the significant inversion was that homosexuality was advocated to be as morally worthy as heterosexuality. Elliot (2009: 132) comments on the fact that a distinctive sense of personal and sexual identity was deployed by gay liberationists to defend gay men and women against suppression by the wider heterosexist culture, and to advance gay rights. As a result, society has come to recognise that gay identity can be central to an individual's 'sense of self'. It is hard to escape the fact that minority sexual identity



even today remains the crux of ‘the self’ for many individuals throughout contemporary society.

### *Naturalistic Approaches to the Relationship between Gender and (Homo)Sexuality*

As implied above, with regards to the relationship between sex, gender and sexuality, naturalistic approaches to the study of gender and sexuality defined this according to the ‘principle of consistency’. For example, gender inversion was commonly seen as a ‘symptom’ of homosexuality. It was assumed that sex-gender-sexuality relate in a ‘hierarchical, congruent and coherent manner’, and any disruption in expectations to one had consequences for all the other elements (Richardson, 2007: 460). Given that deviant sexuality has often been described by sexologists in terms of transgressive gender (see Ellis, 1928), this partly accounts for why cross-gender identity is seen as the exemplary paradigm for thinking about gay identity today (Butler, 1990). This is explored in more detail in section two.

I have so far shown that in conjunction with gender, then, Western society tends to label individuals according to sexuality, commonly assumed to be heterosexual. Males are seen to be attracted to females, who in turn are viewed as the welcoming recipients of male attention, and ‘normal sexuality’ is found to represent the instinct of reproduction, rooted in natural processes (Weeks, 1999). Since sexology spent an inordinate amount of effort categorizing perversity, this cast new light on the ‘normal’, discreetly shrouding it in respectable ideology (ibid.). Heterosexual

‘normality’ was then scientifically reaffirmed through descriptions of appropriate gender behaviour. By marking off certain identities from the heterosexual mainstream, the discursive explosion of sexuality not only invented the concept of ‘the homosexual’. It simultaneously created its dualistic opposite, ‘the heterosexual’; ‘a normality circumscribed by a founding belief in the sharp distinctions between the sexes and the assumption that gender identity and sexual identity were necessarily linked through the naturalness of heterosexual object choice’ (Weeks, 1991: 72).

Importantly, naturalistic theories of sexuality and gender not only understand homosexuality in terms of what it *is* (such as the descriptions found in the field of sexology), it is also understood in terms of what it *is not*; ‘a homosexual’ is not ‘a heterosexual’. In this sense, the normative regulations and sanctions that govern homosexuality do not only apply to gays and lesbians; ‘rather they cut to the heart of the heterosexual identity, which maintains itself in opposition to homosexual experience’ (Elliot, 2009: 134).

### ***Theories of Social Construction***

Psychoanalysis<sup>9</sup>, which more readily acknowledges the culturally shaped dimensions of sexuality, was one of the first approaches to question the ‘innate’ heterosexuality of human beings (Brickell, 2006a). Its conception of sexual development is premised on the idea that *all* individuals are polymorphously perverse (West, 1960: 116). As a result, psychoanalysts render the neat demarcations of sexology problematic. Even

though there is a fundamental set of basic processes individuals are thought to undergo during sexual development, they are thought to be shaped by society and its institutions. For example, Freud (1905) himself implicitly challenged the fixity and essentiality of sexual identity, asserting that characteristics and identities such as masculine and feminine are ‘attained’ through complex psychic struggles (Weeks, 1991).

A new canon of sociological work on sexuality and gender later emerged in the second half of the twentieth century, which more thoroughly challenged earlier naturalistic modes of thinking (Richardson, 2007). As I allude to above, today, many authors privilege the work of the philosopher Michel Foucault (1976) as the ‘fount and currently dominant approach which emphasises the historical, contextual nature of the sexual’ (Weeks, 1998; 131). He was to emphasise that sexuality is *not* a natural category, having a foundation in the aetiology of human beings. In moving away from the reductionism and objectification of sexual behaviour, theorists sympathetic to Foucault’s work reiterate that ‘sexuality’ as a phenomenon can be considered an invention: ‘Nothing is sexual... but naming it makes it so’ (Plummer, 1975). This group of thinkers adopt a perspective of sexuality that speaks from a sociological, historical and anthropological viewpoint; a more macro oriented paradigm known as social constructionism. Jeffery Weeks, for example, emphasises that the constituent elements that make up the concept of sexuality need not be linked together, and he warns against embracing the belief that sexuality refers to an essentially biological human quality known through all time. Alternatively, it is claimed that once, sexuality did not exist, and at some point in the future, it may cease to exist. By focusing on the

historical and social organisation of the erotic, scholars have begun to 'decentre natural man' (Weeks, 2006):

In contrast to thinking about sexuality as biological, 'natural' with the prime goal of reproduction, constructionists have aimed to show the myriad ways in which human sexualities are always organised through economic, religious, political, familial and social conditions. (Plummer, 2003: 515).

While we ought to recognise the multiplicity of social constructionisms, generally, social constructionists are interested in the ways in which understandings and experiences of sexuality change across time and place (Brickell, 2006b). In that regard, history and culture are seen to significantly influence 'how individuals and groups organize and experience sexual subjectivity, desire, love and intimacy, and each of these concepts varies in its form and content according to its context' (Brickell, 2006a: 425). The fundamentals of sexual experience and subjectivities are not inherent in the individual, and do not encompass any degree of continuity due to the very fact that sexuality comprises variable meanings. In similar fashion, scholars such as Lisa Adkins (2000: 11) emphasise that a sexuality involving mobile and fluid subjects is now 'understood to be undermining a modernist sexuality in which sexuality is figured as the 'truth' of a person'. It is believed that neither does sexual identity emanate from the intrinsic makeup of things, nor is it considered to 'arise through a coalescence of psychological elements in the person'. Such perspectives are considered 'a modernist myth' (Beasley, 2006). Alternatively, sexuality is seen as unstable, unfixed and inconsistent. To illustrate, an important distinction is made between sex acts and identities to show that sex acts have occurred throughout our history, yet sexual identities are a peculiarly modern invention (ibid. see below).

Influenced by Foucault and articles such as 'The Homosexual Role' (McIntosh, 1996), these other academics highlight the need to consider homosexuality as a social role, the origin and changing content of which can be studied historically (Bristow, 2002; Greenberg, 1988; Seidman, 1996; Weeks, 1998). For example, historicism, broadly understood as social constructionism as applied to history (Halperin, 2002), and anthropological investigations take issue with the idea that people in past times inhabited sexual identities (Brickell, 2006b). They demonstrate that views surrounding the sexual have changed, and that other cultures live(d) their sexualities differently. Trumbach's work (2003) shows that sexuality is a malleable facet, and questions the view that heterosexuality and homosexuality are biological constants. His work reiterates that the term 'homosexual' is recent, yet same-sex behaviour has long been occurring. Before the 1700s, men were having sex with men but homosexual behaviour was structured around differences in age<sup>10</sup>. In a similar vein, Halperin (1999) encourages scholars to reflect upon the attitudes and behaviours of Athenians in Ancient Greece (such as Alexander the Great). Here, sexuality was very much structured around hierarchy and Athenian polity. Sex was seen to be a declaration of social identity rather than a sexual identity, and desires were conditioned according to the shared cultural definition of sex. Importantly, there was no distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality; only between active and passive, and men would often have sex with men. What Halperin emphasises is that sexual choices 'would not always express the agent's individual essence or reveal the profound orientation of the inner life of a person independent of social and political life' (ibid: pg 24), and that the very existence of institutionalised 'homosexuality' in previous eras shows that behaviours surrounding a modernist hetero/homo binary contradict notions that avidly uphold the primacy and naturalness of heterosexuality<sup>11</sup>.

As stressed by Kaufman (2001; 26), social constructionism places heterosexuality in an equally fragile position. As with homosexuality, the notion that heterosexuality exists in any innate sense is interrogated, in a bid to show that it is 'just a social institution with a tenuous relationship to that with which it is supposed to be synonymous... our biological sex'. *All* sexual identities are characterised as changeable ideologies rather than biological facts (Herek, 1986). Neither heterosexuality nor homosexuality is considered to represent 'emanations of the genes... [For] they are regulative fictions and ideals through which conformities are generated...' (Weeks, 2006: 59).

Adrienne Rich (1980: 637), a prominent feminist scholar, also captures this fragile position of heterosexuality, and the political essence of the hetero/homo binary. She addresses the question: how and why have women's choice of women as partners been crushed? Rich eloquently questions the existence of an innate heterosexual inclination that draws women towards men, and cautions against unwittingly accepting the idea that heterosexuality has aetiological roots. In deconstructing a number of cultural theories, Rich demonstrates that compulsory heterosexuality is used to control women and ensures males dominate<sup>12</sup>, yet the 'cluster of forces' embedded in society, ranging from physical brutality to control of thought that seek to ensure women are held in check, should be seen as a sign that 'an enormous potential counterforce is having to be restrained' (ibid: 640). In other words, heterosexuality may well be an institution, but it is not an adequate reflection of bio-determinate drives.

Through contesting the meanings associated with both sexuality *and* gender, social constructionists have been able to denaturalise the understandings of the relationship *between* gender and sexuality. As Richardson (2007: 461) points out, however, the two concepts are rarely disengaged by constructionist writers, and ‘the interdependence between sexuality and gender which was presumed in the ‘principle of consistency’ is also found in social constructionist accounts’. In other words, although sexuality and gender are no longer thought to relate in biological terms, they are seen as inextricably connected. For example, Gagnon and Simon (1987) see gender as ‘a central organising principle in the process of constructing ‘sexual scripts’ and sexual selves’. West and Zimmerman make a similar point in their article ‘Doing Gender’ (in the context of appropriate gender behaviour as an indicator of heterosexuality). In both instances, ‘gender is understood to be constitutive of sexuality, at the same time as sexuality can be seen as expressive of gender’ (Richardson, 2007: 461), although gender is usually prioritised over sexuality. Other feminist scholars, such as Ingraham (1996), argue that heterosexuality is the key organising principle of gender relations, rather than vice versa, to the extent that it makes more sense to refer to gender as ‘heterogender’. The relationship between gender and (homo)sexuality is a debate I return to later in the chapter.

### ***Symbolic Interactionism and Sexuality***

Many sociologists in the field of sexuality and gender (Butler, 1991; Goffman, 1959; Hollway, 1984; Plummer, 2003; Weeks, 2006; and Wilchins, 2004) agree that there is

no unitary, rational character of the individual; a dubious essentialist position. As we have seen, naturalistic approaches treat the self and identity as entirely individual and self-willed, and humans are believed to be biological and psychological individuals (as in the field of sexology) in the 'black box' (Blumer, 1969; du Gay, 2007; Fine, 1993). Meaning is thought to emanate from the intrinsic makeup of things, or 'arises through a coalescence of psychological elements in the person' where everything about the human is seen as stable, fixed and consistent, rather than process (Blumer, 1969: 5; Hancock and Tyler, 2001). Such an under-socialised view suggests 'a self that is without social and cultural knowledge and understanding' (Webb, 2006; 19).

While historicism has been influential in revealing the culturally contingent character of sexual identities, so too has symbolic interactionism<sup>13</sup> (Plummer, 1975). Here, human characteristics such as 'self' and 'mind' are seen as social objects which arise out of social processes (Denzin, 1997; Fine, 1993). In opposition to essentialism, symbolic interactionists in the field of sexuality and gender demonstrate how these concepts can be theorised based on the phenomenological assumption that the world has meaning 'only insofar as it becomes meaningful to its inhabitants' (Brickell, 2006a: 93).

In discarding the view of self as 'a solid, given entity that moves from one situation to another' (Berger, 1963: 106) and by replacing it with a view that perceives the self as highly dependent on the social definitions of encounters, the individual and the social become inextricably related. For this reason, interactionists are preoccupied with how particular conceptions of the self develop in society (Fine, 1993), and so the question



‘why are people gay’ is replaced with ‘how do people understand themselves as such’?

Ken Plummer (1975) was one of the first to apply a symbolic interactionist approach to the area of (homo)sexuality. Whereas the sexologist (Ellis, 1928, Kraft-Ebing 1998) argues that homosexuality resides in the ‘physiological make-up of man’, the interactionist shows that homosexuality is shaped through social interactions. The meanings of all sexual behaviour are, in fact, bestowed upon us *through* interaction, and these meanings are not taken-for-granted. Instead, they ‘must be seen as social creations – as being formed in and arising out of the process of definition and interpretation as this process takes place in the interaction of people’ (Blumer, 1969: 11). In opposition to sexology, symbolic interactionists such as Plummer hold that humans are only ‘marginally constrained’ by biological processes relating to sexuality and they set about ‘analysing the ways in which sexual meanings are constructed, modified, negotiated in conjoint action with others’ (Plummer, 1975: 29). As Plummer himself highlights, it is social meanings that determine and affect our sexuality, and sexual experiences are constructed from social motives and settings. In this sense, symbolic interactionists reject the naturalistic contention that sexual behaviour involves the expression of innate ‘drives’, arguing instead that sexuality is an aspect of social life, and that the meanings granted to it constitute its most important characteristic (Brickell, 2006b).

Although we are considered to have the ability to *manipulate* sexual meanings and symbols (as implied above), ‘marginal constraint’ suggests that humans are restricted

to some extent, depending on the 'sexual script' (Gagnon and Simon, 1987); 'patterned constellations of language and action, convention and expectation' (Brickell, 2006b). In other words, through aspects such as biological constraints, cultural values and interactive commitments, choices *do* become narrowed and routinised. Sexuality is acknowledged to have biological foundations; it is also accepted that we are 'born into a pre-existing 'sexual world' with its own laws, norms, values, meanings [and] typifications on the cultural level' (Plummer, 1975: 40). These cultural values exist independently of any specific actor, confront us as real, and exert a tacit power over us. Finally, through interaction with others, it is recognised that humans build up 'commitments, perspectives, 'world-taken-for-granted views' and a stable self-conception' relating to his own sexual world. All such factors contribute in lending a precarious stability to social encounters (ibid).

Many symbolic interactionists speak of gender in similar terms. In their influential article 'Doing Gender', West and Zimmerman (1987) contend that there is no authentic or 'natural' maleness or femaleness. Instead the subject is gendered through social practices (such as naming and talk that relay meaning), and becomes committed to doing gender in a society that penalises those who fail. This reiterates that there is a structural element to the accomplishment of gender 'ensuring this process is neither voluntaristic nor transcendent of social demands' (Brickell, 2006b: 94).

*Symbolic Interactionism, Sexuality and Goffman*

An important component of symbolic interactionist theories *is* that humans are capable of directing, influencing and controlling their selves through reflexivity. They do not merely respond to certain stimuli in predetermined ways, alternatively constructing their acts through ‘minded behaviour’ (Fine, 1993). Individuals are not considered to be completely free to direct and control in the complete sense, as stated above, for we are socially anchored and guided by societal expectations. Concepts such as obdurateness, constraint, negotiation, symbolisation and ritualisation connect the actor with the limits of choice (Fine, 1993)<sup>14</sup>. As summed up by Fine (1993), the interactionist goal should be:

...the Goffmanian one of developing an understanding of the ‘interaction order’ that does justice to both order and interaction, asking not which definitions are possible, but also what definitions are likely and what the consequences are for those who ignore the definitions (ibid: 70).

This voluntaristic element of symbolic interactionism takes the tradition in a different direction. For example, in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman (commonly claimed to be the founding figure of symbolic interactionism) emphasises the negotiated aspect of identity creation and formation by using concepts such as ‘framing’ and ‘self-presentation’, where the social world is likened to a ‘stage’ (Goffman, 1959; 1963). Specific social settings are thought to be ‘frames’ or ‘regions’ (such as an organisation) and individuals are thought to organise or ‘perform’ their identities around the characteristic meanings and rules that govern these particular ‘stages’ of social life. In doing so, they present a *selective self* to their audience through implementing reflexive methods such as the art of ‘impression management’: ‘the interactional competences which ‘send’ particular identities to others and attempt to influence their reception’ (Jenkins, 1996). These ideas reiterate the belief that there

is 'no deeply held 'real' self' that exists, only a set of masks (Goffman, 1963; Fine, 1993: 77). Instead, the self is viewed as fragmented; 'something of collaborative manufacture' that is tailored to each social encounter (Goffman, 1959: 253). To Goffman therefore, 'self is intimately linked to interaction and society. Selves are cooperatively constructed in interaction, and interaction is influenced by the larger social environment' (Cahill, 2004: 183). Put differently, the self is an emergent property of social relations.

Goffman's 'life as theatre' analogy has been applied to many aspects of social interaction. With respect to the nature of work, Cialdini (1988: as cited by Fincham and Rhodes, 2005) found the highest-earning waiter would constantly change his *presentation of self* according to the type of customer he was serving. 'With families he was warm and homely, with dating teenagers he was haughty and intimidating. And with the older, lone female customers he was solicitous and confidential' (ibid). Hochschild (1985) applies symbolic interactionism and Goffman to her research on emotional labour in the airline industry.

Interactionists in the field of sexuality also draw on Goffman's metaphor of identity as performance or drama to characterise the neg(oti)ation of gender and sexual identities in everyday life. The notion that homosexuality is performed is nothing new. In his 1897 edition of *Sexual Inversion* (as cited by Sinfield, 1996: 9), while Havelock Ellis considers homosexuality to be congenital rather than social, he nevertheless approximates the 'invert' to a person 'of artistic genius', noting that: 'The dramatic and artistic aptitudes of inverts are partly due to the circumstances of

the invert's life, which render him necessarily an actor'. John Addington Symonds even reported that the actor's work requires emotional flexibility, and 'queers are used to pretending to be someone else', which accounts for the 'frequency of inversion' among actors and actresses. Plummer coined the idea that homosexuals are likely to be aware of 'passing', 'presenting a self' and 'keeping up an act' (ibid). In these examples, the negotiation of (homo)sexuality is portrayed as 'a performance' or process.

The above scholars all infer the stigmatised status of gay identity. Indeed, stigma-based models have had particular currency in the field of sociological and the consideration of gay identity. These models are informed by Goffman's sequel to *Presentation of Self*, within which Goffman applies his own dramaturgical concepts to the negotiation of 'spoiled identities'. In *Stigma*, a 'stigmatised person' is defined as an individual who possesses an attribute that others see as negative or unfavourable, where social disapproval is the hallmark of stigma (Westbrook et al, 1992). Goffman (1963) goes on to argue that those with 'discredited' or 'discreditable' identities will actively manage discrepancies between their 'virtual social identity' (how they appear to others) and their 'actual social identity' 'which closer inspection would reveal them to possess' (Jenkins, 1996: 73). It is perceived that the effect of negative social sanctions about the self on a 'marked' person leads to the development of strategies to manage disclosure of the mark (Westbrook et al, 1992: 634). Goffman describes, in-depth, 'techniques of information control', and focuses upon strategies stigmatised individuals use in their decisions to either reveal or conceal their maligned 'Otherness'. For Goffman, the issue is:

that of managing information... To display or not to display; to tell or not to tell; to let on or not to let on; to lie or not to lie; and in each case, to whom, how, when, and where.

Although Western society no longer conceives minority sexual identity as ‘sickness’, certain people and contexts continue to vilify gay identity and sexual ‘Otherness’. As a result, gay individuals have to actively manage their dissident sexualities, for at the very least ‘gayness’ is still associated with ‘a spoiled identity’ (see Leinen, 1993; Miller, 2007). Goffman’s *Stigma* sets out a range of concepts that are useful when considering the neg(oti)ation of gay identity; concepts such as ‘passing’ and ‘covering’. Passing refers to techniques associated with maintaining a ‘normal’ social identity without being directly untruthful. A good example is utilising the heterosexual assumption at work. Since society presumes the heterosexual identity of many, allowing this assumption to go unchallenged would be classified as *passing*. For example, a gay individual/worker may crucially omit information to profit from lies without technically telling any (Goffman, 1963: 69). Here, one maintains the appearance of heterosexuality, yet they themselves have said nothing. Alternatively, gay individuals may even tell ‘barefaced lies’, in order to conceal a homosexual identity. This process refers to *covering* gay identity, the active process of concealing gay identity through overt dishonesty, such as informing a colleague at work that one has a girlfriend; in short the fabrication and dissemination of untruths.

Andrea Miller (2007: 1) applies the works of Goffman to the negotiation of sexual identity. Her research highlights that bisexual ‘Otherness’ is always negotiated vis-à-vis social others. She found that her informants possessed ‘a repertoire of manoeuvres to navigate a social sexual landscape rooted in heteronormativity and plagued by

homophobic and biphobic reactions'. Her work captures how bisexual individuals use their bodies, verbal and non-verbal cues, and the conscious negotiation of gender and physical signals to 'actively situate their bisexual identities on the social landscape' (Miller, 2007: 3). Miller structures her analysis according to two important concepts; those of *revealing* and *concealing*, and found that due to the often invisible and unfathomable nature of bisexual identity, bisexuals oscillated between identifying as heterosexual, bisexual, and in some cases, gay or lesbian.

This section has reviewed the literature in such a way as to demonstrate that the interactionist or dramaturgical approach to social life has been heuristically applied to the negotiation of (homo)sexual identity. As proposed by Brissett and Edgely (1990), drama and theatre, as research metaphors, serve as powerful exploratory guides and sensitising concepts. In understanding the person as an often idealised 'mask', by suggesting that we select masks to impress our various audiences, it is possible to illuminate some of the issues gay men face at work. I show that utilising Goffman's (1959; 1963) work on the *Presentation of Self* and *Stigma* helps to examine how gay individuals manage performances of their stigmatised sexual identities within certain 'regions', such as workplaces, and around various audiences. It helps demonstrate how gay men, as social actors, put on performances as they endeavour to engineer particular conceptualisations of themselves in the presence of others (Lemert, 2003). Negotiating minority sexual identity can be a troublesome task, especially within environments associated with the stigmatisation of homosexuality. I revisit some of the above concepts and stigma-based models in Chapter Three in relation to existing literature on identity disclosure and management in the workplace.

## **Section Two: Performance or Performativity?**

As we have seen, Goffman's *Presentation of Self* thesis has been applied to the neg(oti)ation of sexuality, and serves as a useful starting point in examining how workers 'perform' gay identities within certain occupations. In detailing the work of Goffman (1959), Miller (2007) and Leinen (1993), I have also outlined how this might be achieved. Symbolic interactionism, however, has been subjected to intense criticism (Denzin, 1997), and its approach to identity is felt to neglect theories of power and control. In contrast, poststructuralists agree, these concepts profoundly affect the experience of 'subjectivity'.

An interactionist approach to social life, posits a particular understanding of the relationship between structure and agency. Borrowing from Valocchi (2005) who summarises this relationship, sexual and gender identities are seen as products of the interaction between structure and agency. In other words, socially constructed identities are shaped and become stabilised through their institutionalisation in social structure and culture (see also West and Zimmerman, 1987)<sup>15</sup>. Within these broad institutional parameters, 'individuals and groups can exercise agency and enact their individual identities in different ways or mobilise their identities collectively' (Valocchi, 2005: 755). This structure/agency paradigm of identity enactment conceptualises the social self as partly autonomous from the power structures that construct it (as we have seen in the case of Goffman's theories). Even though the self



is held to be a social creation, we are reminded that there exists ‘a core self’ that has the capacity to reflexively consider and interact with the social environment ‘in ways that can either reproduce or change that environment’ (ibid.).

The degree of agency endowed upon the subject inherent within Goffman’s work has come under intense criticism. In contrast, there are those who focus on the ‘performative’ ontology of identity as opposed to identity as performance. Butler’s influential texts, which go beyond the structure/agency dualism, have gained authority amongst poststructuralists and queer theorists. These writers (Butler, 1991; Hollway, 1984; Wilchins, 2004) reject ‘choice’ as one of the defining features of identity. As noted by du Gay (2007: 21), scholars such as Butler are keen to pose a resounding challenge to the ‘ontological foundations of the person as the author of their own acts and centred in a unitary, reflexive and directive consciousness’.

Returning to Valocchi, a queer approach, associated with these endeavours, sees the self as a ‘human subject’:

...that is, as derived from the manifold social, cultural, and economic forces that construct the false notion of the autonomous self, and provide the discursive material for the conscious and unconscious enactment of that self.

Agency itself is viewed as a social creation and any ‘resistance’ which takes place does so *within* the various forces ‘that both call the social actor into existence and shape resistance of that social actor against these same forces’ (Valocchi, 2005: 755–756). Importantly, poststructuralist conceptualisations of identity see the human

subject as a product of language, the condition of possibility. Language itself is viewed as having agency, and is not simply viewed as an instrument of expression by a voluntarist subject. The self-constituting human subject, therefore, is viewed as a 'myth', for no identity can exist prior to language. Rather, we are constituted by it.

In contesting the notion of the volitional subject, Butler sets out her argument according to gender, which she articulates as performative, constituting the identity it is purported to be (Butler, 1988). Her theories have since been applied to other forms of identity. Rather than representing the expression of a core self, identities are considered to be the effect of the repeated performance of certain acts, gestures and desires that imply an innate (in this case, gendered) self (Chinn, 1993; Valocchi, 2005). The practice by which seemingly coherent identities occur is viewed as 'a forcible production' or a 'performative accomplishment', compelled by social sanction and taboo (Butler, 1988: 520).

Contrary to the dramaturgical approach to social life, gender cannot represent a single performance as some pre-discursive subject elects to do, in that individuals do not possess a presupposed gender identity. In contrast, identities, in and through the process of iteration, are thought to form or congeal over time 'through repeated performances of socially constructed characteristics and appropriate gestures and signs' (Borgerson, 2005: 10). Agency is effectively robbed from the subject who, due to cultural constraints, is required to take up very specific identity positions as demanded by coercive and productive power mechanisms and discourses.

Butler evokes the work of Foucault when she suggests that ‘the adherence to the norms and culture signifiers of gender and sexuality both bring the subject into being and constrain the identity enactments of the subject’ (Valocchi, 2005: 756). Where discourses produce the very notion of the subject, there is no ‘doer’ or ‘actor’ behind the ‘deed’ who performs gender. On the contrary, the self is constructed through its strenuous and repeated performance of gender (Chinn, 1993). As simplified by Salih (2002: 64), gender identities are ‘constituted and constructed by language, which means there is no gender identity that precedes language’. Linking her position to linguistic performativity, Butler argues that it is not a gender identity that ‘does’ discourse or language, but rather it is discourse and language that ‘do’ gender (Salih, 2002). Arguably, identity can still be conceptualised as a performance, for theories of performativity assert that categories and identities exist in the ideal, and any attempts to reconcile the ideal with the real results in the performance. Even though certain performances are compulsory, gender and sexuality are nevertheless ‘acted out’, for want of being recognised, yet Butler is keen to distinguish ‘performance’ from ‘performativity’, and reflects:

In no sense can it be concluded that the part of gender that is performed is therefore the ‘truth’ of gender; performance as bounded ‘act’ is distinguished from performativity insofar as the latter consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer’s ‘will’ or ‘choice’; further, what is ‘performed’ works to conceal, if not to disavow, what remains opaque, unconscious, unperformable. The reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake. (Butler, 1993: 109)

In this sense, ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ are not what we are, but effects we produce by way of particular things we do (Cameron, 1997: 50), and the idea that individuals

can take on or take off gender at will is firmly discarded. Butler reminds us that individuals do not have the capacity to *choose* how they act, or where they do, the resources drawn upon are pre-determined, which reproduces certain identities. Since society demands appropriately gendered performances, individuals are held accountable should they deviate from heteronormative behaviour. In (re)producing normative heterosexuality (note here, we see that poststructuralist theory sees gender and sexuality as intimately interwoven), placed at the centre of compulsory gendered performances, one either has to be male or female, 'with no gaps and no exceptions' (Chinn, 1993). The very fear of failure and incoherence strengthens the desire to be seen as a culturally intelligible subject (for recognition) and substantiates the iterative performance of a wide range of identities. Yet performative iterations *are not* simply the acting out of ways of being in the world: 'rather each iteration plays the role of producing identities and foreclosing others, maintaining the illusion of natural categories of behaviour' (Borgerson, 2005: 8). To summarise, Butler states:

Gender is the repeated stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance of a 'natural' kind of being (Butler, 2004: 33).

Although Butler's work has been equated to the death of the subject since there is no self behind the mask (Salih, 2002), her work allows us to conceive of people performing gender differently in different contexts, depending on the rigidity of the social norms that govern particular institutions. While performativity cannot be equated to performance, it is possible to imagine a situation whereby different processes of iteration and foreclosure have allowed for subjects to produce alternative gender identities in varying occupations. In this respect, by investigating landscapes which regulate and police gender and sexuality to a more or lesser extent, research can

provide insight into the entrenched patterns which define the domains of these concepts within specific workplace environments (Weeks, 2006, see Chapter Four). For example, what is it about the social context and conventions of performing work that make it so that certain acts not only become possible but become conceivable as acts at all?

In reflecting upon poststructuralist accounts of identity, however, subjects do appear to be rendered helpless against the enveloping embrace of power constructs and discourses, since individuals have ‘no choice’ when it comes to reiterating performances of, for example, gender. Yet it would be inadequate to assume that ‘we are all trapped in [power’s] vice-like grip’ (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008; 93). The example of the man who uses the category of ‘the homosexual’ as a starting point for an opposing strategy (see above) somewhat captures this (limited?) capacity for agency. Certain discourses, then, can be reclaimed by subjects, which serve to (re)construct alternative modes of being, although this does not necessarily extract them from the relations of power that constrain and enable their agency.

Poststructuralism encourages us to see identities as ‘anti-foundationalist constructs’, always open to reconstruction. In particular, as poststructuralist feminists contend, research should be carefully considering the ‘networks of power’ which certain identities and subjectivities depend upon for their continued validation (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008). The task should be to disrupt those identities which appear more coherent and stable; to rupture the relations of power within which such identities are

formed (pp. 92). This approach has been embraced by those who use Butler's work as confirmation that scholars should:

...develop a type of politics that comes about when subjects engage in disruptive, reiterative performances of identity. Such identity practices destabilise normative discourses that relate to, for example, masculinity and femininity (ibid.).

As Chinn (1993) notes, incoherent gender performativity, for example, has the potential to disrupt and expose the constructedness of gender and sexuality. This is discussed in more detail below. Butler herself uses the widely quoted example of 'drag' to illustrate how non-normative constructs of gender, biological sex and (hetero)sexuality reveal compulsory heterosexuality as an ideological fiction; a position that can be applied to camp masculinities. Indeed, we are dealing with a politics of 'troublemaking', a concept queer theory takes as its main objective, to which we now turn in the final discussion on the relationship between sexuality and gender.

### **Section Three: Revisiting the Relationship between Gender and Sexuality**

#### ***Queer Theory (QT)***

Since the early 1990s, a core challenge, particularly for gay liberationists, has been to find some balance between the need for identities and the recognition of sexual diversity and difference (Elliot, 2009). What is more, the social constructionist/essentialist debate surrounding sexuality has 'raged in a variety of

directions', and the constructionism/essentialism dichotomy has become increasingly inadequate to describe a variety of theoretical positions (Waites, 2005: 541).

Queer Theory<sup>16</sup> has emerged, influenced by poststructuralist understandings of identity, associating itself with the transcendence of the hetero/homo binary entirely. It proposes that in a world of pluralistic, multidimensional identities and sexualities, it no longer makes sense to refer to individuals as either/or. In that regard, marking a suspension of identity, QT radically challenges numerous forms of cultural identity, and is primarily associated with 'a subversive critique that interrogates the oppressive fusing of sex, gender and sexuality at the level of the self' (Beasley, 2006; Elliot, 2009: 135).

Queer Theory wishes to challenge the regime of sexuality itself, that is, the knowledges that construct the self as sexual and assume heterosexuality and homosexuality as categories marking the truth of sexual selves (Seidman; 1996: 12).

Firmly rejecting essentialism, more so than interactionism, QT works against the grain of both those who view sexuality as a natural, binary, biological fact and those who try to merge 'Other' sexualities with the dominant (hetero)sexual identity. Specifically, the position of gay liberationist thinking (which emphasises that the affirmation of self and sexual identity remains vital for freedom) is problematised. In contradistinction to QT, lesbian and gay studies is accused of unwittingly (re)invoking and (re)producing restrictive and exclusionary categories of knowledge (Fuss, 1989). Affirming identity is seen to be confining, even where it is acknowledged to be a social construction (Elliot, 2009). Alternatively, the critique of metanarratives, including heterosexuality, along with other universal, homogenous gender/sexuality

categories, has become a key target for queer projects (Beasley, 2006). In other words, QT seeks the deconstruction and elimination of neat divisions of identity binaries, and encourages the denaturalisation of their prejudicial justifications. Individuals are only thought to identify with dichotomous categories due to society's power structures, which performatively demand coherent identities, and continue to privilege heterosexuality, subjugating less conventional categories of sexuality. Consequently, that which is excluded and silenced often becomes the central focus. This helps queer theorists to illustrate that binaries are socially prescriptive and fabricated (Beasley, 2006). QT has been known to celebrate a range of transgressive and subversive sexualities including lesbian and gay identities, but also fetishists and sadists (see Beusch, 2008), drag queens and transsexuals. The landscape of QT is indeed 'unashamedly open-ended', in that the mobilisation of identities as queer is potentially indeterminate (Elliot, 2009: 135).

Clearly, QT interrogates sexuality by drawing upon conceptualisations of identity which decentre the fixed, pre-social, stable 'I' (Elliot, 2009); authors such as Lacan (in Hollway, 1984) and Butler (1988), who argue for recognition of the fragmented subject of shifting and uncertain identities. Embracing these notions provides the conceptual tools which help to disassemble conventional categories of identity. Consequently, using QT can provide insights into alternative political geographies for the heterosexual/homosexual and gender divide (Elliot, 2009).

Queer Theory has had a burgeoning impact on a range of disciplines. Within the area of organisation studies for example, scholars have sought to problematise binary



distinctions which can pervade organisational culture and decision making (Parker, 2002). This shows that the central tenets of QT are not exclusively applied to the area of sexuality. The key question, which relates to the QT and sexuality debate, however, is: can gay men and women afford to dispense with the notion of unified, stable identities? Must we, or indeed can we ever base our politics on something other than these identities (Fuss, 1989)?

Queer Theory is appealing. It has also been questioned, and is accused of representing an 'ephemeral ripple rather than a refreshing wave' (Weeks, 1995: 115). Elliot (2009) notes that QT is perhaps geared more towards fashion, but the fine detail of concrete political transformation remains sketchy. Undoubtedly, there are those who choose to live a heterosexual life, but later come out as gay. Some gay men do get married and have children. Others may even choose alternative sexual identities for political reasons, or embrace dissident sexualities to do with sexual practice and behaviour, such as fetishism or sadomasochism (Ward, 2008). Moreover, at some point or another, these sexualities are worthy of explanation. The problem is that, in the main, individuals do identify with one of the categories gay, straight or bisexual, whether QT thinks they should or not. 'When we apply the postmodern views of fluid identities to organisational reality, the queer theorists' argument starts to crumble' (Ward, 2008: 16). Individuals do congregate around labels at some point in their lives (Weeks, 2006). In that regard, QT's exuberance and idealism is considered to be apolitical and has little or no analytical concern for the realities of social life: 'the language of transgression is sometimes only an inch away from anti-political irrationalism – or so some argue' (Elliot, 2009: 136).

What I find to be most problematic about QT is this idea that we need to, or can even, ‘radically separate’ the concepts of gender and sexuality. Arguably, this does not pay ‘sufficient attention to issues of structure and materiality’ (Richardson, 2007: 458). I would agree that there is a need for a more ‘sociologically grounded understanding’ of the relationship between sexuality and gender that takes into account how individuals experience everyday life. In other words, some gay men continue to experience their sexuality as highly gendered and vice versa, the interimplications of which require consideration and are worthy of attention. In light of this, I would associate my understandings of the relationship between sexuality and gender to the work of sociologists such as Levine (1998) and Chauncey (1994), or those who have written on the area of ‘camp’ (see below).

Having said this, queer theory does alert us to some of the power structures that burden the everyday lives of LGB people. As a result, and as I show in Chapter Four, I align the research to some of the tenets of Queer Theory. For example, I take as my starting point individual subjectivities that are not assumed to be easily read off the dominant taxonomies or identity categories (Valocchi, 2005). I also locate the narratives of gay informants within discursive structures of domination including discourses of hegemonic masculinity (see below) and heteronormativity. I highlight the limitations of the dominant identity categories which are currently prioritised in the organisation studies literature, *yet at the same time*, I demonstrate the continued power of these categories in shaping people’s understandings of themselves; or their centrality to everyday life (ibid.). Being attuned to both QT *and* constructionism – or

mobilising concepts drawn from both of these theoretical traditions – associates the research with ‘queer sociology’ (Stein and Plummer, 1994). This perspective is outlined in more detail in Chapter Four.

### *Camp*

Continuing on the subject of the relationship between gender and (homo)sexuality, it is useful to consider the interrelationship between these concepts through ‘camp’. As commentators note (Babuscio, 1993; Medhurst, 1997; Sontag, 1982; Richardson, 2006; 2009), camp is particularly difficult to theorise, yet most of us expect to recognise it when we see, hear, feel or do it. Earlier writings resort to describing long lists of ‘things’ an author considers to be ‘camp’; items such as tiffany lamps, feather boas or fringed and beaded dresses (Richardson, 2006; see also Sontag, 1982). Yet as Babuscio (1993: 20) points out, although camp has been viewed as ‘one way of seeing the world as an aesthetic phenomenon’ structured around ‘artifice’ and ‘stylization’ (Sontag, 1982), ‘camp resides largely in the eye of the beholder’. Arguably, camp cannot, without losing part of its allure, be easily defined (Bergman, 1993: 5).

In a bid to pin down some of the characteristics of camp, however, and in developing Sontag’s ‘Notes on Camp’ (which were heavily criticised for depoliticising camp’s potentialities), Bergman (1993: 5) suggests that camp is a ‘style’ that favours exaggeration; that the person who is defined as camp is a person outside the cultural mainstream, and that ‘camp is affiliated with homosexual culture, or at least with a

self conscious eroticism that throws into question the naturalisation of desire’. Focusing on the latter point, transvestism and drag queens have often been seen as the epitome of (what has since been termed) ‘Low Camp’, of which effeminate intent (such as pronoun substitution<sup>17</sup>) is an essential feature. Other authors boldly contend that camp remains the exclusive property of gay men; a situation I explore in outlining the important connections between camp, sexuality and gender (Medhurst, 1997)<sup>18</sup>.

The relationship between camp, irony and gender is held to be *the* defining feature of camp. Only through conceptualizing camp in relation to gender can one distinguish it from other forms of irony, parody and pastiche (Richardson, 2006). Former conceptualizations that see camp as primarily a mode of representation have been criticized for ignoring the very question of gender. In contrast, contemporary work recognizes that it is gender that camp represents in terms of ‘artifice’ and ‘stylization’. In his exploration of camp in the modern TV drama *Desperate Housewives*, Richardson (2006: 159) reiterates that ‘camp must maintain an ironic performance of gender if it is to preserve its status as camp’. His views echo Babuscio’s, that see camp as ironic in the sense that it refers to an incongruous contrast between an individual or thing and its context or association, where the ‘most common of incongruous contrasts is that of masculine and feminine’ (1993: 20). At the very moment in which camp undermines traditional gender roles with vitality, however, it is thought to simultaneously reinscribe them. At the very least, camp draws attention to gender roles as actually being gender roles (Medhurst, 1997, Richardson, 2006), notably achieved by drag queens (often presumed to be *gay* men). Indeed, certain scholars go as far as rejecting claims that camp can be achieved by female bodies, either in the form of the butch lesbian, the drag king or the over-conformist woman.

Whilst these subjects similarly use 'irony and masquerade through which to subversively comment on normative gender roles', authors such as Medhurst (1997: 291) aver that it would be a mistake to obscure the particular qualities, subtleties and agendas of these subjects, which are placed in a secondary position to gay men should they be termed camp. Consequently, camp is not just:

...any old way of savouring the ironies of gender. It is the way gay men have tried to rationalise, reconcile, ridicule and wreck their own specific relationships with masculinity and femininity.

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore whether or not camp can be achieved by female bodies, or whether camp should remain exclusively affiliated with gay men (Robertson, 1996 in Medhurst, 1997). I am more preoccupied with the relationship between camp, gender and gay sexuality, which remains the focus of this discussion.

Male homosexuality has long been associated in the public mind with effeminacy and gender transitivity; that is, being labelled gay has been dependent on deviant gender performance, generally construed as camp. In dealing with these (predominantly negative) preconceptions which view non-normative sexuality and non-normative gender as collapsible categories, gay men often attempt to pass for straight or, in contrast, 'perform' by imitating or exaggerating gender signifiers for satirical affect. This brings us on to the perceived theatricality of camp, further outlined by Babuscio (1993: 24) who views campy as an exaggerated self-mocking 'performance', used specifically by gay men, described as 'defensive offensiveness' by Medhurst (1997: 276). It is never natural, always *acquired*, and to see a person as camp is to perceive the notion of life-as-theatre (Goffman, 1959). In particular, Medhurst (1997: 275)

alludes to camp as a performance when he suggests that camp is a method for ‘negotiating [a] way through’ society which at best tolerates the camp gay man and at worst exterminates him. Yet he also accepts that the concept of gender performativity borrows extensively from camp. Camp has the potential to expose stable categories of gender and sexuality as shifting subject positions that must be repeatedly performed in order to maintain the illusion of their constancy. Camp men reveal, through parody and appropriation, that which is thought to be essential.

Consideration of the camp worker has so far been neglected by the organisation studies literature. Even though gender and sexuality are key themes, the lived experiences (and performance) of gender and/in/through sexuality remain under-researched. In Chapter Seven, I explore narratives articulated by gay workers (particularly those who fail to conform to normative standards of masculinity) through a ‘camp lens’. Although camp has politically subversive potential and can expose the performativity of gender (Butler, 1999), I show that gay workers (such as the ‘camp cop’ and ‘prissy performer’) have limited agency when it comes to being seen as such. In doing so, I question whether camp can be conceptualised as a performance at all. Further, although I describe some possibilities for gay men to disrupt heteronormative gender regimes through the manifestation of camp, I show that camp police officers and performers risk facing acute marginalisation due to the constrictions that surround ‘appropriate gender behaviour’ within the occupations. In particular, using Butler’s ‘heterosexual matrix’ (see below), I demonstrate how the relationship between sex, gender and desire ensures that heterosexual hegemony naturalises gay identity in the workplace in the form of the camp worker, who becomes ‘essentially’ locked into the perpetual condition of ‘doing queerness’ (Lloyd, 1999). In this sense, ‘heterosexuality

can augment its hegemony *through* its denaturalisation, as when we see denaturalising parodies that reidealize heterosexual norms *without* calling them into question' (Butler, 1993: 110). As Buzny (2010) boldly claims in *An Effeminist Manifesto*, whilst optimism is important, realism is required, for I show that camp cannot exist within workplace settings without facing a unique set of complications and challenges. What is particularly clear in this discussion is the interrelatedness between the concepts of gender and sexuality.

### ***Gay Masculinities***

The assimilation versus outrage debate remains at the centre of discussions surrounding other forms of gay masculinity, including: the gay bear: a subculture of gay men who valorise the larger, hirsute body (Hennen, 2005); the gay clone: gay men who modelled themselves upon traditional masculinity post gay liberation (Levine, 1998); and the very straight gay: men who engage heavily with discourses of heteronormativity (Connell, 1998). Each of these types of gay masculinity can be associated with the valorisation of Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity; or the normative ideal of male behaviour, and the idea that there exists a hierarchy of masculinities, of which gay masculinities are the least endorsed due to their feminised position (Connell, 1998). To counteract their historic oppression, many gay men have attempted to form subcultures linked to macho behaviour or conventional forms of masculine behaviour. Ironically, however, and while camp can reidealise hegemonic heterosexuality, Connell suggests that the gay man who *appears* to assimilate heterosexual norms actually calls into question taken-for-granted definitions of

masculinity, given their choice of men as sexual partners. This remains a highly contentious assumption.

As I have reflected, conceptualisations of gender and sexuality remain deeply interrelated, and trace back to the mid nineteenth century. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler depicts the relationship between sexuality and gender in terms of the 'heterosexual matrix'; a model which highlights the centrality of *appropriate* gender behaviour.

[The heterosexual matrix is a] hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine express female) that is oppositionally and hierarchally defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality. (151)

The notion of 'proper' gender is seen as the effect of a compulsory system that naturalises heterosexuality through fabricating an illusory continuity between sex, gender and desire, yet we are warned that to exist as a coherent (male) subject, 'one had better make sure to always be walking around and acting 'real masculine' (Kimmel, 1996: 100 as in Nardi, 2000). Effeminacy appears to represent 'the haunting abject' (Kristeva, 1982), whereby disrupting gender norms places one in a precarious position that calls into question normative regimes of sexual identity. While effeminacy in men has the propensity to problematise the normative order of the heterosexual matrix, hegemonic masculinity remains widely endorsed, and so men continue to conform *regardless* of sexual identity.



Effeminacy in men, then, frequently construed as camp (as above), represents the antithesis to both heterosexual *and* homosexual identity according to a significant number of gay men (Nardi, 2000). Medhurst (1997) reminds us that it is argued that ‘fairies, faggots and queens’ have even been detrimental to the political progress achieved by the gay liberation movement. Consequently, authors demonstrate that at various points in time, homosexual culture has undergone a process of ‘gay masculinisation’, in a bid to distance the gay identity away from perceptions of effeminacy (Chauncey 1994; Levine, 1998). In an attempt to ‘throw off the social stigma of being sissies and failed men... gay men enacted a hypermasculine sexuality’ (Pionek, 2006: 58). By repudiating the feminine and femininity, such ultra macho identities coin ‘gay as good’ where (hetero)normative masculinity is embraced as part of the performance (Buzny, 2010).

As a result, negotiating gay sexuality continues to represent an important gender project in the contemporary lives of those who wish to be disassociated with ‘negative’ (namely effeminate) conceptions of homosexuality. In this respect, authors contend those extreme forms of gay masculinity that expel and reject the feminine, represent assimilation to the status quo; the reining in of gender deviance to ensure conformity to the heterosexual matrix. Green (2002: 535) uses the example of the 1970s ‘gay clone’, known for his ‘cookie-cutter masculine style’, arguing that the social identities and sexual practices of clones reiterate and consolidate the gender system, ‘and were constituted by dominant meanings of masculinity acquired within heteronormative communities’. This picture is one that is painted throughout modern gay bars around the country, as ‘straight-acting-muscle-Marys’ attempt to woo others through using exaggerated performances of masculinity. Where gay men ‘over

conform' to these 'destructive norms' of male behaviour, is this really 'the stuff of a transgressive queer' (ibid.)?

In contrast, scholars such as Connell (1998) suggest that hyper-masculinity in gay men causes 'outrage' to hegemonic masculinity, whilst Healy (1996) understands it as parodic and ironic; a form of macho drag that innately destabilises the taken-for-granted nature of heterosexual masculinity. Others maintain that masculinisation has improved the gay man's image, for it questions stereotypes that equate gay identity with effeminacy (Humphries, 1985). This piece of research aims to contribute to these debates by exploring how gay men neg(oti)ate gender identity and masculinity within the workplace. The question of *how* gay police officers and performers resist and/or reproduce discourses of hegemonic masculinity is considered. In particular, I look to investigate how conformity/resistance is achieved. Can it represent assimilation to gender norms or should it be seen as an ironic parody? Again, however, what I hope to have demonstrated is that we cannot consider (homo)sexuality in isolation of gender and vice versa.

## **Conclusion**

Chapter Two has explored the contested nature of sexuality, and sets out the constructionist/essentialist debate surrounding gay identity. Importantly, I review the theoretical perspectives that underpin the research. Situating my study within a constructionist paradigm, I consider symbolic interactionist theories of sexual identity

as well as Goffman's 'life-as-theatre' analogy, and suggest that these perspectives are heuristically valuable in mapping the perceptions of the lived realities of gay men at work. I also consider poststructuralist accounts of gender and identity, and discuss the performance versus performativity debate. In doing so, I engage with Butler's epistemic model, 'the heterosexual matrix', and discuss the ever burgeoning influence of queer theory. Here, I find that queer theory, celebrated for considering the hegemonic power structures that burden society, is useful when it comes to revealing the conditions under which silenced and excluded gender and sexual identities are experienced; particularly in relation to camp and effeminacy, a key theme of the empirical chapters.

Within the discussion, I have also drawn out theoretical positions associated with the relationship between gender and sexuality. Agreeing with a number of prominent sociological scholars who denaturalise the relationship between these concepts, I suggest that it is important to consider the interconnections between gender and sexuality.

In Chapter Four, I revisit how and why the research engages with sociological perspectives of identity, gender and sexuality *and* queer theory. In the chapter that follows, however, while I have shown that medico-legal discourses contributed in constructing gay identity, I go on to consider the development of competitive capitalism and the spread of bureaucratic principles of social organisation, which have also shaped the evolution of (homo)sexual identity, and strengthened anti-homosexual attitudes particularly (Adam, 1996; Greenberg and Bystry, 1996). This leads me into

discussions on the area of organisational (hetero)sexuality and minority sexual identity at work.

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<sup>1</sup> The term 'discourse' alludes to "historically variable ways of speaking, talking, and writing that function systematically – if at times, contradictorily – to articulate what is desirable and undesirable, legitimate and illegitimate, within a culture" (Bristow, 2002; 170).

<sup>2</sup> Sexology also found its legitimacy as a result of the impact of Darwinism; a significant development that had repercussions on the scientific profession and the wider population. It suggested that the struggle for partners (sexual selection) acted independently of the struggle for survival (natural selection), and the 'ultimate test of biological success lay in reproduction' (Weeks, 1999: 67). This allowed sexual aetiologies of individual behaviour to be justifiably studied from a biological/sexological perspective (Greenberg, 1988; Weeks 1997; Weeks, 1999)

<sup>3</sup> For example, the founding text of sexology, *Psychopathia Sexualis* by Richard Von Krafft-Ebing (1998), is known for citing a number of 'fine-spun classifications' with clinical enthusiasm (Ellis, 1928). Epitomising the endeavour to categorise sexual perversion, it is generally seen as the 'chief storehouse' of facts in the field of sexology (Bristow, 2002; 27; Krafft-Ebing, 1998). In particular, Krafft-Ebing's work portrays how Christian attitudes shaped the field of sexology. More importantly, his work emphasises that what you did sexually began to represent what sort of person you were. A number of other theorists placed the study of sexuality on 'an assured scientific basis' (Ellis, 1928).

<sup>4</sup> Degeneration was caused by the transmission genetically to offspring of pathologies brought about by poverty, drink and poor diet and could take on many forms; homosexuality was just one of these (Greenberg, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> Men who had sex with men were deemed deviant as society did not approve of wasted semen. Further, the anal function was primarily a symbol of evil, with the act of sodomy demonstrating rebellion against the moral order, punishable by death.

<sup>6</sup> Its open practice in China was used as proof that same-sex relations potentially led to the degeneracy of entire nations (ibid). Thus moral entrepreneurs were determined to ensure that England would remain a place of sexual purity, and so they sought to stamp out 'vice' and debauchery.

<sup>7</sup> As I have already noted, some sexologists argued against penal sanctions, and believed the law to be deeply ignorant of sexual realities (Weeks, 1999).

<sup>8</sup> There is no doubt that state regulations ensured that 'sexual mores' would be reinforced in the classrooms, schools, prisons, hospitals and "all other institutions set up to socialise individuals into this increasingly controlling society" (Wuthnow, 1984: 172). This reiterates McIntosh's idea of the 'homosexual role'.

<sup>9</sup> This approach no longer presents sexuality in explicitly biologically terms, but recognises that the psychology of humans affects the eventual sexuality of individuals (West, 1960). Identities (such as men and women), and the organization of desires and object choices (heterosexual and homosexual) 'are not seen to be laid down at birth' (Weeks, 2006: 62). All newborn children are presumed to be 'polymorphously perverse'. In subsequent sexual development, the sex drive is invested in various parts of the body at different stages. Each stage involves the choice and focus of a new love object: "first the self, then the mother, the father, and normally someone else of the opposite sex." Hence the model makes homosexuality an element of everyone's 'psychological history' (Greenberg, 1988: 424). Although sickness notions of homosexuality no longer resonate however, implicit standards of normalcy do (Greenberg, 1988). Nevertheless, sexual object choice is still deemed to be a compromise from a range of possibilities. In this respect, heterosexual object choice represents peculiarity: "The exclusive sexual interest felt by men for women is also a problem that needs elucidating and is not a self evident fact based upon an attraction that is ultimately of a chemical nature" (Weeks, 1991: 76).

<sup>10</sup> Renaissance Florence for example, was found to be structured around the tacit acceptance of homosexual behaviour, but only if the elder male took on an active role. It was found that two in every three forty year old men could be implicated in sodomy (Trumbach, 2003). This demonstrates how sexuality has since been socially (re)constructed and (re)moulded.

<sup>11</sup> As an aside, some believe that we may have overly attributed the existence of the hetero/homo binary to the work of sexologists, who transformed the "juridical subject of sodomy into the medical subject

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of homosexuality” (Brickell, 2006a: 424). In fact, sexology seemed to encompass more fluid notions of sexuality. Brickell notes that the influential sexologist Krafft-Ebing implied that all men contained both forms of sexual instinct, and dependent on their relative proportions, one could turn out to be homosexual. Other examples also question the explicitly essentialist endeavours of sexology, suggesting their work is more amenable to modern constructionist notions of sexuality.

<sup>12</sup> She argues that “constraints and sanctions have historically enforced or insured the coupling of women with men and obstructed or penalised the coupling or allying of women” (Rich, 1980). Just like men learn how to be a proper man in relation to a woman, girls learn that the locus of sexual power is male and come to accept as natural the inevitability of this ‘drive’ because they receive it as dogma (ibid: 646).

<sup>13</sup> Although the core ideas of SI are becoming ‘muddled’ (Fine, 1993: 64), three root premises pervade interactionist works: ‘The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings that the things have for them... The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with one’s fellows. The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters (Blumer, 1969: 2).

<sup>14</sup> The concept of the ‘generalised other’, capturing what is common to a class of acting individuals, contributes in providing a unity of self. “[T]he ‘generalised social attitudes’ and expectations of the ‘generalised other’ make an organising self possible (Mead, 1934, as cited by Fine, 1993). Such a ‘generalised other’ forms a basis for understanding how such an approach retains some form of ontological realism in its method. We could also use the term ‘consensus’ here, a term often used by ‘weak constructionists’.

<sup>15</sup> Valocchi notes, learning and enactment of constructed identities are constrained by the social scripts, social labelling and material resources associated with various identities and by the force of externally imposed political naming.

<sup>16</sup> QT reappropriates the term queer, and reverses its negative connotations.

<sup>17</sup> For example, by replacing him with her when referring to a gay man.

<sup>18</sup> Others have associated camp with snobbery, and suggest that the ‘High Camp’ appreciate the finer things in life such as ballet and champagne in crystal flutes. Low and High Camp are not mutually exclusive forms of camp, however.

### **CHAPTER 3: SEXUALITY AND ORGANISATIONS**

As opposed to being ‘innate’, Chapter Two shows scholars now emphasise that (homo)sexuality is shaped by social processes, culturally variable meanings, power relations and discourses that are embedded in societal institutions and ‘instantiated in individuals in particular ways’ (Brickell, 2006a). While medico-legal discourses contributed in constructing gay identity, the development of competitive capitalism and the spread of bureaucratic principles of social organisation also shaped the evolution of (homo)sexual identity, and strengthened anti-homosexual attitudes particularly (Adam, 1996; Greenberg and Bystry, 1996). By focusing on organisational sexuality, this chapter explores these developments in more depth.

While I show there has been notable neglect of sexuality in the organisation studies literature, and account for why this has been the case, I go on to recognise that workplace sexuality has *become* a topic of intense contemporary debate. Revealing the heteronormativity of organisational life, I show that minority sexual identity at work has received limited scholarly attention, and expose some of the pertinent gaps relating to the area of LGB identity at work. In particular, I suggest that existing literature perpetuates the idea that homosexuality remains invisible in organisations, that *all* gay workers face disclosure dilemmas, and in light of this, manage their sexuality by passing, covering or concealing. While some studies elucidate how gay workers neg(oti)ate Otherness at work, I also highlight that current understandings of the contextual issues under which gay sexualities are experienced in the workplace remain sketchy. In other words, research tends to gloss over the experiences of gender

in/and/through sexuality at work, or the experiences of the gay police officer, performer, nurse, teacher, lawyer, accountant, etc. To conclude, I address some of the changes that have occurred within worksites thanks to diversity policies that now incorporate sexual orientation, and discuss emerging literature on the 'gay friendly' occupation, emphasising that further research is required in both areas.

### **Organisation Sexuality: An under researched area**

Workplace sexuality has been the subject of some 'lively discussion' in organisation studies since the 1980s (Fleming, 2006: 239). While some research concentrates specifically on the sex industry and the commodification of sex (Brewis and Linstead, 2000), other studies reveal that sexuality widely imbues the milieu of 'traditional' organisations. Whereas certain scholars focus on (masculine) organisation sexuality in terms of formal hierarchy (Collinson and Collinson, 1989), others discuss 'work' and sexuality in relation to 'workers' who are less attached to any specific type of workplace, such as in the context of prostitution. These alternative bodies of scholarship agree, however, that the 'abstract, bodiless worker, who occupies the abstract, gender-neutral job has no sexuality, no emotions, and does not procreate' is a mythical concept, and a flurry of research is now beginning to recognise that sex(uality) is a significant aspect of the reality of work in its various guises (Acker, 1998: 310).

The notable neglect of sexuality in the organisation studies literature has been related to the wider neglect of gender, yet even when issues of gender received increased scholarly attention, ‘silence on sexuality’ remained (Burrell and Hearn, 1989). According to Hearn and Parkin (1995), research on sexual harassment in the late 1970s was a major catalyst that raised the profile of workplace sexuality. This body of research revealed the ‘latent’ presence of sex in ostensibly formal organisations. Up until this point, academics *had* been reluctant to explore the interrelationship between sexuality, gender and organizations; an ironic situation considering a good deal of recent research understands that the workplace has an important sexual component (Fleming, 2006). A promising line of inquiry even shows that sexuality is promoted in some companies as a method of managerial control, in that certain expressions of sexuality are sanctioned and utilised by management in apparently ‘non-sexual’ employment situations, such as the airline industry (Fleming, 2006; Fleming and Spicer, 2007; Taylor and Tyler, 2000). These papers indicate that organisations are not the ascetic domains they once appeared, and that certain types of sexuality facilitate masculine hierarchy, the consumption experience and control (ibid.).

### ***Organisation de-sexualisation***

The suppression of workplace sexuality together with its absence in the literature has definitive roots in the development of competitive capitalism, and the inception of large, all-male, bureaucratically modelled organisations in the nineteenth century (Greenberg and Bystry, 1996; Hancock and Tyler, 2001). As I go on to show, since it was felt that industrialists had eradicated the threat of ‘subversive’ workplace



sexuality ‘by including it in how they built, organised and managed their factories’, the need to explore sexuality on any academic level was not considered a research priority (Burrell and Hearn, 1989: 12).

Historically, active sexuality in the form of flirtations, self-presentation, fantasy, secret affairs and dalliances, was thought to interfere with the ‘axioms’ of modern work (Burrell, 1984; Collinson and Collinson, 1989; Fleming, 2006: 5; Fleming and Spicer, 2007: 123). Focusing on the expansion of capitalism shown to privilege instrumental rationality as a dominant discourse, authors have highlighted that ‘with the creation of a spatial and symbolic boundary between work and home, labour and leisure, and the public and private in industrialised economies’ sex was increasingly marginalised as an inappropriate activity and relocated in the non-organisational sphere (Fleming, 2006: 242; Burrell, 1984). In linking the alienation of labour with the suppression of libidinal freedom, theorists such Marcuse (1966 in Burrell, 1984) aver that sexual relations became increasingly controlled due to the sober time discipline of the capitalist enterprise, since harnessing human energy for production was imperative. In that regard, when work moved out of the home and into the factory, new forms of work (in opposition to pre-industrial concupiscence) demanded the suppression of sexual relations as efficiency, accumulation and the balance sheet became central to industrialist objectives.

Scholars also refer to Weber’s (1946 in Greenberg, 1988) analysis of administrative bureaucracy to show that the complete eradication of sexuality has long been a goal pursued by organisational decision makers, and that the impact of industrialisation has

been significant. Theorised by Weber as an elaborate hierarchical division of labour and an important cause of the development of capitalism, bureaucracy operates on the basis that 'the office' is sharply distinguished from the private affairs of the 'office holders'. According to Weber's ideal type, bureaucracies demand that workers are universalistic and impartial in the way that they make decisions (Greenberg and Bystryn, 1996: 94), and a strict degree of impersonality is required when employees deal with each other, their work and their customers. Above all, 'members' are expected to restrict their affective and sexual involvements to organisational outsiders who have no dealings with the organisation, for if workers can be linked to others through ties of sexual attraction, organisational decisions might become 'influenced by extraneous personal considerations' which jeopardises the rationality of bureaucratic modes of organising (Greenberg, 1988: 437).

Under these related conditions, the model firm in commercial society was a sexless realm (Burrell and Hearn, 1989). As a consequence, human feelings including sexuality have gradually been expunged from the workplace; sex had its time and place, but not within the walls of the factory (Burrell, 1984: 99)<sup>1</sup>. Authors draw attention to the ways in which nineteenth century industrialists monitored the sexual affairs of their employees (Gramsci, 1971; Lofstrom, 1997). Since workers were expected to harness their energies for the purposes of (capitalist) production, they could even be fined for engaging in sexualised interaction during working hours (Burrell, 1984; Hancock and Tyler, 2001). The lasting influence of bureaucratic principles of efficiency has meant that modern corporations continue to view workplace sexuality with intense cynicism. Contemporary studies show that sexual sobriety is widely institutionalised, and sexual expressions are often viewed with

distaste in twenty-first century organisations by management. Wal-Mart's recent attempt to legally ban office romances in Germany is a good example which indicates this ubiquitous and prevailing trend (Fleming, 2006).

In that regard, the former neglect of sexuality by organisational research can only be understood with reference to modernity, the expansion of competitive capitalism and bureaucracy. Advocating that sexuality can be ignored simply because 'it is not a problem', since the world of work has no place for sexuality, academics neglected it on the basis that sex(uality) was an irrelevant issue altogether (Burrell, 1984: 12).

### *(Hetero)Sexuality in the Workplace*

Since Burrell's (1984) influential article, organisation sexuality has crept more prominently onto the organisation studies agenda. Whereas historical accounts of the workplace tend to ignore the reality that sexuality imbues organisational life, developing research shows that 'sexuality in the workplace is not simply repressed or sublimated or subjected to controlled expression; it is actively produced in a range of discourses and interactions.' (Pringle, 1989: 164). Pringle's (1989) noteworthy study finds that sexuality impacts upon the dynamics between bosses and their secretaries, and reports that outside of the sex industry, the relationship between these workers 'is the most sexualised of all workplace relationships' (Pringle, 1989; 158). Interaction between these individuals represents a deviation from the separation in organisations between the public world of rationality and the private sphere of emotionality.

Importantly, Pringle shows that workplace relations can ‘ooze’ with sexuality and emotion: ‘[Sexuality] is alluded to in dress and self-presentation, in jokes and gossip, looks and flirtations, secret affairs and dalliances.’ (ibid; 162). In similar fashion, scholars consider how masculine sexuality is a basic feature of strategy and formal hierarchy in factories. For example, Collinson and Collinson (1989) provide evidence of the pervasiveness of sexuality within organizations by charting the ways in which *men’s* sexuality govern working practices, as opposed to women’s. In their case studies, forms of male sexuality are shown to characterise everyday life and interaction on the shop floor of the factory, which helps contribute to a form of male unity, and allows men ‘to deny their subordinate position within the organisation’ (Collinson, 1988; Collinson and Collinson, 1989: 98). The authors also illustrate the ways in which men seek to use sexuality as a means of enhancing or sustaining their power and status within organisations (ibid.).

Other feminist analyses show how feminised sexualities are organised among customer service workers in the airline industry and fast food outlets (Adkins, 1992; Guerrier and Adib, 2000; Hochschild, 1983, Taylor and Tyler 2000; Tyler, 1997). Here, sexuality becomes an essential part of the labour process since organisations utilise ‘women’s sexuality as a means of pursuing strategic organisational goals’ (Hancock and Tyler; 2001: 159). For example, the ‘sexy’ demeanour of the flight attendant is said to be achieved through corporate engineering, and women are expected to deploy their sexuality to put nervous male passengers at ease. Such cases highlight that ‘women’s sexuality is harnessed for general purposes of adjunct control’ and that ‘the multiple facets of women’s sexuality... are utilised between the labour process and the control system’. (Tancred-Sheriff, 1989: 52). In a similar vein,

Fleming's (2006) work demonstrates how a range of sexualities, including gay sexualities, can be encouraged *among* workers (as opposed to the promotion of sexuality in the worker/customer relationship) under the auspices of a culture of 'being yourself' at work.

Clearly, since the late 1980s, academics have revealed that organisation sexuality is a 'diverse and diffuse process'. Sex is no longer considered to be 'a 'thing' brought into organisations, there to be organised', and quests for rationality are no longer considered to be 'performed by asexual actors, but by people in sexually coded positions' (Burrell and Hearn, 1989: 13-15). Even more clear is that once we move away from the belief that organisations represent asexual domains, we begin to appreciate that a 'central feature of the sexual 'normality' of organisations is a powerful heterosexual bias: a form of compulsory heterosexuality' (Hearn and Parkin, 1995: 94). In this regard, organisations could be said to have a particular *type* of sexuality. Pringle (1989), again, draws attention to this assumption by highlighting that daily life in the office is relentlessly heterosexual, although this is unsurprising given that normative heterosexuality remains at the heart of many other social institutions (the Church; the military). Organisations are places in which heterosexism is considered to be the overarching norm, and digressive behaviour away from heterosexual hegemony is characterised as intensely problematic (Collinson, 1988; Collinson and Collinson, 1989; see also below). Further, as Acker (1998) highlights, 'a certain kind of *male* heterosexual sexuality plays an important part in legitimising organisational power' (312: emphasis added), suggesting that *hegemonic masculinity* (see Chapter Two) plays a pivotal and functional role in certain organisations (Connell, 1987).

## **Minority Sexual Identity, Capitalism and Bureaucracy**

A particularly under-researched area of contemporary organisational theory is minority sexual identity at work. In order to clarify further why this has been the case, I will now say something about the relationship between competitive capitalism, bureaucracy and homosexuality.

Both capitalism and bureaucracy have been ascribed a prominent role in the birth of the 'modern homosexual'. With regards to the impact of industrialisation and accumulation, authors such as Adam (1996), Greenberg and Bystryn (1996) and Lofstrom (1997) note that new forms of work encouraged the development of impersonal relationships based on competition. Consequently, and as the capitalist economy took hold, workers were increasingly isolated from one another, and rivalry between men became exacerbated (Greenberg, 1988: 447). Effectively, the pitting of man against man for productivity purposes meant that affectionate male bond became irreconcilable (Adam, 1996; Lofstrom, 1997). Adam (1996) characterises these developments by noting that the rise of commercial society reconstructed masculinity to reflect the machine. He notes: 'The industrialised system sought to discipline and regularise workers as steady, reliable, emotionless, hard, and instrumental' (Adam, 1996; 117). In that regard, homosexuality as a manifestation of tenderness and a route to male bonding was 'vehemently excoriated' and viewed as a violation and failure; a betrayal of masculine virtues necessary for success (Adam, 1996; Lofstrom, 1997).

Extending analysis to include the inception of specifically bureaucratic forms of organisation, Greenberg (1988: 438) highlights that by analogy ‘we might expect that bureaucracies would have introduced a prohibition against male homosexuality’. Certain rules and procedures attempted to eradicate homosexuality at work to serve bureaucratic goals of rationality and efficiency; such as the screening of recruits for effeminate mannerisms at army training camps during World War II (this was seen to be an indication of homosexuality). Greenberg (1988) further notes that because the internalised prohibition against male-male intimacy was implicated in the bureaucratic organisation, this led to wider instances of societal homophobia. The suppression of affective emotional responses towards one another within bureaucratic modes of organising meant that men tended to experience a heightened degree of anxiety in the presence of expressions of emotional intimacy or sexual contact between men, aggravated due to capitalist ideologies.

A paradox of capitalism, however, is that urbanisation was conducive to the formation of the modern homosexual, in the form of an ‘opposing strategy’ (Foucault, 1976; Lofstrom, 1997; see also Chapter Two). The rise of capitalism opened up new avenues for homosexual expression, while conversely laying the ‘groundwork for reorganisation and rejuvenation of older doctrines proscribing it’ (Adam, 1996; 120). Through profoundly reorganising the significance of kinship and family, the transition to capitalism opened up new possibilities through the expansion of wage-labour in work organisations. Kinship code had originally restricted individuals in the sense that there was little room for alternative (homo)sexual (or other) subjectivities to find

independent expression, as productive land was allocated to new generations. This handing down of land from one generation to the next strongly influenced chances of future economic well being and there were few legitimate reasons to opt out of such a system (Adam, 1996). With the rise of capitalism, however, individuals could secure a livelihood away from their home towns. Men who were sexually interested in other men could now move to industrialised cities, be relatively unknown and indulge in 'unconventional' life-styles (Lofstrom, 1997). New opportunities presented themselves with the expansion of the public realm through the mobilisation of labour in capitalist production. The result was that previously unacquainted 'homosexually inclined' men could now make contact with each other and began to constitute a gay subculture (Adam 1996; *ibid.*). Additionally, industrial wage labour made it easier and less stigmatising to live alone; and it became more acceptable to opt out of the family system.

Ironically, however, and referring back to the related conditions of capitalism and bureaucracy, Hearn and Parkin (1995: 125) note that as far as organisational analysis goes, homosexuality in organisations has still remained within the 'darkest penumbra, sealed away from any illuminating awareness' (Hearn and Parkin, 1995: 125). In other words, homosexuality at work, even more so, has not been considered a research priority. Not only was 'sex' considered to be a 'non-issue', in that it had been dealt with by bureaucrats, but the taboo of homosexuality at work evoked a certain level of anxiety in the minds of researchers (*ibid.*).



## **LGB Identity at Work**

In 1996, a literature review conducted by James Croteau concluded that only nine qualitative and quantitative studies had been carried out on the work experiences of LGB people. As recently as 2008, Ward observes that ‘sexual orientation’ remains one of the most taboo topics within the area of organisation studies. He also notes that existing research tends to adopt a narrow focus. Although academics have stressed the challenges LGBs face within environments dominated by heterosexuals, they offer otherwise myopic accounts of the broader experiences of LGB workers.

Nevertheless, it is fair to say that research on gay sexuality at work has mushroomed since 2008. An outbreak of promising scholarship has featured in top journals on the experiences of gay male friendships at work (Rumens, 2008); professionalism and gay identity (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009); the experiences of diversity policy from the perspectives of gay men and women (Colgan et. al., 2009); and a particularly interesting and developing area: the ‘gay friendly’ occupation (Williams et al., 2009). In his influential book, James Ward (2008) even explores transsexual related issues in call centres – the most under researched minority of all. Gaps remain, however.

The next section provides a literature review of the key studies that can be found on the experiences of minority sexual identity at work. In doing so, I highlight the prevalent gaps, and reveal how this study aims to contribute to the most pertinent of these. For example, the idea of ‘gay-friendly’ work settings is of interest to me, but I address the topic from a somewhat different perspective to much of the research

currently emerging on the subject. This will become clearer below.

### ***Heterosexism and the Neg(oti)ation of LGB Identity at Work***

Studies in sociology have indicated that an alarming number of LGB people, particularly young people, continue to face discrimination and harassment in society. This can manifest itself through both direct and indirect forms of persecution (Herek, 2002). In 2007, *The School Report* revealed that 92% of 1,145 lesbian, gay and bisexual pupils reported being subject to verbal abuse (see [stonewall.org.uk](http://stonewall.org.uk)). Even within a progressive and ostensibly liberal country such as the UK, gay men and women are the targets of snide comments, alienation, rudeness and even acts of extreme physical violence (ibid.). Statistics show that societal homophobia is on the increase (Hari, 2009), and it would appear that this situation carries across to the workplace. A recent 2008 survey found that one in five lesbian and gay people in the UK said they had experienced bullying in the workplace as a result of their 'sexual orientation'. I have already shown that historically, discriminatory rules against gay sexuality have been adopted by bureaucratic organisations to serve goals of 'rationality and legitimacy' (Greenberg, 1988). Anecdotal evidence generated throughout the course of my own research suggests that the British Royal Navy and the police only recently ceased monitoring the homosexual practices of officers, further alluding to the prevalence of normative, institutionalised homophobia.

Much organisation research on the work experiences of LGB people concentrates on exposing the affects of such homophobia. UK surveys published in the 1980s (Beer et al., 1983; GLC, 1985; Taylor, 1986) focus solely on the (constructive) dismissal of gay employees along with accounts of violent forms of workplace discrimination. Empirical studies conducted in the mid nineties (Badgett, 1995; Boatwright, 1996; Day and Schoenrade, 1997) continue to reveal the presence, nature and affects of workplace discrimination towards LGB people, and contemporary research reminds us that ‘the argument that gay men and lesbians can expect to be discriminated against at work if their co-workers know of their sexual orientation still holds sway in much of the literature about the work experiences of these people’ (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2005: 2). Many of these studies show that, at the very least, the gay population fear harassment in the workplace, such as sanctions by co-workers or even acts of physical abuse, they are often the target of toxic humour, and legal archives provide well-documented evidence that confirms the persistence of these behaviours, particularly since the introduction of new legislation: the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 and the Equality Act 2010<sup>2</sup> (Badgett, 1995; Boatwright et al, 1996; Caudron, 1995; stonewall.org.uk; Ward and Winstanley, 2005).

Other research has found that gay men and women suffer pervasive effects of institutionalised stigma and serious economic disadvantage as a consequence of status subordination in the workplace (Badgett, 1995; Fraser and Honneth, 2003). Badgett’s (1995) econometric study revealed that gay male workers earn 11% to 27% less than heterosexual male workers with the same experience, education, occupation, marital status and region of residence. In addition to economic discrimination, evidence suggests that LGB people are denied promotion and reach a ‘glass ceiling’ referred to

as the ‘pink plateau’ (more commonly viewed as a reluctance to promote gay men and women), similar to that met by black people and women (Badgett, 1995; Boatwright et al, 1996; Ward, 2008; Ward and Winstanley, 2005). Elsewhere, a recent study on call centres (Fleming and Spicer, 2007) found that where minority sexual identities had been *encouraged*, a number of employees expressed homophobic and discriminatory views. And in a study examining the experiences of lesbians and gay men working for UNISON, Humphrey (1999) found that workers in public service occupations were still vulnerable to victimisation by service users on account of the conflation of gay sexuality, HIV, perversity and paedophilia.

Over the years, much debate has ensued as to whether or not ‘sexual orientation’ should be added to civil rights laws. Some claim legislation grants sexual minorities’ special privileges in the workplace (see Badgett, 1995), whereas the above studies imply that gay employees require increased legal protection. They show that even though the growth of equal opportunity policies has sought to achieve an ‘employment meritocracy’ (see below), prejudice and discrimination remain salient features of organisational life (Ward, 2008), and that those who possess a minority sexual identity risk being ‘out and persecuted’ (Humphrey, 1999).

I am hyper aware of how I represent myself as a gay man to my students... Should I look and act like a stereotypical fag or should I provide an alternative vision of gay manhood? Is it OK to use camp, wit and biting irony, or should I eschew the affectations of fagdom and provide an alternative vision? Is it OK to cross my legs, move my hands, raise my eyebrows? Can I call my gay students “honey”? Is it OK for me to refer to male colleagues as “girlfriends”? What image should I project when I walk across the room? (Rofes, 2000: 450)

Although research on how LGB people disclose and manage their sexual identities in the workplace is limited, scholars have come at the subject from different directions. Some have drawn from Goffman's (1963) stigma theory (Ragins, 2004; Clair et al., 2005), used social cognitive perspectives (Lidderdale et al., 2007) and adopted a Foucauldian notion of discourse (Ward and Winstanley, 2005) to the same end: examining how sexual identities are managed (focusing on different identity strategies) and disclosed (focusing on the choices about whether or not to disclose). Models that mobilise stigma theory have been particularly influential in that respect. In the face of discrimination, discussed above, it is clear that homosexuality in the workplace can be characterised as a stigma that requires negotiation and management. As King et al. (2008) assert, LGB people experience dilemmas of disclosure on a frequent basis, as they weigh up the costs and benefits associated with disclosing sexual identities that may be stigmatised in specific contexts.

Indeed, to maintain equitable treatment, gay workers have been found to manage, pass and conceal sexual identity (Day and Schoenrade, 1997). The choice to 'come out' in the corporate world can be an important career decision for many gays and lesbians (Bowring and Brewis, 2009). Moreover, it is commonly referred to in the literature as a 'reiterative process' rather than a single undifferentiated act, in that due to the presumption of heterosexuality, coming out becomes a 'performance' gay individuals enact in every new work situation (Boatwright et al, 1996; Bowring and Brewis, 2009; Day and Schoenrade, 1997; Humphrey, 1999; Ward and Winstanley, 2004). Much of the literature implies, however, that this reiterative process is faced by *all* homosexuals in *all* organisations. The analysis presented in Chapter Seven, however, problematises this assumption by showing that gay men who are visibly gay (due to

the relationship between effeminacy and gay identity, see Chapter Two) do not face the reiterative process of coming out. Alternatively, these individuals face different and, at times, perplexing experiences within the world of work that have yet to be elucidated by existing research. This is explored in more detail below in terms of visibility and gender identity at work.

Due to the pervasiveness of hetero-patriarchy, Croteau (1996) suggests that various coping strategies are utilised by gay individuals who look to manage both disclosed and undisclosed minority sexual identity. In this regard, qualitative studies elsewhere have identified typologies of concealment, disclosure and discovery (ibid.; Humphrey, 1999: 138). They highlight that workers often decide to pass or lie in order to be perceived as 'normal'/heterosexual (Goffman, 1963); some 'cover' aspects of their sexual identity and disclose selective aspects of their self; whereas others outwardly affirm gay identity and use explicit language and artefacts to indicate the true nature of their sexuality (Croteau, 1996). On a similar plane, Woods and Lucas's (1993) US study of gay male professionals is well cited in that respect. They identified three main strategies for managing a gay male identity in the workplace: (1) counterfeiting; (2) avoidance; (3) and integration. Counterfeiting refers to efforts made by gay men to 'pass' as heterosexual in the workplace, thereby giving out the 'wrong' message about their gay identity, which remains concealed. Strategies of avoidance include attempts to disclose as little personal information as possible, deflecting attention away from the issue of sexuality. In contrast, strategies of integration refer to 'coming out' as gay in the workplace. This usually involves saying or doing something explicit to disclose as gay to colleagues. Some men made indirect remarks to colleagues about their sexuality while others tried to normalise their sexual identity, by conforming to

prevailing expectations and cultural norms around sexuality and gender. In each strategy the individual manages what information about their sexual identity is disclosed, to whom, how and when.

Other studies focus on the main impediments to coming out at work and show that those with higher incomes are less likely to disclose minority sexual identity than those with lower incomes (Schneider, 1986). Obstacles to coming out at work can also involve working within 'large bureaucratic organisations, undertaking sensitive public service work, and being located in the upper echelons of income and status hierarchies' (Humphrey, 1999: 138). In contrast, however, research conducted by Wright et al. remarks that 'manual, administrative, service and skilled trades workers as well as BME workers were less likely to be 'out'' (2006: 467), even when these occupations have 'good practice' with regards to policy.

For those who decide to conceal sexual identity at work, a range of (negative) identity consequences relating to commitment to an organisation have been found to transpire (Day and Schoenrade, 1997; 2000). In their study, Day and Schoenrade used data from a survey of 744 gay employees to determine the relationship of reported disclosure of sexual orientation, anti discrimination policies, and top management support for equal rights with relevant work attitudes. They found that openly gay workers showed higher commitment, higher job satisfaction, lower role ambiguity and lower role conflict. The study revealed that job satisfaction can also suffer should gay sexuality be negated, for a disproportionate amount of time and energy can be spent maintaining these concealment techniques (Boatwright et al, 1996; Croteau, 1996;

Ward, 2008; Ward and Winstanley, 2005). From an employer's perspective, then, secrecy may be of little benefit, for it can lead to a decrease in productivity or destructive conflict amongst workers due to poor communication (Day and Schoenrade, 1997: 241).

Taking both the experiences of homophobia and the management of gay identity at work into consideration, Rumens notes that much of the existing literature makes for 'grim reading', for the world of work is characterised as one of the least hospitable places for gay men and women (Rumens, 2009: 106).

### *The Need for Specificity*

In detailing the workplace pressures gay men and women experience, academics are at risk of disseminating the idea that the LGB population encounter synonymous issues throughout (dis)similar occupations. Undeniably, LGB individuals face similar individual and collective struggles, yet experiences of having a minority sexual identity arguably diverge depending on whether you are a gay man, a lesbian woman, a bisexual, or a transsexual. Scholarly literature elsewhere has been quick to note that gay men and women *do not* face identical struggles throughout broader society (Burn et al, 2005), thus referring to them as 'one group' serves to (un)wittingly homogenise their interests and experiences (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2005). Whilst gay men, lesbians and bisexuals share commonalities with regards to values and living arrangements, 'such commonalities should not be assumed or seen to be fixed' (ibid: 7). My own



research confirms that gay male employees *expect* themselves to have disparate workplace experiences in comparison to lesbian workers (Broomfield, 2007; see Chapter Seven). Humphrey (1999: 140) briefly contributes to this debate by suggesting that different levels of ‘persecution’ can be associated with lesbian women and gay men at work. She found that ‘lesbian narratives tended to revolve around more subtle forms of persecution while the most blatant forms of persecution were found in gay male narratives’. Humphrey explains that such blatant persecution has probably thrived on the additional layer of perceived perversity, which has been easier to ascribe to gay men ‘on account of the umbilical cord which has linked visible gay male sexuality to punitive criminal justice systems’ (ibid. See Chapter Two). Overall, however, research priorities should be looking to unpack the possible range of issues that are distinctly problematic for gay men/lesbians/bisexuals as workers (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2005). This has implications for this study, discussed in Chapter Four.

In similar fashion, many studies also fail to elucidate the experiences of sexual minorities working within *specific occupations*. Burke (1994); Humphrey (1999); Ward (2008); and Rumens (2008a) have made inroads in this respect by focusing on policing; the trade union UNISON; banks, government departments and emergency services; and NHS workers respectively. The research intends to address this gap and expands upon existing studies that tend to focus on the *general* working lives of LGB employees. I show that groups of (gay male) workers employed as police officers or performers face unique contextual challenges related to ‘passing’, ‘coming out’ and homophobia. As this Chapter so far demonstrates, these are key areas of interest to existing literature, yet studies fail to consider these concepts in detail with reference to specific occupations.

### *Gay Identities at Work*

One purported reason why gay sexuality has received a lack of scholarly attention is due to its 'concealed nature', which has the tendency to make issues surrounding gay sexuality *appear* 'invisible'. Button (2004) suggests that gay people are faced with a dichotomous choice. They can either 'pass' as heterosexual or they can 'come out' at work; thus researching the topic becomes increasingly complex for academics who are faced with a peculiar set of methodological difficulties. In a similar vein, Ward and Winstanley (2006: 3) reiterate: 'It is not possible to guess someone's sexual orientation from the way they walk, talk or dress'. This ubiquitous assumption, whereby gay men and women are seen to represent a 'hidden population', has been used as a justification for ignoring the issue altogether (ibid.). This is a problematic, although frequently unchallenged assumption, touched upon by Rumens and Kerfoot (2005) who note that not all gay men are able to associate themselves with (hetero)normative forms of masculinity. This *implies* that at times, a gay man can be identified as such, primarily due to his deviant gender identity. Consequently, meeting standards of professional competence in certain work sites can become difficult for effeminate (gay) men. The key issue, however, is that current literature has been quick to (re)produce the assumption that there appears no range of (often visible) gay *identities*, and that all gay men and women have the choice to either pass or to reveal.

A number of studies do touch upon the butch-camp/butch-femme continuum relating to minority sexual identity at work (this continuum has so far been explored with

reference to the heterosexual matrix in Chapter Two). Bowring and Brewis (2009: 24) remind us that many accounts of gay and lesbian identity focus on ‘the importance of being ‘appropriate’’ in the workplace. This has implications for those who appear ‘visibly gay’, associated with gender deviance, camp demeanours or butch appearances. In that regard, a handful of scholars allude to the power effects of the heterosexual matrix within a range of occupations; and not just within environments that are male-dominated and arguably masculinist. For example, the idea that minority sexual identity is tolerated at work when normative discourses of gender remain unchallenged is captured by Bowring and Brewis’ (2009: 24) respondent, Sam: “If I came in [to work] in drag and wearing six-inch stilettos maybe there would be a problem”. Other scholars have briefly noted that ‘gender presentation’ and visibility impacts upon the experiences of gay identity at work; primarily in terms of injustices and challenges (Williams et al., 2009). In other words, those who appear visibly gay are likely to experience direct and pervasive forms of homophobia in the workplace.

In a study on the NHS, Rumens and Kerfoot (2009) revealed that effeminate gay men are recast as the flagrant transgressor according to participants, echoing sociological studies that show effeminacy represents the antithesis to both heterosexual and gay identity (Connell, 1998; Richardson, 2006). As a result, research has found that gay men are keen to ‘perform’ appropriate gender behaviour for fear of being accused of ‘ramming [their sexuality] down somebody’s throat’ (Williams et al., 2009: 36); or for fear of being associated with a ‘poofs and pansies’ discourse (Humphrey, 1999). In contrast, whilst it is important for gay men to uphold hegemonic conceptions of gender identity and masculinity at work, Bowring and Brewis (2009: 26) found that lesbians were “‘tolerated’ on the basis of performing as the opposite gender, given

sexual attraction to women'. In a similar vein, Wright (2008) found that lesbian firefighters who could be identified with masculine traits fitted more easily into their watch. When lesbian women began dressing in a more feminine manner, however, male co-workers reacted with hostility and confusion, whilst others attempted to 'correct' the 'dissonance' between appearance and sexuality by making sexual passes at gender conformist lesbians (Gherardi, 1995).

While literature hints that a possible range of gay identities inhabit the workplace, researchers tend to overlook the nuances associated with the performance of gender identity in/and/through sexuality at work. Attention paid to nonconformist gender in the context of sexuality is at best, cursory, and at worst, naive. This study's contribution stems from revealing the experiences of effeminate gay men, who live under alternative conditions, most notably the 'homosexual assumption' as opposed to the 'heterosexual assumption'. As the analysis suggests (see Chapter Seven), effeminate individuals do not face synonymous issues with respect to discrimination or 'coming out' at work. By revealing certain forms of 'effeminophobia' (Richardson, 2009), I observe that feminine (gay) police officers and performers are likely to experience increased abjection and exclusion on account of their alterity within certain work sites, for they more readily fail to fit in with or belong to the established idea of the 'masculine' worker. In terms of *visible* gay identity, my analysis details the lived experiences of effeminacy; a notably under-researched area in the OS literature.

### *Sexual Orientation: Legislation and Policy Interventions*

Despite the above, and over the last two decades, it is fair to say that gay men and women have enjoyed increased social acceptance within the workplace and beyond. Particularly in organisations located in urban areas, where radical sexual politics are thought to exist, gay individuals can actually thrive and succeed (Humphrey, 1999). It has been argued that in relation to being a sexual minority at work, there has never been a better time to be gay (Donkin, 2003: 22). '[In the field of Investment Banking, i]f you have the same qualifications as a competing candidate who cannot claim minority status [on the grounds of sexual orientation], the job... could be as good as yours'. Humphrey (1999: 142) found that some of her respondents gained more authority and credibility in the eyes of their employers, reporting some type of career benefit due to the nature of their sexuality. In this regard, a gay man or lesbian can actually be 'out and pursued':

Several participants depicted a dialectical consciousness-raising process, whereby the more out and proud they became, the more their colleagues noticed sexual ignorance and injustice and requested assistance accordingly; the more advice they dispensed, the more their managers solicited their expertise in training and policy-making functions.

In similar fashion, Ward (2003) notes that gay men and women provide a particular competency to organisations in terms of service delivery to LGB clients. Reflecting on recent diversity initiatives adopted by a range of employers, this appears to have been recognised (kpmg.co.uk; lloydstsb.com; mi5.gov.uk; see also below). Some of these organisations have attempted to facilitate a working environment conducive to the cultivation of 'gay friendly' cultures and the positive negotiation of (minority)

sexual identity (Fleming and Spicer, 2007). Indisputably, a wide variety of employers are currently and energetically recruiting gay graduates and staff; actively nurturing the endeavours of internal gay staff networks; supporting LGB employees through incidents of workplace and societal homophobia; and offering a range of same-sex partner benefits (Ward, 2008). Further, an ever increasing number of employers have signed up to Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme; Britain's good practice forum in which employers can work with Stonewall, and each other, to promote lesbian, gay and bisexual equality in the workplace. These factors highlight that the corporate landscape for gay men and women is changing. 'Proliferating diversity discourses that convey the bottom line rationale, recent legal reform and changing sexual politics have all exerted force on organisations to address sexual orientation within the workplace' (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2005: 4). A wider range of possibilities do seem to exist for gay men and women to construct alternative identities within the world of work.

These possibilities draw attention to the concept of normalisation, and remind us that gay men and women are living 'beyond the closet' (Seidman, 2002). In other words, gay sexuality is increasingly becoming a small part of an individual's self, and is no longer seen as the crux of identity. Seidman alludes to the decreasing influence of 'the closet', and highlights that LGB persons routinely live 'out'; they are socially accepted; and above all, they are seen as normal. This is captured by a number of Seidman's participants, who are keen to celebrate the fact that they no longer view life in terms of a division between a heterosexual and a gay world. As a result, individuals are able to 'comfortably and rather passively inhabit their homosexuality at work' in a

range of contexts including retail, law, nursing, hairdressing and teaching (Williams et al., 2009: 31).

### *Changing Tides*

The Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003, replaced by the Equality Act 2010 (see Chapter One: Introduction,) now mean that LGB persons have increased legal protection in the workplace. They aim to prevent heterosexist discrimination and advocate that employers should seek to eradicate the ‘pink plateaus’ that have traditionally stifled gay people from making headway within a number of (homophobic) institutions. Stonewall’s campaigning has been credited for leading to a catalogue of legislative changes giving gay people protection and equality at work (Colgan et al., 2007). Further, studies show that gay men and women have welcomed the introduction of legislation, and note that LGB workers now feel more inclined to pursue cases of workplace homophobia, should they occur (Colgan et al., 2007).

Up until recently, many organisations merely had in place a statement setting out their intention to be or become an ‘equal opportunity employer’, associated with the liberal necessity to comply with legislation from a social justice perspective (Kirton and Greene, 2004; Jewson and Mason, 1986). Liberal approaches to equality, predicated on a philosophy of sameness, focus on ensuring workers have access to and are assessed within the workplace as individuals, *regardless* of what social group they

belong to (Jewson and Mason, 1986). Contained within these policies is often a commitment to tackling discrimination on a variety of fronts; to having in place fair and transparent procedures regarding recruitment and selection; training and development; terms and conditions of employment; and monitoring and auditing (Kirton and Greene, 2004). This perspective has been contrasted with radical approaches to equality that emphasise the need for direct intervention in order to achieve not only equality of opportunity but also equality of outcome, thus the focus here rests with social groups rather than the individual (Jewson and Mason, 1986). The ideal of the radical approach is a situation whereby the workforce is *representative* of all the social groups available to it, meaning policies such as preferential treatment at appointment based on gender, race, sexual orientation and so forth are promoted. A number of policies associated with this model are outlawed in Britain.

Currently, however, many organisations are leaning towards proactively emphasising diversity within the titles of their initiatives, possibly as a result of legislative changes, as they allegedly seek to capitalise on the multitude of different skills *all* individuals have to offer (ibid.). Indeed, since the mid nineties, the term ‘managing diversity’ has become the new label in many occupations for policies and practices that would otherwise have fallen under the remit of ‘equality policy’. It is seen as a new way forward, and moves beyond arguments that centre on social justice, implicit within both the liberal and radical approaches to equality. Alternatively, ‘[t]he cornerstone of a diversity approach is the belief that it will deliver benefits to the organisation – in other words there is a ‘business case’ for diversity’ (Kirton and Greene, 2004: 4). In particular, MD emphasises that ‘equality comes not by ensuring the same treatment or



opportunities but by allowing people to demonstrate their distinctive contributions in the workplace' (Dean and Liff, 2010: 6). Such an approach<sup>3</sup> is hoped to suture the gap that exists between rhetoric and reality inherent within traditional equal opportunity approaches associated with negative dimensions that equate difference with disadvantage. Although advocates of MD claim the key to its success is in seeing all individuals as uniquely different (CIPD, 2005), certain MD policies focus less so on the uniqueness of individuals (see Kamp and Hagedorn-Ramussen, 2004 or Liff, 1997). This is perhaps fortunate, given many criticisms levied at MD note that such an individualised approach to equality can undermine collective support, potentially isolating the weakest and most disadvantaged (Kamp and Hagedorn-Ramussen, 2004; Liff, 1999).

For example, Liff's MD typology outlines four analytical categories/approaches to MD. The 'valuing differences' approach suggests that inequality is experienced by members of particular social groups (such as gay men), and such differences should be 'acknowledged and responded to, rather than ignored' (Liff, 1997: 13). Equality policies involve the restructuring of organisations and management practices such that gay men and women (for example) can succeed by being themselves rather than through having to mirror the working patterns of white heterosexual males. The 'accommodating differences' approach is seen to emphasise commitment to a specific social group, but aims to achieve this by making policies fully open to all organisational members. Thirdly, the 'utilising differences' sub-theme recognises social group-based differences and these are seen as the basis for different treatment rather than as the focus of equality policies. Finally, the 'dissolving differences' approach, seen to be the most qualitatively different to traditional equality approaches,

attempts to dissolve group-based differences by stressing individualism. Differences are held to exist between all individuals, are not distributed systematically on the basis on any particular social group such as gender or sexuality, and should be responded to by management. Only one of Liff's (1997) approaches to MD, then, 'dissolving differences', stresses the uniqueness of individuals, implying that aspects of MD are merely a small evolutionary step from equality (Kirton and Greene, 2004). The remaining three of Liff's typologies are closely aligned to existing equal opportunity policies. Some have thus suggested that what we are witnessing may mark a change in terminology and language - a repackaging of equality perhaps - but effectively MD in practice remains noticeably similar to liberal or radical models of equality (Webb, 1997 in Kirton and Greene, 2004).

Nevertheless, as explored by Colgan et al. (2007) a range of 'good practice' employers located within various occupations (including IBM, BT, Ford of Britain and Leeds City Council) demonstrate commitment to equality and diversity with regards to the needs of LGB employees *in terms of policy initiatives*. In relation to equality/diversity and sexual orientation, Stonewall (in Colgan et al., 2007) has set out a number of formal and informal procedures companies can adopt, which help to demonstrate commitment to this emerging sub-strand of diversity. At the very least, Stonewall appear to be moving towards a language of diversity more closely associated with Liff's 'valuing differences' approach<sup>4</sup>.

With the above in mind, this piece of research sets out to provide additional insight into the experiences of diversity policies as a mediating force in the working lives of

gay men. As Colgan et al (2007: 591) highlight, a dearth of case studies focus on the lived experiences of sexual minorities within particular occupational settings. This has been outlined above. Even fewer, however, place the experiences and perceptions of equality and diversity policy at the forefront of their analyses. Consequently, it was felt any project that aimed to privilege workplace context regarding the negotiation of sexual identity, should look to address the gap that exists relating to the impact of policy within the occupations of interest. As I show in Chapter Five and Six, diverging institutional arrangements help to explain why, in the first instance, differences in policy prevail, and secondly, how policy is experienced in multiple, fragmented and conflicting ways. Further, as Colgan et al. highlight, gay employees still fear a backlash when reporting homophobia at work. Whereas 81% of their respondents acknowledged that their employer was gay-friendly in policy, only 62% of these argued that the same employer was gay-friendly in practice (Colgan et al., 2007). I look to explore whether such perceived discrepancies manifest themselves according to gay police officers and performers.

### ***‘Gay-Hostile’ versus ‘Gay-Friendly’***

A modicum of research on LGB sexualities has been conducted within occupational domains considered to be ‘gay-hostile’ sites of work for LGB employees. The experiences of work for LGB workers have seldom been explored within ‘gay-friendly’ occupations. At this point, it is important to note that in terms of popular perception, stereotypes of the gay-hostile or gay-friendly occupation vary according to gay **or** lesbian sexuality. This reminds us that gay men and lesbians face *distinct* pressures, challenges and experiences at work. The assumption is that there are gay

‘industries’ like airlines, fashion, nursing or hairdressing, ‘and this assumption is often accompanied by anecdotal evidence of a high proportion of gay men’. In contrast, gay women are stereotypically assumed to be working as security officers or prison wardens (Woods and Lucas, 1993: 4).

### *‘Gay-Hostile’*

For example, policing represents one of the quintessential examples of a heteronormative occupational culture, in so much as ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ (Rich, 1980) has acted to subordinate all other sexualities including, and predominantly, gay masculinities. Thus it is often perceived as ‘gay-hostile’. However, Burke (1994) proposes that lesbian officers are less likely to encounter difficulties regarding their minority sexual identity. As he points out, the stigma attached to the quasi-criminal legal status of male homosexuality has been absent with respect to lesbianism. Further, colleagues have been known to assume that gay women are more, not less likely to live up to ‘macho’ expectations given stereotypes associated with policing and lesbian identity. In contrast, the activity of ‘gay bashing’ by police officers (physically abusing gay men in society ‘on the job’/derision towards gay male peers) has served as a symbolic function over the years, and has helped to confirm the heterosexual status of participating officers. In other words, the experiences of men as ‘deviant’ are not always analogous to those of their female colleagues. This has implications for perceptions surrounding the ‘gay-hostile’ occupation (Broomfield, 2007). Burke’s research reminds us that we need to be careful when considering work that has been conducted on ‘gay-hostile’ occupations,

for they may not always refer to lesbian identity. Other examples of ‘gay-hostile’ occupations do refer to both gay and lesbian identity, such as education (Rofes, 2004).

I expand upon existing studies conducted within perceived ‘gay-hostile’ sites of work by taking as my focus the UK Police Service and policing. I throw light on how gay officers have been subject to employment discrimination and experience all manner of disclosure dilemmas associated with modes of identification based on sexuality and gender. Yet I also show that policing need not be vilified for being ostensibly homophobic in the twenty-first century. In fact, I suggest that to an extent, we can talk about a ‘gay-friendly’ policing environment, particularly since the organisation has implemented a range of diversity policies.

### *‘Gay-Friendly’*

A handful of research papers are beginning to explore the work realities of gay men *and* women located within ‘gay-friendly’ occupations, particularly since a number of factors have placed pressure on employers to cultivate gay inclusive work space. Given certain organisations, some of which have not been renowned in the past for their progressive stance on LGB workplace issues, are now taking a leading role in this regard, scholars have been able to consider *what* policies have been put into place to help the gay workforce, along with their effects (Colgan et al., 2007).

As I have shown, coming out as LGB is commonly recognised as an iterative and discontinuous process in the workplace, often with uneven opportunities for disclosing LGB identity to peers, employers, customers and clients (Bowring and

Brewis, 2009; Colgan et al., 2008; Ward and Winstanley, 2004). As such, LGB employees might not be out to everyone in the workplace, even in organisations accepting of LGB employees. Furthermore, while coming out as LGB at work has been associated with positive outcomes such as enhanced job satisfaction, well-being (Day and Schoenrade, 1997; 2000) and opportunities for friendship making with other minority employees (Rumens, 2008), we now know that it can also heighten the risk of employment discrimination (Humphrey, 1999). Regarding the latter, many LGB employees are vigilant of their surroundings and the people they work with, watchful of the opportunities for and calculating the risks associated with coming out at work - as discussed above (Bowring and Brewis, 2009; Humphrey, 1999; Ward and Winstanley, 2003, 2005, 2006). While 'gay-friendly' organisations appear to represent environments more conducive to coming out and staying out, then, recent research gives us reason to be concerned.

For example, Giuffre et al. (2008) noticed that study participants were still subject to discrimination in 'gay-friendly' workplaces. While these organisational environments were largely free from overt forms of homophobia, participants reported sexual and gender stereotyping, sexual harassment and gender discrimination. Similarly, Williams et al. (2009) found there were even costs associated with forms of visibility that sustain an openly LGB identity in the workplace. For example, some LGB employees were expected to look and act according to stereotypes that make LGB identities intelligible to others. Other participants did report that working in 'gay-friendly' organisations helped them to 'feel normal', although the performance of normality in the workplace was equated with conservative politics, being in a monogamous long-term relationship, dressing professionally and having children.

Current research on the ‘gay-friendly’ occupation is limited to either focusing on individual understandings of ‘gay-friendly’ (Giuffre et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2009) or occupations that have implemented policies aimed at levelling the playing field for gay men (Colgan et al., 2007; 2008). Researchers have yet to explore the working realities of gay men or lesbians within occupations that have long been understood as ‘gay-friendly’. Taking this as a starting point would enable researchers to consider why certain occupations are seen as providing welcoming contexts for the exploration and expression of minority sexual identity.

Focusing on the work experiences of gay male performers, I aim to bring to the fore the perceptions of the work realities of gay men located in an occupation that is frequently characterised in homonormative terms. The experiences of these individuals provide fresh insights into the opportunities and challenges associated with negotiating a sexual identity within certain areas of the performing arts. As such, this study makes a clear contribution to the organisational literature on LGB sexualities, nuancing how ‘gay-friendly’ workplaces might be understood as well as showing how performing is mediated by normative constructions of gay male sexualities and genders. This will become clear in the chapters that follow.

## **Conclusion**

Although Chapter Three acknowledges that the issue of minority sexual identity at work has gradually crept onto the organisation studies agenda, I have highlighted four

key gaps in the existing literature. Firstly, there is a dearth of research that focuses on the neg(oti)ation of minority sexual identity within distinct occupational settings. Secondly, current research published on gay identity at work tends to overlook nuance associated with the performance of gender identity in/and/through sexuality at work. Thirdly, little is understood about the experiences of diversity policy from the perspectives of gay men and women. Finally, given assumptions associated with LGB identity in the workplace, it is necessary to explore in more depth the concepts of the ‘gay-hostile’ or ‘gay-friendly’ occupation. In the following Chapter, I set out how I aim to address these gaps.

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<sup>1</sup> Desexualisation of the workplace went hand in hand with managerial attempts to achieve control over time and over the body. Religious morality also played a key role in creating ‘asexual’ work spaces (Burrell, 1984; 1992). This is further noted by Burrell (1984) who suggests that pressure was “placed on adults to privatize all their impulses” in the public sphere as a result of the ‘civilising process’ and the Catholic Church.

<sup>2</sup> Examples of those which have gone to tribunal and been upheld under include: 1) In March of 2007, a lesbian shop assistant received over £120,000 compensation from retailer Next after an employment tribunal ruled she was subjected to homophobic harassment and unfairly dismissed. 2) In June 2006, a lesbian couple were awarded a six-figure pay-out after an employment tribunal found both nurses in a care centre were victims of sexual orientation discrimination. Barchester Healthcare sacked the women following an anonymous, and later groundless, allegation that accused the couple of allowing the physical and sexual abuse of residents. 3) In May 2005, Durham City Council was found guilty of discriminating against a gay theatre worker who suffered months of bullying at the hands of his manager. 4) A gay man resigned from his job at the Brighton Palace Pier after finding out that he had been the subject of a homophobic remark from a colleague. A tribunal later held that the term used was “exceptionally offensive” and awarded the claimant nearly £10,000 in compensation. This was a landmark ruling that in effect prohibited the use of homophobic language in the workplace.

<sup>3</sup> Four key components are related to the MD discourse (Kirton and Green, 2004): it is voluntary and top down in nature; serves business objectives; values difference rather than sameness; and sees differences as being individual rather than group based – encompassing not only visible differences such as gender, disability, race, age, but also an infinite number of invisible differences such as sexual identity.

<sup>4</sup> In particular, Stonewall outline that organisations should: Develop and promote a written equality/diversity policy barring discrimination and specifically stating ‘sexual orientation’; Develop a working group/diversity team that includes LGB issues; Establish a lead person for LGB issues at Board/Chief Executive level; Establish an LGB network group for support and consultation; Audit policies and procedures for employees in line with Employment (SO) Regulations 2003 and Civil Partnership Act 2004; Run diversity awareness training that refers to ‘sexual orientation’; Sponsor or support an LGB organisation or event; Recruit staff or advertise products or services in UK LGB media.



## **CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY**

In the preceding chapters, key perspectives of identity, gender and sexuality were critically reviewed, and a genealogical account of gay identity was provided. Subsequently, the extant literature on (homo)sexuality in organisations was explored. Hence the research has been grounded both theoretically and empirically. Importantly, I have argued that there is a need to further expand upon the relative paucity of studies that seek to understand how *gay men* negotiate minority sexual identity within *distinct occupational settings*.

The purpose of Chapter Four is to set out the methodological considerations in relation to this aim, and to review the research process. To begin with, I summarise the theoretical resources that inform the empirical analysis presented in Chapters Five to Seven, and discuss how these resources link to issues of the study's ontology and epistemology. I then detail the study's design, and explain the practical and theoretical issues associated with the research strategies adopted. I go on to outline the research parameters and how I negotiated access to the study's participants. Finally, my approach to data analysis is presented, followed by a brief reflexive account of my own role as a gay researcher. In particular, I acknowledge the implications and limitations of this role. Here, I also detail my ethical obligations to participants given that such a research project may be described as 'sensitive' (Rumens, 2008a).

## Queering Sociology

Returning to the theoretical framing of my inquiry, Chapter Two positions the research at the intersection of two perspectives. The first is a sociological account of identity. This problematises the category ‘homosexual’ and conceives of the sexual subject as a culturally dependent, historically specific product. By means of perspectives such as symbolic interactionism ‘the notions of meaning, process, ‘invented identities’, and the cultural construction of communities’ become central to understanding everyday life (Stein and Plummer, 1996: 180). The second is a poststructuralist account of identity. This challenges dominant foundational concepts of gender and sexuality, and arguably calls for a different type of research (Seidman, 1994).

Although Green (2007) suggests that, at times, interactionist and queer theoretical approaches are incommensurable positions, parting company with regards to the ‘performative interval’<sup>1</sup>, he also acknowledges that these two perspectives are ‘siblings, of a sort’. In similar fashion, Stein and Plummer (1996) and Seidman (1994) emphasize that sociological approaches to identity, gender and sexuality can learn from queer theory. For this reason, some authors have looked to a ‘queer sociology’, which calls for the yoking together of sociological *and* queer theorist positions in the study of gender and sexuality. As set out in Chapter Two, both approaches reject the notion of a pre-social, pre-linguistic self and begin with a deconstructionist impulse dubious of stable, coherent identity categories (Green, 2007: 34). In contrast, identity

is seen as an ongoing process ‘marked by multiplicity, instability and flux’ (ibid.), but to varying degrees.

Interactionist literature, for example, such as Goffman’s analysis of the social self (explored in Chapter Two), has included analyses of self and identity that run ‘eerily parallel’ to the analyses found in queer theory (Green, 2007). Sociologists had already refuted the idea that humans have a ‘core’ identity before queer theory had emerged as an intellectual position. As we have seen, they argued that individuals are comprised of multiple and fractious identities (Goffman, 1959). This is particularly apparent in West and Zimmerman’s ‘doing gender’ formulation, which posits that gender is not a stable essence of the self, but arises through an iterative process of gender ‘doing’ (such as ‘doing’ masculinity and femininity); thus identity is not an ontological property of the individual (West and Zimmerman, 1987). Before queer theory had arrived on the intellectual scene, ‘interactionists had deconstructed gender into moments of attribution and iteration, driving a stake into the heart of prior essentialist accounts’ (Green, 2007: 36; Stein and Plummer, 1996). Importantly, however, sociologists primarily think of sex, gender, and sexuality as separate variables, associated with the binaries of male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual, ‘treating these categories and the normative relationship among them as the starting assumptions on which research is based’ (Valocchi, 2005: 752).

Since the 1980s, queer theory has reinvigorated the study of sexuality, and scholars have been encouraged to think of social categories *more* critically. In line with this,

sociology has been accused of reifying identity ‘types’ and discourses of heteronormativity by assuming that individuals have one sex, one sexuality, and one gender, which are congruent and stable for life. Even though sociologists admit that identities are social constructions, they tend to ‘conspire’ in reproducing normative relationships and conflate certain variables with salient social identities (Valocchi, 2005). Sociological accounts of identity have the tendency to understate the extent to which individual agency is constrained by the power of institutionalized discourses such as heterosexuality (Stein and Plummer, 1996: 137). This point was explored in Chapter Two with reference to Goffman and the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959). Queer theory, on the other hand, thoroughly interrogates taken-for-granted binaries associated with the heterosexual matrix (see also Chapter Two), and in its wake, scholars have been able to reveal the relationship between sexuality and power. Since existing binaries incompletely represent a broad range of subjectivities associated with gender and sexuality, queer theorists provide insight into the deviant cases and capture a complexity of subjectivities: ‘The gulf between the ideological construct and the lived experience is one contribution of queer analysis’ (Valocchi, 2005: 753). As Rumens (2008c: 121) suggests, sociologists would do well to take a cue from queer theorists ‘in cultivating sensitivity towards the discursive construction of sexuality, and of the influence of heteronormative power relations in shaping the form sexual identities take’.

Queer theory has not eluded criticism, however, and has been accused of concentrating on textual forms of analysis; playfully deconstructing the heterosexual/homosexual binary; ignoring ‘real’ queer life as it is materially experienced across societies and cultures; and denying opportunities to LGB people to

rally around existing political and 'stable' identities. Consequently, Stein and Plummer (1996) aver that sociologists have the capacity to deepen insights provided by queer theorists by offering a more grounded, more accessible approach to empirical research. Other authors such as Valocchi (2005: 753) suggest that 'rethinking sex, gender, and sexuality queerly opens up new questions for sociologists and new ways of thinking about old concepts'. Hence, similar to research that has been conducted on gay sexualities elsewhere (Rumens, 2008c; Beusch, 2009), I decided to engage with sociological *and* poststructuralist accounts of identity associated with a 'queer sociology' (Stein and Plummer, 1994).

There has certainly been a growing call from sociologists to draw from queer theory and vice versa (Seidman, 1994; Stein and Plummer, 1994; Epstein, 1994), yet it is fair to say that the details of a 'queer sociological framework' are still being worked through by scholars. In its current form, I understand the approach to involve the mobilisation of conceptual resources from sociology *and* queer theory, which has the potential to provide 'flexibility and richness to a perspectival understanding of gay men's working lives' (Rumens, 2008c: 122). Although I privilege a sociological approach to the study of gender and sexuality, I bring in post-structuralist ideas for consideration along the way (see Brickell, 2006b).

In that regard, the analysis presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven draws upon Goffman's presentation of self thesis, yet I locate the narratives of my informants within discursive structures of domination such as discourses of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1998) and the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). I also take as

my starting point individual subjectivities that are not assumed to be easily read off the dominant taxonomies or identity categories, associated with queer theory (see Valocchi, 2005). As a result, the analysis speaks in terms of gay femininities and effeminophobia; useful analytical categories that serve to question the coherence of gay identity. I highlight the limitations of the dominant identity categories which are currently prioritised in the organisation studies literature, yet at the same time, I demonstrate the continued power of these categories in shaping people's understandings of themselves, particularly in terms of the relationship between gender and sexuality (ibid.).

### **Ontological and Epistemological Concerns**

A number of authors remind us that there are different ways to look at and understand the social world (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Kelemen and Rumens, 2008). As we have seen, the research focuses on the construction and performative ontology of identities, and emphasises that there is no unitary, rational character of the individual. Consequently, I was keen to reject functionalist or positivist approaches to research, which see 'science' as the way to establish truth and knowledge. These perspectives agree that there exists an objective reality that is available 'out there', and the role of research is to uncover timeless truth, whereas sociologists and queer theorists see such endeavours as 'semiotic strategies deployed to underpin truth claims that are inevitably competing, contingent and permeable' (Wilton, 2004: 27). Indeed, like theorists such as Blumer (1969), Butler (1991), Goffman (1959), Plummer (2003), Seidman (2010) and Weeks (2006), I disagree that

researchers have an ability to capture the social world ‘as it is’, and refute the assumption that the methodology of natural science can be usefully applied to the understanding and improving of human life through empirical testing (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008). This has been made clear in Chapter Two.

In contrast, I support a view of science as a social and political process; that what appears stable and coherent, such as the concept of gay identity, is in fact the result of certain power struggles. Further, given the dearth of research in the field of gay sexuality at work, it is fair to say that preoccupations centred on providing insight into ‘the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it’, and so were more aligned to an interpretivist paradigm (Schwandt, 1994: 118; see also Prasad and Prasad, 2002). The methodological approach of interpretivism sets out to *interpret* the world of meaning, and agrees that ‘realities’ and ‘truths’ are socially and experientially based. As summarised by Prasad and Prasad (2002: 7):

[I]nterpretive research is committed to the broad philosophy of social construction (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), which sees social reality as a constructed world built in and through meaningful interpretations. The goal of the researcher is not to capture some preexisting or ready-made world presumed to be available out there but to understand this process of symbolic “worldmaking” (Schwandt, 1994) through which the social world is ongoingly accomplished.

In particular, I set about grasping how gay workers negotiate and make sense of their (potentially) maligned ‘Otherness’, and data analysis presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven provide local understanding of the *multi-voice* reconstructions of the research phenomena. Here, as opposed to seeing truth and knowledge claims as ‘true’, pluralistic subjectivities are given voice and priority.

Inherent within my ‘abiding concern for the life world... for grasping the actor’s definition of a situation’ (Schwandt, 1994: 118) was a commitment to gaining ‘Verstehen’ (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Johnson and Duberly, 2005; Schwandt 1994). A key analytical *method* of interpretivist research, ‘Verstehen’ has been characterised as ‘the interpretive understanding of the meaning a set of actions has to an actor through some form of contact with how they experience their experience’ (Johnson and Duberly, 2005: 34). I was researching gay sexuality in the workplace, a topic organisation studies scholars classify as ‘sensitive’, hence I opted to conduct in-depth interviews as my chosen ‘form of contact’, meaning that a qualitative approach to research has been adopted. This is explored in more detail below.

### ***Objectivity, Bias and Reflexivity***

Due to the philosophical position and choice of methods, it is acknowledged that pervading the interpretations of the experiences offered by participants are my own preconceptions; hence partiality and bias undoubtedly permeates the empirical research presented. Study data, in its final form, should not be regarded as an objective ‘mirror’ accurately reflecting ‘what is out there’ (Kelemen and Rumens, 2008: 23). Implicit here is the epistemological position of the research: the investigator and the objects of investigation are assumed to be interactively linked, where knowledge is seen to be ‘created’ in interaction among researcher and



respondents (which blurs the conventional distinction between ontology and epistemology; (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

This requires me to address issues relating to the study's validity; or how the research stands up to outside scrutiny (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991). Easterby-Smith et al. (1994: 41) highlight that from a phenomenological viewpoint, the question that needs to be asked is 'Has the research gained full access to the knowledge and meanings of informants?' I would reiterate here that as a piece of interpretivist research, neither 'isomorphism of findings with reality' nor 'generalisability' were deemed overwhelmingly significant (ibid: 114). In the final chapters, constructions held by individuals are not necessarily considered more or less 'true'. Instead, they are considered more or less informed/sophisticated, thus more or less *valid* (see Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 111). In light of this, aspects such as trustworthiness (Kvale, 1996) were central to the goals of data validity, along with data quality, and the quality of the interviewing itself. This meant rigorous self-reflexivity was involved throughout the research process. Part of being reflexive in qualitative research involves 'being honest and ethically mature in research practice that requires researchers to 'stop being "shamans" of objectivity' (Ruby, 1980: 154)' (in Shacklock and Smith, 1998: 6, 7). In no way does the research claim to provide 'objective' empirical research, and for this reason, an 'author's account' of the research process is provided throughout this chapter, as I:

...attempt to identify, do something about and acknowledge the limitations of the research: its location, its subjects, its process, its theoretical context, its data, its analysis, and how accounts recognise that the construction of knowledge takes place in the world and not apart from it (Shacklock and Smith, 1998: 6, 7).

Where research has been underpinned by a critical orientation, researchers have often made explicit their own biographies and backgrounds (particularly feminists, for example). It is duly noted that these biographies constitute and influence the research, and have the capacity to shape the study's agenda. As Davies and Thomas (2008: 631) note, in their study on change within one basic command unit of the police:

As white middle class female researchers, with a background in critical feminist research, we recognise our influence over the research agenda, in the questions we ask, our presence in the empirical encounter, and in the subsequent knowledge creation.

By being self-reflexive, Davis and Thomas recognise their presence throughout the research process, the relevance of their own social identities, and provide an account of how this has shaped the research findings. Although eliciting thick description (Geertz, 1970) was prioritised over engagement with the need to transform ignorance and misapprehension (critical theory), it is valuable to recognise how the construction of knowledge might have been affected (Prasad and Prasad, 2002).

The idea that 'we must always begin from where we are located bodily' is a position adopted by standpoint theorists (Smith, 2004: 29; Harding, 2004). In standpoint epistemology, the assumption that society is known and experienced differently from different positions within it is of great significance. In other words, the realities perceived by researchers are varied, meaning that what *I* write is conditional upon *my* location as part of a relation existing between locations (ibid. 30). Borrowing from standpoint theory, and taking into consideration my own personal biography, I acknowledge that my identity as an out, effeminate gay man has shaped my

preoccupation with the experiences of camp (gay) men throughout the research process. Hence my own standpoint has had the capacity to influence the research agenda, the questions asked, the empirical encounter, and subsequent knowledge creation. Rather than viewing this as problematic, some standpoint theorists suggest that my embodied location brings to the table a kind of epistemic advantage or ‘double consciousness’ (Harding, 2004), in that my position as a member of a subordinate group allows me to provide a critical insight into how the dominant society thinks and is structured through carrying out research. Indeed, I agree with standpoint theorists that knowledge is situated and contingent upon my own subjectivity, which has implications for the empirical analysis presented in Chapters Five to Eight.

### **Research Design: In Depth Interviews**

As Alvesson and Deetz (2000) emphasise, the development of an intellectual position regarding research activities is a necessary precursor to the more technical issues of the research. Since I have set out the intellectual position of the research above, this section focuses on issues of research design.

Interpretivists encourage researchers to elicit and refine ‘only through interaction between and among investigator and respondents’ (Guba and Lincoln, 1994: 111), using techniques such as interviews, ethnography or participant observation, since these approaches permit research subjects to describe the world as they experience it

(Schwandt, 1994; as above). There is little preoccupation with quantifying causal relationships or predicting trends, unlike positivist concerns which tend to neglect the social and cultural construction of variables (Silverman, 2000). In contrast, the experiences of participants are interpreted using conventional hermeneutical techniques, and compared and contrasted through a dialectical interchange, in a bid to build theory (outlined in more detail later, see 'Analysis'). Taking this into consideration, in-depth, qualitative interviews were conducted with each participant. This method allowed me to generate insights into identities and subjectivities far more robustly, go beyond surface assumptions, and gain deeper access to micro-discourses, 'emic' views (insider views of a study's participants) and individual narratives (Guba and Lincoln, 1994; Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Interviews help to understand social phenomena and investigate the *interpretation* and meaning that people give to certain events they experience (King, 1994). Since the area of gay identity at work is under researched, qualitative research interviews would also allow me to build up a more expansive body of descriptive information concerning the neg(oti)ation of minority sexual identity at work (King, 1994); an essential requirement according to Croteau (1996).

Generally, an interview schedule that was used to 'steer' informants, modified after the completion of a pilot study, enabled me to maintain commitment to the research questions, yet facilitated a degree of flexibility. Given the research was exploratory, digression from the semi-structured interview questions was not discouraged. This approach was also driven by my belief that the 'participant', as opposed to the 'interviewee', should actively shape the course of the interview; a strategy commonly associated with feminist research. My approach to interviewing was informed by

feminist theories (Oakley, 1981). For example, I conducted interviews with a view to fostering non-hierarchical relationships between the interviewer and the interviewee (Keleman and Rumens, 2008). Loosely structuring the interview exchange using a flexible interview schedule meant that the agency of the interviewee was given primacy, based on the assumption that:

...the goal of finding out about people through interviewing is best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical. (Oakley, 1981: 41)

Where possible, I tried to overcome 'the stark instrumentality of some interview formats', a further strategy regarded as synonymous with feminist research (Keleman and Rumens, 2008: 163). I did so by establishing 'relations of trust' prior to conducting research interviews, and by remaining in contact with interviewees (ibid.). Indeed, I am still in contact with a number of my participants. Several performers invited me to attend shows, although I did not view performers as 'free tickets', of course! I was invited to the annual Gay Police Association (GPA) event (2009; see also 'Access'), and saw this as an opportunity to develop rapport and form friendships, before approaching individuals to take part in my study. Elsewhere, I liaised with police officers and performers via email. This allowed me to clarify the aims of my study to them, and afforded potential participants the opportunity to ask questions about the research, the research process and the researcher.

I also shared interview transcripts with a number of interviewees in a bid to involve them in the research process, although I was reluctant to involve them in the data analysis process which I found to be a complex stage of the research. I was surprised

at the level of interest of participants who were keen to reflect upon what they had said. Providing informants with copies of *their own* transcripts allowed them to clarify and add. Only one participant took the opportunity to edit and erase, for he had wanted to come across as succinct and cogent in his responses. I later received an email from one police officer, from which I inferred a certain degree of anxiety. He insisted that he had no problems with me using the data “exactly how it is, if it’s going to assist you in your PhD. *Who am I to say it should be changed?*” Nevertheless, he wanted to make absolutely clear that I would disguise his name and station as “the top brass might well take a dim view on some of the comments made”. This officer’s concerns emphasise that no matter how far researchers go to try and involve interviewees, participants can (re)frame themselves as subordinate to the researcher. Following this email, I decided to share interview transcripts with interviewees only when asked to do so.

The empirical research presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven is exclusively based on interview data gathered in the field between 2007 and 2009, as opposed to other methods of data collection, such as participant observation or ethnography. These methods were only briefly considered as plausible approaches to data gathering. After being warned by several police officers that access essential for an ethnographic research project would be ‘impossible’, primarily on the grounds of ‘health and safety’ (given the nature of some aspects of police work), I was forced to rule out this method. Further, I had reservations about conducting ethnographic research within a masculinist occupation (policing). Since I identify as an effeminate gay man, I worried about how this might be perceived working alongside police officers and on location in challenging circumstances (explored later, see also Chapter Seven). This

had implications for my carrying out research on performers. I did not try to negotiate access to the industry for an ethnographic research project as I was keen to maintain a degree of consistency relating to data collection methods between the occupations of interest. As a result, I decided to carry out in-depth interviews with gay police officers and performers.

Not only is it held that researching LGB persons at work is notoriously difficult (given that sexuality can remain invisible, see Ward and Winstanley, 2003; Ward, 2008), LGB persons might be reluctant to be involved in a study that is seen to tackle potentially 'sensitive' research areas. This has a number of consequences and also restricted the types of data collection methods that were appropriate. As we have seen, gay men face a number of challenges at work, and so shadowing workers with a tape recorder as part of an ethnographic piece of research on sexual identity might seem distinctly unappealing to both (gay) researcher and (gay) participant(s). Exploring and eliciting sensitive details associated with gay identity at work is likely to be most effective in a confidential interview setting. This was confirmed by a number of performers, who noted that they often negate open performances of sexual identity at auditions. Retrospectively, then, researching gay sexuality as a participant observer at auditions, an important part of the performing labour process, might have become particularly tricky.

## *Storytelling*

Storytelling was utilised alongside the conventional in-depth interview technique as part of my qualitative quest for rich and insightful data. This provided the opportunity to probe deeply and helped secure vivid accounts of personal and lived experience (Easterby-Smith et al., 1991). A number of organisation studies academics have drawn upon this methodology to understand organizational politics, culture and change (see Gabriel, 1995, 1998; Ward and Winstanley, 2004, 2005). In fact, stories, in all their different versions, have been shown to ‘capture organizational life in a way that no compilation of facts ever could’ (Czarniawska, 1997 as cited by O’Leary, 2003: 686).

As Ward (2008) highlights, in allowing participants to focus on self-perceptions, storytelling is useful as it helps to establish how sexual identity is discursively constituted. Referring to their own study on minority sexuality identity at work, Ward and Winstanley (2005: 458) emphasize that their ‘project has given life to texts that otherwise might have remained hidden’. Hence I asked participants to recall stories pertinent to the research questions, and it soon became clear that individuals were inclined to authentically express views and feelings that otherwise might have been unacceptable in straight talk (Gabriel, 1998: 136). By approaching the research in this way, ‘stories’ were able to surface information concerning marginalised groups that have previously been denied voice (Ward, 2008; Ward and Winstanley, 2004). Informed by my semi-structured interview questions, issues and themes were raised, but informants were encouraged to re-enact and tell their own stories. In data analysis,



I attempted to place striking and illuminating stories within categories, and used vignettes selected from other interviews to build upon key emerging concepts (see below).

### **Parameters: Gay Men**

The research focuses exclusively on the lived experiences of gay male police officers and performers, providing a much needed insight into issues surrounding 1) gay men at work 2) specific occupational groups and 3) stereotypes associated with gay sexuality and particular workplaces. These parameters were chosen due to the notable gaps established after conducting the literature review (see Chapter Three).

In detailing the workplace pressures gay men and women experience, the OS literature is at risk of homogenising the experiences of the LGB population. As I have already pointed out (see Chapter Three), scholarly research elsewhere has been quick to note that gay men and women *do not* face identical struggles throughout society or the workplace (Burn et al, 2005). Omitting the experiences of LBs as subjects of empirical investigation from my research then, should not be viewed as a careless oversight or a ‘deliberate decision predicated on a belief that for example, only female/lesbian researchers can understand women/lesbians and their situations’ (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2005). On the contrary, there needs to be increasing recognition of the fact that interests and experiences of sexually diverse groups diverge in important ways within the workplace, such as along the lines of gender

(ibid.). Bearing this in mind, I looked to unpack the occupational experiences of gay men only, the experiences of which are found to diverge along the lines of gender themselves (see Chapter Seven). Much as feminist inquiry has revealed the need to research women's lives, rather than generalising the conclusions of research on men to generic 'people', I (similarly) agree, as a gay man, that generalising the conclusions of research on LGB 'people' to *all* individuals seen to comprise this group fails to adequately capture the differences in the experiences of gay men, lesbian women, bisexuals and transsexuals (Millen, 1997). As a result, I chose to conduct research exclusively on the working lives of gay men.

Additionally, again discussed in Chapter Three, the research focuses on the experiences of gay workers located within popularly perceived 'gay-hostile' or 'gay-friendly' occupations (policing/performing). Importantly, engrained perceptions relating to sexuality and policing/performing work diverge with regards to gay men and lesbians. To be a gay male police officer is considered to be problematic. Policing has 'core referential values of hegemonic masculinity', and transgressive male sexualities are thought to have no place in that 'order of society' (Burke, 1994). To be a gay male performer, however, is perceived to be acceptable (see below). For example, the theatre is traditionally seen as a gay 'safe haven' for gay men. Yet the reverse is considered to be true relating to lesbianism in the police, and pervading assumptions associated with performing and gay sexuality rarely refer to lesbianism. Taking this into consideration, I decided to focus on gay male sexuality only.

## *Policing*

Police work falls squarely into the masculine domain with societal stereotypes of manliness mapping directly onto the attributions of being a ‘good cop’. (Davies and Thomas, 2005: 683)

Taking into account that I was looking to explore stereotypes associated with gay men at work, I opted to conduct research on the UK Police Service and policing. There were a number of reasons for this.

The police service in the UK has often received criticism from academics and other commentators in the field of equality and diversity regarding the position of female, ethnic, racial and sexual minority officers (Brown, 1998; Burke, 1994; Dick and Cassell, 2002; Cashmore, 2001; Loftus, 2008; Metcalfe and Dick, 2002). Accounts of truncated career trajectories, stereotyping, bullying, harassment and loss of employment figure prominently in this research, all of which suggests that workplace discrimination on the grounds of sex, race and sexuality has plagued the UK police service. Given that I aimed to pursue questions relating to how gay workers neg(oti)ate identity when confronted with normative expectations of gender and sexuality within sites perceived as ‘gay-hostile’, the occupation of policing was clearly of interest to me.

The central idea common to studies on the police services is that its ‘quasi-military’ culture promotes masculine values that engender particular views of the nature of policing (Dick and Jankowicz, 2001; Kiely and Peek, 2002). In the past, authors have

highlighted that the occupation values the competitive-masculine subject who is 'intimidating and willing to use force and even brutality' (Miller, 1999: 3; Thomas and Davies, 2005). Some accounts suggest that policing as dominated by crime-fighting has been used 'unproblematically' to justify working practices that effectively bar certain individuals from buying into police culture (Dick and Cassell, 2004: 65)<sup>2</sup>. Generally, however, police work is characterised as physically 'tough work', associated with images of white, working class masculinity. Ingrained in police culture, there is felt to be a 'tribal distrust of outsiders', historically accentuated due to the sheer number of white, working class men within the organisation (Kiely and Peek, 2002; Miller et al, 2003: 8). This has meant that women and other minority groups have struggled to become accepted officers (Dick and Cassell, 2004); a situation echoed in the statistical evidence showing that female officers have continuously been under-represented throughout many forces (Brown, 1998). Indeed, policing *remains* an overwhelmingly white, heterosexual, male-dominated occupation in the 21st Century; a 'demographic fact' that poses important challenges for those of nonconformist gender, ethnicity or sexual identity (Loftus, 2008: 757).

Reiner (in Chan, 1996) goes further and isolates certain features of police culture related to officers' working personalities, including a cynical view of the world, a machismo and racist attitude, a strong sense of solidarity with other officers, and a conservative political outlook. More commonly referred to is 'canteen culture'; or the more informal attitudes that find expression around canteen tables of the British Police Force (Davies and Thomas, 2005; Dick and Jankowicz, 2002; Kiely and Peek, 2002). As Fielding (1995: 47) notes, the stereotyped cultural values of the police canteen have been read as an almost pure form of hegemonic masculinity. They

highlight aggressive, physical action; a strong sense of competitiveness and preoccupation with the imagery of conflict; exaggerated heterosexual orientations, and the operation of rigid in-group/out-group distinction. These attitudes not only socialise new recruits into police culture, but contribute in providing meaning and purpose to an inherently problematic working experience (Dick and Jankowicz, 2001). As Davies and Thomas (2005: 683) note, the presence of canteen culture combined with the operational requirements to exercise high levels of individual discretion show that policing organisations are ‘mock bureaucracies’ ‘where formality, hierarchy and career structure present a facade behind which a strong informal culture of ‘occupational deviance’ operates’. Throughout the course of my own research, numerous participants reflected on the prevalence of canteen culture, commonly referred to as ‘safe, white space’, and confirmed that canteen culture thrives on ‘scatological humour’, the boasting about sexual exploits and ‘feats of physical prowess’ (Brown, 1998).

Particularly relevant to the research is this belief that ‘In part because police departments have regulated heterosexuality in society, they exude exceptionally strong norms of compulsory heterosexuality’ (Miller et al, 2003: 359). Basically, policing represents one of the quintessential examples of a heteronormative occupation, in as much as ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ (Rich, 1980) has subordinated all other sexualities including and predominantly, gay masculinities. Chapter Three notes that certain symbolic activities, such as ‘gay bashing’ by police officers, encourage officers to assert and prioritise their heterosexuality (Van Maanen, 1975). It is no surprise that stereotypically, gay male officers are considered to be particularly vulnerable in the occupation, even though (ironically) the daily reality of conventional

policing entails a strong degree of homosociality, whereby men generate an exclusive closeness between men. This closeness, however, is saturated with a sense of 'compulsory heterosexuality', further marginalising those of dissident sexuality (Cockburn as cited by Miller et al, 2003; Rich, 1980).

Overall, it is made clear: gay men struggle to become 'respected' police officers, yet with very few exceptions (Burke, 1993, 1994; Loftus, 2008), scholarship on LGB sexualities within police organisations is largely confined to the US (Belkin and McNichol, 2002; Colvin, 2009; Hassell and Brandl, 2009; Leinen, 1993; Lyons et al., 2008; Miller et al., 2003; Myers et al., 2004). In terms of UK academic research, Loftus (2008) notes that she did not meet any officers who were *openly* gay throughout her ethnographic research project in the police. This suggests that less than five years ago, the gay police officer was very much the 'isolated exception' (Ward and Winstanley, 2006). Earlier studies concentrated on discrimination with particular reference to a perceived disjuncture between constructions of police work and homosexuality. A noteworthy example is Burke's (1993, 1994) UK research, and is illuminating in that respect, showing how homosexuality is represented as 'deviant' in police work. His research on the lives of LGB officers makes for grim reading, and confirms that these individuals in the early 90s faced being ridiculed by colleagues. Others were forced to exit the Service as a result of facing intense emotional battles, breakdowns and charades of heterosexuality. Indeed, the 'canteen culture' of policing meant that Burke's sample of gay men felt pressurised to engage in dramaturgy (or role-taking, see also Chapter Two), such as the leading of 'double lives'. As noted in other studies on LGB people in policing (Leinen, 1993; Ward and Winstanley, 2003), identity disclosure strategies such as passing and covering are identity management

strategies employed at and outside work by gay officers. Many of Burke's participants constructed a particular identity at work where their sexual orientation was undisclosed. Outside of work the same individual identified as gay or lesbian but their occupation is undisclosed (Burke, 1993: 92). This strategy of leading a 'double life' or having a 'dual identity', can be intensely stressful, not least because it is difficult to annex a particular identity to a specific sphere of life.

At the time, it is fair to say that Burke's informative and exemplary research offered a much needed insight into the lives of gay officers. Nearly two decades on, however, it is repeatedly claimed that policing remains gay hostile (Ward, 2008), even though the landscape of policing has changed dramatically since diversity discourses have proliferated. Indeed, the British policing terrain has transformed significantly in recent years. Since the early 2000s, constabularies have been trying to remedy associations between police culture, overt discourses of machismo and a poor record of equal opportunities (Dick and Jankowicz, 2001). This has included a move towards community orientated policing (COP), which marries with the attempts by the police to 'rebrand' from 'force' to 'service' (Davies and Thomas, 2005: 682).<sup>3</sup> The paradigm shift from traditional policing to COP arguably challenges the dominant masculinities of the service, and has led to a 'feminising' of work (since officers are expected to reassure, engage, empathise and sympathise with the public - generally construed as feminine activities), improved equal opportunities and a more 'tolerant' occupational landscape (ibid); productive ground for the construction of a range of identities for officers. The Macpherson and Morris Inquiries have also prompted the organisation to address issues of institutionalised racism and account for why equalities have been high on the agenda since 2004 (Colgan et al., 2009). As Colgan et al. (2007) note,

‘[The Macpherson Inquiry] prompted huge changes in police forces across the country and has meant that equalities have been high on the agenda in this sector’.

Undeniably, the service has been at the forefront of the drive to recruit, retain and promote gay men; a contradictory position to the anti-gay ‘witchhunts’ carried out by numerous forces in the late 1980s<sup>4</sup>. In 2009, nearly 20% of Stonewall’s Top 100 Employers were police constabularies, including Staffordshire Police, a force that has remained in the top ten for the past four years. It is argued that the enthusiastic attempts to engage with gay men essentially endeavour to ‘correct the numbers’, as stations now aim to reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Anecdotally, whilst on a weekend visit to Preston Park in 2005 to celebrate Brighton Gay Pride, I caught a glimpse of a standalone recruitment booth manned by two police officers. Each could be seen handing out application forms, encouraging gay men to join the local constabulary, yet I witnessed no other organisations distributing recruitment material to gay revellers. Thus it is no secret that the police have sought change with respect to the treatment and recruitment of minority groups, and a number of media excerpts reiterate this fact<sup>5</sup>. Since being criticised over the past three decades for their excessive use of force, racism, sexism and homophobia, a number of constabularies have attempted to melt ‘the ice in the heart of the police service’ with regard to some of these issues (Davis and Thomas, 2008: 629). Given these developments, contradictions are evident in terms of the current academic literature, which exposes the police as heterosexist, and the changes that have occurred throughout the service. I found this scenario fascinating; a scenario I felt provided a dynamic environment within which to consider ongoing and visible processes of identity negotiation.



The efforts of police authorities to disassociate themselves from the negative images of masculine police culture have produced mixed results for the legitimatisation of LGB sexualities in the workplace (Belkin and McNichol, 2002; Loftus, 2008; Lyons et al., 2008; Miller et al., 2003; Myers et al., 2004). Some of the minority employees in Loftus's (2008: 772) study noted a 'general spirit of inclusion' pervading the workplace. Other studies suggest that diversity/equality practices have made a partial impact on undermining a traditional masculine policing culture. Indeed, Loftus concludes that an 'imperious white, heterosexual, male culture' continues to prevail within some police organisations. Similar research in the US is equally disheartening. One recent survey revealed that the majority of police chiefs held a belief that 'homosexuality was morally distasteful' (Lyons et al., 2008: 115). However, other US research is more optimistic (Belkin and McNichol, 2002), claiming that new forms of community based policing have engendered informal relations among officers more conducive to the establishment of understanding and acceptability around LGB sexualities. As will be revealed in Chapter Six, a similarly chequered picture emerges regarding the gains and obstacles for UK gay police officers seeking to participate openly in police work.

On a final note, my previous research alerted me to an interesting observation, which perhaps ties in with the changing face of police culture. Stories recalled by my small sample of gay police officers indicated that a discrepancy exists between rhetoric and reality; between the anticipated experiences of gay officers according to existing descriptions of police culture, and the actual lived encounters of these men. Given the

central tenets common to numerous studies on the police, it surprised me to find that gay officers were open, confident and comfortable negotiating out gay identity within the service. I was eager to explore these discrepancies further.

### ***Performing***

There were a number of reasons why I chose to conduct a comparative analysis on the working lives of gay police officers and performers. Since I was eager to interrogate assumptions associated with gay sexuality at work, an occupation perceived as ‘gay-friendly’ is performing. A recent report conducted for the International Federation of Actors on age, gender and performer employment in Europe (Dean, 2008b) alerted me to some interesting statistics. The survey conducted on 2,174 actors across 21 European countries shows that 20% of British performers identify as a gay or bisexual man. Given that 6% of the general population (DTI, 2005) or 8% of British police officers (see Chapter Six) are thought to identify as LGB (note, these statistics *include* lesbian sexuality, and so the proportion of gay men will be lower than these figures), in the context of gay male sexuality, Dean illuminates, as part of her broader study on perceptions of age and gender, the high proportion of gay men that can be found working as performers in the UK. While this report notes a high percentage of gay performers, there is little insight into the opportunities and constraints for employment among LGB performers within a profession often dubbed as ‘gay-friendly’.

Performing work has often been associated in historical research with LGB people (Friedman, 2007; Dyer, 1990; Miller, 1996; Sinfield, 1996). Yet organisational researchers appear to be much less concerned with this particular observation or, more generally, with performing as an occupation of empirical investigation. However, organisational scholarship on performing is emerging (Dean, 2005, 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006; Swanson et al., 2000; Thomas, 1995). Dean's research is notable in that respect, and makes for the many citations of her work throughout my thesis. Her work shows how physical differentiation in the auditioning process is particularly pronounced, being shaped by dominant conceptions of race/ethnicity, heterosexuality and gendered age positions.

Given the dearth of research that can be found on performers within the area of organisation studies, I felt that researching the lives of gay performers could contribute to the literature twofold. Research elsewhere has shed some light on the issues gay male cabin crew (Taylor and Tyler, 2000) and nurses face (Humphrey, 1999; Pullen and Simpson, 2009) in focusing on the labour processes of these industries. Conversely, research focusing on the experiences of gay male performers could potentially provide insight into the labour processes of performing; a necessary contribution to the organisation studies field.

Returning to the draw of performing for LGB people, this is more apparent in accounts of the historical significance of theatre and stage for expressing LGB sexualities (Sinfield, 1996: 1). Taking theatre as an example, before the cultural invention of homosexuality in the latter part of the nineteenth century as an identity

or, as Foucault puts it, 'a personage, a past, a case history...a type of life' (1976: x), playwrights had long been dramatising issues of same-sex desire on stage. In that sense, performers explored 'homosexuality' front stage, even if it had to be represented in a coded manner intelligible to some but crucially not all theatregoers (Clum, 2000). Thus, in his influential text on homosexuality in Renaissance England, Bray (1982) points out that the London playhouses and the public houses that mushroomed around them were one of a few sites for individuals to congregate and develop same-sex intimacies. However, theatres were also subject to rigorous censorship and persecution. The London playhouses were denounced as 'haunts of the sodomite' (Drayton quoted in Bray, 1982: 55), and often subject to police raids. Censorship continued well into the decades that followed after homosexuality had emerged as a distinct sexual category. Under strict licensing arrangements any mention of it was, until 1958, expressly forbidden on the public stage. As Sinfield rightly notes, this formed 'part of a pattern of silence that left many people virtually unaware of homosexuals' (1991: 44).

As the research cited above shows, the relationship between homosexuality and performing is not fixed but dynamic and culturally contingent, influenced by how homosexuality is understood in a wider social milieu. While many writers, performers and producers have concealed their homosexuality over the years, fearing discrimination, others have chosen not to lie about their sexuality. The last few decades has seen an explosion in performing of different types of 'queer' theatre, dance and film, which has done much to break social taboos surrounding the representation of homosexuality on stage and screen (Bernstein, 2000). With this in mind, it is easy to see how LGB performers might view segments of the performing

arts as political and personal havens, not least as valuable networks of LGB people. Sinfield (1991) argues that the dominance of homosexuals in British theatre has been particularly pronounced at specific moments in time, providing a context for some LGB performers to develop successful careers. This gives rise to questions, which I explore in Chapter Five, about how certain work settings within the performing arts might be conceptualised as being 'gay-friendly'.

On the contrary, taking the film industry as an example, Clum (2000) exposes the 'corporate thinking' behind the Hollywood mythology that 'there are no gay actors, only gay roles'. Despite having produced a number of gay-themed films that convey images of 'normal' gay men and lesbians (Seidman, 2002), the fear that openly gay and lesbian performers might offend some heterosexual audiences has rendered aspects of the industry difficult for openly gay and lesbian actors to develop successful careers (Walters, 2003). In other words, LGB performers can be expected to face the sort of identity disclosure dilemmas more commonly reported by LGB employees in areas of employment less accepting of minority sexual identity (Bowring and Brewis, 2009; Ward and Winstanley, 2003; Woods and Lucas, 1993).

For instance, actor Rupert Everett sparked controversy when, in an interview published in the *Observer* in 2009, he commented: 'I wouldn't advise any actor thinking of his career to come out'. Everett's complaint about Hollywood's apparent queasiness with openly gay male performers, felt by Everett to be manifest in the tendency to type-cast gay actors and their stronger occupation of supporting rather than leading roles, raises wider unanswered questions about, for instance, how gay performers might be subject to dominant conceptions of how homosexuality is

understood during the auditioning process. Hollywood can be considered an extreme example, since most performers will never become Hollywood 'stars', but it serves to illustrate the contemporary salience of heteronormative constructions of homosexuality in how openly gay performers negotiate life within some areas of the performing arts. This calls attention to the need for research that digs its teeth into these issues, of which this study of gay male performers is an important step towards understanding the contemporary work realities of gay performers in that respect.

The study focuses on the working lives of gay performers primarily working in musical theatre, subsidised repertory theatre and terrestrial television (see below). Dean (2005) notes that the latter two represent the principal areas of work for the majority of actors. Performing as work, however, varies in type; from cabaret singing, drag artistry, contemporary dance to clowning work. The performer's working life is rarely spent working within just one of these areas, and is typically described as 'fragmented', as s/he often moves between a range of workplaces.

Although we tend to speak of performing as a profession, performing work differs markedly to jobs that are referred to in the same terms (such as lawyers, doctors or accountants), yet the work can be defined with reference to a number of identifiable general characteristics: 'Work in performing is largely short-term, frequently casualised (without formal recruitment processes or employment contracts) and unpredictable, with very few long-term fixed workplaces' (Dean, 2007: 253). Crucial to these characteristics is the competitive nature of performing work since the labour market is perpetually oversupplied, restricting access to work (Dean, 2005). In 2005,

Dean's respondents estimated that the permanent unemployment level sits at around 85%. In relation to access and gender, although performing work is non-ideologically sex-typed work (that is there is no conventional association of the occupation 'performer' with either predominantly men or women), occupational segregation is relevant given that the industry seeks to represent the social world (Dean, 2007). As a result, gender stereotypes and prejudices can affect the labour process (and thus access to work<sup>6</sup>). For example, hegemonic masculinity is presumed to affect the material aspects of the labour process for women, who are restricted by societal influences of their time<sup>7</sup> (Dean, 2004). I return to this point in Chapter Seven, and discuss these issues with regards to men, gay men and effeminate (gay) men.

Reflecting on the absence of academic research that has been written on the occupation, one begins to question whether performing work is 'real work' at all (Dean, 2005). As I point out above, work and organisation has rarely addressed the occupation *as* an occupation 'in its most straightforward manifestation: as a job' (Dean, 2005: 13; Dean and Jones, 2003). In the UK particularly, the occupation remains largely unexplored in terms of qualitative analysis that can be found within the area of organisation studies. The general perception of performing work as not 'real work' was nevertheless apparent throughout the research interviews, and many performers felt they were able to pursue a passion for something they love. As one of my own participants noted:

If you're a plumber, you're not going to fix pipes for free. If you work in Tesco, you're not going to say 'Oh, I'll work the next 6 months for free, packing groceries'. Performing is the only business I can think of when you'll work for free, because you love work. If you cannot cope with that - the strange hours, the travelling, the periods of unemployment -

you end up drinking yourself to death, or you take drugs or you're drove to jump off a building. It's an extremely difficult business. But it's a very rewarding business.

Certain performing worksites are thought to represent a distinct type of social space cut off from the harsh realities of 'traditional' forms of work. Like many of Dean's (2005) participants, performing was described with reference to 'rogues and vagabonds', yet men and women alike were felt to face a distinct set of difficulties commonly associated with the 'drive to work' at any cost (Dean, 2007), as reflected in the performer's account above.

Finally, it is worth reflecting on the position of essential gatekeepers within the occupation. These can be viewed as managers to performers. This is true for agents, directors and casting directors who have the power to recruit, direct and control aspects of the performer's labour process (Dean, 2008). The research was looking to interrogate assumptions regarding sexuality and performing from the point of view of performers themselves. As an outsider, however, as someone who has very limited experience of the occupation, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the labour process, I conducted 'orientation' interviews with two casting directors. I also liaised over email with a number of agents (who were sometimes perplexed to receive requests for access to gay male performers). These encounters enabled me to gain a certain amount of clarity relating to the 'audition experience' or the relationship between an agent and his/her representation. Empirical research presented in the following chapters is primarily derived from the experiences of gay male performers themselves. Where appropriate, I refer back to my encounters with these gatekeepers where it assists in providing a more detailed analysis (for more information on the



biographies of the agents and casting directors referred to in the data chapters, see the Appendix).

## **Access**

Interviews were conducted with 40 self-identified gay male participants in total; 20 police officers and 20 performers. While this appears to be a small size, as I have touched upon above, this is a study about the perceptions of the lived experiences of gay workers. It was not my intention to generalise findings to a broader population. I was more interested in gaining in-depth accounts of the neg(oti)ation of gay identity at work, which might indicate broader trends.

A number of personal contacts were used to recruit initial respondents, and, in part, through ‘snowballing’ procedures, a more extended theoretical and purposive sample was gained. ‘Snowballing is where one interviewee puts a researcher in contact with another through personal introduction’ (Ward, 2008: 2). Snowball techniques have frequently been used in the study of sexual minorities where participants are hard to find due to their invisibility (Forster, 1994; Rumens, 2008a). In other words, it was never the intention of the research to generate a representative sample (as outlined above), and a snowball technique would provide me with accounts of the range of hard to access micro-discourses that characterise gay sexuality at work (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2005). I also contacted LGB networks that were concerned with promoting issues surrounding workplace diversity within the occupations of interest. Such

methods have proved particularly effective in prior studies on sexual identity in the workplace (Humphrey, 1999, Ward and Winstanley, 2004; 2005).

### *Police Officers*

Gaining a cohort of gay police officers was unproblematic. Unlike the multitude of obstacles encountered by my predecessors (Rumens, 2008b; Ward, 2008), gaining access to this group of gay workers was neither challenging nor frustrating. Although I prepared myself for many setbacks, gay police officers were more than willing to participate, arguably problematising 'gay-hostile' assumptions associated with the British Police Service from the outset. Given that police officers are institutionally bound to a fixed workplace, it is fair to say that it was easier to gain access to a group of gay officers, particularly since LGB networks have been set up within these fixed workplaces. As I go on to show in Chapter Six, since the proliferation of diversity discourses within the police, other officers came forward as they were eager to discuss how their experiences had changed over the years:

John: Why did you decide to take part in the research?

Police Officer: Actually, this has been a very cathartic experience... but I volunteered because I wanted to talk to you about how things have changed, about how I have changed when it comes to my daily life as a [gay] police officer.

Initially, I contacted the Gay Police Association. The GPA is an organization that aims to achieve equality for gay officers and staff. It offers advice and support to gay police service employees and promotes better relations between the police service and

the gay community. Contacting the GPA proved futile, and I was sent the following message; a reply that is telling in itself:

The GPA receives hundreds of requests each year to assist with research projects. Sadly, we still have no paid or seconded staff and every member of the executive has a full time policing role, in addition to doing GPA work. We therefore have to concentrate on working towards our priorities and supporting the many staff who still experience discrimination, bullying and inequality on a weekly basis, within the British Police Service.

While alternative avenues of access proved successful, revealing the force as accepting and tolerant of dissident sexual identity, the GPA's account indirectly supports popular perceptions that see the police as inherently homophobic<sup>8</sup>. At the time, the response spurred my enthusiasm to carry out research within this heteronormative and seemingly 'gay-hostile' work setting; sites of particular interest to the research questions. I later approached Gay Liaison Officers (GLOs). All GLOs have full time policing job roles but work with the gay community on a voluntary basis to address issues such as health and wellbeing, discrimination, victimisation and hate crime. Much of the time, these officers are gay themselves<sup>9</sup>. Certain constabularies tend to post the contact details of their GLOs on their divisionary websites. Eight officers in total were recruited in this way.

I also gained access to a number of participants through a West Midlands constabulary via its LGB network. In total, five officers were recruited in this way. Additionally, I received an invite to the annual (2009) GPA event thanks to one participant. I was grateful to have been able to attend this occasion, as it enabled me to interact with a wide range of officers and provided additional insight into the

embodied masculinities of gay police officers (and discussed in Chapter Seven). Two police officers agreed to take part in the study after I discussed the research with them at this event. The remaining participants were either recruited through personal contacts, snowballing or *Facebook* (see below). Whilst these access tools may be perceived as opportunistic approaches which attract a certain type of (out) participant, I needed to be aware that I was dealing with a group that is notoriously difficult to study (as explored earlier). While there are methodological issues with imposing restrictions on a sample, or reifying identity categories such as 'gay man', I account for these parameters as logistical and practical limitations to the research.

The resulting sample of gay officers was made up of 20 white, able-bodied, out gay men. Nine worked for the Metropolitan Police, five for Staffordshire Police, three for South Wales Police, one for West Yorkshire Police, one for West Midlands Police and one for Avon and Somerset Police. In one week, I found myself travelling some of the length of England; from Weston Supermare to Manchester. In doing so I was exposed to an array of different stations and locations throughout the UK. Each officer had experience in operational duties (including 'street duties'), but were now working throughout a range of divisions including domestic violence, traffic, sexual offences, victim support, firearms, neighbourhood policing and anti-terrorism. Two officers had done less than two years service, twelve between two and ten years service, two between eleven and twenty years service, while four officers had either more than twenty years of service under their belt or retired (thirty+ years). Eleven officers were police constables (PC), two were detective constables (DC), one was a sergeant (Se), and three were inspectors (I). The remaining three were either special constables (Sp) or police community support officers (PCSO). The sample also

ranged in age, from twenty-three to fifty. Similar to other studies on minority sexual identity at work (Bowring and Brewis, 2009), given the self-selecting nature of the sample and the relative homogeneity this produced, I am not able to comment meaningfully on the intersections of sexuality and gender with ethnicity and (dis)ability in the empirical research presented on police officers. In other words, I do not refer to police officers with reference to their ethnicity, since they all identified as White-British.

Throughout the analysis chapters, I refer to each interviewee by pseudonym (see Research Ethics below), age followed by rank and department. For example: Paul (28, PC, Firearms) or Sean (38, I, Anti-Terrorism). Further information on the profile of each participant is provided in the Appendix.

### ***Performers***

Initially, I contacted the performer's trade union Equity. Equity is a UK based trade union representing professional performers and other creative workers from across the spectrum of the entertainment, creative and cultural industries. Within the union, there is a committee comprising elected lay members that specifically addresses the concerns of its LGB members. Interestingly, this committee was the last of the 'equality' committees to be established within Equity; a point I return to in Chapter Five. A request for participants was raised during an LGB committee meeting, primarily due to my correspondence with Equity's welfare and benefits officer. I also

emailed agents known to represent a diverse range of performers. All agents listed in ‘Contacts’, (a text that provides over 5000 listings of casting directors, drama schools, theatres, agents, photographers, film and television studios and so forth) were approached. In total, in excess of 300 agents were contacted, both co-operative agencies (agencies ran by performers themselves) and traditional-style agencies. Eight performers in total were recruited in this way; a frustratingly low number. I wrote to fifteen West End theatres and advertised my research in *The Stage* magazine (a main trade paper also used by actors as a medium to look for employment). I also set up an online profile on *thestage.com*, and posted discussion board messages requesting interviews with gay performers (some of the conversations from which are discussed in the analytical chapters of the thesis). Additionally, I used *Facebook* as a medium to recruit participants.

Of the resulting sample of gay performers, fifteen were White, two were African-Caribbean, one was African American, one was Asian and one was British-Indian. In that regard, it is more ethnically diverse than my sample of gay police officers, meaning that, at times, I am able to comment meaningfully on the intersections of sexuality and gender with ethnicity in the empirical research presented on performers in Chapter Five. All were able-bodied, with the exception of one who described himself as visually impaired. Experiences of the different areas of performing varied. Broadly speaking, six performers worked *predominantly* in musical theatre, six on stage, two on stage *and* TV, one on stage *and* film, while five worked in variety. ‘Success levels’ also diverged considerably. Some participants described themselves as ‘struggling artistes’. In contrast, one performer had starred in Academy Award winning productions and could be classed as a minor celebrity. The majority,

however, were ‘middle to lower-range’ performers. Of these, some worked regularly, ‘a significant factor in an overcrowded, highly competitive labour market’ (Dean, 2005: 115), while others had yet to build up a résumé that had made them desirable to gatekeepers. One performer had less than two years experience, eleven between two and ten years experience, four between eleven and twenty years experience, while four performers had more than twenty years of experience. They ranged in age, from twenty-four to sixty-three. On a final note, three of the participants had exited the industry entirely, but had built up at least two years experience prior to doing so.

I refer to each performer by pseudonym (see Research Ethics below), age followed by sector and ethnicity. ‘Sector’ refers to the area within which a performer has worked most, but I must emphasise that a performer could have worked in other sectors. For example: Charlie (33, Stage, White) or Sam (24, West End Musical Theatre, African-Caribbean). Where relevant, I also refer to participants with regards to their Equity position. For example: Philippe (58, Stage, TV and Film, White, Equity Officer). Further information on the profile of each performer can be found in the Appendix.

### ***Facebook***

After liaising with a colleague at Cardiff University, I decided to tap into the advantages of a social networking website, *Facebook*, and proceeded to use this site as a recruitment tool. Taulke-Johnson (2009), who carried out research on the lives of gay students, suggests that without *Facebook*, his sample would have been

considerably lower. I estimate, however, that around 10% of my sample was successfully recruited via this method.

*Facebook* proved to be a useful access tool, but consequently presented me with a range of ethical conundrums. *Facebook* allows you to possess your own personalized web-space, and in return, you are able to add other individuals as ‘friends’. ‘*Facebook* friends’ are able to keep up-to-date with each other’s personal lives, share photographs and openly ‘blog’ with one another. The site is not just used by individuals. It has been embraced by organizations and causes; publications and trade unions; and company LGB networks. Both the GPA and Equity have ‘open’ *Facebook* ‘groups’, which anyone can view the members of. As a result, I was able to directly contact members of the GPA’s group and post discussion board topics on Equity’s *Facebook* page, requesting potential participants come forward should they be interested in being interviewed for a PhD thesis on the working lives of gay police officers and performers.

Utilising *Facebook* as a recruitment tool for academic purposes presented me with a powerful set of ethical and methodological dilemmas. Should I allow participants who request to view my *Facebook* page to do so?<sup>10</sup> What are the ethical issues involved if participants deduce that my other ‘*Facebook* friends’ are also my research participants? How should I deal with advances made by research subjects who openly blog on my ‘*Facebook* wall’? At some point or another, these questions required contemplation.



Four potential participants came forward from Equity's group, expressing interest to participate in the research. Cordially, I proceeded to accept their friend requests. However, over the following weeks, all four failed to respond to a message I sent out thereafter. This message was aimed at arranging in-depth, qualitative interviews with the individuals concerned. I began to question the usefulness of this contemporary 'access resource'.

At the time, I was a 23 year old gay male. I was also a PhD researcher. In the office, during interviews, and through my university networks, I was *slowly* learning to play the role of 'academic'. On the contrary, in the photographs I uploaded, in the photographs I had been 'tagged in' by others, in the blogs that I typed, and in the comments made by my close friends on my personalised web page, I very much came across as a 23 year old gay male. Retrospectively, I feel that adding participants as *Facebook* friends had the potential to blur or even jeopardise the professionalism of the researcher/participant relationship. I was anxious to come across to my subjects as the aspiring PhD candidate I nurtured in the comfort of my PhD office. Potentially, however, this image did not transfer well onto the pixels and portals of *Facebook*.

For those participants who 'added me as a friend', to resolve some of the main ethical dilemmas associated with *Facebook*, I allowed these individuals to see 'basic information' about myself. Given some participants had provided me access to their personal and working lives, it seemed only fair to give a little something back.

Additionally, some of the research interviews were carried out over the telephone (see below). *Facebook*, then, enabled both me and my participants to put faces to names prior to the research interviews, and this relinquished some of the barriers associated with telephone interviews.

Social networking sites enable you to see who your ‘friends’ are linked to, meaning participants were able to deduce that my other ‘*Facebook* friends’ might also have been my research subjects. This had the capacity to reveal who had participated in the research to the broader e-community. I resolved this dilemma by sending out a short message briefing participants that being *Facebook* friends could reveal that they had taken part in the research, meaning each individual could make an informed decision. Where they had responded, having understood the consequences, I saw there to be less of an onus on me as the researcher to take the initiative to disengage entirely with participants on a social networking level. Tapping into social networking sites could also be seen as a means of fostering non-hierarchical relationships between the interviewer and the interviewee (Keleman and Rumens, 2008). Such a strategy then, marries with the feminist concerns of the research.

## **Analysis**

The process of analysis began from the moment the tape recorder was switched on at the beginning of each interview. In this respect, analysis went parallel with data collection (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Combined with the field notes recorded in the

form of a research diary, a compilation of ‘memos’ on the salient points and themes of each interview (Boje, 2001), I was initially overwhelmed with the sheer volume of data collected. As many qualitative researchers suggest, field research diaries can serve as an important and useful tool throughout the data collection stage (Boje, 2001), and help to provide a more nuanced account of the research process. For this reason, I opted to write down my feelings upon meeting certain individuals, perhaps recalling their appearance, mannerisms, or reactions upon being asked pertinent interview questions. Each interview lasted around one hour, and on average it took at least a day to transcribe each interview. Around 8 weeks of the field research year was spent carrying out this monotonous yet essential research activity. Transcribing as the research proceeded allowed me to note emerging themes, key passages and interesting contradictions, and iteratively refine the research questions and findings (Rubin and Rubin, 2005).

Data analysis involved a thematic interrogation of the interview transcripts (Boje, 2001; Ezzy, 2002; Grbich, 2007). I looked to identify key themes by breaking up and rebuilding the data in the form of thematic categories relating to the research questions, previous (relevant) research and pertinent theoretical concepts. Specifically, I used a ‘block and file’ approach (Grbich, 2007), which allowed me to keep large chunks of data intact; a particularly useful technique given my commitment to a storytelling methodology. Segments of data were grouped and placed in tables with headings added to clarify and categorise the contents of each column. At times, when themes/categories, subthemes/subcategories became particularly unwieldy, I drew conceptual maps. These enabled me to summarise emerging themes and envisage the relationships between the data (Grbich, 2007).

Analysis initially sought to inductively identify how and why gay men adopted certain subject positions in relation to a perceived 'stigma' (Goffman, 1963). I was interested in examining how workers construct identities through reflexive consideration of their heteronormative or homonormative environments, as set out by the research questions. Here, analysis concentrated on the ways in which multiple and conflicting 'masks' (Goffman, 1959) were crafted within prevailing power structures. Accounts were compared to other (dis)similar narratives and looked to identify the agentic aspects of identity, with the aim of formulating sensitizing and mini concepts relating to the performance and neg(oti)ation of workplace sexual identity (Plummer, 2000)<sup>11</sup>. As the research proceeded 'effeminacy at work' became a key emerging theme, and I became particularly interested in the workplace experiences of 'camp', steered by my own subjectivity. In this regard, data was not collected from a 'theoretically neutral position', and a grounded theory approach does not adequately capture how I managed techniques of data analysis; an approach which sets about analysing in an intentionally non-linear way (Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Martin and Turner, 1986). Nevertheless, the process of coding data was suitably rigorous<sup>12</sup>, aided by computer software which helped me to organise the data into themes and sub-themes as the number of participants increased.

Using the qualitative data analysis computer software package NVivo, the data was initially coded according to occupation. With regards to performing work, seven key themes emerged including career choice, neg(oti)ating sexual identity at auditions, experiences backstage, sector differences, gender and masculinity, gatekeeper

encounters and occupational culture. With regard to policing, the interview schedule consisted of questions relating to (i) gay identity (such as experiences of coming out, discrimination), (ii) career structure and police culture (such as the macho aspect of police culture and recent equality interventions), and (iii) a combination of these issues (such as coming out *in* the police, double-lives, equality interventions relating to sexuality, experiences of homophobia at work). Data was then coded into similar themes. Participants' interview quotations, presented in Chapter Five (performing) and Chapter Six (policing), were drawn from across these themes. Data was then brought together to derive the central themes of Chapter Seven. Here, I discuss three key themes: normalization, embodiment and queering.

After coding the data, the process of analysis turned to writing chapters based on key themes. Like many of my predecessors (Cooper, 2006, Rumens, 2008c, Ward, 2008), the empirical research presented in the final chapters blend together extracts from participant stories, relevant theoretical concepts, and aspects of other empirical studies.

### **Research Strategies in Practice**

Encouragingly, I found participants were keen to open up, and numerous informants talked at great length about issues of workplace sexual identity. In this study, both telephone and face-to-face interviews have been used to gather data from gay police officers and performers. The original project design called for all face-to-face

interviews, as this would allow for depth and richness of data. After one officer requested he be interviewed by telephone, however, opportunistically, I agreed to conduct the exchange. I am glad I took this opportunity, for the interview yielded an extraordinary amount of data. On reflection, I conducted around a third of the interviews by telephone. Many of these were with performers.

As Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) point out, the use of telephone interviews in qualitative research is uncommon, due largely to concern about whether telephone interviews are well suited to the task. Yet, as with Sturges and Hanrahan, when I compared the telephone interview transcripts with the face-to-face interview transcripts, this revealed no significant differences in the interview data. For this reason, I continued to carry out a number of interviews by telephone, and continued to elicit lush and thorough accounts concerning the research phenomena. The suitability of telephone interviews needs to be considered in light of the particular research endeavour (*ibid.*). Sturges and Hanrahan (2004) outline three issues that may indicate the suitability of telephone interviews for qualitative research purposes: sensitive topics, access to hard-to-reach respondent groups, and cost. I was faced with all three of these issues. Performers, for example, tend to be particularly dispersed and are subject to unpredictable working patterns thus making them hard-to-reach. Twice, face-to-face interviews with performers were cancelled (since these individuals had to attend auditions on short notice). In these circumstances, logistically, it became practical to conduct some telephone interviews. Of course, my primary concern was always the quality of the data collected. Other researchers who have taken the opportunity to use a mixed method of interviewing found that telephone interviewing was an acceptable and valuable method of data collection (Sturges and Hanrahan,

2004; Sobin et al., 1993). Telephone interviewing has also been credited for gathering sensitive data due to perceptions individuals have around issues of anonymity (Babbie, 1986). I am confident that a mixed-method interview approach (i.e. alternating between face-to-face and telephone interviews) has not adversely affected the nature and depth of the data generated.

The structure of each interview needed adjustment depending on the participant. On very few occasions, interviews became a frustrating game of question-answer. Even when asked to elaborate, certain participants gave underdeveloped, superficial responses. During these interviews, the interview schedule was more consciously adhered to. At other times, participants meandered away from any pre-set questions and provided highly emotive and thought provoking responses. It is to these informants I am indebted, for allowing me considerable access into their professional and personal lives.

I frequently recalled on my field notes that many gay officers ascribed to conventional forms of heterosexual masculinity in terms of their manner and appearance. This heightened awareness of my own gender identity. As a self confessed effeminate gay man, upon discussing themes of 'camp', I sensed officers became aware of the 'elephant in the room'; namely my own effeminacy. Rather than being a limiting factor, (in that I was concerned participants might feel reluctant to discuss issues surrounding 'camp' candidly), it proved to be a point of intellectual debate. I would ask the question: "How do you think I would cope as a serving officer?" Overall, I agree that a shared sexual identity helped stimulate participation, and encouraged

participants to talk openly and candidly (Rumens, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c), yet these experiences also illustrate, and cemented in my own mind, the idea that gay identity in the workplace is profoundly fluid and diverse. Certain gay men were keen to differentiate themselves from gay stereotypes, and at times spoke condescendingly of effeminate gay men (explored in Chapter Seven). Others clung to their effeminacy as a source of identity, and others felt marginalised because of it. A number of participants relished in their outings to popular gay destinations, yet others described the gay scene as a ‘meat market’ or ‘ghetto’. Some sought to compartmentalise their gayness into ‘butch’, ‘bear’, ‘queen’ or ‘fairy’ whilst a minority recalled that they were men who just happened to have sex with men (MSM), who besides this were fathers, ex-husbands, lifeguards or tennis players. Related to this, I explore the ways in which *both* gay police officers and performers *dis-identify* with stereotypes of gay identity in Chapter Seven, a noteworthy contribution. Nevertheless, and although the area of sexuality at work has traditionally been regarded as sensitive research and difficult to undertake (see above), I feel my identity as a (camp) gay man has been a real asset. It is very possible that respondents would not have committed to the project or, especially, been as open and forthcoming with a straight male researcher, female or lesbian researcher.

### ***Research Ethics***

I have already discussed some of the ethical issues that confronted me throughout the research process, for example with regards to the research interviews and *Facebook*. I



was required to deal with these situations as and when they arose, however, where possible, I attempted to anticipate my ethical obligations as a researcher.

Often, gay men are referred to as a ‘vulnerable group’ due to the ‘stigma’ attached to being gay (Rumens, 2008a; Ward, 2008). Hence it was important that I gain fully informed consent, state clearly the purpose of my study to informants, whilst emphasizing assurances of anonymity and confidentiality. Any data that can be traced back to participants has therefore been disguised throughout the thesis, though the use of pseudonyms, for example. Even though all participants self-identified as gay, I did not want to inadvertently disclose any of the participants’ sexual identities. Anonymity and confidentiality were my main ethical considerations. I also made it clear that participants could withdraw from the study at any point (Wilton, 2004). I have endeavoured throughout all stages of the research to adhere to data protection legislation and ESRC ethical guidelines.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has outlined the main methodological considerations, and where possible, offers a reflexive account of my research. Initially, I summarized the theoretical framework that guide the empirical work presented in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. I then went on to show how the research has been informed by interpretivist and feminist research concerns, and demonstrate how these approaches informed my data collection methods. Importantly, I set out the study’s parameters and the occupational landscapes of policing and performing, detailing how I

subsequently gained access to the research participants. While these occupations may differ structurally, I have also justified why the research focuses on these two industries. Overall, I have attempted to provide a candid account of the research process, and reflect on the challenges, trials and tribulations of conducting qualitative research.

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<sup>1</sup> Whereas sociologists tend to conceive of the performative interval as a point of arrival for the social accomplishment of the self (consequently, sociologists tend to study subjects and identities as *relatively* stable), queer theorists focus on 'performative failure'; "a point of departure in which the self is exposed as an artefact of discourse, absent of a stable interior" (Green, 2007: 39).

<sup>2</sup> In that although police officers are expected to exercise coercive authority, in reality, Dick and Cassell found that the 'physically demanding' discourse of policing misrepresents just what police work actually involves. Operational policing is in fact more service-orientated, yet the longstanding conflict management discourse dominates popular perception.

<sup>3</sup> Whereas conventional policing emphasises detection and arrest rates, response times and the role of the police to solve crimes, COP stresses the absence of crime and disorder, through public co-operation and the adoption of a problem-solving approach, focusing on the cause of crime (Davies and Thomas, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> In 1989, the police secured the highest conviction rate of the 20<sup>th</sup> century for gross indecency offences (timesonline.co.uk).

<sup>5</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/london/3368141.stm>

<sup>6</sup> Shared, gendered conceptions of realism particularly influence access to work.

<sup>7</sup> A lack of finance for instance has seen repertory theatre shift to showcasing 'classic' productions that usually have fewer female roles.

<sup>8</sup> Whilst it may be true that certain officers are still experiencing homophobia, I found that the GPA exists in tension with localised LGB networks. In other words, the latter are making the force wide GPA redundant. I couldn't help but think that the GPA's response was almost legitimising their continued existence. This is a bold statement to make, but data support the idea that should any individual encounter a problem, they are more likely to approach their own constabulary's LGB network rather than the GPA.

<sup>9</sup> This was emphasized by one of the study participants, himself a Gay Liaison Officer, who noted that out of his team of 20 GLOs, only two identified as straight.

<sup>10</sup> Given the participant usually made 'the first move' (in that I never sought to add individuals), I took it upon myself to brief the person concerned that being *Facebook* friends had the capacity to reveal that they had taken part in the research. This allowed participants to make an informed decision.

<sup>11</sup> These categories include: the performance of coming out; passing; contextually concealing, actively affirming, and stylisation of the body

<sup>12</sup> As set by Ezzy (2002), open coding, described as exploring the data, experimenting with codes, and pursuing research questions, was used.

## **CHAPTER 5: POLICING AND PERFORMING GAY SEXUALITY I**

### **PERFORMING**

Performing work is often described as bohemian and liberal. Popular perception is that no heteronormative, hegemonic masculine culture characterises the landscape of performing. In contrast, performers are seen to be working within boundaries defined by ‘homonormativity’<sup>1</sup>, in that a man’s sexuality, from time to time, will be (mis)read as gay. Yet virtually no academic research charts the workplace experiences of individuals located within such ‘gay-friendly’ workspace. To suggest that this sector unquestionably allows for the positive negotiation of LGB identity is problematic. A study that draws upon data generated from in-depth interviews with 20 gay performers in the UK, who have experienced a range of forms of performing work, is thus apposite and timely.

The next two empirically-focused chapters problematise the idea that certain occupations can be viewed as ‘gay-friendly’ *or* ‘gay-hostile’. According to the narratives of my participants, these terms are insufficient considering the identity neg(oti)ations that take place according to gay performers and police officers. As I go on to show, ‘gay-hostile’ occupations can allow for the expression of gay sexuality (see Chapter Six), while professed ‘gay-friendly’ environments can promote its suppression. In that regard, Chapters Five and Six contribute to emerging literature on the ‘gay-friendly’ occupation. In particular, I advance the theorisation of ‘gay-friendly’ workplaces not as a static set of environmental factors but as a cultural

construct that has a complex relationship with heteronormativity (see also Colgan et al, 2007 and Giuffre et al, 2008).

For now, Chapter Five focuses on the experiences of gay performers. In particular, I illustrate that performers do not always feel empowered to reveal gay identity at work. Chapter Five is structured as follows. The first section presents study data that provides insight into how gay performers understand and value aspects of the performing arts as ‘gay-friendly’. In section two, I consider these accounts further, and problematise how some participants characterise performing in this way by showing that a significant minority of my informants suffer anxiety as a result of possessing a potentially ‘stigmatized identity’ (Goffman, 1963). I note how some performers expend unusual amounts of energy attempting to ‘pass’ as straight, particularly throughout the audition process. I go on to explore prevailing contradictions or the ‘hypocrisy’ associated with gay sexuality in the industry, such as: ‘if you're a nobody and you announce that you're an actor, it's pretty much assumed you're gay. But if you're famous and an actor, it's pretty much assumed there's no way you could be’ (Ross, 2010). Finally, section three reflects on issues related to diversity policy and performing work.

### **A ‘Gay-Friendly’ Haven: Drama School and Demographics**

Drama schools offer the principle formal route into the occupation of performing (Dean, 2005). Most participants had experience here, as it was often discussed as the

initial site within which gay performers were able to understand their industry as ‘gay-friendly’ *before* actually entering the performer labour market itself. In other words, although drama schools are outside the labour process of performing, encounters here shape perceptions in relation to performing as particularly accepting towards gay sexuality. Other encounters, however, indicate that at some drama schools, choreographers and drama teachers are keen to stress industry standards relating to embodied, sexual identity. At an early stage in a performer’s career, we see that gay identities that do not conform to images of conventional gender are constructed as deviant, while others are constructed as acceptable and unproblematic. This is discussed in Chapter Seven.

Expectations of drama school as ‘gay-friendly’ were found to attract gay men who wished to explore and express their sexual identity, such as Charlie (33, Stage, White) who “had a very rural upbringing... Part of my reason for going to drama school was about exploration”. Although Charlie had a desire to go into show business, he also wanted to meet “likeminded people”. Once at drama school, Charlie found that he was quickly able to come out, partly because “there are more women at drama school, and the straight men are more open-minded since they have to become a lot more comfortable around gay people”. Such findings relate to existing studies on gay men at work. Research has found that men in non traditional careers are more likely to be (openly) homosexual than men in traditional careers (Chung and Harman, 1994). Simpson (2005) goes further than simply revealing this demographic fact. In her research on gay male workers in non-traditional occupations, she found that a higher number of women in nursing and teaching had a positive influence on gay men’s sense of self. In similar fashion, gay men at drama school were usually faced with

working alongside a high number of women. These skewed demographics enabled gay students to come out and explore gay identity from the outset of their careers, having implications on future expectations of the industry's acceptance towards homosexuality, and the types of identity management strategies used to express their sexuality.

75% of the students in drama school were either women or gay men! [Laughs]... Being gay was completely accepted. It was normal. [What do you mean when you use the word 'normal'?] It was as normal as being straight, put it like that. They were both equally accepted in that environment. It wasn't expected that you were either/or, and it was accepted if you were both. (Peter, 21, Musical Theatre, White)

Out of 17 guys on my drama course, 5 of us were gay. The rest of the guys, *if* they were straight, were always very open-minded, liberal and cool. But also, there were a lot more girls than boys. For me, that made it was easier to negotiate my sexuality. (Rav, 29, Stage, British-Indian)

When you're surrounded by women, it's easier to be a gay man. You're less likely to hide that part of you. This was the case at drama school. I mean, a straight man is probably in the minority. They have to put up and shut up! (Zac, 39, Stage and Film, White)

The principle route into the occupation of performing, then, a key site that is likely to shape assumptions of the industry as a whole, is experienced as female dominated and treats gay sexuality with a degree of nonchalance, casualness or indifference. When participants felt they blended in at drama school and when their heterosexual peers adapted to the knowledge of their sexuality, this appeared to have a positive effect on workplace interactions. Indeed, gay men are unlikely to be framed as the 'isolated exception', unlike gay men in the training schools of the fire service or police (Ward and Winstanley, 2006). This allows gay performers to experience their sexuality as though it is as 'normal' as heterosexuality (see Peter's comments above).

Not all participants studied at drama school. Once working inside the performing arts, however, awareness of a large number of gay performers was read as an indicator of its 'gay-friendliness'. A recent report conducted for the International Federation of Actors (IFA) on the work realities of professional performers across Europe notes that nearly one in five male performers identify as gay (Dean, 2008b). This is a telling statistic given that around 6% of the UK population identifies as gay LGB (DTI, 2005), or in the case of police officers, 8%. Agent One felt the idea that 50% of male actors are gay was a little extreme, and reflected: "In my experience, it's probably nearer to 30%. Basically, the industry isn't short of gay performers, especially in musical theatre." Another performer used the term 'gay mafia' to explain the general predominance of gay men in the performing arts:

I think people outside of the industry don't realize how powerful [gay men can be in this industry]... they call it the 'gay mafia' within the industry. 70% of the industry, I think, is made up of gay men – producers, directors, actors, writers. Like at drama school, as a straight guy, you're likely to be in the minority. (Rav, 29, Stage, British-Indian)

Although there are no data on the sexuality of non-performers in the industry, Rav suggests that gay men make their way throughout various job roles within the performing arts, emphasising Miller's (1996) argument that in any one week, 'there will be shows produced, written, directed or designed by many openly gay men'. Rav was not alone in this regard. The entire landscape of the industry was presented as an arena within which gay men heavily dominate by a number of participants. Casting Director Two stressed: "There are so many gay people in the industry at *all* levels."

Many of these comments were about stressing to an outsider that the industry treats gay sexuality with a degree of indifference.

Nearly all participants alluded to a 'gay ghetto' in the form of musical theatre. This is explored in more detail below. Indeed, for several participants, the seemingly high number of openly gay performers had ghettoised areas of the performing arts to the extent that some, like Jolyon (39, West End Musical Theatre, White), dubbed the area of musical theatre as a 'pink fluffy bubble'. As I go on to show, these favourable demographics mean that gay actors can forge intimate friendships with gay colleagues more easily, and such increased opportunities mean they have more gay-positive experiences in the workplace. This kind of intimacy is also felt to set norms that transfer to friendships between gay performers and non-gay colleagues, and arguably seeds greater gay-friendliness.

Demographic perceptions meant that 'coming out' at work was generally described as a 'non-issue'. Very few performers in my study recalled the first time they initially acknowledged their sexual identity to peers and co-workers, unlike the participants of other studies conducted on the experiences of LGB identity at work (see Humphrey, 1999; Ward, 2008; Woods and Lucas, 2003). Some straight men even found they were automatically presumed to be gay, implying that a 'homonormative' culture pervades. Having struck up a discussion on StageTalk<sup>2</sup>, the following comments depict this latter point:

It's a total non-event. In fact, it's usually dealt with in a very off-hand manner. Somebody once said "Oh, we thought you were gay". But



getting it wrong like that doesn't generate anything other than a decent laugh from all concerned, especially given the climate of performing. (Respondent One)

There does generally seem to be an assumption (rightly or wrongly) in this country that if you are in the performing arts industry, as a man, you're probably gay anyway, so it's not a huge surprise if someone does come out. And most people couldn't really care less anyway. (Respondent Two)

Respondent One implies that as a heterosexual man, he has been required to negotiate instances when his sexuality has been misread as gay. He suggests that straight men are able to view these instances as genuine mistakes. In similar fashion, Respondent Two stresses the nonchalance afforded to individuals who 'come out' in the occupation given the number of gay men who are openly gay in the industry.

I now show how another powerful way of understanding the 'gay-friendly' climate of some aspects of performing is in terms of the structure and content of performing work.

### ***The Nature of Performing Work***

Explaining why gay men seem to be well represented within the profession, some participants explained that growing up gay, entailing numerous decisions about disclosing and managing sexuality in everyday activities, had already equipped them with skills that made careers as professional performers attractive. Speaking along

these lines, Rav (29, Stage, British-Indian) agreed that in life, gay men can endure a plethora of emotions, which effectively makes it easier for them to act. Comments such as these partially resonate with Derek Layder's research findings (1993: 77). He emphasises that many actors and actresses expressed the view that they thought acting attracted people who were neurotic, unstable and insecure about their own identity. Acting out dramatic roles allowed his participants 'to mask their personality insecurities and engage in forms of wish fulfilment in an adult version of 'let's pretend''. With regards to gay men, Clyde reflected:

At one time or another, [a gay man] has had this other persona, which probably helps in this business. I think having done that myself when I was in the navy, I found it easy to do. When I found this business, I found it quite easy to be somebody else, because I'd done that most of my life, since I was 16. (Clyde, 47, Stage and Film, White, Equity LGB Officer)

As Bowring and Brewis (2009) rightly point out, studies seldom comment upon how experiences of growing up as a LGB person can help in the development of skills that might be useful in certain work contexts. There are possible risks here in over-emphasising skills such as shifting identities or emotional expressiveness. To do so might amount to another form of gender and sexual stereotyping that could lead some to conclude that performing is a *natural* home for gay men, or treat gay men as an undifferentiated body of people. That being said, many performers implied that being gay had provided them with certain 'performance' related skills.

Whilst all participants understood performing as 'gay-friendly', interview accounts made few if any references to the importance of equality and diversity policies,

gatekeeper support or anti-discrimination legislation based on sexual orientation (see below). As with other studies, participants often acknowledged, in general terms, the significance of performing as a well-known 'bohemian' occupation for gay performers (Clum, 2000; Sinfield, 1991). Emphasising this point in a slightly different way, Felix (31, Stage and Film, Asian) suggested that his experience of being gay in Singapore had prepared him for a career as a professional performer, which he and other participants felt was characterised by its unconventionality:

I think a lot of people are afraid to go into acting because it's unconventional and unstable, and there is no certainty, but if you're a gay man, you're already used to all that. I suppose it was easier for me to realize that I don't have to do what people expect of me. Whereas, if I was straight, I might be an engineer or something because that is what is expected of someone from my background, coming from Singapore.

For my research participants, the 'unconventional' nature of a career in performing, due in part to its instability and insecurity, is deemed to be compatible with living a gay identity, assumed to be at odds with heteronormative conventions. Above is a sense of Felix's understanding of living an openly gay identity as being 'unconventional'. His upbringing in Singapore might be influential in that respect, alerting us to the possibility of how some identities, lifestyles and professions might be more heavily associated with unconventionality in specific cultural settings. The normalisation of some gay and lesbian sexualities is an observation made largely in relation to Western contexts, provoking unanswered questions about whether and how these processes are occurring elsewhere (Seidman, 2002).

In other words, a powerful way of understanding the ‘gay-friendly’ climate of some aspects of performing is in terms of the structure and content of performing work. Indeed, some participants frequently mentioned that they were expected to be adaptable and flexible in regard to where and with whom they work, a consequence of which was said to be exposure to all manner of human differences. For some, because everybody is always moving around from one show or set to the next, going on tour or even around the world, many performers are continually brought into contact with people from diverse cultures in different locations. Several participants went further, suggesting that career success was contingent on developing a ‘good reputation’ determined, in part, by a performer’s ability to interact with people they might not ordinarily come into contact with elsewhere in their lives. As Jolyon (39, West End Musical Theatre, White) noted, performers have to “become...more accepting of anybody, from anywhere”. These remarks, however, require careful consideration. Organisational settings perceived to be more accepting of individual differences do not automatically signify forms of organising that are less heteronormative (Williams et al., 2009). Further, structural realities of performing work might account for the indifference associated with coming out in the occupation given the (dis)continuity of workplace relationships. Even where actors are fortunate enough to have relative continuity of employment, they are constantly thrown together with strangers whom they see only on an intermittent basis (Layder, 1993). There may be little opportunity to discuss the personal lives of colleagues, which never have to become an issue. Still, it is noteworthy that some performers regard structural realities as having created organisational spaces that are particularly appealing for gay performers, and thus understood to be indicative of a ‘gay-friendly’ environment.

In terms of the content of performing work, participants employed in theatre, TV and film felt acutely aware that they could find themselves cast in myriad character roles at any time throughout their careers - gay, transsexual, whore, immigrant, mentally or physically impaired, working class, socially deviant or ugly - the success of which was said to be contingent on a willingness to tap into and embrace individual (and often abject) differences. It was felt that this was conducive to tolerance and the welcoming of difference within the industry. The requirement to empathise with other selves and identities, understood as a central component of performing professionally, is key here. The skill involved in the successful performance of character roles can help performers to understand the human condition from differing viewpoints. Acknowledging this, participant accounts of the skills involved in performing, which can demand performers 'stretch their minds', sometimes challenging their own stereotypes, adds a new dimension to existing research on how some work contexts are understood as 'gay-friendly'. As I highlight in the Introduction, currently, the 'gay-friendly' workplace is characterised in terms of management commitment towards issues of equality, diversity and sexual orientation. Data here imply that performers experience the benefits of working in a 'gay-friendly' workplace, which has less to do with organisational policy (see Colgan et al., 2007, 2008), and more to do with the labour process of the job.

### ***Backstage: Being Openly Gay***

Gay performers were particularly able to find validation of a self that is generally at odds with heteronormative culture once work had been secured; in green rooms or backstage where productions are rehearsed. Here, the industry was characterised as an

alternative relational space, providing opportunities for gay men to ‘construct a sense of self and belonging that runs counter to dominant heteronormative discourses’ (Rumens, 2008b: 83). Rumens is referring to gay men’s friendships here, but he may as well be referring to gay men and some aspects of performing work.

Backstage, many participants noted that they could be ‘open’ about their sexuality with colleagues. Participants tended to conceptualise openness in terms of being visibly gay to colleagues. In dressing rooms, backstage or in green rooms, much like at drama school, working as performers allowed participants to understand themselves as ‘normal’ within a society that privileges heterosexuality. For Clyde (47, Stage and Film, White, Equity LGB Officer), formerly employed in the Navy, the theatre offered him a workspace in which he felt that his sexuality no longer mattered. It was even something he could ‘enjoy’ and ‘celebrate’. Both Lemar (24, West End Musical Theatre, African Caribbean) and Wyclef (38, West End Musical Theatre, African Caribbean) referred to some West End theatres as ‘home’ for gay people, echoing writers such as Alan Sinfield (1996) and Carl Miller (1996) who draw attention to the theatre as ‘gay space’. This does not mean to say that participants were out at all times in all work contexts to all colleagues, as research indicates that coming out is an iterative and on-going decision making process (Colgan et al., 2008; Ward and Winstanley, 2003). I return to this point later in section two in relation to the audition.

However, many participants reflected on their time backstage or in green rooms, and recounted experiences of garnering emotional support from other openly gay men. Here, supportive friendships were found to be valuable sources of acceptance and

understanding, both of which are important for identity growth (Rumens, 2008a; 2008b; 2008c; 2010). Such friendships can be difficult to develop in organisations less accepting of the visibility of LGB sexualities (ibid.). Acknowledging this, some participants described supportive workplace friendships with other gay performers after exiting drama school, illustrating the ease with which some of these friendships could be established within workplaces characterised by the enactment of visible LGB workplace identities.

### ***Straight Men and Straight Talk***

While workplace friendships involving other gay men were valued highly and provided affirmational support for validating gay identities at work, the benefits of working in a ‘gay-friendly’ occupation also accrued to friendships between gay men and non-gay peers. Many of the performers interviewed said they were able to strike up levels of intimacy with heterosexual men, and that this enriched the working lives of both straight and gay performers.

Given expectations and assumptions of performing as ‘gay-friendly’ (instilled to some at drama school), going into the industry, many participants reported finding it easier to establish close friendships with heterosexual men, noting their ‘liberal’ attitudes towards gay men and fewer tensions surrounding how heterosexual masculinity might be threatened by visible gay workplace sexualities. It was argued that ‘straight men’ could adopt fluid subject positions within the industry, suggesting that certain

occupations can offer possibilities for denaturalising dominant discourses of identity. In other words, being immersed in a 'gay-friendly' context enabled heterosexual men to resist binary constructions of gender and sexuality. This was described as 'refreshing' by some participants and framed as a significant 'gay-friendly' characteristic of the workplace. A minority of accounts do suggest that straight performers can enact overt behaviours associated with normative modes of being heterosexual and masculine. Due to prevailing assumptions relating to gay sexuality and performing work, certain straight male colleagues were eager to prioritise their heterosexuality:

Those heterosexual actors, the ones who are secure about themselves, find it quite liberating to let go of the way they are *supposed* to be as straight men. They learn that at drama school. It's testimony to an industry within which people *can* behave in different ways. But a small number feel the need to become aggressively heterosexual and 'butch up' to prove they are not one of you. I've seen this with heterosexual ballet dancers. You meet a heterosexual ballet dancer, and within ten minutes you're talking about his wife or his girlfriend, so he knows you know he's straight. Others spit or swear, or talk and act aggressive. (Felix, 31, Stage and Film, Asian)

According to the majority of my sample, however, normative workplace discourses of (heterosexual) masculinity are more fragile within *certain areas* of performing (such as musical theatre, explored later). Subverted expectations of sexuality within the industry, such as the absence of a 'heterosexual assumption', allowed heterosexual men to experiment and flirt with dissident sexual and gendered behaviours going into the industry. This is not to say that all performers experience the industry as such at all times. As Dean's (2008a) research shows, patriarchal ideologies structure the working realities of women performers. Further, I go on to show that the



marginalisation of gay actors takes on a number of forms at the point of access, thus structuring the material work opportunities at audition.

Particularly backstage at some theatres, however, it was felt that male-male hegemonic boundaries, associated with men's negative attitudes towards gay men, were discarded. In contrast, a large majority of performers characterised male-male workplace relations in terms of openness, fun, flirtatious interactions and support. In doing so, the industry was set apart from other occupations.

I flirt with the gay guys. I flirt with the straight guys. They flirt back. It's what you'd call 'camaraderie'. (Lemar, 24, West End Musical Theatre, African Caribbean)

If anybody gets first night nerves, I'm able to camp about and all that helps. In theatre, even the straight guys are able to 'camp around'. (Philippe, 58, Stage, TV and Film, White, Equity Officer)

The straight guys definitely flirt with you. In any other profession, if you walk around slapping someone's ass, you're gonna be up on sexual harassment charge. I think because it's so prominent backstage, it's accepted. It's not a one way street. It's accepted on both sides of the table, which makes it pretty alright to do things like that. (Wyclef, 38, West End Musical Theatre, African Caribbean)

I'm able to discuss my personal life with almost everyone backstage, in the dressing room; even with the straight men. It's refreshing to be supported [by straight men]... One time, when a director was being particularly harsh, a straight colleague wasn't averse to coming over and being like 'Are you OK, love?' (Zac, 39, Stage and Film, White)

Here is an overall sense of how gay sexualities can find expression within informal workplace relations in a positive and pleasurable fashion. For Wyclef, good natured-

flirting can help performers to let off steam by maintaining an atmosphere of fun. Likewise, Philippe suggests that his use of ‘camp’, as an anti-serious and playful display of gay sexuality with exaggerated overtones of femininity, sometimes had a disarming role to play in helping to counter ‘first night nerves’ (explored in more detail in Chapter Seven). While these examples bear testimony to the possibilities for performing visible gay sexualities in specific work locales, this is not to imply that such experiences are uniform and static, as I explore below. Given some of the less gay-friendly aspects of performing work, friendships between gay performers and their peers could be focused on creating circles of safety that blunt some of the challenges these workers face, at the point of access to work for example (as we discuss above). This allows gay actors to make more positive attributions about their workplaces than is necessarily the case.

A bohemian tone *does* appear to permeate the experiences of gay performers. Openness and acceptance revealed themselves in some perplexing yet dynamic forms, however. For example, Rav (29, Stage, British-Indian) found it refreshing that performers were able to use terms such as ‘fag’, rarely met with appalled gasps by co-workers. Yet “saying whatever you like” in this manner was considered a *positive* feature of the working environment. Referring to someone as a ‘fag’ often demonstrated a unique kind of camaraderie amongst ‘friends’. This was reiterated by Jolyon (39, West End Musical Theatre, White), who similarly notes:

One of the straight boys on the show will [say to] one of the gay boys ‘You alright faggot?’ But they’re great mates. From the outside, you might think ‘Goosssh, you can’t say that!’ But they’re just having a laugh. We’re beyond [homophobia]. It’s like ‘Yeah I’m a faggot, call me a faggot, I don’t care.’

The use of the term 'faggot' is significant given its particularly pejorative connotations. It is a term that invokes images of verbal abuse and derogation when directed towards the (effeminate) homosexual. Yet performers drew upon the phrase to illustrate that gay men within the arts were comfortable with, if not 'immune' to, its usage. In some cases, freedom of expression was understood as the signature of acceptance, and marked moments at which gay identity was embraced. By drawing attention to a performer's (homo)sexuality in the crudest of terms, interaction effectively parodied hegemonic masculinity and societal homophobia for playful purposes.

Although Lemar emphasised that the cultural norms of performing favour loose expression and a move away from 'political correctness', he did recount instances whereby continuous reference to homosexuality, predominantly by other straight men, took on a more crass quality. Upon being asked if he believed discrimination occurred, he remarked:

People tend to push the boundaries; you're allowed to be as outrageous as possible. They say things that are derogatory, and you think 'Wow, I can't believe you just said that'! I've been asked 'Does your arse bleed when you have sex?' They even put a sticker on my [dressing room mirror] saying 'I like the smell of farts'. They think it's funny, but it's shallow. I can deal with it. I don't think it's nice. I would never dream of asking why [heterosexual men] like doing women up the bum! It's tasteless and it's rude.

In a similar vein, Peter (21, Musical Theatre, White) acknowledged:

Sometimes, things are said and you need to sort of take a step back. There's another gay guy, Brandon, in our changing room and he took a sip of Percy's drink without asking. Percy's straight, and was like 'Oh great, now I've got AIDS!' I wasn't necessarily offended, but I was shocked. I think other people in the dressing room were too. Those sorts of comments are expressed a lot more in our industry. There is a lot of flamboyancy and people push the boundaries for the sake of pushing the boundaries.

Whether this can be compared to the outright discrimination and scorn experienced by gay workers in other occupations in the 1990s is questionable (see Chapter Three). Nonetheless, at the very least, this sort of behaviour can be characterised as 'toxic humour' (see Caudron, 1995). Although controversial comments were "taken in jest", at other times, they provoked feelings of shock in the minds of participants and colleagues. Usually, however, certain "banter" was permitted "in the name of art", for "the creative industries are *expected and accepted* to house eccentric behaviour" (Wyclef, 38, West End Musical Theatre, African Caribbean). As a result, toxic humour was rarely challenged. Further, in terms of the structural realities of performing, actors are effectively self-employed businesses (Dean, 2005; Layder, 1993). As Callum (43, Stage, White) stressed, "Performers are preoccupied with doing a job well... We only have a few days to prove our worth." This helps to facilitate access to work in the future. In this sense, I was sometimes given the impression that performers do not want to cause a fuss, as they are more concerned with handling the emotional demands of a role in order to secure future work.

Arguably, the above narratives relate to Rumens' research findings. Despite being seen as 'a sector of employment often thought to be accepting of gay men', Rumens (2008a: 89) found that (homo)sexuality became the target of attack from heterosexual

male colleagues for one gay theatre worker<sup>3</sup>. He warns that perhaps even those working within creative industries commonly perceived as ‘gay-friendly’ *can* be confronted with ‘bitter, homophobic hostility’. As Lemar and Peter’s accounts imply, pockets of the performing arts can indeed find gay performers grappling with homophobic behaviour and banter. As the next section goes on to explore, experiences at the audition also give us reason to be concerned.

### **‘Getting-Straight’ to Work**

At this point it is important to delve deeper into how participants enact visibly gay sexualities throughout the labour process of performing. A useful way forward is to return to the comments of participants like Equity’s LGB committee rep Clyde (47, Stage and Film, White, Equity LGB Officer), who previously suggested that sexuality ‘does not matter’ in the occupation in the same way as it did when he was employed in the Navy. This is valid on one level, inasmuch as Clyde can be ‘out’ as a performer without fear of direct reprisals. At another level, Clyde’s comments are complicated by other participants’ accounts that reveal how much of a cultivated performance gay male sexuality actually is, since gay male performers are subject to self-management of physical appearance and behaviour in ways similar to heterosexual performers (see Dean, 2005). In this next section, I begin to explore the unevenness in the opportunities for participants to remain visibly gay, noting the alarming currency stereotypes of gay male sexuality appear to hold in the auditioning process (I return to this point with regards to gendered sexuality in Chapter Seven). This helps to

problematise participants' claims of visibility within work contexts understood to be 'gay-friendly'.

Whereas research has drawn attention to the 'concealment versus openness continuum' relating to gay sexuality at work (Croteau, 1996: 200), very little is understood about the contextual reasons that lead gay men to adopt certain subject positions along this conceptual continuum. Study data generated from my interviews with gay performers provide insight into this continuum in practice.

### *Negotiating gay male sexualities in the audition*

It became apparent that gay performers do not always choose to live 'out' within a supposedly open and tolerant occupation. To maintain equitable treatment, a number of participants negate visible performances of gay sexuality. In that regard, the choice to 'come out' can be seen as an important career decision, as characterised by other academics who explore the experiences of minority sexual identity at work (Day and Schoenrade, 1997; Ward, 2003). Specifically, it was found that individuals 'contextually conceal' in certain situations though invoking masculinised bodies and demeanours associated with heteronormative forms of masculinity, particularly when auditioning for heterosexual character roles.

As Dean (2005) notes, the audition is the principal process through which performers are recruited, by, for example, acting, singing or dancing part of the role being

auditioned for. The role of casting directors, producers and directors is crucial, since they assess the performance and the performer for their suitability for the part. Not surprisingly, study participants voiced their anxieties about the audition process, which sometimes requires careful preparation and attention to detail, such as dressing for the part (ibid.). Notable, then, was the management of gay male sexuality in the auditioning process, negotiated in ways noticeably different to how visible gay sexualities were enacted in backstage areas during rehearsals. For example, some participants seeking acting work in TV, film and the theatre employed specific identity management strategies. On occasions some sought to ‘conceal’ their identity as a gay performer by lying to casting directors (e.g. about having girlfriends) while others used ‘passing’ to mask their gay identity by letting assumptions of heterosexuality among colleagues go unchallenged (Goffman, 1963). The decision to remain discreet was influenced by personal anxieties linked to rejection and typecasting, along with inferences associated with gatekeeper preferences and/or audience concerns. In this respect, accounts build upon Dean’s (2005) findings, which suggest that the perceived barriers to gaining access to work include age, looks, ethnicity and lesbian sexuality.

#### *Individual Concerns: Fear*

Many performers were concerned that prior knowledge of their sexual identity would negatively affect the outcome of the audition. Given it was felt that one should *appear* to toe the sex-gender-desire line for casting purposes, as with other studies on the negotiation of LGB identity at work, performers also said that embodying the

normative heterosexual persona could benefit gay workers (see also Bowring and Brewis' study on LGB identity in Canadian workplaces). As Charlie (33, Stage, White) reflected:

There are times when I go into auditions where I might make the choice not to talk openly about my sexuality. There is a slight stigma in mainstream theatre about gay men playing straight roles. [Passing] makes me feel more comfortable, that I'm not being discounted purely on my sexuality. I'm proud to be gay, and most of the time, once I've secured a job, it becomes quite natural for everyone to see that I am gay. But when auditioning, it's not something I would choose to vocalise. It's something I feel I will be judged on.

While performers admitted to concealing gay sexuality, the practice of passing generally occurred throughout the casting process *only*. All participants noted that one's armour of heterosexuality could be shed once work had been secured within the otherwise bohemian walls of the industry. This reiterates the idea that performers are free to appear how they choose during rehearsals or the middle part of the labour process (see also Dean, 2005). Nonetheless, accounts confirm the relevance of embodied attributes/aesthetics (such as physical appearance, voice and age) at the point of employment. In other words, I find that workers can perform open displays of gay identity during rehearsals or in a dressing room (as described above), as long as they are considered 'desirable' or 'marketable' at recruitment and at the 'sale' of the product. A similar point is made in relation to police officers in Chapter Six.

Perhaps the most pertinent factor that encouraged gay performers to pass, cover or conceal was *fear*. Some performers feared being discounted, marginalised or discriminated against. Others were anxious about being typecast or dropped by



agents. Indeed, an unrelenting theme of fear cuts right through a range of narratives, related to the transitory nature of work. Essentially, performers have no career structure (see Dean, 2005; Eikhof and Haunschild, 2006). As Equity Officer Philippe (58, Stage, TV and Film, White) recalls: “You’re only as good as your last gig.” Once a job has finished, there is no guarantee the telephone will ring. A performer can be successful one year, and not the next. Philippe again: “You simply can’t predict it.” Given individuals’ need to maximise their best chance, where sexuality was thought to even remotely hamper opportunities, gay men became cautious when auditioning. While many participants suggest that ‘talent’ is a crucial criterion for determining a performer’s suitability for a part, they seemed only too aware of the potential pitfalls of performing sexuality in ways that might put off casting directors, producers and even their agents (see also Chapter Seven and gendered sexuality). This was particularly the case when performers spoke in terms of auditioning for straight roles.

As one participant (Rav, 29, Stage, British-Indian) explained, “I am able to play heterosexual incredibly well”, yet in auditioning as a gay man, he feared gatekeepers might be side-tracked into thinking “Oh Rav; now this is the one who is gay.” In that regard, he worried less about his ethnicity (British born Indian, also perceived as a limiting factor), but became ‘vigilant’ when his agent put him up for token heterosexual roles - roles Rav felt he was able to obtain given his ‘look’ and appeal that embodies conventional images of idealised heterosexuality and masculinity. Consequently, the casting process became a site within which performers consciously manipulated and negated gay identity. Here, I show that some performers are driven to actively deceiving at auditions, where they suspect casting directors might prefer a

straight man for the role. Yet as Rav stressed, at the end of it all, “I need that job... and needs must”.

Rav captures a concern widely expressed among participants about the risk of being rejected on the basis of sexual orientation. That gay performers *feel* gatekeepers make decisions based on prejudice, I believe, is clear here (discussed in more detail below in terms of gatekeeper and audience concerns). “Basically, gay men epitomise a reduction in masculinity, and that’s seen as a limiting factor when it comes to auditioning for all sorts of roles, but mainly straight roles” (Zac, 39, Stage and Film, White). The perceived power of gatekeepers resonates (see below), as the fear of being discounted for heterosexual roles is articulated. We are given insight into *anticipated* or *perceived* gatekeeper reactions to the connotations associated with being gay. Effectively, it was felt that by coming out *before* one had secured a job, casting directors would become preoccupied with viewing the worker as an explicitly homosexual subject, emphasizing that gay men and women, upon disclosing sexual identity, can become associated with never ending eroticism. As Hall (1989: 125) highlights, within organizations, ‘homosexuals’ ‘must do nothing in particular to be perceived in terms of excessive eroticism’. Put differently, by revealing gay sexuality, casting directors might see the audition through glasses ‘tarnished’ by homosexuality (and by implication, gender deviance). ‘Gayness’ would therefore become *the* point of reference throughout the casting process potentially rendering the aspirant as unsuitable for certain (heterosexual) male roles.

Related to this, is the fear of being typecast, an extensive theme discussed by all participants. Typecasting, the process by which a stage actor is strongly identified with a specific character, one or more particular roles, or characters with the same traits, is broadly characterised as a hindrance. It is most eloquently articulated in the account below recalled by Charlie (33, Stage, White):

[I once played] a very flamboyant [gay] character. It was a joy to play. It was flamboyant, big, open, swearing... it was a very liberating role to play. At the same time, I was conscious as I was doing this role that other people would be making assumptions as they were watching; assumptions relating to me as an actor. So it was a role that I didn't invite casting directors and agents to see, as I was thinking 'I don't want to pigeonhole myself. [I don't want them] to see me as this huge, camp, gay character when they haven't seen me do anything else.'

There was tremendous concern within the acting community that not only playing gay but being known to be gay had implications for the “bane of typecasting to rear its ugly head” (Zac). Moreover, it could do so in a way that was unimaginable should an actor be known for being or playing heterosexual. Importantly, as echoed in Rav and Charlie's accounts, one does not simply have to play gay to become associated with a specific character (to be typecast). One simply has to reveal gay sexuality to be pigeonholed; perceived as a key challenge gay men must negotiate within the industry. A performer can embody idealised forms of masculinity (such as Rav), yet if one is known to sleep with men once the stage curtains descend, once the cameras stop rolling, *where gatekeepers are privy to this information at the point of access*<sup>4</sup>, performers fear they will be placed in a straightjacket concerning the roles they might be offered.

Other factors that encouraged participants to pass include age and ambitions. Dean (2008b) found that half of male performers see ageing as an advantage. At 58, Philippe (58, Stage, TV and Film, White, Equity Officer) confirmed that ageing also meant that he was now less likely to adopt passing techniques, implying that with age, opportunities to work increase, or at the very least, the necessity and pressure to be seen as (hetero)sexually desirable decreases (thus rendering (homo)sexual identity as less significant). His feelings repeat the idea that it is more acceptable for older actors to come ‘tumbling through closet doors’ (Miller, 1996: 12). In addition, Dean found that a huge amount of competition exists particularly for actor performers in their 20s. I find that because of this, remaining closeted and passing as heterosexual during these earlier years was felt to ensure that gay performers are not discounted more so than they already might be. In contrast, then, at 28, Mario (Stage, TV and Film, White) noted how he became ‘very conscious’ of changing his physicality, and evaded mannerisms that could reveal his gay identity.

If you’re a sexy, young actor wanting to make a career – you have to be more discreet about your sexuality, simply because you want to get yourself cast in as many parts as possible. It’s OK for older actors like myself. No one wants to jump into bed with us! (Philippe)

I’m at a certain level now. I’m still young, having recently been trained in the industry... but I get work and I know that I can have an incredibly healthy career. The only thing I don’t want, and it’s very, very important to me, is that I don’t want anyone to be influenced more than they would be anyway, by what it is I can play or what it is I can do. (Rav)

### *Gatekeeper Preferences*

As we have seen, a key feature of an individual’s career as a performer is that it is worked out between a number of different ‘career intermediaries’. Progress is reliant

on the activities of other occupational groups within the industry (Layder, 1993: 119). As I mention in Chapter Four, in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of the labour process of performing, I conducted ‘orientation’ interviews with two casting directors. I also liaised via email with a number of agents (see Appendix). These encounters enabled me to gain a certain amount of clarity relating to the ‘audition experience’. From these interviews, I found that participant concerns about being stereotyped and/or discounted during the auditioning process were vindicated by the perspectives of two casting directors (see Appendix). For instance, Casting Director One stated: “If I’m casting a strongly heterosexual character, then I wouldn’t approach a gay actor”. Such sentiments indicate how sexuality is influential in the recruitment process, the suggestion here being that gay men are not very good at drawing on the cultural norms and behaviours associated with male heterosexuality, in order to perform heterosexuality in a professional capacity.

Part of the reason why casting directors are said to prefer heterosexual men for heterosexual roles relates to Dean’s (2008a: 172) idea of ‘conservative second-guessing’. Casting directors are paid to make judgements about appearance in terms of representing a particular ‘type’ to convey particular information (ibid.). They are often expected to do so “with no gaps and no exceptions” (Callum, 43, Stage, White). As Dean (2008a: 171) points out, these workers are employed for their awareness of the identities and past work of a broad range of performers. Their position also requires them to please another crucial gatekeeper, the director. Again, we see that the manner in which certain occupational groups within the entertainment industry interrelate has a direct bearing on the career progress of performers (Layder, 1993). Overall, this is thought to result in conservatism, as pointed out by Felix (31, Stage

and Film, Asian). He felt that because casting directors are busy trying to please everybody (agents, directors, the audience), they refuse to see anybody other than ‘safe alternatives’ for certain parts. While acting talent was demanded, these performers confirm that when auditioning, casting directors are sometimes looking for someone *who just is the role*, and search for the appropriate package until it transpires in the right performer (see also Dean, 2008a). In terms of sexuality, then, Zac (39, Stage and Film, White) comments: “I think this perpetuates the presence of the closet in our industry, especially for those who *could* be the part *bar* sexuality”.

Casting is an interesting area. In the last ten to fifteen years, it seems to have become a lot more specific. If there is a character called David, who grew up in Essex and drives a white car, they want an actor called David who grew up in Essex who drives a white car. There is more of a belief that an actor has to be the character from the outset. Until you can convince that you can transform, it remains incredibly specific. (Callum, 43, Stage, White)

And yet the idea that a gay man might be *more* suited to play gay did not translate in the eyes of the majority of my performer participants. Expressed regularly in interview, individuals felt that straight men were also preferred for gay roles by gatekeepers. This preference was perceived to marginalise out gay performers who then became locked into a contradictory double-bind. If an actor was known to be gay on the acting circuit, individuals feared marginalisation due to the myopic perceptions of casting directors that associated gay men with being ‘unsuitable to play straight’ (as outlined above). Yet they were equally marginalised when it came to ‘playing gay’ due to the preferences of gatekeepers, which included casting straight men for these gay roles. This was especially the case when it came to some heterosexual directors:

It’s a terrible generalization, but I think it’s true. Straight directors often hire straight men to play the gay parts because they don’t want the actors

to know more about [being gay] than they do. (Philippe, 58, Stage, TV and Film, White, Equity Officer)

It might be a bit of a generalisation, but I've been surprised that often, gay characters are played by straight men. There are certain (heterosexual) directors that definitely have a kind of laddy culture, so they would be more comfortable having straight men [play these gay roles]... or people that they can have similar conversations with, or people that they see as similar to themselves. I've worked on three jobs where a gay character has been played by a straight man. (Charlie, 33, Stage, White)

Given the competitive nature of work, these views could be interpreted as a construct to cope with rejection (Dean, 2008a). Such a preference, however, resonated as a key theme throughout many of the research interviews. In particular, two plays were drawn upon to describe this preference in practice including *My Night with Reg* and *Fucking Men*. The former, written by British playwright Kevin Elyot, a play set among London's gay community in the mid-1980s against the backdrop of the mounting AIDS crisis, the synopsis of which revolves around six gay characters, was known by a number of participants for having just one gay actor in the cast. Equally, reflecting on the sexual identities of the men who perform in the play *Fucking Men*, a piece written by American playwright Joe DiPietro and known for parodying the film *La Ronde* (the title means 'the merry-go-round'), Philippe comments: "There are ten in the cast, but I think there are only two or three gay actors in the play, and they're all playing screaming queens." Although Philippe's anecdotal stories should not be read as definitive (in that although he himself is a very well known actor embedded within the acting network, he is not an infallible source of knowing who is gay and who is not), other informants echoed Philippe's underlying premise to varying degrees.

Elsewhere, agent responses to email requests for assistance in the research project justified the idea that performers might fare better in the closet. Agent One felt that revealing gay identity in the film industry was particularly risky (explored later). His comments even strike up images of the double-lives led by gay workers of existing studies (Boatwright et al, 1996; Day and Schoenrade, 1997; Humphrey, 1999). In similar terms, Agent Two emphasised that prejudice looms large in an industry that only *appears* to be welcoming of difference. In these instances, the world of work still appears less than hospitable for gay men (Rumens, 2009).

One major stumbling block for any gay actor is that if he is to come out to everyone, he is then only thought of as a “gay artiste”, and will only be considered by employers for gay characters. This can be very harmful to a film career particularly and especially in Hollywood where nearly every gay actor has to live a double life and have a sham marriage. Hollywood actors are like politicians in this respect. (Agent One)

Here, it is felt that by coming out, a performer resigns himself to a ‘type’ when it comes to working as an actor. Dean (2005) found that type categories seem to be based largely on age (apparent rather than biological) and perception of image and attractiveness. Agent One suggests that homosexuality is also a crucial defining aspect, unlike heterosexuality, further showing that revealing heterosexuality does not produce a heterosexual identity when it comes to being categorised as a performer; heterosexuality remains unmarked (Smart, 1996).

Performers too recalled moments at which they were encouraged by their representation to negate open displays of gay identity, indicating that agents channel and control the career of a performer as much as casting directors.



An agent once asked me to ‘dress down’. She wanted me to audition for a commercial. Playing devil’s advocate, I said: ‘What do you mean, dress down?’ Eventually she said: ‘Can you *not* look quite so gay’. They felt it would affect the outcome and their commission! (Callum, 43, Stage, White)

To summarise this section, I have suggested that gatekeeper preferences for conservative or ‘safe’ options (straight men) impact upon the performer’s decision to pass or remain closeted at particular temporal and spatial co-ordinates. As do gatekeeper practices linked to typecasting, as well as the gatekeeper practice of employing heterosexual men to play gay character roles. As with Dean (2008), I suggest that the critical attitude towards casting directors by performers could be interpreted as a construct to cope with rejection. I also show the belief that it might be wise to suppress open displays of minority sexual identity at the point of access is vindicated by some casting directors and agents.

### *Audience Concerns*

At both levels of analysis, individual concerns and gatekeeper preferences implicate ‘the audience’ as a key reason why performers might conceal gay sexuality at the point of auditioning. It would appear that both performers *and* gatekeepers are ‘hostage’ to society, which valorises heteronormativity as the idealised norm (Rich, 1980).

When casting for certain roles, gatekeepers are likely to consider public reaction to casting decisions. Although this is fairly self-explanatory, Wyclef (39, West End Musical Theatre, African-Caribbean) felt that the sexuality of an actor can impact upon the decision-making process, as casting directors fear “a ‘hostile’ audience reception”. Further, he stresses that gatekeepers are mindful of the fact that an actor’s background affects how an audience sees their performance. This relates to Setoodah’s (2010) point when he uses the example of Rock Hudson in *Pillow Talk* to illustrate that: ‘For all the beefy bravado that Rock Hudson projects on-screen, *Pillow Talk* dissolves into a farce *when you know* the likes of his true bedmates.’ In that regard, public opinion surrounding what is acceptable, believable, intelligible and popular is expected to affect *both* gatekeeper judgments and performer decisions to remain closeted. This is also alluded to by Huw (39, Stage and TV, White) when he notes: “No audience should be placed in a position where they are thinking ‘Hmm, that guy’s slightly camp, he wouldn’t be married to her’.” (see Chapter Seven). Clearly, ‘believability’ and ‘intelligibility’ are crucial mediating factors gatekeepers need to think about. Again, this links back to the principle of conservative second-guessing and Dean’s (2008a) comments that stress the influence of shared stereotypes on the performer’s access to work.

It was also suggested that director preferences for straight men in gay roles comes down to what an audience perceives as ‘acceptable’. Zac (39, Stage and Film, White) believed that directors aim to ensure that audiences do not repudiate homosexuality on screen: “If an audience knows the actor is straight off screen... that pill is easier to swallow. Middle England does not want to see the likes of ‘us’ on television given what we get up to in our spare time”. These data can be related to Walters’ (2003)

identification that gatekeepers fear that openly gay and lesbian performers might offend some heterosexual audiences, which has rendered aspects of the industry difficult for openly gay and lesbian actors to develop successful careers.

Overall, I find that (young) gay male actors feel that revealing gay sexuality *can* ruin careers. While I provide a detailed insight into why this is felt to be the case, in *Stages of Desire* (1996), Carl Miller suggests that passing has occurred in the past due to issues of power, in that men have more powerful roles than women in the theatre, usually defined according to hegemonic, and thus heteronormative, conceptions of masculinity. Additionally, men are normally defined by a sexual relationship to a female character. As with Miller, my study participants were also keen to reiterate that ‘most of the celebrated openly gay stars are no longer at an age to be considered as Romeo’ (ibid. 12). Even exemplar stars remain the same as those provided by Miller (1996), and include actors such as Ian McKellen, Stephen Fry and Simon Callow. As I have shown here, a profession that is held to be ‘gay friendly’, which on the one hand attracts many for its freedom of expression and bohemian culture, is one that leads its gay male performers to the same ‘heterosexual charades’.

### ***Sector Struggles***

I have implied that the different strands of the entertainment industry require careful consideration. For example, the majority of participants with television and film experience opted to moderate and manipulate their physicality within these

environments; particularly at the audition stage (I discuss disciplining the performer's body in Chapter Seven with reference to the embodiment of gay identity at work). There are various reasons for this. I now discuss these with reference to the *content* of television and film work, the *culture* of these two worksites and the *costs* associated with television and film production.

*Content:* Performances on camera are to be 'contained' and 'reined in'. When casting for a heterosexual man, it was felt directors could not ignore *any* traits in a performer that challenge idealised images of conventional heterosexuality (voice, mannerisms, appearance; for a discussion on 'camp' see Chapter Seven). In other words, as discussed above, participants (and gatekeepers) stressed the absolute importance of finding the appropriate package for film and TV roles since the content of work requires 'naturalism'. This is in contrast to theatre work, which lends itself to exaggerated (and thus camp), dramatic, 'larger than life' performances, to compensate for live audiences who are sometimes sat a fair distance away from the stage. Comments in this vein relate to earlier accounts that emphasise the increasing preference for actors *who are the role*. "For television parts, a casting director will have a fixed image in his mind, and he won't deviate from that image until that person walks through the door [sic]" (Zac, 39, Stage and Film, White). In light of this, performers felt that television and film directors (re)cast 'safe options' or options associated with star (straight) products audiences are familiar with. Although I have already touched upon some of these issues, it was felt that many of the challenges gay performers face are *magnified* in these two industries. To compensate, many participants negated sexual identity when attending auditions in these sectors. For example, Huw (39, Stage and TV, White) felt that going in for television or film roles,

he often pressurises himself to ‘cover’ or ‘screen over’ nuances associated with his minority sexual identity. Somewhat similarly:

I think [gay actors] make a conscious choice when going in for a camera audition, to suppress their actions, movements. Everything has to be reduced. I think there is a pressure to be straight, particularly if you’re going for a straight role (Mario, 28, Stage, TV and Film, White).

*Culture:* Data suggest that aspects of the performing arts can be characterised as heteronormative space. I show in Chapter Six that gay men migrate towards certain areas of policing (see also Broomfield, 2007). In similar fashion, data suggest that gay performers migrate to certain strands of the performing arts. Theatre, labelled as the ‘pink fluffy bubble’ (Jolyon, 39, West End Musical Theatre, White), was thought to be particularly welcoming, yet the television and film industries were characterised in distinctly heteronormative terms. Callum (43, Stage, White) recalled that TV and film crew members often referred to the actors on set as a ‘bunch of poofs’, highlighting that even those who comprise aspects of the labour process of performing make assumptions about the sexual identities of the male performers they work closely with. In this sense, ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ appears to manifest itself to varying degrees within certain strands of the occupation. This is alluded to by Philippe (58, Stage, TV and Film, White, Equity Officer) who spoke of the cultural dynamics ‘on set’. Whereas data in section one can be closely allied to the assertion made by Sinfield (1996) – that theatre lends itself to the expression of difference – other strands of performing were characterised as follows:

Film crews and television crews are, let me tell you, very white-working-class. And very nice. But they’re very, very, very straight. It’s sort of like going to a straight pub. In theatre, it’s a lot easier to camp around for a laugh. I mean, the British theatre has always been about the pantomime, dames, and people just love the camp, because it’s so funny.

But I think film and TV sets are much 'straighter' environments.  
(Philippe)

Overall, on experiences of the content and culture of television and film work, performers agreed with Barrios' (2003) consideration of Hollywood. Although Hollywood is thought to be home to a well-established, at times nepotistic, same-sex community of professionals, it is often beyond the purview of the public eye. While some gay performers can use gay networks of actors, casting directors, agents and producers to nurture their careers in film, they can face the sort of identity disclosure dilemmas more commonly reported by LGB employees in areas of employment less accepting of minority sexual identity (see Bowring and Brewis, 2009; Ward and Winstanley, 2003; Woods and Lucas, 1993). Comments appear to illustrate that performers wishing to pursue a career in film are aware of the challenges they face should they decide to come out. They relate to the earlier point made by Agent One (above).

*Cost:* Finally, participants reflected on the costs associated with television and film production, in that there are added economic pressures that require consideration. Investment in a film or television programme can be huge, as features such as the studio and location cost large sums of money, and employers want to ensure they make this money back. As Zac (39, Stage and Film, White) expressed, "If a major film is produced based on an openly gay character, it's not going to perform as well at the box office right? That goes for any mainstream television programme." Given the end product is expected to be heteronormative, in terms of the neg(oti)ation of

identity, this was felt to contribute in silencing issues of gay sexuality in the industry more generally.

### **Equality, Diversity and ‘Sexual Orientation’**

I have shown in section one that the term ‘gay-friendly’ can be used to characterise performing and performing work. In interview, when it came to discussions on the experiences of prejudice or discrimination, even Equity Officer Philippe (58, Stage, TV and Film, White) noted, “The battle’s been won. Was there a battle to win in the first place?” Philippe commented that in his Equity capacity, he was currently working hard at “getting the regional theatres back on their feet”; a plight seen to be more pressing than issues of sexuality and discrimination. Equity LGB officer, Clyde (47, Stage and Film, White), also drew attention to the sheer lack of issues raised with the union concerning sexuality, in comparison to other trade unions:

When I go to TUC conferences [as part of my Equity role], I see that there is a comparison between the number of calls other trade unions may be getting compared to Equity. They have a hell of a lot of problems sometimes... I’m talking about the fire service, the police, teachers...

In 2004, the LGB committee set up an anti-bullying hotline for those of minority sexual identity, responding to anecdotal evidence and reports of homophobic bullying and harassment at work (equity.org.uk). Clyde recalled that this hotline dealt with a “handful of incidents”. Drawing on Dean’s (2008b) statistics which suggest that 20% of male performers are gay, instances of discrimination based on sexuality *appear* to be isolated at least.

And yet, section two shows that it would be foolish to assume that gay performers do not experience disadvantage. As we have seen, gay performers negate sexual identity at the point of access in order to secure work. Indeed, sexuality *does* matter, in relation to passing throughout the casting process, toxic banter, the anxieties associated with ‘pulling off straight roles’ or otherwise. These are similar challenges gay men face in heteronormative contexts (Humphrey, 1999; Ward and Winstanley, 2007). To suggest that sexuality is a non-issue to gay performers would be misleadingly incomplete. Where this has been the case in other industries, the assumption is that it must be rectified (as we see in Chapter Six), yet we are faced with an occupation marked by a comparative lack of equality policies on sexual orientation.

Indeed, the latter half of Chapter Five raises questions surrounding (perceived) prejudice and disadvantage according to gay performers, and how this might be addressed. Whereas workplace policies have been implemented in abundance throughout the police service to redress patterns of inequality, it is unclear what policies are in place with regards to performing work, or who (permitting policy does exist) plays an active role in the shaping of initiatives (employers/gatekeepers/Equity?). As I go on to show, given performers are self-employed businesses that are rarely institutionally bound to any organisation, the structural *realities* along with the *content* of performing works make it trickier for individuals to challenge disadvantage when it is felt to occur.



### ***Identifying the Problem***

An article written by Ramin Setoodeh (2010), published in US magazine *Newsweek*, recently provoked outrage on the blogosphere after it disparaged actors Sean Hayes (more commonly known as Jack of *Will and Grace*) and Jonathan Groff (of the hit show *Glee*) for their portrayal of straight men on Broadway and television. Many came out in opposition to what was widely perceived as the article's scent of homophobia. Effectively, Setoodeh crudely suggests that gay actors should think about remaining closeted. His underlying argument is that the suspension of disbelief audiences must overcome in accepting a gay actor in a straight role is too great. While Setoodeh is also referring to shared stereotypes (effeminacy) that can reveal an actor's 'true' sexual identity, and although the article has an offensive tone (he refers to Sean Hayes as someone who 'even tips off your grandmother's gaydar'), it has sparked a debate that has been boiling beneath the surface with regard to performing. As we have seen, it is a sore point for some performers that straight men play gay roles in pieces such as *Brokeback Mountain* or *Fucking Men*, at a time when some openly gay actors are cautioning other gay actors to remain closeted – such as Rupert Everett, who alludes to a certain kind of homophobia in Hollywood (Everett's complaint about Hollywood's apparent queasiness with openly gay male performers is felt by Everett to be manifest in the tendency to type-cast gay actors and their stronger occupation of supporting rather than leading roles). In light of this, some might regard Setoodeh's piece to be apposite. Even though many bloggers were quick to blast the article as distasteful journalism, if Setoodeh sees the world in such a way, it is possible that directors, casting directors and agents do so too. This has even been confirmed by

some of the data I present above. In other words, there is a point behind comments such as:

If an actor of the stature of George Clooney came out of the closet tomorrow, would we still accept him as a heterosexual leading man? It's hard to say. Or maybe not. Doesn't it mean something that no openly gay actor like that exists? (Setoodeh, 2010)

Recently, the *Don't Play Me, Pay Me*<sup>5</sup> campaign, set up by Nicky Clarke, advocates that the practice of able-bodied actors playing disabled characters can be equated to 'blackening up'. It highlights that an element of prejudice characterises the decisions made by gatekeepers who prefer able-bodied actors for disabled roles, whereas these roles could be allocated to actors who already have the disability<sup>6</sup>. This would open up opportunities for disabled actors who are particularly restricted in a competitive industry. Given the implications of my participants' comments in section two, and the ramifications of Setoodeh's article, it would appear that there is a similar debate to be had with reference to gay sexuality and performing work.

Over the years, the drive to recruit, retain and nurture gay men and women in various occupations has grown significantly (see Chapter Three). 'Sexual orientation' is a 'protected characteristic', along with age, disability, race, religion or belief, sex and gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, and pregnancy and maternity (Equality Act, 2010). The LGB population has become the target of numerous initiatives, particularly within occupations such as the police. While it is fair to say that performing work bears limited similarities to the structures and cultures of bureaucratically run institutions such as the police, recent activism regarding disability in the industry ties in with the positive action and diversity initiatives that

have been implemented within other sectors. Still, it appears that the issue of sexual orientation and performing work remains distinctly under-addressed. There are unique structural and cultural reasons for this (see below).

Yet if we are to agree that ‘playing disabled’ should be left to those who are disabled, what about issues of gay sexuality? And why is no one talking about these issues? Should it be up to gay actors to play gay roles? Reflecting on my own research, I show that gay performers face a unique set of challenges. Many of these challenges relate to the crucial issue of *access to work*, a concern that cuts right through Nicky Clarke’s argument. While the logical extent of the *Don’t Play Me, Pay Me* philosophy is questionable (in the case of *gay performers for gay parts*, this potentially narrows opportunities for these workers, should gay men then *only* be considered for gay roles, which are few and far between), it raises a debate about the importance of providing opportunities for actors of a minority who could be facing covert forms of marginalisation. Whereas disabled performers face disadvantage on the basis that directors assume that these actors will need very high levels of one-to-one support (as it is suggested on the dontplaymepayme.com website), according to the perceptions of my participants, gay actors face disadvantage based on a different set of (mis)conceptions (associated with the ‘suspension of belief’ argument, outlined above). This ultimately limits the types of roles disabled *and* gay actors *could* be playing.

Nevertheless, although the majority of my participants acknowledge the ways in which prejudice forms the fulcrum around which performers gain access to work, they

also note that once work has been secured, they are able to live out within an industry that remains devoid of EO policies. In other words, we are dealing with a complicated picture concerning sexuality and performing work.

***Addressing the Problem: The structural realities of performing work***

In legal terms, performing work is commonly paid for as a contract for services rather than a contract of service as in the standard employment situation (Dean, 2010). Overall, it appears that the make-up of the workforce within performing, the precarious nature of the work itself ('short-term', 'casualised' and 'unpredictable' – see Dean, 2004), combined with a multitude of performing work-sites make for fewer diversity initiatives within the occupation (beyond the minimum terms negotiated between employers and the union). Performing is not completely devoid of policy initiatives directed towards the issue of sexual orientation, the main impetus for driving equalities being union involvement. Equity involvement, as opposed to employer workplace diversity policy, has been crucial in the development of (a modicum of) initiatives for LGB members over the past few years, including the setting up an LGB committee within the union, along with an anti-bullying hotline (as described by Clyde above). Further, the agreement made between Equity and the Society for London Theatre specifies that the parties affirm their commitment to a policy of equal opportunity in connection with the employment and treatment of artists regardless of sexual orientation. Yet the structural realities of performing account for why preoccupation with equality generally remains low on the agenda (see also Holgate and McKay, 2009), including the importance of individual

reputation and maintaining amicable relationships with industry gatekeepers. Since performers are effectively self-employed, Jolyon (39, West End Musical Theatre, White) felt that maintaining positive workplace relationships with gatekeepers is critical to successful career development. Other performers spoke in similar terms, and stressed that this was one reason why they rarely challenged perceived prejudice. This chimes with Dean's research who found that when it came to inadequate pay and conditions, some performers were reluctant to go public for, "If someone gets a bad reputation in this business, they don't work again" (Equity Official, see Dean, 2010: 3).

Some participants also felt that should the industry attempt to redress concerns associated with access to work for gay performers, policies could never amount to more than 'empty shells' (Hoque and Noon, 2004) which fail to deliver gains for workers, due to the characteristics of performing work. Performing opportunities are also heavily dependent on the (often silent) 'work grapevine' (see Dean, 2005: 149), ad-hoc networks or word of mouth, with many performers noting that work tends to generate more work (similarly, others felt that in terms of access to work "It's not what you know, but who you know"). Formalisation of recruitment and selection in the context of traditional equality initiatives often involves moving away from reliance on word of mouth methods (Kirton and Greene, 2004), yet word of mouth was perceived to be the "yellow brick road" in performing (Mario, 28, Stage, TV and Film, White). As described by numerous participants, once in work, performers found it possible to secure further auditions due to the relationships formed with key gatekeepers or fellow performers. Due to these realities, it was felt that recommendations set out by organisations such as Stonewall or ACAS, and relating to

the Equality Act, are rarely followed by industry gatekeepers; advice such as: ‘It makes sound business sense for an organisation to attract a wide field of applicants – it is not a good idea to rely on current staff as this may limit the diversity of the organisation’ (acas.org.uk). In similar fashion, Holgate and McKay (2009) found that recommendations concerning the advertising of work set out in the Racial Equality Code of Practice on Racial Equality in Employment were rarely followed by audio-visual employers associated with the industry’s reliance on freelance labour. A similar picture was painted by the majority of performers.

It soon became clear. Certain policies that might be implemented relating to race, disability or sexual orientation would become almost impossible to implement given the structural realities of performing work. In other words, the conditions under which many performers work – the fact that they are effectively self employed workers, or the difficulties associated with gaining access to performing work (generally obtained by individuals who are already working) – means that gay men who *feel* disadvantaged, are either reluctant or powerless to do anything about the situation. Implementing diversity policy to rectify perceived prejudice within the industry was also complicated due to the *content* of performing work and the “requirements of the show” (Peter, 21, Musical Theatre, White), to which I now turn.

### ***Addressing the Problem: The content of performing work***

Other performers highlighted that although discrimination operates in covert (or perhaps unconscious) ways in the industry, found most clearly in relation to auditions, its presence can be justified based on what is ‘right’ for the end product. In other words, recruitment and selection decisions are frequently made solely on the basis of superficial personal characteristics (Adnett, 1988). As I confirm, however, such discrimination ‘does not seem to be discrimination of a type easily categorisable as ‘wrong’ or easily addressed by any of the regulatory strategies’ (Dean, 2005: 302).

Ex-performer, Zac (39, Stage and Film, White), who now has a wealth of experience directing amateur stage productions, spoke extensively around this topic. Recently, he was faced with the task of casting *Beauty and the Beast*. While he felt obliged to give one of the leading roles, *Gaston*, to a “perfectly competent and capable” longstanding member of the ensemble, he eventually gave the part to an outsider who happened to audition for the role. Although this amateur performer gave a good audition, he had limited experience, and had never been a part of any theatre company, yet “he just looked the part” in terms of his muscular physique. Anticipating the decision would spark controversy, he sat the company down at rehearsals and reiterated that this was in everybody’s interest: “I told them, the audience *expects* to see someone who looks like *Gaston*, and he happened to walk through my door”. It became clear that Zac’s decision to discriminate based on (what appears to be) a ‘superficial characteristic’ (physique), was grounded in financial logic. Zac later told me that recruiting this performer for the role of *Gaston* generated greater profit for the company, since the

show received very positive reviews based on its cast. Zac stressed that it is not up to directors to make decisions based on equality guidelines, except that it is only right to audition all those who would like to try out for certain roles (in the case of amateur dramatics). When it came to making a choice, however, this had to be done based on:

...what *I* see as fitting for the part. I would never cast myself, or expect to be cast in the role of *Henry the V*. Can you imagine me doing ‘A horse! A horse! My kingdom for a horse!’ I’d be like ‘Excuse me love, can I borrow...’ [said campily]... it just doesn’t work.

What we also see here is that male performers assess themselves according to certain embodied competencies, based on dominant cultural perceptions of age, attractiveness, masculinity and so on, which affects their own decisions when it comes to audition attendance (Dean, 2005)<sup>7</sup>.

Similarly, in response to addressing prejudice, Peter (21, Musical Theatre, White) reflected:

*How would that even work?* A casting director doesn’t necessarily think ‘we need one black’ or ‘we should employ one gay’. What they need are people who are going to represent ‘the part’ in terms of ‘the show’. They cast with a vision of what the show needs to look like. It’s not about what the people performing it are. That’s where the distinction probably lies. They can’t really have a target. They don’t need to be able to tick a box and say ‘we have one black person or one gay person’. It has to be suitable for ‘the show’. Out of a whole company of 50 people, the only race is white. There are Russians, Irish and British, but all of us are white. That wouldn’t be the case if there was some sort of equal opportunity policy in place, I don’t think. Purely because the industry is looking for specific types for specific casts, I don’t think the industry needs policies in place.



Implicit in these accounts is some acknowledgement that performing work is justifiably exempt from legislative demands such as the Sex Discrimination Act and the Race Relations Act for the purposes of authenticity in dramatic performance, characterised here as the 'requirements of the show'. As Dean (2007) writes, being a man/woman is a genuine occupational qualification (GOQ) and Equity has never contested this. In the Equality Act 2010, there is also a clause related to sexual orientation and 'genuine occupational requirements', however, there is no mention of 'for the purposes of authenticity in dramatic performance'. Particularly when it came to gendered sexuality, however, there was a sense that the same principle could be applied to workers who stereotypically *appear* gay. In this regard, certain gay men *should be* rejected for certain roles, but potentially, any performer, for any number of reasons should be rejected when particular characteristics *are not fitting for a role*, related to perceptions of market demand. Some of these reasons included: Do his teeth cross over? Is he too short for the part? Is he ugly? *Gaston* would be bigger than him. *Is he too effeminate? He would never be married to her.* Related to the final two reasons, Dean (2005) also found that embodied sexuality can openly be viewed as a competency when it comes to casting decisions.

## **Conclusion**

As with men located in traditional feminine occupations, this chapter shows that gay performers neg(oti)ate Otherness in partial and fragmented ways (Pullen and Simpson, 2009). The research shows that sexual identities are relational processes that gay men seek to celebrate as well as resist (ibid.). While I emphasise that performing

can be experienced as 'gay-friendly', findings suggests that a paradox characterises the 'liberating openness' associated with performing work combined with the loose talk this openness can encourage. At times, tongue-in-cheek rhetoric caused offence to gay individuals, and was interpreted as inadvertent or 'borderline' homophobia. Significantly, I show that the audition is a key site in which heteronormative constructions of gender and gay male sexuality are mobilized. I also find the different veins of the industry are not equally as accepting of 'dissident sexuality'. Television and film are shown to be permeated with a degree of hegemonic heterosexuality.

I question taken-for-granted assumptions of the 'gay-friendly' occupation. Although gay men are seen to dominate particular areas of the performing arts, to assume that this implies that gay performers do not conceal, or that they are immune to the anxieties associated with minority sexual identity at work, would be inadequate. Indeed, the research cautions one in assuming that performing is 'gay-friendly', highlighting the complexities involved concerning the neg(oti)ation of sexual identity. I also demonstrate that addressing many of the issues gay performers face through diversity policy is perceived as particularly problematic due to the structural realities of performing work.

The next chapter continues to explore the work experiences of gay men within occupations commonly (dis)associated with minority sexual identity. Data here go on to question negative notions concerning 'homophobic' police culture, and show that police officers appear increasingly comfortable negotiating 'out' gay identity at work. I discuss how far, if at all, this reveals the occupation as 'gay-friendly' (as opposed to

homophobic) by drawing upon interesting contradictions, such as the evidential pressure placed on gay officers to appear heteronormative at certain points.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a term used to describe an industry that appears in stark contrast to heteronormative occupations. While heteronormativity refers to those punitive social norms and institutionalised frameworks that force us to conform to hegemonic, heterosexual standards for identity, homonormativity refers to a marked indifference towards heterosexual standards for identity and an openness towards gay identity.

<sup>2</sup> StageTalk is a discussion forum on the website [www.thestage.co.uk](http://www.thestage.co.uk), a web-based version of The Stage newspaper.

<sup>3</sup> His research focuses on gay men's friendships in a variety of workplaces. One of his respondents worked as an usher in a theatre.

<sup>4</sup> As we have seen, once work has been secured, performers might be able to reveal gay identity.

<sup>5</sup> The *Don't Play Me, Pay Me* campaign seeks to actively encourage and support disabled people to follow their chosen creative career path (see [www.dontplaymepayme.com](http://www.dontplaymepayme.com)).

<sup>6</sup> Nicky Clarke argues that there is fear and trepidation, since many directors assume that disabled actors will need very high levels of one-to-one support. A similar picture is painted by Dean (2005) in the context of pregnant women and childcare arrangements.

<sup>7</sup> In Chapter Seven, I suggest that this process only seeks to reinforce dominant perceptions of heterosexual relations.

## **CHAPTER 6: POLICING AND PERFORMING GAY SEXUALITY II**

### **POLICING**

In 1994, Marc Burke provided a glimpse into the tumultuous working lives of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) police officers (Burke, 1994). At the time, not only did Burke's research provide insight into the neg(oti)ation of LGB identity at work, it did so with reference to a particularly 'gay-hostile' occupation; policing. Indeed, gay men have long been uncoupled with tough, masculine organisations such as the police and the armed forces (Britton and Williams, 1995; Burke, 1994; Kaplan and Ben-Ari, 2000; Miller et al., 2003). As observed in Chapter Four, Burke's study showed that gay police officers are likely to experience identity ambivalence working under enveloping conditions of machismo and institutionalised homophobia; embrace masculine signifiers associated with conventional images of police work; and adopt dual roles – heterosexual(ised) workplace personas and 'homosexual' off-duty identities. Nevertheless, times have changed since the early 1990s, as highlighted by numerous academics (Loftus, 2008, Loftus, 2010; Davies and Thomas, 2008), and police forces are under increasing pressure to understand themselves as 'sites of diversity' (Loftus, 2008: 758). I have already noted that in 2009, 18 of the 100 companies featured in Stonewall's Equality Index were police constabularies, implying that police forces have become fertile ground for the construction of gay identity at work. Loftus (2008) holds that since the Macpherson Inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence in 2004, and documentaries such as *The Secret Policeman* (2003), police forces have become eager to shy away from stereotypes that perceive the occupation as heterosexist, homophobic and racist. As a result, they have

attempted to redress inequality associated with sexual orientation. Currently, however, few studies explore how those of nonconformist sexual identity, gay male or otherwise, (in comparison to the white, heterosexual male ideal) neg(oti)ate themselves against a backdrop of these changing conditions of police culture. Are police officers more likely to come out of the corporate closet or do they continue to fear persecution and derision in the 21st century?

In this chapter, I draw on the interview data gathered from gay male police officers to examine if, and if so how, they experience their sexuality as ‘deviant’ at work. In particular, I explore this research question in the context of wider changes that have taken place within UK police authorities seeking to improve the participation rates and work experiences of minority employees. I follow two of the main themes explored in Chapter Five. Section one explores policing as an example of a ‘gay-friendly haven’. I argue that, for many participants, sexuality is not seen as an organisational ‘liability’ or ‘deviant’, but as an aspect of human difference generally accepted and valued within many police work contexts. As captured by one participant, the occupation’s “love affair” with diversity policies has been influential. Narratives illuminate crucial turning points associated with the acceptance of gay police officers linked to diversity policies. I show how changes to induction programmes, recruitment strategies and everyday memorabilia disseminate a positive message regarding the acceptance of minority sexual identity. I illustrate how these initiatives impact upon the day-to-day lives of gay men for the better, suggesting that we are dealing with a ‘gay-friendly’ occupation, albeit to a differing extent compared to performing. I also draw attention to how some gay officers feel that diversity/equality policies and practices on ‘sexual orientation’ are limited in scope,

giving them reason to suggest that LGB sexualities are not valued in their own right but as resources that form part of a diverse police workforce.

‘Getting ‘Straight’ to Work’ goes onto highlight that although individuals no longer engage in the dramaturgy associated with the ‘double lives’ of the 1990s (see Burke, 1994), the circumstances under which some employees are able to identify as ‘gay’ at work remain highly circumscribed. Here I show that gay police officers continue to experience pressure to ‘fit’ into existing police cultures, indicating that some gay sexualities are constructed as acceptable while others are still labelled ‘deviant’ (this point is taken up further in Chapter Seven). In other words, I show that contemporary identity management strategies are a variation on the stories recalled by Burke’s gay police officers in 1994. Expressed in interview, it was clear that participants seek to gain psychological security and legitimacy within a heteronormative environment, and again, particularly within certain sectors of policing. Finally, I reflect on ‘life on the beat’ as a minority worker, accounts of which allude to some of the heteronormative conditions gay officers are expected to reproduce. Overall, Chapter Six problematises popular and academic perceptions that relate police culture to overt forms of homophobic victimisation, yet reflects on some of the caveats associated with the neg(oti)ation of minority sexual identity at work.

### **A ‘Gay-Friendly’ Haven: “*Get off your soapbox and make us a brew!*”**

In the UK at 31 March 2006, there were 36,807 female police officers, representing 22 per cent of the total (whereas in performing, there is a 50:50 split). At the same point, there were 5,297 ethnic minority officers, representing 3.7 per cent of the total police service (statistics.gov.uk, 2007). Anecdotal evidence collected throughout the course of my own research suggests that around 6% of the British Police Service identify as LGB. Clearly, policing remains an overwhelmingly white, heterosexual, male-dominated occupation, and this ‘demographic fact’ poses important challenges for those of minority gender, ethnicity or sexuality (Loftus, 2008: 757). Yet in contrast to stereotypes that portray policing as homophobic, my research findings suggest that gay officers can exude confidence in their roles. While participants felt discrimination was commonplace in the past, they were equally keen to stress that homophobic victimisation has been dealt with. On the surface at least, ‘identity work’ – or the ‘management’ of (homo)sexuality – is something gay officers historically engaged in, yet there currently seems to be less pressure to conform to a heterosexual(ised) ideal. In this regard, it would appear that legal, social and organizational factors have enabled gay men to identify as ‘typical’ police officers, much as they have allowed for gay workers to lay claim to professional identities in the NHS (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2005). Illustrative of a cultural shift, Isaac (30, PC, NMPR) notes:

A few years ago, I was with the boys in a riot carrier. Of course, a lot of them were going “Look at that girl over there!” The Sergeant suddenly said “We have to go around Soho, so Isaac can have a look at the boys!” All of a sudden, my team were going “What about him. Or him?” I don’t think ten years ago, that would have happened; a whole carrier of butch officers driving around the streets of Soho for [the gay officer], when

they're obviously interested in women. There has definitely been a culture change.

Although Isaac alludes to 'the heterosexual panorama' or 'the heterosexual assumption' (given that he positions himself as the 'isolated exception' working alongside a whole carrier of butch police officers who are 'obviously' interested in women), other participants found that police culture increasingly renders sexual identity as irrelevant and distinctly unproblematic. Here, I find that heteronormative occupations typically perceived as 'gay-hostile', facilitate happiness and greater confidence among gay employees. It would be inadequate therefore to assume that all police officers feel ill at ease coming out to colleagues, and it is said that gay identity can be easily integrated at work:

I genuinely believe that if someone started here today, as a brand new probationer, and said "My name's X, and I'm gay", we'd say "Get off your soap box and make us a brew". No one cares... Do I like being gay in the police? [Laughs] Yeah! I think it's great! If you'd ask me that question [when I first joined], I may have had a different answer. (Clive, 30, PC, Neighbourhood Policing)

I couldn't be happier. I've never had any negative experiences whatsoever. Everybody has been so helpful. There's a fantastic support group as well. They arrange nights out and social events. It's just great. I've got lots of gay friends who work in the Met. (Stan, 28, PC, British Transport Police)

As we saw in Chapter Five, straight performers sometimes enact fluid subject positions along the lines of sexuality. Heterosexual performers were said to develop friendships with gay colleagues suggesting that the occupation offers numerous possibilities for denaturalising dominant discourses of identity. In similar fashion, gay officers felt straight colleagues were increasingly able to resist binary constructions of



gender and sexuality without fear of repercussion since times had changed. It is noteworthy that some of the closest workplace friendships reported involved heterosexual men, supplanting stereotypes of heterosexuals as most likely to give openly gay police officers little respect and dignity. This implies that the heteronormative culture of policing temporarily erodes at certain points. Heterosexual co-workers of gay officers were felt to experiment with dissident sexual and gendered behaviours. According to participants, flirtation and banter of a “homosexual nature” even provided light relief for some straight officers who took pleasure in breaking away from macho performances of workplace identity. Clive (30, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) and Cameron (26, Sp, Response) noted that they “flirt constantly in the office” with “straight mates” who “love the sexualised camaraderie”. Even ex-TSG (Territorial Support Group) colleagues were known to “find the whole gay thing fascinating” and took the opportunity to ask numerous questions about gay sex. Geoff (43, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) even recalled that, “Whenever we go out for a team drink on a Friday, we always end up at [a gay bar], and no one has a problem with it.” Upon coming out, Will (33, PC, Response) found his straight colleagues were excited by the fact that they now “had someone to go clothes shopping with.” While this form of stereotyping gives heterosexual men licence to value gay friends, it unhelpfully treats gay men as an undifferentiated group. Nevertheless, engaging in these friendship activities enabled participants such as Will to affirm their identities as gay men, and were generally understood as examples of acceptance that showed some straight officers were prepared to flirt with the boundaries of normative sexual identity. Some individuals reported feeling ‘accepted’ as a ‘whole person’ rather than the bearer of stigma, by those who are not at risk from being stigmatised and who do not stigmatise.

### ***The British Police Service and ‘Gay-Friendly’ Policy***

As outlined in Chapter Four, policy has been an important factor that has facilitated these changing conditions of police culture. A range of ‘good practice’ employers within an assortment of industries (including IBM, BT, Ford of Britain and Leeds City Council) have been found to be committed to equality and diversity with regards to LGB employees (Colgan et. al, 2007). The police are no exception. Broadly speaking, we can contrast the police and the performing arts as being comprehensively proactive versus minimalist/partial in their approach to equal opportunities respectively. This is owing to the fact that we are dealing with two very different occupations, particularly when it comes to occupational structure. It is fair to say that the police have extensive policies relating to sexual orientation, suggesting that in terms of written commitments, the term ‘gay-friendly’ more accurately applies to the British Police Service. As noted in Chapter One, however, an interesting question is that where occupations have adopted policy to rectify institutionalised exclusion of certain minority groups, to what extent can they represent ‘gay-friendly’ worksites? In other words, does policy act as a conducive mediating force in the working lives of gay officers, or does the police service simply ‘tick a box’ relating to a range of initiatives that it is possible to implement? I now show that a number of stories indicate that police officers increasingly live ‘out’ at work thanks to a range of ‘gay-friendly’ policies that have been put into place.

## *Policy in Practice*

Of late, appropriately captured in a web advertisement found on [jobs.pinkpaper.com](http://jobs.pinkpaper.com), the police have been quick to promote the service as open to all, regardless of gender, sexuality, ethnicity or religion:

Any man or woman who thrives on challenges, and seeks a job where no two days are the same would find the police a rich and rewarding career. The Met Police is London's largest employer with almost 50,000 people, and the makeup of the organisation seeks to reflect the diversity of the communities it serves... the MPS Equalities Policy covers all aspects of diversity including sexual orientation... The Gay Police Association is one of the Met's largest staff networks... The MPS is [also] part of Stonewall's Diversity Champions Programme and for the past three years we have been progressing up the top 100 employers index...

In doing so, they have heavily drawn upon 'managing diversity' discourses or 'the business case' for diversity (Kirton and Greene, 2005; Liff, 1995; Redman and Wilkinson, 2001). The police appear keen to ensure that diversity features at all levels of the organisational hierarchy, arguing that as an employer, the service will accrue numerous benefits by making the most of different skills. Crucially, police management see it as *necessary* to have in place a diverse workforce, since policy belief is that the internal make-up of the service should represent the (often) diverse nature of the communities which it serves.

Surprisingly perhaps, in 2006, Staffordshire police was named Britain's most 'gay-friendly' employer by Stonewall ([stonewall.org.uk](http://stonewall.org.uk)), suggesting that along with Colgan's sixteen 'good practice' employers, certain police forces are equally

progressive<sup>1</sup>. Sean (38, I, Anti Terrorism), an Inspector at the constabulary, reflected on this achievement and felt that more and more LGB officers were able to affirm their sexuality without being pinned to negative stereotypes of LGB people as sexual deviants: “Statistics now show that nearly one in ten of Staffordshire’s police force identify as gay, most of whom are thought to be ‘living out’ in the workplace”<sup>2</sup>. He also emphasised that Staffordshire was not the isolated exception in this regard. Although there is a lack of robust statistical evidence concerning the proportion of the UK population who identify as LGB (Colgan et al, 2007), I have noted elsewhere that the DTI’s regulatory assessment indicates that around 6% of the UK population identifies as LGB (DTI, 2005). In this respect, Sean felt that certain constabularies “are well above the national average relating to their ‘proportion’ of gay employees.” Further, I was referred to staff monitoring surveys. These showed that more officers are now out in the service than are out at home. This was understood by Sean as a sign of progressive change within some police authorities, particularly so against the backdrop of stereotyped images of UK constabularies as unsafe work environments for LGB employees (Burke, 1993, 1994). In contrast to studies carried out in the early nineties (see for example Burke’s 1994 study or Leinen’s 1993 study), Sean alludes to the positive negotiation of gay identity within a police climate that is considered to be *more* tolerant and open than some external (home) situations. ‘Double lives’ (see Burke 1994) are still led by gay officers; ironically the presentation of self is manipulated *at home*, to maintain the appearance of heterosexuality, whilst this mask of deceit can be shed at work.

Sean was eager to highlight that these recent statistics on the number of LGB officers in Staffordshire reiterate that the force’s “diversity driven agenda” since the early

2000s has paid dividends; an agenda he has helped to sustain after forming Staffordshire's original LGB support group in 1999. Earlier this decade, attention focused on diversity awareness training and policy changes, including staff monitoring<sup>3</sup> and the disciplining of any adverse behaviour directed towards people of a sexual minority. Once these practices became more mainstream "[Change came to Staffordshire] more quickly than anticipated." Even as I sat with Sean, I was drawn to his colourful coffee mug. On this mug, a slogan abhorring transphobia was written (victimisation directed towards transsexuals). This subtle 'organisational prop' (see also Loftus, 2008: 762) immediately exposed me to some of the informal measures that disseminate the 'celebration of cultural difference' message, apparently emulated throughout the service.

Some officers went on to emphasise that currently, not only do recruitment advertisements regularly feature in the 'pink press' (these aim to highlight that the doors are open to gay men and women), as with other organisations (see Solomon, 1995), forces have sought radical change by removing institutional and cultural obstacles that have historically prevented minorities from progressing. On this matter, these participants felt that messages from senior management about stamping out inappropriate behaviour and attitudes towards LGB employees exceeded the level of rhetoric. In some constabularies, senior officers had acknowledged cop canteen culture as a breeding ground for sexism, racism and homophobia, and had taken corrective measures:

The Chief Constable closed all canteens and bars, as a way to eliminate 'canteen culture'. It was a radical idea, but it removed 'safe white space', within which officers were able to express discriminatory views.

It now became far more difficult for people to have that networking capability to make transactions that were hostile towards other people. That had quite a significant effect on the ways teams gelled together. With canteens removed, this meant culture changes came into effect far more rapidly. (Jason, 50, PC, Traffic)

Eradicating canteens and police bars meant that LGB workers or those of BME status could no longer feel intimidated by 'safe white space' associated with the ubiquitous norm of a white, non-disabled, heterosexual policeman. Jason's quote (above) is revealing of the progressive steps taken by some police authorities to distance themselves from negative associations with sexism, racism and homophobia. Dismantling aspects of policing culture in the face of possible resistance from those hostile to such changes is challenging (Belkin and McNichol, 2002). However, study findings revealed less evidence of backlash to diversity/equality work on sexual orientation, and more evidence of the supportive roles played by HR practices and the heterosexual colleagues of gay officers. Another officer who worked for a Staffordshire constabulary highlighted that these changes had implications for the ways in which he negotiated his own sexual identity:

We are who we are now. There are no 'hidden veil' conversations at work. We're completely open. We come to work as our 'full selves', and it's completely OK. Previously, I would divert attention away from conversations about my personal life, and just say that it was no one else's business. (Roger, 33, Se, Response)

Before the introduction of these changes, Roger alludes to a suppressed existence, associated with 'passing' gay identity (Goffman, 1963). Previously, he would actively "divert attention away from" questions of his sexuality in a fairly abrupt manner ("It's none of your business!"), but was reluctant to lie ('covering')<sup>4</sup>. Since the closure of police canteens and bars, along with the development of other policies, however, a

‘veil’ has been lifted for Roger. He is now able to reveal, discuss and cherish his ‘full self’ at work that includes his sexual identity. Roger’s account not only alludes to policing as ‘gay-friendly’, but suggests that policy, in the form of the reorganisation of heterosexist workspace, has been an important mediating force in the construction of workplace gay identity for gay officers. Indeed, for Sean, Jason and Roger, the prevailing accent on diversity has reconfigured historical forms of identity neg(oti)ation associated with minority sexual identity and police work (see Loftus, 2008 for a similar account based on race. For ‘traditional’ examples, see Burke, 1994)

Data above show that certain constabularies have strived to recruit gay men at entry level by engaging in ‘positive action’ (see Liff, 1997; Roosevelt-Thomas 1990; Solomon 1995 for a discussion on positive action), such as advertising in the pink press/at gay events. A number of policies have been adopted which take (in this case) sexuality into consideration in an attempt to promote equal opportunities. Narratives suggest these initiatives quell fear of marginalisation. One officer, who worked for a West Yorkshire constabulary, noted that the evident pan-force drive to recruit gay men encouraged him to ‘live out’ from day one of his police training. In this sense, policies put at ease aspiring gay officers, and help to articulate the image that gay men are welcomed and accepted. A number of other examples could be used here.

At Mardi Gras, I started talking to this guy on a recruitment stall. That was an influential turning point, after which I had no hesitations about applying. I chose to openly identify myself as gay right on the application form, as part of my ‘life story’. I didn’t want to hide my sexuality, but I also thought ‘why would they want me to?’ (Will, 33, PC, Response)

A common problem faced by managers once positive action programmes have been implemented is for individuals to be left to 'plateau and lose their drive and quit or get fired' (Roosevelt-Thomas, 1990: 108), yet some officers felt that police forces remained committed to positive action initiatives since they affirmed diversity at the upper echelons. In other words, interviewees noted that there were openly gay men in senior police roles. Openly gay senior officers were regarded by some participants as 'role models', who viewed their career progression as evidence that senior police ranks are not a 'closed shop' to junior LGB officers. On this matter, while research on LGB individuals shows that being located in the upper echelons of status hierarchies impedes the coming out process (Humphrey, 1999), as recently promoted gay Inspectors, Sean and Daniel (48, I, Terrorism and Allied Matters) emphasised that their own working lives were testimony to openness at the top. Further, Stonewall highlighted that one of the main reasons why Staffordshire triumphed and received their coveted award in 2006 was because the force had demonstrated commitment to recruiting *and promoting* lesbian and gay officers to the highest levels, suggesting that it is easier to 'work out' at rank than studies would suggest. As a senior member of the police force, Daniel admitted that he felt "insulated" from intolerance by his status, which provided him with the confidence to initially come out.

On a final note here, for Sean, the acceptability of LGB sexualities in police work was due, in large part, to HR practices surrounding the induction and training of new recruits. These practices were said to have transformed the ways in which new recruits are introduced to police culture, thus demonstrating a heightened commitment to harnessing and nurturing individual uniqueness. In this sense, the police aim to welcome individual nuances associated with race, religion, sexuality and gender:



New [gay] officers coming in do not feel the need to modify themselves anymore. A few years ago, you would go to a regional training centre. You would basically come out with the same robotic stance as the officers that joined with you. It was like a production line. This was clearly wrong. What we were producing was a stamped approved police officer. By the end of their probation, all officers were trained, functioning, speaking, and doing exactly the same. The individual personality of that person was eradicated. We now have a system in place that values individual traits, cultures and characters. Individual personalities are supported and utilised. We look to build upon the talents and capabilities of the individual. You no longer have to conform to what people perceive as ‘the police cultural attitudes’. (Sean)

Sean’s view of police training stands in direct contrast to the experiences of some police recruits reported in earlier studies that show how police training can (re)produce masculine values that support a sexist, racist and homophobic police culture (Prokos and Padavic, 2002; Burke, 1993; Cashmore, 2001). In Sean’s quote we can see a conscious strategy being developed to value individual differences (see Liff’s typology outlined in Chapter Three). Traditionally, training programmes were felt to stifle individuality, producing, in contrast, standardised and internalised compliance that manifested itself in the form of the “stamped approved” (generic, heterosexual) police officer. Effectively, new recruits were caught up in a hegemonic system that centred on very specific ideals of policing. As historical accounts suggest (Burke, 1994; Waddington, 1999), these hegemonic ideals (akin to images of hegemonic masculinity, see Connell, 1998) valued white, working class, heterosexual identity, yet marginalised homosexual identity as well as women and BME individuals. Sean acknowledges that gay officers were expected to conform, at the expense of revealing minority sexual identity, which reproduced the legitimacy of hegemonic heterosexuality and heteronormativity. Adjustments to the training structure, however, now mean that sexual identity, along with a range of other traits,

cultures and characters are nurtured throughout the induction process. According to Sean, some new gay officers no longer feel the “need to modify” identity along the lines of sexuality. This was confirmed by a number of recently recruited police officers including Geraint (27, PC, Victim Focus):

The police are really focused on ‘diversity’, and bringing out those diversity elements in the people they recruit. That’s my experience of police training anyway.

### ***Paying Lip Service to Policy***

So far, I have examined the perspectives and experiences of those participants who feel diversity/equality policies and practices have exerted a positive influence on the field of policing, enabling gay officers to feel comfortable about coming out at work. These positive views, barely reported in the existing literature, are noteworthy. I now pursue this further by examining how some gay officers feel that diversity/equality policies and practices on sexual orientation are limited in scope, giving them reason to suggest that LGB sexualities are not valued in their own right but as resources that form part of a diverse police workforce.

Some participants felt that modernisation agendas and diversity/equality initiatives had gained some traction on police life, helping to undermine the stereotype of homosexuality within the police services as socially deviant (Burke, 1994). It is fair to say that Sean’s (38, I, Anti-Terrorism) standpoint (above) has been shaped by the fact that he has personally invested his time and emotions into a range of diversity

initiatives. Over half of my participants felt they had faced some form of homophobic victimisation and/or discrimination over the years, including Sean. Historically, institutionalised homophobia was felt to permeate police culture. Discrimination was said to have occurred through both overt and covert means. It is worth noting that Daniel (48, I, Terrorism and Allied Matters), Isaac (30, PC, NMPR) and Geoff (43, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) felt they had become the victims of social sanctions by co-workers due to their sexual identity. Senior officers even equated gay identity to paedophilia in asking Elliot “how mothers of young boys might feel” knowing gay men were policing the streets. Other accounts of homophobia were also recalled.

Due to the prevalence of such institutionalised homophobia, championing diversity policy with regard to sexual orientation was initially felt to challenge the status quo. While certain officers celebrated the actions taken to undermine ‘canteen culture’, some interview accounts revealed insights into the feelings of resentment harboured by some heterosexual officers towards the inclusion of LGB officers in the police services. Given that compulsory heterosexuality was understood as natural and ‘therefore right, or best’ (see Acker, 1990: 312), this was even propped up through informal decision-making procedures. When Daniel (48, I, Terrorism and Allied Matters) initially came out, one chief constable remarked that he should understand that “people like me were arresting people like you in the toilets a few years ago, not expecting you to be walking around in uniform.” These comments expose a sense of insecurity regarding the idea of heterosexual officers having to work alongside gay personnel. Likewise, as Jason (50, PC, Traffic) described:

At the time, my Superintendant was gay. He advised me: don’t come out. The Detective Chief Constable had said: “There are loads of these

queers in the police. I want you to go down to these gay clubs and seize their books, check through them, and look for officer names. We don't want them in the job." After it became law though, after the courses and training, things did change rapidly, and I soon stopped pretending.

Less than a decade ago, Jason was advised by a colleague to remain 'in the closet' regardless of equality policy and impending law, as the then DCC had commanded serving officers root out homosexuality in the service. His account starkly reveals institutionalised homophobia in practice. Jason implies, however, that legislative change combined with diversity training helped to address the homophobic aspects of police culture. These changes encouraged Jason to become open in terms of negotiating his own gay identity at work. Jason observes the point at which things began to improve for gay officers; when the nurturing of difference took precedence over the tolerance of institutionalised homophobia.

Having said this, some officers felt that over the years forces had engaged in dishonest attempts at "smudging the numbers" to falsely portray the police as accommodating to LGB officers. Ben (49, I, Roadside Policing), who described himself as a gay activist, was even asked to retract statements released to the press as part of his GPA position where they had failed to reflect a positive image on this matter. During the Morris Inquiry (2004)<sup>5</sup>, Ben was invited to meet with the team. This invitation was later revoked:

On the morning the team came, I was called into the office to discuss what I might say. I said: "If they ask me certain questions, I will give appropriate responses." I told them I was prepared to give 'off message' responses. They told me that this was important to the force, and that they had to be seen positively, but I upheld my position and refused to be silenced on key issues. They later made the decision: I was not

allowed to meet with the team. The people who did meet the team were the ones saying “Everything is wonderful!”

In this sense, forces have paid ‘lip service’ to policy. Other participants felt that ‘valuing diversity’, or levelling the playing field for gay men, was not the primary aim of LGB recruitment drives. These drives were merely about complying with legislation, group parity, and getting the numbers right; ‘means to an end’ concerns commonly associated with traditional equal opportunity policies (Holgate and McKay, 2009; Redman and Wilkinson, 2001: 407). In other words, ‘diversity’ rhetoric was a façade disguising a less promising agenda. Striking, too, was that LGB police support networks were also berated for placing too much emphasis on a numbers approach to sexual diversity in the workplace. Ben was particularly scathing in that respect, asserting that the gay staff networks “organise a few curry nights” at the expense of the local force, but achieve little in terms of cultural change. He was quite serious in noting: “At the AGM, it’s basically: ‘This month, we have 298 members. Last month, we had 297 members. Next month, we hope to have 299 members’.” Ben’s viewpoint raises issues regarding the risks associated with LGB support networks being seen to over identify with senior police chiefs’ interests in boosting numbers of LGB employees. As Kirton and Greene (2009: 173) aver, the danger is that the changes such diversity champions and network groups drive are likely to serve organisational goals than actually improving the quality of the work lives of LGB employees. Christopher (29, Sp, Response) also argued that diversity/equality policies in the police were “concerned with cosmetic window dressing” (a term used and explored by Hoque and Noon, 2004 in the context of diversity policies and organisations). As he explained, once a gay man was known to

have been recruited, the service then had “no idea what to do with them” against an enveloping backdrop of institutionalised heterosexism:

The police service police society and they’ve been criticized over the years on the basis of ‘how can they represent this society if they only have white heterosexual men between a certain age group working there?’ That’s what this is about. It’s not about the fact that they want gay people in the service, or even that they like it. It’s the fact that they are a necessity in the current climate.

Christopher criticised current police diversity/equality agendas for striving to be ‘representative’ of the communities they serve, suggesting that such aims are born from political ‘necessity’ rather than from a moral case for ‘wanting gay people’ to be a part of the police services. Christopher’s comments expose the elements within some police diversity/equality initiatives that have supported a ‘business case’ for the recruitment and retention of LGB people. As Colgan et al. (2009) point out, business case diversity rhetoric incorporates LGB sexualities in the knowledge that, through the application of HR policies and practices, organisational benefits will follow such as enhanced job satisfaction and maximised employee potential. From Christopher’s point of view, this approach treats members of sexual minority groups as resources, seemingly out of place once recruited into heterosexist police organisational settings.

A number of officers similarly felt equality interventions over the past ten years have directly attempted to redress discrepancies in the number of women, BME and gay officers by giving preference to under-represented groups at appointment in an attempt to ‘save face’. Such an approach, known as positive discrimination, is largely unlawful in the UK (EHRC, 2009; see the ‘radical model’ to equality, Chapter Three)<sup>6</sup>. Indeed, a small number of participants felt they were part of an organisational process of ticking boxes, suggesting they had been recruited ‘purely on the basis of

sexuality', with some feeling they had to 'prove themselves' on the basis of merit in order to be taken seriously by colleagues. This has been similarly reported by Miller et al., 2003 who interviewed a sample of US 'cops'. Positive action, construed as positive discrimination, was held to break the preferred principle of 'equal opportunity for all' (*irrespective* of minority status). In light of this, gay officers themselves worried that minority sexual identity was 'desired' or 'favoured' when it came to appointing and promoting in the twenty-first century. In their minds, officers felt this approach had eroded the benefits of attempting to eradicate institutionalised homophobia, as gay men had become associated with a degree of incompetence. 'Recruiting gay' allegedly enabled the police to comply with Home Office quotas ("They say they don't exist; but it's obvious they do")<sup>7</sup>, and importantly, these perceptions had implications for the ways in which gay sexuality was negated, since officers were unwilling to become associated with 'flag waving' (Roger, 33, Se, Response) or 'special treatment' (see Kirton and Greene, 2004 for a discussion on BME workers and 'special treatment'). Whilst recounting stories relating to a transfer and a promotion, two participants discussed how they resented being perceived as the embodiment of the diversity discourse:

I did contemplate London, but with the Met's recruitment system, it's a bit... disgusting is the best way to describe it. You have to have an interview before you're even allowed an application form, and they make sure you're black, female, disabled, sometimes gay. If you present yourself as a white, heterosexual male, you won't get an application form. That's not a force I particularly want to work for... I can see why positive action is supposed to take place, to level the playing field, but then do you really want to work for an organization that quite clearly discriminates like that? (Bryn, 23, Sp, Response)

And similarly:

I've never used my sexuality to further my career. I point blank refuse to do it. If I'm capable of doing it, I'll do it on merit, not so the force can tick a box.

John: Do you think that happens?

C: Of course it does. It's not just sexuality. It'll be skin colour, it'll be religion, and it'll be race. For anyone to say it hasn't happened... that's ridiculous. There's a lot of positive discrimination, which isn't a bad thing. But sometimes at the detriment of employing some damn good coppers because they don't tick a box, that's wrong. I've always said, I joined the police with no one knowing I was gay and I never put on application forms that I'm gay. If I'm gonna do it, I'll do it on the strength of my abilities, not so the force can be like "Oh look, this one's gay, let's employ him. Oh aren't we good, aren't we an equal opportunities employer!" Employ me because I'm decent, no other reason. Some people say to me "Why not?", but for me, it just doesn't feel right. (Clive, 30, PC, Neighbourhood Policing)

While research has shown how diversity/equality practices can attract criticism and resistance from those who feel minority employees are being unduly advantaged (Belkin and McNicol, 2002; Loftus, 2008), it is less common to find evidence in police studies that reveal how minority groups may also view these initiatives in a similar way. There is no doubt that members from other social groups, whatever their age, gender, race, ethnicity, etc., might have similar experiences of diversity/equality practices. As I have already shown, the 'tick box' approach to diversity/equality is problematic for reinforcing the idea that minority officers require 'special measures' in order to gain entry into the police force (see also Brown, 1998; Cashmore, 2001), with the effect that some gay officers feel they have to work extra hard to present as competent and professional (also found to be the case by Miller et al., 2003; Myers et al., 2004). For this reason, Clive (above) emphasised that when applying for promotion he was reluctant to declare his sexual orientation, for this goes against his preferred principle of "based on merit". Here, organisational diversity policies are



found to *suppress* sexual identity. They can even shape officer career paths (for example, by not applying to the London Met in Bryn's case, above). In these instances, while participants recognised there had been greater recognition of sexual identities within the police, which had modified the ways in which sexual identity is experienced, participants espoused similar views to their white, heterosexual, male counterparts in disparaging and subordinating the diversity agenda (see Loftus, 2008).

It was also apparent from the interview accounts that the impact of diversity/equality initiatives across different police divisions and departments was very uneven. Some areas of police work appeared almost immune to the effects of equality work on sexualities. In these contexts, some participants appeared to doubt whether LGB officers were understood as valued members of staff who could make worthwhile contributions to police life. This was evident in the type of identity management strategies some participants employed, and is explored in the following section.

On a final note, and returning to the stories of victimisation discussed a little earlier, I do not wish to gloss over these experiences of homophobia. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that many of these instances were framed by participants as 'obsolete accounts'. For example, both Isaac (30, PC, NMPR) and Geoff (43, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) received a significant amount of support after reporting instances of victimization to the DPS in the early 2000s. Generally, once the issue of harassment and scorn had been explored in the research interviews, Paul's (28, PC, Firearms) remark encapsulates many of the participants concluding comments on the subject:

Now, if they can prove discrimination, the [perpetrator] is likely to lose their job. I would say that [instances of victimization] are rare. I don't know anyone who's openly criticized the police [on the grounds of homophobia]. Stonewall rates the service very highly. This proves that we are better than most with respect to LGB issues. To be honest, I have heard people criticize us along the lines of "I'm being discriminated against because I don't fit into any of the diversity strands" [laughs].

Where forces had pursued corrective action, participants recalled that the opinions of (straight, white, male) colleagues were reminiscent of Cockburn's (1991: 67) explorations of men's reactions to equality programmes: "The women are OK, the black people are OK, even the disabled people are OK. But me, I'm white, male, average height – who do I turn to?" Even when I discussed the research with a number of straight, white, male police officers, without hesitation one individual quipped: "They close the canteens, remove our police bars, and in their place we have the Rainbow Network, and a GPA. I'm left wondering, where the bloody hell do I go for advice?", suggesting that marked changes have been implemented to benefit the expression of gay identity. That being said, I have shown that diversity policies are not always referred to in favourable terms by the very people they seek to support.

### **'Getting-Straight' to Work**

#### ***Same Old Stories?***

Despite the gains for some participants in being able to identify as gay in the workplace, it was not the case that participants felt they could always express their sexuality in ways of their choosing. I now show that regardless of policy, participants

‘contextually conceal’, and in the process, reproduce discourses of heteronormativity. While section one observes a cultural schism, particularly since diversity discourses have proliferated, narratives reveal that officers continue to neg(oti)ate gay identity in order to fit into policing contexts marked by masculinist dominated forms of socialising, informing and mentoring. The ‘double lives’ typically embraced in the 1990s, however, rarely feature as *contemporary* examples of identity neg(oti)ation (see Burke, 1994). Historically, the police was perceived as homophobic, which meant that for gay officers, continually managing sexual identity was necessary. Going back as far the 70s, older participants were quick to confirm that to identify as gay was “simply not an option”, since homosexuality was associated with criminality (Burke, 1994). This often meant that experiencing a gay lifestyle in any capacity was put on hold altogether. In describing how gay sexuality was vehemently negated, officers of age and rank were again able to draw attention to discourses of change:

For the first seven years, when I joined in the 90s, I certainly wasn’t out. It was made very clear to me that it wasn’t accepted. I witnessed people being constructively dismissed. So I decided to live a dual life. My service life and my home life were completely separate. If I saw a colleague whilst out shopping with my partner, I’d sometimes have to dash off, and meet up with him later in the car park! That was the madness you felt you had to deal with! (Sean, 38, I, Anti-Terrorism)

I was worried for the first three years in the 70s that if I ever did anything I would be arrested for breaking the law. They would’ve seen being a police officer who was gay as being a double sin. If I’d been arrested, I would’ve been kicked out guilty or not because I would’ve been known as gay. (Daniel, 48, I, Terrorism and Allied Matters)

The most striking of these ‘dual roles’ adopted by officers was described by Clive (30, PC, Neighbourhood Policing), who remained closeted as a probationer for fear of being harassed out of a job.

One of the guys cottoned on that I might be gay. He was very unhappy about that and gave me a lot of abuse because of it. Since I wasn’t out, I wasn’t prepared to go to my Sergeant. So we sorted out our differences in the backyard, by having fisticuffs! Not the best way, but my train of thought was that I needed to prove I was capable of defending myself. Ten very short years ago, that was how it was sorted out. He beat me, but I gave a good fight, after which he shook my hand, and I never had an ounce of trouble off him again. I know I lost, but the respect I got from it was worth it. I still didn’t say I was gay though.

In the above instances, officers attempted to ‘pass as normal’ (Goffman, 1963) or covered gay identity through purposefully manipulating their subject positions. The necessity to appear (heterosexually) ‘conventional’ was noted as being paramount to the lives of these gay officers *prior* to recent changes in legislation and policy, particularly in the late 70s. Often, these accounts were framed as ‘outdated’ accounts, and did not reflect how officers navigate sexual identity within contemporary constabularies. It is fair to say that stories of tumultuous identity struggle, recalled by ‘gay cops’ elsewhere, (see for example Burke’s 1994 study, Leinen’s 1993 study, or Ward’s 2008 research), appeared as de-prioritised or *historical* accounts throughout many of the research interviews. In contrast, the current occupational climate was thought to allow for openness and honesty. A small minority of participants did recognise that a kind of excessive dramaturgy continued to characterise the neg(oti)ation of identity for *some* ‘homophobic homosexual’ officers. When it came to their private lives and career, interviewees highlighted that certain colleagues were known to divide up their sense of self:

Not a lot changes except the gender and the name of the person. You try wherever possible to say 'they' or 'we', instead of saying 'he' or 'she' (which makes it gender specific), *because you don't want to lie either*. So, if someone asks 'what did you do on the weekend?' you say 'we did this', or 'they said this', and you try not to mention names. If you have to mention names, you think of a different name. I have a friend, who is still not out at work; he's got different names for all his gay friends. (Bryn, 23, Sp, Response)

Crucially, participants saw these forms of identity negotiation as 'sad', demoralizing and unnecessary, but also 'exceptional', and many felt that anyone who remained closeted did so for personal reasons, and "not because of workplace culture" (Sean, 38, I, Anti-Terrorism).

Nevertheless, data suggest that some officers continue to conceal gay identity, but to a less dramatic extent. Certain identity management techniques were unidentified directly by participants, yet I show that passing continues to take place. In this sense, some officers still have 'fractured identities' for fear of loss; of status, affiliation and respect (Bowring and Brewis, 2009). Given the endurance of these fractured identities, it is evident that officers reflect upon gay identity. Indeed, my participants were eager to maintain a psychological sense of security and legitimacy within an environment that continues to be defined according to heteronormativity:

John: Were you an openly out gay officer when you applied to the firearms department?

P: My application had on there that I was gay. Some of my [application] evidence related to my perceived bullying from when I first started in the job. It would have been quite obvious. However, that doesn't carry across to the training unit. Whoever screens the application forms [HR] wouldn't necessarily tell the firearms instructors I was openly gay. And

during my training I wasn't openly gay. I didn't hide it. I didn't lie. I just identified myself as single.

J: Were you in a relationship?

P: Yes.

J: So you told people you were single but you were actually in a relationship?

P: Yes. But it wasn't a lie as such, because on any sort of application I may fill in, I would be classed as single, right? I wasn't married or anything like that. I would've been classed as single. (Paul, 28, PC, Firearms)

In a similar vein, this method of passing was utilised by Leo (33, DC, Sexual Offences):

When I meet people on courses, and things like that, I always say, purely out of laziness – if they say girlfriend or wife, I just go along with it. I just can't be bothered to explain. It puts people... I wouldn't say it puts people on edge, but... I'm a bit lazy sometimes, I just say "yeah, yep, yeah" – whatever, you know?

On the one hand, Paul recalls that he was not openly gay during his training in firearms, avoiding workplace discussions about his personal life by identifying to colleagues as 'single'. At the time, Paul was partnered, so identifying as 'single' at work had a silencing effect on his identity as a gay man in a loving, long term relationship. Paul felt that by identifying as 'single', this 'wasn't a lie as such'. On certain application forms for finance, jobs or insurance, 'long-term partner' is rarely an option. According to these forms, 'single' would be an honest response, yet it would be considered a 'dishonest' response in everyday conversation. Leo's account shows how workers 'utilise' the heterosexual assumption. On the other hand, Leo allows the presumption of heterosexuality to prevail, yet very little is expressed on his

part. Goffman suggests that we can deceive without technically lying (Goffman, 1959). These accounts fluidly reveal how this might be achieved in a bid to conceal minority sexual identity at work.

Reflecting on these accounts, we begin to appreciate the reasons as to why such identity neg(oti)ation persists. Although Leo attributes his behaviour to laziness, he appears relatively concerned for the ‘embarrassment’ of others, and possibly his own, suggesting that marrying a DC status with a gay identity is not entirely straight forward. It was also felt that revealing gay sexuality could potentially ‘put people on edge’ in the service. As Paul explained:

I didn’t want people treading on eggshells. I didn’t want them to worry about what they were saying. [Another reasons why I did this] was due to some of the preconceptions I had about the firearms training. How would other officers perceive me and would they think I was less able to do the job, because I was gay?

As a result, it is easier to appear married to a woman or single. In doing so, Leo and Paul manage to preserve their self-image as just ‘ordinary’ (heterosexual) officers. Noteworthy, however, is that Paul is employed in a firearms unit, an area of police work commonly described among participants as male dominated, competitive and heavily associated with stereotypes of crime fighting based on ‘control’, ‘force’ and ‘violence’. While such work contexts are not off limits to gay men, the accounts of firearms officers like Paul suggest they require the adoption of specific identity strategies in order to minimise any potential awkwardness from colleagues. While Paul’s standpoint shows that the white, heterosexist, male culture of firearms led him

to engage in heterosexualised behaviour (explored in more depth later), both accounts provide insight into how officers subtly conceal in twenty-first century constabularies.

Striking, is the extent to which consenting to the heterosexual assumption was utilised as a strategy by a number of participants who were able to maintain their integrity *and* status as ‘honest’ colleagues. Since the homosocial aspects of police work require a mutual bond of trust, many officers were keen to stress that they were reluctant to lie about their gay identity. It was recognised that ‘covering’ (akin to being deceitful) could potentially jeopardise ongoing working relationships (see below). For this reason, individuals opted to pass; a strategy justified in stressing “I didn’t confirm or deny who I was. *I never lied as such*”.

Of the officers who felt they had become particularly vocal when it came to revealing gay sexuality, such accounts do not always allude to a ‘gay-friendly’ police service. Bryn (23, Sp, Response) and Geoff (43, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) acknowledged that their forces allow gay officers to reveal and blend into the heterosexual milieu of everyday work life, yet they equally reveal the police as distinctly heteronormative (and at times homophobic). During his time at a previous station, Geoff became the target of outright hostility and homophobia. Not only was he known as “the queer bastard”, he found that officers wouldn’t sit next to him at meal times. “Certain ones would, but if they did, they were then persecuted by the Sergeants and other PCs.” After filing a grievance on the basis of homophobia, and following a leave of absence, Geoff moved stations. At this point, he decided to come out to everybody. “I did it in an ‘over the top’ kind of way, almost in their faces. I was stronger now.” Currently, if



questions are ever raised about his sexual identity, Geoff confidently and proudly reveals that he is gay, and refuses to conceal, cover or pass<sup>8</sup>. Although nowadays, he felt that being a gay officer was less of an issue, we are reminded that serving gay officers have faced intense journeys and victimisation, and reveal gay sexuality because of this. As Clive (30, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) reflected, “We shouldn’t forget that ten years ago, the police were arseholes.” In similar fashion, Bryn implied that while he was out at work, he faced an element of “grief” because of this:

If I decided I wanted to be in the closet for the rest of my life, I would’ve had a lot less grief, but what’s the point? If I’m not going to be myself, why bother? I’ve got the ‘I don’t care anymore’ attitude. I’ll be myself. Whenever I want to talk about it, I will, and that’s tough really.

### *Closeted Contradictions*

It is misleadingly incomplete to propose that forces have reached dizzy heights in allowing for the open expression of gay identity. I have shown that by consenting to the ‘heterosexual assumption’, some gay officers are complicit in supporting compulsory heteronormativity, despite being subordinated by it. Anxieties based on popular perception of police culture lead gay officers to engage in a new kind of dramaturgy in order to conceal minority sexual identity.

While gay officers reproduce norms associated with heterosexism and police culture, they do have the capacity to disrupt them. ‘Buying into’ the prevalent discourses of policing, however, gay officers themselves play a key role in creating the gap that remains between the move towards an ‘open’ culture and the more ‘closeted’ reality.

Some of the following data link well with Dick and Cassell's (2004) belief that within the service, officers neg(oti)ate identity according to a 'distorted' (macho) view of policing. This will become clearer below.

After leaving firearms, Sean (38, I, Anti-Terrorism) decided to reveal his gay identity. In doing so, he became an advocate for the rights of gay men and women within his force. As part of his LGB committee work, Sean went back to firearms to discuss why he had remained closeted for so long within the department, in a bid to address concerns associated with the homophobic culture of specific units. Categorising firearms as a homophobic "problem child", Sean found that his ex-colleagues became notably defensive. They were insulted to discover that Sean had not had the confidence to openly reveal his sexual identity based on fear of homophobia while on the department.

While working as a firearms officer, Sean insisted on segregating his private life (as a gay man) and work life. He regularly became "cagey" and elusive when conversations centred on topics other than the job at hand. Several years later, revisiting the unit in his diversity capacity, Sean discovered that his firearms partner had many gay friends, and would have embraced working alongside a gay officer. Any *perceived* hostility directed towards Sean was said to be based on his reluctance to talk about his 'social self', which fuelled Sean's reluctance to come out of the closet at work. As Sean goes on to explain:

In terms of me understanding their issues, that was quite an eye-opener.  
If I was your colleague and every day I was coming to work and I wasn't

talking about my home life, how off putting would that be in terms of our working relationship? They are also very close teams; very intertwined, and it needs to be that really cohesive entity, that really good bond, because you're reliant on each other in some really difficult situations. Now, it should be about trying to put that [message across]; that you've gotta be 'out' and realize that the team dynamics and the way your relationships gel within your team depend on it.

Here, Sean suggests that heterosexual officers are not always given the opportunity to demonstrate their willingness to accept gay colleagues when individuals decide to remain closeted. As a result, an open culture can become stifled. Had Sean revealed his sexual identity originally, he admits that "I might still be working within firearms". Allowing assumptions of heterosexuality to go unchallenged can reproduce existing norms associated with compulsory heterosexuality and hegemonic masculinity. Sean's account implies that the onus is on gay officers, as much as it is on their straight colleagues, to work through personal concerns associated with gay identity in the police, as cagey closeted officers have the potential to negatively impact upon team dynamics. Further, and in contrast to Burke (1993), disclosing was constructed as an act that prioritised the needs of the team over those of the individual.

Geoff (43, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) spoke in similar terms and noted that since revealing his sexuality, he "hasn't always received favourable feedback", yet by coming out, he has helped to tackle a modicum of "silenced homophobia". For example, as the research proceeded, I found that since sexual orientation equality has mushroomed as a cause, bigoted officers were no longer able to express discriminatory views for fear of reprisal (or dismissal). "Years ago, you knew who

your enemies were. Now, however, chief inspectors may be thinking [queer bastard] but they would be [wise] enough not to say it". Geoff insisted that here, revealing gay sexuality can help to push the equality agenda forward and further benefit team dynamics. In other words, remaining closeted is problematic:

There is one PC who up until recently was [homophobic] He couldn't cope with gay people. He's got more testosterone than all of us! Since I started doing some training sessions for staff about LGB issues, after he went to one of these sessions, his attitude changed completely towards me.

Other gay officers faced 'unintended backlash' from colleagues when they decided to conceal, but later disclosed gay sexuality, revealing some of the pitfalls associated with failing to disclose. Christopher (29, Sp, Response), below, suggests that even though one may be contradicting normative discourses of heterosexuality, remaining closeted creates alternative challenges should gay identity be disclosed at a later stage. Inadvertently, a gay officer can jeopardise his 'credibility' as a result of being formerly evasive.

Police officers by their very nature are inquisitive people and they like to know what's going on. I think for those who don't identify themselves as gay or for those who are a little bit more guarded, colleagues tend to be suspicious. The issue is that they're going to be working with this person, perhaps in the most difficult of circumstances, so they need to know where they stand. (Christopher)

When I did come out, a colleague of mine said that he felt like he didn't know me; that there was another side to me that he didn't know. I was like a different person to him now. (Geraint, 27, PC, Victim Focus)

The above paradoxical ‘cycle’ was even characterised as a “self fulfilling prophecy” by Geraint (above). Should an officer decide to pass in a bid to preserve his self image, this becomes detrimental should he later decide to reveal gay identity. Any backlash incurred, however, cannot be typified as homophobia. Instead, it becomes a credibility issue, which causes the gay officer to lose his integrity in any case.

### *Sector Struggles*

As in other studies (Clair et al., 2005; Ragins, 2004; Woods and Lucas, 1993), organisational context was found to be a particularly influential factor in shaping disclosure decisions and how information about sexual identities was managed. This has already been demonstrated in Chapter Five. Whilst it was apparent that many participants felt traditional police culture was under attack, applauding the efforts made by their employers to stamp out its hyper-masculine and homophobic characteristics, the reluctance to affirm gay identity within certain areas of the occupation (such as the firearms department, see above) alludes to a fragmented police culture that encompasses pockets of machismo and gay hostility. Tellingly, and through his LGB work, Paul (28, PC, Firearms) was aware that a number of gay officers embraced heterosexual(ised) façades on the job “due to their line of police work”, which restricts officers to “extremely macho forms of interaction”. Sean (38, I, Anti-Terrorism) noted that back in the 90s, the firearms department was associated with severe and persistent forms of heterosexism, which led to his own reticence and eventual migration back to neighbourhood policing. As an advocate for gay issues, although Sean felt that concealing gay identity reproduces discourses of compulsory

heterosexuality (as above), other narratives demonstrate that certain aspects of police work continue to demand heterosexual(ised), gender conformist (see Chapter Seven) identity performances. Jason (50, PC, Traffic) stressed that for this reason, he was reluctant to apply for a secondment to firearms, which attracted the “macho-loving-guns type”. Similarly, Cameron (26, Sp, Response) described the TSG (Territorial Support Group) as a “big, beefy ‘men-talk-about-women’ department”, whilst Adam (28, PC, Traffic) referred to this unit as a “band of hairy arsed coppers”. Leo (33, DC, Sexual Offences) agreed, noting: “I didn’t join the police to beat people with batons”. In doing so, he uses the metaphor of “pack mentality” to suggest that a certain type of white, heterosexual, masculine identity can be integrated with ease in the TSG and firearms department, whilst minority identities are less likely to gain acceptance. Importantly, however, Geraint (27, PC, Victim Focus) reminds us that gay officers can choose to work for the TSG: “Out of the straighter than straight meat heads, one of them happens to be gay”, yet he emphasised that his colleague was a “muscled, hairy guy” who was able to “jump people”. For this reason, his sexuality became less of an issue<sup>9</sup>.

The term ‘van culture’ was used specifically to describe the TSG environment (since much of the work involves teams responding to major incidents in riot vans). Like canteen culture, van culture was associated with images of machismo. When asked to elaborate on the key images of van culture, adjectives primarily described the types of *men* who comprise the average TSG team, and included: big men, beefy men, hairy men, aggressive men, men who swear, beer-drinking men, men who like football, straighter-than-straight men, meat heads, men who talk about busty blondes; overall, men who ascribe to the ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1998). Arguably,

this shows that attempts to eradicate the undesirable elements of police culture are incomplete (Loftus, 2008), having failed to tackle the reputations of some police units as bastions of sexism, racism and homophobia. In similar fashion, Geoff (43, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) described the nuances associated with police culture in terms of different stations. He felt that certain constabularies were associated with 'hard' or 'soft' policing. Describing his current station as 'the pink palace' ("I can be as 'out' as I like"), he notes the alternative has far more "testosterone flying around". In a bid to characterise the niches of police culture, Sean (38, I, Anti-Terrorism) used the metaphor of the gym. Referring specifically to the firearms department, he notes:

I was in the gym last night. I went into the changing rooms and there were these two guys talking about the most mundane of things, but every other word *had* to be a swear word, to make themselves appear larger than they actually were. They weren't actually being their true selves. That's the type of environment I see firearms officers going into. They go into a department they see as an extremely macho form of policing and they feel as though they have to fit into a persona based on how they are viewed by the public. It's becomes a performance; it's almost as though you are acting out that role.

Here, we see most clearly the active role taking (Goffman, 1959) police officers engage in within certain departments, which may demand the management of gay identity. These standpoints confirm that certain areas of policing value the competitive masculinist subject who is willing to use force and brutality within environments that exude exceptionally strong norms of compulsory heterosexuality (Miller, et al., 2003; Thomas and Davies, 2005). They specifically show that characterisations of the firearms and TSG units remain closely aligned to traditional imagery of policing (see Chapter Four). As a result, gay officers were often disinclined to migrate to these departments, and where they did, some felt particularly uneasy negotiating and disclosing open performances of gay identity.

In contrast, gendered organisational norms within divisions such as the sexual offences unit attached value to the expression of traditional feminine qualities, such as sensitivity, empathy and caring. Officers working in these units were encouraged to express these qualities, not least because they often had to deal with victims of sexual abuse. These fields of policing appeared demographically skewed, with participants reporting higher numbers of women and openly gay male officers. The combined influence of these features was apparent in accounts of identity disclosure and management. Some participants disclosed quickly to others in these areas, based on positive evaluations of organisational cultures as 'supportive' and 'open'. Indeed, in the sexual offences unit, gay sexuality was constructed as an asset on the job, as gay officers were considered to be 'open-minded', 'supportive' and 'sensitive'. Yet gay officers were not always willing to be positioned in that way. Roger (Sergeant) told stories about how some gay officers who were considered to be particularly 'feminine' found themselves shunted off, reluctantly, into 'service units', where a more 'sensitive' and 'feminine' approach was required when dealing with members of the public.

In light of some of the above narratives, I suggest that the television and film industries, as well as certain departments of the police force, present moments marked by 'sector struggles' for gay workers. Generally, these sector struggles relate to the content of work and audience perception. I have already shown in Chapter Five that due to the content of television and film work, it is necessary for performers to appear conventionally heterosexual, as mainstream audiences expect this. The 'audience' also



expect firearms officers to be a certain type of man associated with hegemonic masculinity. Sean captures this point above when he notes that firearms officers “feel as though they have to fit into a persona based on how they are viewed by the public.” In similar fashion, to be a leading man, performers must conform to a set of norms, which results in the negation of minority sexual identity.

### ***Life on the Beat***

Narratives show that sexual identity impacts upon the mundane aspects of police work (or when playing the ‘role’ of police officer) which are implicitly structured around the ‘heterosexual assumption’. Specifically, and relating to the intense interaction that characterises police duties, gay sexuality often made Daniel (48, I, Terrorism and Allied Matters) feel uncomfortable when communal showering was required after public order training. Although Daniel acknowledged that in reality it is probably less of an issue to his colleagues, we are given insight into some potentially awkward scenarios relating to gay sexuality and police work. Adam (28, PC, Traffic) also felt that certain aspects of police work present gay officers with role ambiguity:

You sweat like a pig in all the riot gear stuff as it’s so physically demanding. At the end of training when you’re showering, and you’re naked, I’m always aware that people think I’m looking at other guys. I find this very uncomfortable. (Daniel)

Certain things we have to do as officers can cause problems when being gay. The obvious one is searching. We have strict rules. A male officer searches a male, and female officers search females for obvious reasons. What do you if you have a male officer who is clearly gay and they have to search another male? There is nothing in place which tells us how to deal with this. (Adam)

The current rules, touched upon by Adam, are strict and in place to protect officers and offenders, yet the guidelines are rooted in heteronormative assumptions and do not take into consideration gay sexuality. Potentially, everyday work related practices become complicated, and require gay officers to moderate their manner when strip searching, whereas Daniel notes that police officers can become conscious about “not looking” in the communal showers. When known-about gay identity becomes a factor in these situations, the repercussions can be very serious. Gay officers can become victims of malicious allegations of sexual harassment or assault by homophobic ‘villains’<sup>10</sup>. Adam wears the ‘Rainbow’<sup>11</sup> logo on his uniform, but if a prisoner happens to remark on his sexual identity, a colleague will then be asked to take over the strip search. Fearing the repercussions of potential complaints or hostility, even Geoff (43, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) admitted that he tends to remove ‘gay signifiers’ whilst patrolling:

I don’t wear my LGB liaison officer badge in the street. I think it could be an issue in certain situations, with certain individuals. I’m respected by all the kids in the area, and by some of the known villains. I think it would change their perspective and behaviour towards me – if they knew I was gay. So [the badge] is only worn in the station. It makes me feel less vulnerable when I’m out working [but] everyone within the police knows.

As I show in Chapter Five, performer narratives suggest that ‘public reaction to’ gay identity requires intense consideration. I illustrate that performers and performer gatekeepers are ‘hostage’ to societal stereotypes that place heteronormativity as the idealised ‘norm’. As a result, performers were found to pass at the audition stage. Similarly, it was evident that police officers reflect upon public reaction to minority sexuality, and neg(oti)ate sexual identity in a similar fashion.

In contrast, some participants felt it was useful to enact fluid identities along the lines of sexuality depending on the ‘incident’. For example, gay officers who were comfortable with disclosing gay sexuality were able to assist during incidents of homophobia. Yet Clive (30, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) also acknowledged that utilising the heterosexual assumption allowed him to use his ‘charm’ should this help in gaining a statement from a female victim of domestic violence. Equally, this charm helped in gaining statements from gay male victims of homophobia or domestic violence. He goes onto say:

If it gets someone onside, to get them to tell me what’s going on or to get a story that you need to hear, let them think what they want, ’cos it works. Ultimately, if I’m looking at someone who has been badly assaulted, and they’re not going to tell us anything, if a bit of charm helps, be it with a gay man or woman, if we can then catch and convict, then it’s the right thing to do. I’ll play to whatever I need to.

While serving the public then, it is clear that officers are mindful of putting on a performance, or ‘mask’. The types of behaviour that are accepted within the confines of the station are markedly different from those that occur ‘on duty’. Although I demonstrate that an element of playful campery can structure working relationships ‘backstage’ in the office (see also Chapter Seven), when officers are expected to tackle serious police work, some individuals *self-consciously* revert to a hegemonic masculine performance, to evoke authority and respect from fellow co-workers and members of the public. The ‘camp cop’ is deliberately dispensed with by, for example, removing symbols that signify a transgressive sexual identity, as officers use calculating strategies to situate their selves within the boundaries of heteronormativity. Chapter Six also shows that the types of behaviour that are

accepted also vary across the different units of policing, however. As we have seen, the firearms and TSG units demand male officers to conform to a stereotype and public expectations. To be accepted as a firearms officer can mean performing *and* embodying masculinity in a preset way that concomitantly serves to conceal gay identity.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter explores the experiences of gay police officers taking into account the changing conditions of police culture. My data show that indeed, minority sexual identity has historically opposed prevalent norms. At one time, when (hetero)sexual identity was in doubt, this required belligerent ‘corrective’ behaviour on the part of the (closeted) officer. In certain instances, police officers opted to unequivocally embrace (heterosexual) masculine signifiers that included symbols of physical aggression (‘fisticuffs’) for fear of marginalisation. Others led ‘dual lives’, whilst some suppressed gay identity entirely.

Although it is fair to say that the issue of the shifting nature of police culture is itself an interesting question (see Loftus, 2010), important developments within policing have meant that gay men are living out at work and rank thanks to changes in organisational policy. These transformations include recruitment drives/initiatives targeted towards gay men and a reorganization of workspace associated with heterosexist ideologies (such as the closure of police canteens). Further, all of my

twenty respondents were out, and keen and willing to participate in the research. This in itself suggests that police culture has moved on given that Burke's (1994) sample requested anonymity and were generally closeted. My research shows that, as in performing, there are caveats associated with the occupation's new found status 'gay-friendly', however, and there is a need to be cautious. While officers may reveal gay identity within the walls of the occupation, some individuals still appear reluctant to disclose, preferring to pass as heterosexual; certainly in relation to the execution of police work. Moreover, certain strands of the occupation continue to be perceived as intolerant towards 'homosexuality' (or at the very least, non-conformist gender, see Chapter Seven); such as the Firearms and TSG units. In that regard, I agree with Loftus (2010) – that due to some of the more enduring aspects of police culture, specifically the fact that masculinity infuses the police identity, softer performances of gay masculinity are rendered incompetent. Importantly, and as I now go on to show, deviant gender or the manifestation of camp is particularly Othered – according to both gay police officers and performers.

As with Chapter Five, it has been my intention to revise the blanket view of policing as 'gay-hostile'. Since diversity discourses have proliferated, steps have been taken to combat institutionalized homophobia. I would equally suggest that all is not rosy or (more importantly) static, for gay identity can increasingly be rendered unproblematic within the occupation.

I go on to discuss the key similarities that structure the working lives of gay police officers *and* performers. The voices of these workers suggest that primarily due to the

nature of their work (in that performers are expected to represent *mainstream* images of maleness on screen as much as police officers are expected to represent hyper-masculinity on the streets), occupations can become ‘hostage’ to the production of ‘doing gender’ appropriately (West and Zimmerman, 1987). This has repercussions on the neg(oti)ation of homosexual masculine identities at work in relation to embodiment and processes of normalisation. This is now explored in the final empirical chapter; Chapter Seven.

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<sup>1</sup> Since 2006, numerous constabularies have featured in the top ten and top 100 of Britain’s most gay-friendly employers, including Kent, Hampshire and the London’s Metropolitan police force.

<sup>2</sup> Whilst interviewing Sean, he referred me to a power point document that pointed to these statistics. I did not write down the name of the report or questionnaire originally conducted to gain such statistics; a frustrating omission on my part.

<sup>3</sup> “We try to monitor staff with respect to their sexual orientation when they join. Staff perception surveys have included sexual orientation since 2002.” (Sean)

<sup>4</sup> The distinction between ‘passing’ and ‘covering’ had already been set out in Chapter Two.

<sup>5</sup> This was a governmental inquiry into minority groups. The Morris Inquiry focused on the question: Is there disproportionate treatment of minority staff subjected to criminal or disciplinary investigations?

<sup>6</sup> Specifically, experiences suggest that interpretations of positive action, managing diversity and positive discrimination can become blurred. There is distinction between ‘positive’ and ‘affirmative’ action that primarily lies in national differences. In the UK, ‘positive action’ is when equality is promoted “based on the view that in many instances it is important to recognise social group differences which may lead to some applicants or job holders being disadvantaged” (Liff, 1997: 12). In the US, this is referred to as ‘affirmative action’. However, this approach goes further than positive action, and can be equated to positive discrimination. As Liff notes, positive actions *can* encompass some elements of the US affirmative action approaches and vice versa.

<sup>7</sup> Targets are not illegal, however, quotas are unlawful (EHRC, 2009).

<sup>8</sup> As I show later, even Geoff feels that certain aspects of ‘police work’ require tapered displays of (or the negation of) gay identity.

<sup>9</sup> I return to this point in Chapter Seven, in the context of appropriate gender performance.

<sup>10</sup> For example, in 2009, a Merseyside police officer was brutally attacked by a gang of youths after leaving a gay venue in Liverpool. Shielding his own partner from homophobic abuse, James Parkes had cautioned the aggressors, revealing his job status in the process. He later became the single target of a horrific homophobic assault, suggesting that bigoted members of the public can repudiate gay police officers.

<sup>11</sup> A symbol representing gay pride.

## **CHAPTER 7: GENDER MATTERS**

So far, much of the organisation studies literature assumes a position that fails to fully recognise the existence of a range of gay identities at work. For example, Ward and Winstanley (2003: 3) propose: 'It is not possible to guess someone's sexual orientation from the way they walk, talk or dress.' Drawing on research presented in the previous two chapters, Chapter Seven goes on to unpack this problematic assertion that in effect serves to marginalise the experiences of (gay) men who are unable to associate themselves with (hetero)normative forms of masculinity (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2005). Given the prevalence of 'sex-role stereotyping' (Butler, 1999: 363) which equates gay identity to gender role atypicality, and assumes that effeminate males must be gay and masculine males must be heterosexual (see Chapter Two), I show that experiences of work vary depending on the *visibility* of particular versions/performances/expressions of minority sexual identity, particularly within the case occupations.

In that regard, I explore the perceptions of the lived realities of effeminacy at work, concluding that certain gay men live under conditions of the 'homosexual assumption' as opposed to the 'heterosexual assumption'. In doing so, I suggest that 'straight acting' and effeminate individuals do not face synonymous issues with respect to discrimination or 'coming out' in the workplace. For some 'camp' workers, coming out is regarded as a 'non-issue', and in-depth stories recalling this process are rarely articulated. As one detention officer remarked: "I come out as soon as I walk into a room, dahlin'!" I further illustrate that these workers are likely to experience

increased alienation and exclusion on account of their alterity within certain work sites, for failing to 'fit in with' the appropriate ideal of the masculine police officer or performer.

Indeed, similarities exist across both occupations, with study data showing that when it comes to the neg(oti)ation of sexuality, gender remains a key organising concept due to the gendered nature of work (explored below). All participants felt that, at times, they were 'hostage' to the enactment of 'appropriate' gender behaviour in their occupations, associated with normative forms of masculinity. This has already been touched upon in Chapters Five and Six in the context of the audition (performing) and patrolling (policing). Given that structures of heteronormativity impact upon the labour process of policing and performing, participants were keen to 'normalise' gay identity (Seidman, 2002) and maintain a particular state of (heterosexualised) embodiment. In other words, erasing signs of transgressive gender allowed participants to 'cohere' along the lines of both gender and sexual identity for the purposes of work. Further, I also show that through invoking and then rejecting images of effeminacy, gender deviant figures of the 'camp cop' and 'prissy performer' act as constraining forces, which help regulate and mediate these processes of identity neg(oti)ation. Crucially, these subject positions provide ontological security for participants' own sense of workplace masculinity.



## A Note on: Conceptual Resources

Theoretically, this chapter returns to the work of Butler (1988; 1990), Ingraham (1996) and West and Zimmerman (1987), who contend that conceptualisations of gender and sexuality are deeply interrelated, and can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century (Nardi, 2000). As outlined in Chapter Two, in her influential work *Gender Trouble* (1990: 151), Butler depicts the relationship between sexuality and gender, and frames it in terms of the ‘heterosexual matrix’; a matrix that highlights the centrality of *appropriate* gender behaviour in society:

[The heterosexual matrix is a] hegemonic discursive/epistemic model of gender intelligibility that assumes that for bodies to cohere and make sense there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender (masculine expresses male, feminine express female) that is oppositionally and hierarchally defined through the compulsory practice of heterosexuality.

Effeminacy in men, commonly construed as the epitome of ‘gay identity’, is often regarded as the antithesis of both heterosexual *and* homosexual identity according to significant numbers of gay men (Nardi, 2000). Authors have demonstrated that at various points in time, homosexual culture has itself undergone a process of ‘gay masculinisation’, in a bid to distance the gay identity away from perceptions of effeminacy (Chauncey 1994; Levine, 1998). Consequently, negotiating gay sexuality continues to represent an important ‘gender project’ in the contemporary lives of men who wish to be disassociated with ‘negative’ (namely effeminate) conceptions of homosexuality. Chapter Two has already discussed the debate surrounding whether or not gay masculinisation represents assimilation to the status quo, and the reining in of

gender deviance to ensure conformity to the heterosexual matrix (Green, 2002). Alternatively, scholars such as Connell (1998) suggest that hyper-masculinity in gay men causes ‘outrage’ to hegemonic masculinity, whilst Healy (1996) understands it as parodic and ironic; a form of macho drag that innately destabilises the taken-for-granted nature of heterosexual masculinity.

This chapter contributes to a number of key debates in outlining how gay police officers and performers neg(oti)ate gender identity and masculinity *at work*, drawing on my own study data. Firstly, I explore *why* the negotiation of sexual identity represents an important gender project within the case occupations (‘Gendered Work’). Secondly, the question of *how* gay police officers and performers reproduce discourses of (hetero)normative masculinity is considered, through processes of normalisation and embodiment (‘Gender Work’). Finally, I look to investigate the experiences of nonconformist gender according to gay police officers and performers (‘Queering Gender’). Here, I also explore the (limited) opportunities for enacting queer identities within the case occupations. Although the majority of accounts suggest that gay men enact dominant forms of masculine behaviour to compensate for their sexual identity (tantamount to gender deviance), a minority of participants resist binary constructions of sexuality and gender, particularly through the enactment of ‘camp’.

## Gendered Work

This section introduces the idea that working within the case occupations requires police officers and performers to engage in behaviour structured around shared cultural values of normative gender. For this reason, the majority of participants perceived transgender appearances ‘on the job’ as particularly disadvantageous. In particular, effeminacy in (gay) men was purported to represent the antithesis of effective policing and performing according to a significant number of informants. While the ‘camp cop’ symbolizes lack of competence, the ‘prissy performer’ becomes restricted in terms of access to work. Consequently, neg(oti)ation of sexual identity within both occupations requires a heightened awareness of gender boundaries, given societal and cultural conditions which conflate effeminacy with gay sexuality. As set out in section two, through conjuring up images of effeminacy, narratives demonstrate how figures of the ‘camp cop’ and the ‘prissy performer’ act as constraining forces, which allow performers and police officers to situate their own gay identities as ‘normative’ in comparison (normalisation).

The majority of performers claimed that effeminate (gay) men, commonly perceived as ‘camp’ men, are particularly restricted in terms of securing access to (a wider variety of) roles because men are employed within the industry *to be* men. With regards to ‘being a man’ or ‘being a woman’, as noted by Dean (2005), it is clear that particular constructions of gender dominate within the industry, and gay performers need to respond to the demands of a market formed by existing heteronormative relations, or the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1993). These relations assume that

effeminacy in men signals non normative sexuality<sup>1</sup>, a subject position outside of the intelligibility of the heterosexual matrix. For this reason, performers felt that should one ‘fail’ in ‘the activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex category’ (West and Zimmerman, 1987: 127), opportunities to work become limited. Effectively, effeminate performers remain in a perpetual condition of ‘doing queerness’ (Lloyd, 1999), and are fit for parts associated with dissident sexual identity only.

It’s a business! We’re employed to represent life. Most men in society are not camp, yet some actors are ‘obviously gay’ – in terms of their behaviour, manner, and general ‘campness’. They will find it very hard not to play parts which are soft, camp, effeminate, *gay* parts. (Huw, 39, Stage and TV, White)

If you’re dancing for a predominantly straight audience, then [gatekeepers] are going to want the dancers to look straight... We had one teacher who said ‘you need to dance like men’; and ‘no one is going to employ men who are camp and obviously gay.’ (Peter, 21, Musical Theatre, White)

The above vignettes suggest that a male performer at least needs ‘to cohere and make sense’ in terms of conventional gender performance. In other words, there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender, whereby masculinity expresses male and femininity expresses female (Butler, 1993). As Huw’s argument reiterates (see above), effeminate subject positions visibly disrupt the heterosexual matrix, and since the majority of staged texts look to (re)produce gender intelligibility, summarised by Charlie (33, Stage, White) who thinks that “art looks to reflect life”, ‘heterosexual hegemony’ operates as an excluding force throughout the working lives of these performers. Given these employment realities, it was felt that only those whose bodies ‘cohere’ had the opportunity to audition for a wide(r) variety of (predominantly

heterosexual) roles<sup>2</sup>. Peter's account strikingly notes that this is stressed to students at drama school. During training, early signs of the primacy of appropriate gender behaviour, whereby unacceptable performances of masculinity are framed in terms of minority sexual identity (i.e. "No one is going to employ men who are obviously gay.") are seen. Dean (2005) makes a similar point with regards to women performers' experiences of training and the necessity to appear appropriately gendered. As a result, *embodying masculinity* is an important prerequisite according to participants, which facilitates future success levels. The theme of embodiment is explored in more detail below.

Appropriate gender display, in adherence to prevailing expectations and the concept of the heterosexual matrix, was deemed to be equally as crucial when it came to executing police work effectively. In particular, narratives show how public expectation of the appropriately gendered (masculine) police officer has ubiquitous power. As a result, gender identity and masculinity are required to remain 'omnirelevant' (West and Zimmerman 1987) throughout the day-to-day lives of serving police officers. Numerous references could be cited here, however, Clive's (30, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) account is noteworthy. He states:

Being effeminate would make it more difficult to police the streets. Whilst attitudes have changed, there are a lot of people out there who could give you abuse. With a camp guy, the stereotype is that they're going to scream if they break a nail. For someone who is quite camp, will they be able to do the job as well? What if you've got someone you need to taser? What if you need to break up a fight? You gotta [be able] to just jump on them. [In those situations], I wouldn't say masculinity is necessarily something you need, but it certainly helps.

While it is clear that programmes of modernisation and diversity/equality management have disturbed traditional police culture (see Chapter Six), one recurring view to emerge from the study data was that contemporary policing culture is still tethered to traditional masculine values and behaviours (see also Loftus, 2008). Where officers are required to carry out sensitive public service work, the suitability of gender deviant officers is explicitly questioned. In contrast, masculinity is prioritised by participants, and accounts serve to reiterate that aspects of police work continue to dictate the necessity to appear manly *and thus* heterosexual (Burke, 1994). Although aspects of policing offer scope for ‘camp’ gay masculinities to ‘add value’ (explored later), Clive’s account confirms that policing is principally defined in terms of ‘fighting crime’ or ‘catching criminals’ and the centrality of masculinity as an interactional resource is apparent (Martin, 1999). Indeed, the majority of police officers reflected upon how effeminate officers might negotiate themselves around members of the public, for police officers are expected to conform to gender norms, ultimately emphasising that there is pressure to be seen as masculine.

Given that we are increasingly able to live our sexual identities more fluidly, I imply that effeminacy in (gay) men within these two occupations is denigrated or cast as the Other rather than readily accepted. As I have shown, since society is partitioned by essentialised differences between men and women, performers and police officers are punished for failing ‘to do’ gender; whether this be in relation to the efficacy of police work, or access to performing work. Not only is the strict binary of gender intelligibility which permeates society captured, but tenacious commitment to masculinity is shown to be fundamental to the labour process within *both* occupations. Importantly, perceptions of the gendered nature of policing and performing work

impacted upon the neg(oti)ation of sexuality (and gender identity) for my gay participants who were keen to disassociate themselves with negative, namely effeminate, conceptions of homosexuality. To be considered a 'real' police officer or performer, 'one had better make sure to always be walking around and acting 'real masculine' (Kimmel, 1996: 100 as in Nardi, 2000). But how did these perceptions affect the negotiation of workplace sexual and gender identity more specifically?

## **Gender Work**

### *Normalisation*

As we have seen, gender status remains a key organising concept in the neg(oti)ation of minority sexual identity for both police officers and performers. This prompted individuals to emphasise the centrality of their own 'masculine capital' (Cole, 2008), and assert that they 'do masculinity' *even though* they identify as gay. For many, a key feature of negotiating gay identity at work involved personally aligning the sense of self with conventional images of gender, linked to the figure of the 'normal gay'; an identity that has increasingly been integrated into society as a respected identity (Seidman, 2002). As Seidman observes:

The normal gay is presented as fully human, as the psychological and moral equal of the heterosexual... [He] is expected to be gender conventional, link sex to love and a marriage-like relationship, defend family values, personify economic individualism, and display national pride. (2002: 133)

Indeed, whilst interviewing these men, I was struck by the fact that gay officers and performers often looked, sounded, and acted like their straight counterparts. Tellingly, they were eager to discuss this important detail; that they considered themselves to be ‘normal’ or ideal workers in every way other than in sexual identity. By subscribing to representations of the ‘normal gay’, (more commonly referred to with regards to gender conventional behaviour), individuals were able to reaffirm their competence and coherence as ‘real men’, a characteristic that was seen as a necessary prerequisite, demanded by the nature of work (as above)<sup>3</sup>. Crucially, participants drew upon the effeminate ‘Other’, contrasting it to their own normative and stable masculine identities. Effectively, the body of the ‘fairy’ was utilised as a reference point against which a consolidated masculine identity was forged (Green, 2002; see also Chauncey, 1994). In particular, ‘*dis-identifying*’ with emasculated perceptions of the gay sensibility allowed police officers and performers to feel psychologically secure ‘on the job’. The accounts below serve as typical illustrations:

I’ve always been a masculine officer... I dare say, some officers these days are obviously gay around the stations and far from masculine. I do wonder how they manage their interactions with colleagues when they have feminine characteristics, which stand out in uniform quite markedly. (Daniel, 48, I, Terrorism and Allied Matters)

The perception is that if you’ve got a camp guy in a uniform going to a Saturday night job with four or five pissed-up blokes fighting, they’re going to look at him and laugh. Whereas you get two or three coppers who might be gay, [like myself], but who are just average-joe blokes, offenders are going to listen to them. [We’d] be like, “You WILL wind your neck in, and you WILL disappear.” (Clive, 30, PC, Neighbourhood Policing)

I always differentiate between sexuality and ‘campness’. There are some really camp dancers, which on a personal level I don’t really like to



see... I wouldn't do anything camp unless it was required for a role.  
(Peter, 21, Musical Theatre, White)

I don't know if it's a bit of homophobia within me, but I don't always enjoy [the company] of someone who is extremely camp. Especially if I feel it is affected. The other lad who was gay on our course was incredibly camp. Maybe he didn't want a shot at every part. The Head of Acting reassured me, however, that I didn't bring my sexuality into my work. She said, 'You're not tremendously camp'. She thought I could remove that essence or quality. (Mario, 28, Stage and TV, White)

These comments may be considered controversial because they crudely categorise gay men in terms of gender: those who display 'feminine' characteristics and those who are conventionally masculine. Not only is gender treated as a fixed property of gay men in a polarised fashion, but making gay sexuality 'obvious' by the display of 'feminine' characteristics is considered problematic, and to be avoided at work. Although 'the Other' gay man is defined rather narrowly (he has a 'polluted' status, and is stereotyped as a queen – 'swishy, limp-wristed, and exhibiting an exaggerated, affected feminine style' – Seidman, 2002: 128), constructing gender identity in opposition to those who 'lacked' masculinity enabled individuals to preserve their sense of ability. On the one hand, police officers sought to demonstrate physical prowess by conjuring up images of 'the Other', which, in part, served to enhance individual self esteem. To Daniel (above), possessing an adequate stock of masculine capital allowed him to command respect, yet he worried that effeminate officers would be unable to achieve such levels of deference. Similarly, given that police work involves 'men's work' or the taking charge of certain situations (Martin, 1999: 115), Clive (above) positions effeminate men as unequipped to handle certain 'Saturday night' sagas. In contrast, the gay man who, on the surface, appears to be 'your average Joe bloke' manages to preserve his authoritative aura. Much like those women who

have been constructed in the context of police work as physically and emotionally 'unfit' to perform the full range of police duties (Prokos and Padavic, 2002; Dick and Cassell, 2004), the expression of femininity among gay officers is looked upon as being equally deficient. On the other hand, dis-identifying with images of the effeminate allowed performers to feel as though they themselves had 'a shot at every part' (Mario). Here, the gendered categorisation of gay workers (re)produces boundaries between what gay sexualities are 'acceptable' and those which are 'deviant' within both occupations. Within this gendered dichotomy, masculine gay workers are more likely to be accepted by colleagues or gatekeepers, but for those gay men who are perceived to be overtly feminine the consequences are potentially severe.

Although research has shown that 'straight acting' gay men have developed anti-effeminate sentiments towards those whose 'bodies fail to cohere' along the lines of gender (Nardi, 2000), only a limited number of informants expressed explicit derogation towards gender deviance. For a large proportion of participants, however, a crucial process in terms of negotiating and securing one's sense of self centred upon 'invoking and then rejecting' images of effeminacy (see below: Beusch, 2009). These images aroused representations of men which stood for everything that 'normal' (gay) police officers and performers were not. This is not an unusual occurrence. For example, Pullen and Simpson (2009: 571) show that (gay) men in 'feminine' occupations seek to 'undo femininity' (such as through the masculinisation of emotion). In a similar vein, Rumens and Kerfoot (2009) illustrate that by depicting the camp gay male nurse as the 'flagrant transgressor of conventional gender significations' (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009: 777), gay men disconnect themselves

from ‘lacking’, effeminate subjects. Further, Danny Beusch (2009: 244) found that gay men sexually interested in Nazi fetishist S&M seek to invoke and reject images of gay male effeminacy, which ‘operated as the fulcrum around which they could ontologise and make visible their own subscription to and embodiment of dominant masculine norms’. Accounts here serve to develop understandings of how gay men situated in alternative occupations draw upon similar techniques when negotiating sexual and gender identity at work.

As illustrated in Chapters Five and Six, throughout the course of the interviews, many participants fashioned affirmative gay identities, which were structured around narratives ‘beyond the closet’ (Seidman et al., 1999). As Seidman et al. (1999) note, however, another effect of normalisation is the ‘decentering’ of gay identities whereby ‘homosexuality’ is no longer narrated as the crux of identity. In that regard, decentering, as well as the continuing theme of ‘distancing’ gay identity from the vilified identities of ‘Other’ inferior gay men, was an important tool in the neg(oti)ation of workplace sexual identity. As the below accounts show, gay police officers and performers tend to marginalise ‘homosexuality’ as a basis of personal identity.

I’ve never mentioned it to my agent. I don’t know if he knows. I don’t really care. It’s not really anyone else’s business. (Clyde, 47, Stage and Film, Equity LGB Officer)

People know I’m gay, but I don’t discuss my personal life at work. (Tyler, 31, Variety and Musical Theatre, White)

I was a police officer who was gay – I was never gay first and foremost. We've come to do a job. What we are is secondary. (Elliot, 49, PC, Retired)

I can't be arsed with the gay scene. I go there rare as rocking horse shit. It's the same queens, the same people and they haven't changed, and their entire life revolves around the gay scene. For the sake of being in a same sex environment, sod it! I'd rather go out with my friends to a pub rather than sit in a camp bar for the sake of it being a camp bar... [And] on the streets, I'm just a copper. Sexuality doesn't have to enter into the equation. (Clive, 30, PC, Neighbourhood Policing)

Clive remarks that he does not organise his life in relation to a gay subculture, while other participants were keen to stress that gay identity does not dictate their working lives. Overall, I find that the negotiation of workplace sexuality involves marginalising 'homosexuality' as the crux of identity for both gay performers and police officers. Certain expressions could be interpreted as external manifestations of internalized gender-phobia (such as Clive's comments), and mark further moments at which gay workers seek to reinforce their maleness (for another account of how (gay) men, who carry out feminine work, also reinforce their maleness at work see Pullen and Simpson, 2009). Again, the sense is that individuals fear the repercussions of being tarnished as gender deviant workers (the fear of work drying up, or the fear of being stigmatized on the street).

It has so far been shown that social institutions mediate the construction of gender identity and sexuality. As we have seen, within their respective workplaces, police officers and performers feel it is necessary to engage in activities that are seen as *appropriately* gendered. In conforming to a set of ideals, as evidenced by the language

offered by informants, these two groups of workers appear to recognize that a hierarchy exists between men in terms of policing and performing; a hierarchy that is acknowledged to subordinate, in particular, gay male effeminacy (but not necessarily *all* gay men). Consequently, workers within these two occupations look to create a substantial distance between their own normative masculine identities and the innately feminine bodies of the ‘camp cop’ or ‘prissy performer’. These depictions are explicitly rejected and rendered incompetent. As I now go on to show, performers even attend to the stylization of the body and engage in ‘agentic deployment’ (see Hennen, 2005) with respect to the negotiation of workplace gender identity. Crucially then, data confirm that ‘insofar as their rejection of effeminacy signals a broader devaluation of the feminine’ (Hennen, 2005: 27), the negotiation of masculinity by gay men within these occupational landscapes assimilates gendered hierarchies central to the logic of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1998). Indeed, despite failing to reach the standards of hegemonic (heterosexual) masculinity, gay police officers and performers are nevertheless complicit in its construction, as demanded by their institutions.

The significance of normalisation should not be discounted, particularly with reference to policing, a historically homophobic occupation. As Seidman (2002: 159) claims, extending the status of normal to homosexuality weakens a culture of shame and self-deprivation. Indeed, as highlighted in Chapter Six, police officers in the 21st century are increasingly able to live ‘beyond the closet’ in their occupation; an important development. Arguably, however, given the majority of participants champion a notion of the ‘normal gay’, opportunities to enact alternative sexual identities become narrowed for gay police officers and performers. Since it is implied

that only normal gays who conform to dominant social norms will be respected and integrated into the case occupations, gay men who are ‘gender benders’ are likely to remain outsiders (Seidman, 2002). Effeminate performers face discrimination ‘on the job’, whilst effeminate performers face discrimination at the point of access. This is confirmed in section three, which explores the lived experiences of effeminacy within the two industries. Here I also show that normalisation does not challenge the norm of heterosexuality, but leaves it unmarked.

### ***Embodiment***

Against this enveloping backdrop of normalisation – and the centrality of appropriate gender behaviour – numerous performers tacitly referred to the process of gay masculinisation *on stage* and within casts, within musical theatre especially, further suggesting that directors increasingly distinguish between the ‘appropriate/good and the inappropriate/bad gay citizen’ (Seidman, 2002). It was felt that many roles previously offered to those who flout the gender regime are now being filled by overtly masculine (gay) men. Given theatre has been a site within which dissident sexual and gender identity has flourished (Sinfield, 1996), participants conversely acknowledged the witnessing of ‘gay masculinisation’ within the industry and intolerance towards gender bending personas:

There used to be a lot of rather camp chorus boys. Well the chorus boys may be slightly gay, but boy are they muscled, honed and toned! They can camp about, but they’re not the old fashioned screaming queens. (Philippe, 58, Stage, TV and Film, White, Equity Officer)

Generally, [gay dancers] used to get lots of jobs, and previously, if you were camp or flamboyant, you were more likely to get work. Now it's flipped over. They want to see manly, masculine dancing. (Peter, 21, Musical Theatre, White)

Five years ago, there were a larger percentage of gay men in the casts. Now, there are so many straight guys. I mean it's good! I like the diversity and the variety. But what happened to these other guys who were talented guys, who might not have got the job because they were too camp? (Wyclef, 38, West End Musical Theatre, African Caribbean)

Here, Philippe suggests that over conformity to hegemonic masculine ideals is currently preferred, noting that images of the 'screaming queen' have been replaced by the *slightly* gay 'honed and toned' chorus boy; a man who oozes testosterone in the form of his muscular body. His account is reminiscent of the 'butch shift' or Levine's 'gay clone'; 'the manliest of men' (1998: 7). Since entering the industry within the past year, Peter similarly felt that masculine dancers are given preference at appointment over flamboyant performers, having previously remarked upon the need to appear 'manly', stressed as a necessary prerequisite by his tutor. Wyclef reiterated that a 'butch shift' has come around over the past five years, whereby he has noticed a masculinisation of the casts he has belonged to since he initially began performing in 2004.

As we saw in Chapter Five, television and film work demand heterosexualised performances of masculinity. Since around 2006, it was said that musical theatre has been 'mainstreamed' in that the BBC and ITV have aired primetime shows that focus on searching for the new stars of the West End. One performer felt that due to the

mainstreaming of musical theatre, added pressure has been placed on men in this sector to suppress sexual identity:

‘Middle England’ doesn’t want to see the likes of *us* on television. And now this audience is being ‘poached’ to benefit the West End. I know for a fact that some of the performers on *Any Dream Will Do*<sup>4</sup> were gay. It was common knowledge to a lot of us. But as soon as they go on to those sorts of TV shows, they have to be seen as straight to accommodate for the difference in audience. I think it’s having an effect on West End casts more generally (Zac, 39, Stage and Film, White)

Given that many forms of performing place emphasis on the performer’s appearance, it was no surprise that many participants spoke about the importance of ‘looking the part’ when auditioning, which meant paying attention to clothing, body shape and intonation, highlighted in Chapter Five. Of particular interest here was how sexuality influenced the ways participants attended to these matters, against the backdrop of such ‘masculinisation’. Since gay men, like lesbians, can confound normative assumptions about how they should act and appear in the workplace (Adkins, 2000; Bowring and Brewis, 2009), some participants tried to ensure they embodied normative images of heterosexual masculinity, regardless of whether they were auditioning for a gay or heterosexual role.

Indeed, performer accounts, such as those articulated by Peter, Mario and Philippe below, allude to the negotiation of sexuality and gender identity through the stylization of the body or through the self-regulated expressions of bodily performance. Not only was masculinity emphasised using talk and rhetoric, but in seeking to physically appear masculine, narratives depict the manipulation of the



presentation and performance of the body, which must be maintained for the purposes of work. As explored with regards to flight attendants (Tyler, 1997), I found that to become and remain a gay police officer/performer, workers must achieve and maintain a particular state of embodiment, defined primarily according to constraint and confinement. In that regard, to those gay performers who were keen to negate and suppress deviant gender presentation, in refusing to 'do effeminacy' with their bodies, they exercised a form of 'embodied agency' (Hennen, 2005).

Generally, I try to dance in a certain way that doesn't make it look like I'm gay. People I know, who have got work, are a lot more masculine. I have quite a manly physique also, I'm quite muscular. I suppose it works in my favour that [the industry prefers masculine dancers]. A lot of my friends who aren't as muscular or who are quite lean have struggled more to get work straight after exiting drama school. (Peter, 21, Musical Theatre, White)

There are sometimes cases where I go up for what would be deemed 'very straight parts'. I suppose I do have that, in the back of my mind, that sense of being very conscious of changing my physicality... (Mario, 28, Stage, TV and Film, White)

I'm offered all sorts of parts – married men, fathers. I'm very lucky, but that's partly because when I was young, I tried to expunge any sign that I might be gay, so that people would not think of me only in those terms... [John: How?]. I had the tendency to cross my legs in a particular way. [It was about being aware of] one's voice, those sort of things, the way I dressed too. (Philippe, 58, Stage, TV and Film, White, Equity Officer)

Here Peter reiterates the cultural currency of normative constructions of male heterosexuality, employing his 'manly physique' in the performance of dance in a way that conceals his gay identity. Philippe and Mario also admit to being very self-conscious about how their bodies should appear. Philippe even felt that because he

had been taught to enunciate using Received Pronunciation (RP), this had enabled him to blend into the heterosexual milieu required for numerous roles. Remarkable though, is the length Philippe goes to ensure his physical appearance, voice and clothes do not embody any visual stereotypes associated with visible gay sexuality. As the quotes indicate, the project of erasing or ‘expunging’ all signs of visible gay male sexuality is not effortless, but requires on-going vigilance about how the body might be gendered and sexualised by casting directors, producers, agents and audiences. For these performers, to be accepted as a professional performer means to be invisible as a gay man, at least for the duration of the audition. This enables them to feel more confident and secure, and as a result, they felt they had greater success in securing work.

Further, given that “lean bodies are out” and “muscular bodies are in”, participants looked to conform to this ideal by working on the contours of their ‘manly’ physiques by going to the gym. This was the case for a number of police officers who felt that doing so enabled them to visibly embody masculinity. At times it appeared that gay men were highly sensitive and skilled social actors in physically neg(oti)ating their identities to assimilate into the assumptions and expectations of the dominant heterosexual discourse (Taulke-Johnson, 2009). Rather than just being associated with passing or covering, narratives reveal the embodiment of masculinity as key. In doing so, even as gay men, through embodying appropriate gender behaviour, participants were able to gain access to performing work or conform to perceptions of ability associated with police work. These preoccupations with sculpting the body to appear more ‘manly’ reveal gender as a precarious, fragile and performative *process*.

### *Doing Effeminacy is Doing Sexuality*

In amongst the analysis lies a reification of the ‘heterosexual matrix’ that props up stereotypes associated with the conflation of (deviant) gender and (non-normative) sexual identity. It is important to note that with regards to the above stories, effeminacy was always discussed alongside known-about gay sexuality by participants (except on rare occasions that were viewed as the isolated exception and made explicit). In moving away from perceptions that see the camp man as, by definition gay, I should stress that ‘camp-straight’ men potentially face similar issues within the case occupations due to the gendered nature of work.

As I continue to highlight, however, with reference to the heterosexual matrix and in reiterating the work of Nardi (2000: 4), ‘the conflation of gender with sexual orientation by the dominant culture continues.’ Hence I stress that effeminacy remains a matter of sexuality and vice versa. Whilst a camp-straight man may face similar issues in the workplace, due to the assumptions that society tends to rally around (which interrelate gender deviance and sexuality), he is likely to be seen as ‘homosexual’ and treated accordingly. By the same token, sexuality may not become a workplace issue until one discloses. Yet once homosexuality has been revealed, some of the central issues associated with disclosure remain a matter of effeminacy since ‘straight-acting’ gay men are locked into being associated with gender deviance (Nardi, 2000). As indicated by Clive (30, PC, Neighbourhood Policing) and Philippe

(58, Stage, TV and Film, White, Equity Officer) respectively, this has real and constraining consequences within both occupations:

Unfortunately, this is a job where people fight. I've never been afraid of using my fists. But I didn't want sexuality to be in the forefront of everyone's mind. If I'm going to back up a colleague who's getting the shoe in, the fact that someone might be thinking "Is that poof gonna turn up?" – that wasn't what I wanted. So I was quite happy to keep quiet, and prove myself as capable.

I know young, gay actors who are completely out, who talk about it to anybody, and everybody knows. But they get frustrated as often then only get offered gay, soft, or effeminate parts when really, they could play all those other roles [married men, fathers, etc].

By revealing gay sexuality, straight-acting gay men feel they will be considered weak, or passed over for the consideration of straight roles ('married men, fathers, all the rest of it', seen in Chapter Five). In this sense, the links between homosexuality (regardless of how it manifests itself in the individual) and effeminacy are captured. The fear of being openly gay relates to being associated with the effeminate. Consequently, and as the research shows, straight-acting gay men engage in body work that aims to negate effeminacy, for they perceive it to reveal sexual identity. In suppressing deviant gender behaviour, one is by definition and concomitantly negating homosexuality. For this reason, sexuality and gender cannot be considered in isolation of one another, yet existing research does not address in-depth the links between the neg(oti)ation of sexual and gender identity at work. This chapter addresses this gap in knowledge. The following section 'Queering Gender' further ignites a discussion on the relationship between gender and (homo)sexuality at work in considering the experiences of 'camp' at work.

## Queering Gender

### *The 'Curse' of Camp?*

If you're a butch homosexual, nobody knows. It's only if you're an effeminate homosexual. If I could take a magic potion to give me a deep voice, I would take it tomorrow. (Isaac, 30, PC, NMPR)

As I have reiterated, the OS literature has yet to fully recognise the existence of a range of gay *identities*. In other words, the experiences of gay men who *cannot* support hegemonic masculinity, because they do not possess an adequate stock of 'masculine capital' (Cole, 2008), or conform to dominant conceptions of gender, raises a number of important (theoretical) questions (particularly regarding the relationship between gender and sexuality at work). In the Introduction, I showed that much of the existing literature suggests that sexuality remains hidden at work (see for example, Ward and Winstanley, 2003). Sociological literature, however, emphasises the existence of a range of gay identities. Importantly, I do not wish to set up a false dichotomy between the butch and the effeminate gay man, as this marginalises a whole variety of sexual subjectivities such as the 'gay bear', the 'genderqueer', the 'trans' or the 'femmeboy'. I merely wish to create a small fissure in the ongoing assumption that 'It is not possible to guess someone's sexual orientation' at work (ibid.)<sup>5</sup>. For this reason, here, I explore just one interstice between organisational sexualities and genders in the form of the counter-hegemonic identity of the effeminate ('camp') gay man.

Study data reveal that effeminate police officers and performers live under alternative conditions, most notably the ‘homosexual assumption’ as opposed to the ‘heterosexual assumption’. In particular, experiences of negotiating visible gay identity show that effeminate gay men face unique struggles and ‘effeminophobia’ within certain occupational landscapes. In addition, coming out is considered to be a ‘non-issue’ on account of gender deviance, and in-depth stories recalling this process are rarely articulated by camp workers; stories which remain the focus of research conducted elsewhere on the working lives of LGB individuals (see Chapter Three). My study data further illustrate that effeminate (gay) men are likely to experience increased alienation and exclusion on account of their alterity within the workplace, for failing to ‘fit in with’ dominant conceptions of the appropriately gendered police officer/performer.

### ***The Camp Cop***

Three self-identified, ‘visibly gay’ officers spoke of experiences whereby effeminacy had triggered instances of workplace homophobia and societal abuse on the job. Other participants, who self identified as butch, equally stressed that effeminate officers tend to face unique struggles negotiating feminine characteristics against masculine expectations. As articulated by Leo (33, DC, Sexual Offences), “Some of my colleagues find it challenges everything they’ve ever had to deal with; about a man being a man, and a woman being a woman. An effeminate gay man challenges their

entire mind-set.” Bryn (23, Sp, Response) recalled that negotiating effeminate gay identity led to the departure of one officer who chose to leave his constabulary. Even the fear of harassment drove Cameron (26, Sp, Response), a self confessed “Julian-Clary-like” detention officer, to negotiate the speech work involved while dealing with offenders. He reflected: “In front of a few detainees, I ‘play it down’.” suggesting that he also attempts to embody a more appropriately gendered body.

Isaac (30, PC, NMPR) felt that specifically because he “wasn’t butch, didn’t have a deep voice or big muscles”, he became the target of underhanded, covert discrimination by co-workers. One of the perks of completing probation is that fully-fledged officers are taken out by superiors in “one of the fastest cars the police have”. Isaac was denied the opportunity to celebrate this milestone. He goes onto recall:

All of the other officers were allowed to sit in the control room, where the cameras are, when they were on night duty. But I was told I had to sit in the front office all night, on my own, by the desk. Obviously they wouldn’t say it was because I was gay. They would say that was what I was supposed to be doing. Other people were allowed to break the rules and I wasn’t. I felt that was because the sergeant who was in charge of us had a problem with me in particular.

After his Sergeant made further disparaging comments relating to his identity as an effeminate gay man, Isaac was signed off work with stress. “I am effeminate”, Isaac argued, “and I would not have come up against such homophobia if I’d been seen as a butch gay man.” Thus here, we are given insight into instances of ‘effeminophobia’ (Richardson, 2006) at work.

When he returned to work, although he had been reluctant to go through official grievance channels, Isaac was pleased to discover that his sergeant had been moved to another station. Isaac's reluctance to file a grievance on the grounds of homophobia relates to his unwillingness to pursue procedures that potentially reify the 'camp cop' as excessively emotional: "I didn't want *on the record* the fact that I couldn't deal with somebody. People would think I was a right wuss." This comment could also be linked back to the theme of diversity/equality policy. Policies prohibiting this type of behaviour were seen to offer little protection from his colleagues labelling him as an excessively emotional gay officer, unfit for police work. As such, Isaac was signed off work with stress on the grounds of a family bereavement, an act which conforms to cultural norms that govern the appropriate management (suppression) of emotions within this policing context. As Martin (1999: 116) points out 'officers who reveal their feelings to other officers may be viewed as weak or inadequate'. Arguably, Isaac's actions to avoid being branded a 'wuss' inadvertently (re)produce the gendered values that are the mainstay of traditional police cultures hostile towards LGB officers. At one point during our interview, Isaac wistfully remarked: "If I could take a magic potion to give me a deep voice, I would take it tomorrow." indicating the tension in trying to conform to both organisational and personal expectations about how to openly participate in the police service as a gay male officer.

In similar fashion, Bryn (23, Sp, Response) and Roger (33, Se, Response) felt that effeminate officers tend to exit the police, as a result of their 'unconventional' gender. As Bryn recounted:



A friend of mine, who is that way inclined [effeminate], had quite a hard time, to the point of getting bullied out of the job. [Ryan] put a complaint in, and [a colleague] ended up getting sacked...

...This colleague had gone to some awful lengths to show how 'disgusting' Ryan's lifestyle was. He'd found out Ryan's Gaydar profile, and compiled a report on why it's disgusting that Ryan was allowed to be a PCSO and be out in the community. That report lost him his job really, because he'd gone out to actively find out information about Ryan. Ryan was bullied in some awful ways; graffiti, criminal damage, that sort of thing, and he too ended up leaving.

Roger also reported that one effeminate officer decided to leave the police. He contemplated that this may have been because of his 'gender deviance':

He ended up leaving the job. Not because of people ostracizing him, but I don't think he was particularly suited to being a police officer in the traditional sense. You tend to get people who join the job for the wrong reasons, who are then slightly uncomfortable with confrontation. I think that was the issue. His station used to cover an area that was a big council estate and the mentality of the people who were there... it was a big drugs estate at one point, and I don't think they would've been the most forgiving or understanding of people. I dunno if he had issues through that, through being *overtly* gay... or like I say, there are people who just aren't suited to being police officers. It depends on whether members of the public will be accepting of you. If you're working on a mining estate, and miners are traditionally heterosexual, big, butch and drinking pints, you're gonna face potential issues.

Arguably, this passage reveals Roger's reluctance to express that an officer left because he was effeminate, illustrative of the restrictions in place that censor defamatory language within the police (see Chapter Six). Roger alludes to the unique issues this group of workers face, however: localized and societal abuse from certain communities whilst patrolling; perceptions that they are in the job for the wrong reasons; lacking discourses associated with their manner; an inability to deal with the

underclass who identify effeminate men as feeble, weak and less confrontational. Simultaneously, the 'camp cop' is compared to its dualistic opposite, the butch, pint-drinking miner, who effectively has superiority over law enforcing, effeminate gay men, because they are positioned at the top of the pyramid of hegemonic masculinity. As if to support Roger's assessment, Elliot (49, PC, Retired) recalled:

For this one guy, he was obviously gay, and they all knew; the public knew. As soon as he walked out of the door, he was hassled. He was arresting people who were abusing him; never mind the police work. His identity as a gay person got in the way of him doing his job. Well he couldn't do any police work! He was too busy arresting people who were calling him names!

Christopher (29, Sp, Response) and Cameron (26, Sp, Response), who described themselves as 'noticeably gay', also reflected on the realities on the street and in the office. Christopher acknowledged: "I'm not the straightest of gay men and there is name calling." By virtue of being visibly gay, Cameron found that one Sergeant, before giving him a chance to introduce himself by name *or* sexuality, quipped: "Oh, you're not one of these people who throws accusations of homophobia around are you?" This reiterates that being identifiable as a gay officer can make you the target of abuse and scorn, and by nature of their effeminacy, these workers are susceptible to distinctive struggles which need to be further elucidated.

### ***The Prissy Performer/Casting Camp***

As explored in Chapter Five, narratives show that the audition process is fraught with emotions and anxieties associated with 'doing heterosexuality'. It was demonstrated

that a significant minority of performers prefer to remain closeted whilst auditioning, and opt to 'pass' as heterosexual. Given the centrality of the audition process to participant stories, and in order to gain a more nuanced understanding of this crucial process, I conducted informal, semi-structured interviews with two casting directors. These enabled me to gain a certain amount of clarity relating to the 'audition experience'. Upon outlining my research aims to Casting Director Two, she candidly pointed out: "I think, to be quite honest, there are very, very few occasions when I want to cast camp, in any situation." Casting Director Two later asked if she could retract this statement, and reframed her account by emphasising that when casting gay, she was distinctly unresponsive to gay performers who express femininity in an exaggerated manner.

If you're casting a gay character, very often, one doesn't want to go down that John Inman<sup>6</sup> stereotype route at all. You want to absolutely veer away from it. I'm well aware that, quite often when I'm casting gay characters, it's just another human being. To all intents and purposes there is no need to flag it up at all.

This director's comments are revealing of the aversion associated with visible gay sexualities that appear too feminine, redolent of outdated gay stereotypes that no longer have the same cachet that helped make John Inman a UK television star during the 1970s. In casting a gay man as camp, Casting Director Two felt that this was "an unnecessary encumbrance on the character". By her own admission, however, she stated: "There are camp people around of course. I'm going to put my neck on the line and say there are probably quite a few gay actors who come across as quite camp." Thus she refers to the (prevalent and relevant) relationship between effeminacy and gay sexuality (Nardi, 2000), yet she stressed that when 'casting gay', this stereotype was rejected. Possibly, Casting Director Two's attempt to 'veer away' from such gay

stereotypes is suggestive of a move towards recognising that gay sexualities can be performed in multiple ways, yet she also alludes to the good/bad gay dichotomy associated with a normalised gay identity (as above). Lemar's (24, West End Musical Theatre, African Caribbean) account below confirms that gay performers might be aware of and/or understand the implied terms built into casting directors' statements that prefer to treat gay performers as 'just another human being':

Just because I was auditioning for a gay character, I wasn't like "Oh look, I'm camp, cast me!" I made sure I wore appropriate clothes; I put on my flat cap, I wore a nice pair of jeans and shirt – not too flamboyant. I didn't want to portray myself as an outrageous effeminate or camp gay man.

While Lemar's quote illustrates the possibility for enacting gay sexuality in a visible manner when auditioning for gay parts, it also highlights the parameters that determine gay visibility. Appearing 'too gay', here negatively linked to femininity, has its costs, not the least of them being rejection during the audition process. Yet by steering away from the display of overt femininity, gay performers like Lemar, concentrate their efforts on normalising their gay identities by toning down their sexuality (Seidman, 2002). In these cases, there is limited scope for gay performers to transcend heteronormative constructions of gender and sexuality, which, as we have seen, appear to be privileged within the audition.

For those performers who are unable to associate themselves with heteronormative forms of masculinity, Casting Director Two's account provides a unique insight into the potential challenges effeminate gay men can expect to face when auditioning. Where casting directors are uninterested in "casting camp, in any situation",

effeminate performers can experience acute marginalisation. There is the possibility for effeminate men to become locked into a distinctly peripheral position, whereby their failure to adequately communicate appropriately gendered behaviour restricts access to (all?) roles. Importantly, they are marginalised for central reasons associated with inappropriate gender display, and less so because of their known-about ‘sexual orientation’. Although as we have seen, the two are linked, and known-about gay sexuality can equally become a hindrance (see Chapter Five).

Effeminacy and its potential to create perplexing dynamics during the audition process are further alluded to by Casting Director Two:

CD2: Someone who I met as a student not so long ago, came in to meet me last week. He is a very beautiful man. He came in, and I suspect he’s gay because he was wearing a necklace. He has very interesting hair. He was wearing very effeminate clothes. I suspect, though I can’t guarantee, I suspect that is a statement he has made. I wasn’t sure why he had made that statement, but it would appear to me that he is probably gay. However, I brought him in for a straight role, and he read very well. But the statement, and talking about whether you can tell if someone is gay, the way he appeared and presented himself... the part was a fireman, and he knew it was a fireman. But it did appear to me that the statement of what he was wearing... However, it didn’t matter! He wasn’t right for the part as it happened.

J: It didn’t affect your decision making?

CD2: He just wasn’t right for the part, no.

The aspirant’s ‘statement’ as potentially quite prissy, signalled by his necklace, clothes and hair, was felt to have had no resounding impact on the overall decision to cast elsewhere, even though “he read very well”. On this occasion, he “just wasn’t right for the part”; a statement used liberally by workers to signal the ambivalent and

nebulous aspects of casting<sup>7</sup>. What is clear, however, is that effeminacy in men is observed. The extent to which it is rendered ‘burdening’ or a disadvantage, I feel, is inconclusive given this individual was especially brought in, read very well, yet perplexed the casting director on account of his effeminacy. Although Casting Director Two assertively claims that an effeminate demeanour played no part in her decision to cast elsewhere, her account shows that (casting) directors are conscious of appropriate gender presentation in men when casting. Dean discusses a similar situation in her work on women performers (2004: 109). In that regard, I further show that there are shared unarticulated assumptions about what men and women (should) wear in certain situations (ibid.).

In a similar vein, Casting Director Two’s awareness of camp was reflected in Tyler’s (31, Variety and Musical Theatre, White) account. During an audition for a variety show, Tyler noticed the casting director had written the words ‘very camp’ beside his name. “I then felt as though I needed to tone down my performance.” His account reiterates that camp can become relevant throughout the audition process, and it is (literally) noted when a man appears inappropriately gendered. In relation to the institutionalisation of discrimination and the applicability of diversity policy in performing work, Tyler’s quote suggests that performers may benefit from additional measures.

Although research questions focused on the lived experiences of gay performers as opposed to the representations of (gay) men on mainstream stage/TV, such themes were inevitably reflected upon by participants. One performer referred to the BBC

drama *Robin Hood*, which sees the character of Friar Tuck played by a black man, to demonstrate that casting decisions have sought to challenge normative representations of race. There was no sense, however, that theatre or TV could ever make equally respectable attempts to subvert stereotypes associated with deviant gender and sexuality<sup>8</sup>. Instead, it was felt that mainstream preoccupations continue to lie with producing believable texts in relation to dominant conceptions of gender identity and sexuality. In the process, it could be argued that sections of the performing arts become ‘hostage’ to the very production of ‘doing’ competent gender, dispelling ‘transgender’<sup>9</sup> men to the fringes of the industry itself, as demanded by wider society (West and Zimmerman, 1987). This was alluded to by one performer whilst reflecting upon the career trajectory of a famous effeminate television presenter. This individual:

...had no success as an actor, and then had to find something else to do. There are very few parts for screaming queens. If you’re a screaming queen, and you can’t stop being a screaming queen, you have to do something like drag, or musical theatre. (Philippe, 58, Stage, TV and Film, White, Equity Officer)

Indeed, it was frequently expressed that effeminate gay men are prime candidates for roles in musical theatre, ‘gender bending’ productions or ‘exclusively gay’ plays, but little else, for they have an ‘ability’ to take on these character roles ‘naturalistically’, thus reinforcing the persistence of biological determinist views that intertwine (non-normative) sex, gender and sexuality<sup>10</sup>. Shows such as *La Cage Aux Folles*<sup>11</sup> were articulated as representing ‘a specifically homosexual world, a society within a society’; an underground society of men, reminiscent of the eighteenth century English molly houses; taverns where effeminate (gay) men and transvestites could notoriously be found cavorting (Bray 1982: 85):

If you're camp, you're only going to be able to go into shows like *La Cage Aux Folles* or *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*; that vein of camp musical theatre. That's all you're ever gonna be able to do. (Lemar, 24, West End Musical Theatre, African Caribbean)

In detailing the work experiences of effeminate gay men, I have so far shown that neg(oti)ating gay identity varies according to the gendered manifestation of gay identity. On the one hand, 'camp' confronts the socially constructed elements of gender, challenges heteronormativity, and destabilizes taken-for-granted assumptions. However, due to its transgressive, transgendered demeanour, effeminacy in men is likely to be repudiated, victimized, marginalized or overtly ascribed as incompetent within the case occupations. Policing and performing are governed by the necessity to appear appropriately gendered, hence the 'deviant' dimensions of camp are exaggerated.

### ***Valorising Effeminacy in the Workplace***

I now briefly show how 'gender bending' personas are embraced, re-appropriated and reframed as positive, along with the conscious effort by butch workers to play with traditional notions of gender identity, boundaries and roles within the case occupations. A number of stories demonstrate that it is inadequate to define the 'camp cop' and 'prissy performer' solely within the martyrs-targets-victims paradigm (Rofes, 2004). Indeed, Isaac (30, PC, NMPR) and Christopher (29, Sp, Response) were keen to valorise effeminacy, and acknowledged that:



I would say I'm unique. It has its advantages, and although I did have problems, I think it's made me a stronger person. (Isaac)

I'm a man myself remember. I mean, I'm a red-blooded male the same as them. But we can offer input in certain situations from almost a female perspective and engage with them in that way, and it works, it does work! (Christopher)

The trials and tribulations of being effeminate are used to secure one's "unique" sense of strength, and provide Isaac with a distinct awareness of self that enables him to contribute as a police officer. Christopher saw the effeminate gay subject as 'innately' feminine, and highlighted that engagement with heterosexual colleagues was possible from a 'female perspective'. However, in doing so, he simultaneously alludes to the 'male bond' that binds men of all sexualities (Miller et al, 2003), reframing effeminacy as (hegemonically) masculine in the 'red-blooded', heterosexual sense. These accounts show that effeminate individuals are not necessarily faced with perpetual difficulties claiming legitimate positions within heteronormative workplaces, as implied by Rumens and Kerfoot (2005).

Although it has been found that the nature of police/performing work produces excluding effects that 'prop up a slender range of gendered and sexual selves, emotional intimacies, and bodily appearances', as found to be the case for doctors, (see Rumens and Kerfoot 2005: 8), a small minority of participants felt that effeminate workers had the opportunity to 'flourish' within both occupations. Accounts suggest that officers who do not fit the (perceived) hegemonic masculine ideal look to departments which value their 'feminine capital' (Cole, 2008). Dealing *sensitively* with victims of rape, both male and female, in the sexual offences unit was

frequently cited as a key example. In a similar vein, where one can be seen to fall into the effeminate/camp 'category', Rav (29, Stage, British-Indian) confirmed that there was the opportunity for performers to profit greatly from doing so. Although the practice of type-casting was often portrayed in negative terms by performers, in terms of 'camp', Rav articulates it in a far more positive light, to the extent that it could be 'the queen's saving grace'.

There was a guy at my drama school who was actually very camp. Everything he played was camp. He only gets a certain role, but it can be really great in our industry if you have a certain characteristic trait. If you're sold on that characteristic trait, you can work, a lot! He's profited from being how he is!

Of course, the extent to which this amounts to effeminate workers being siphoned off to particular areas or departments is open to interpretation. For example, narratives which highlight the migration of camp officers to 'station housed' units reinforce the dualistic view that sees 'real' police work as 'street based', whilst supervisory assignments (service-related encounters that demand emotional support for victims of rape) as subordinated, weak, devalued 'feminine labour' (Martin, 1999, see also Kerfoot and Knights, 1998). Nevertheless, 'utilizing camp' as an anti-serious, fun and playful strategy, informants described instances whereby they actively challenged hegemonic identities through 'performing' the effeminate (see also Chapter Five and Six). It was apparent that camp, as an exaggerated and affected behaviour, was used for humorous and pleasurable gains, and represented a form of theatrical agency:

If anybody gets first night nerves, I'm able to camp about, and all that helps the show! (Philippe, 58, Stage, TV and Film, White, Equity Officer)

The banter I have with my sergeant, my inspector, and the team I work with is completely and utterly open. They'll say things to me that I know are not in the slightest bit insulting. They may say "Ohh, here *she* comes." They may have a pair of shorts on and show an extra bit of leg, and say "Hello dahlin." I respond to it! But they're laughing, and I'm laughing. It's not a dynamic I'm used to though, with straight men... (Geoff, 43, PC, Neighbourhood Policing)

Philippe's account demonstrates how camp can help to diffuse and ease anxious situations, as I explore in more detail below. In a similar vein, Geoff was keen to discuss the element of playful camper, which permeates his working relationships. Here, banter between colleagues is shown to parody the stereotype of the 'camp cop' for amusement, also shown to occur in the airline industry (Tyler, 1997). When officers are expected to tackle serious police work, however, individuals self-consciously revert back to a hegemonic masculine performance, to evoke authority and respect from fellow co-workers and members of the public (noted in Chapter Six). In terms of 'real' work, the 'camp cop' was deliberately dispensed of, as it was 'Other' to the expected role.

#### *'Little cuddles without touching'*

On a final note, data confirm that the liberal use of camp language in the acting profession, that is, terms of address like 'love', 'dear' or 'darling' regardless of the sex of the speaker, cannot be understood without reference to the wider work setting and the economic context of the acting profession (Layder, 1993). As I have already noted, unemployment levels in the profession are depressingly high. Additionally, when actors work, they are usually employed on a short-term basis, meaning the

lucky few in continual employment are constantly moving between employers and employing organisations. This creates a highly discontinuous work situation, and can produce uncertainty and insecurity in actors and their work relationships (ibid.). For this reason, as noted by Layder (1993: 56), the importance of being able to trust each other in the profession and to make this trust 'visible' becomes extremely important in the industry. To deal with this situation, actors use camp language in day-to-day occupational life to communicate 'little cuddles without touching'. Hence, the presence of camp and effeminacy are important tools, and a consequence of the ways in which the occupation is socially organised. For example, participants frequently described instances whereby verbal interchanges adopted a camp demeanour. I find that such interchanges, however, helped to comfort performers on a bad day:

When the director was being particularly harsh, one of my straight colleagues wasn't averse to coming over and being like 'Are you OK, love?'" That's just how things are. (Zac, 39, Stage and Film, White)

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I highlight that key similarities characterise the neg(oti)ation of sexuality, gender and masculinity across the occupations of policing and performing. It is clear that discourses of heteronormativity impact upon the labour process and working lives of gay police officers and performers. I show that through invoking images of effeminacy against a backdrop of this heteronormativity, according to 'normal' gay workers, gender deviant figures of the 'camp cop' and 'prissy performer' act as important constraining forces, which regulate and mediate commitment to masculine gender projects. Effeminacy was indeed a potent theme,

and accounts confirm that police officers and performers devalue gender deviant workers within their occupations. Although denigration of 'camp' did not always characterize the narratives of participants, its presence in policing and performing was framed as problematic.

Given the gendered nature of work, it is unsurprising that the doing of 'gender work' and masculinity remain enduring and salient features of the neg(oti)ation of gay identity within these industries. Whereas authors such as Connell (2005: 162) argue that masculinised gay men trouble the heterosexual matrix since 'the masculinity of their object-choice subverts the masculinity of their character and social presence' (Connell, 2005: 162), I show that overtly masculine gay workers do not necessarily cause outrage to hegemonic masculinity. By appearing devoted to 'heterosexist gender', gay police officers and performers are more likely to be accepted as competent workers. Gay workers show commitment to heteronormativity through processes of normalising gay identity and embodiment, both of which focus on tapering mannerisms associated with effeminacy.

Overall, this piece of research is one step forward in recognizing the existence of a range of gay identities at work, since I elevate effeminacy at work to a position of conceptual importance and demonstrate that 'sexuality as invisible' is an unsustainable position. I draw attention to the experiences of the 'homosexual assumption' at work. In privileging the marginalized voices of certain workers, I show that 'camp' police officers and performers face victimisation and effeminophobia. In this sense, data provide insight into how gendered work presents effeminate gay men,

who are unable to associate themselves with (hetero)normative forms of gender and masculinity, with a distinct set of challenges.

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<sup>1</sup> It is important not to reify the assumptions of the heterosexual matrix by inferring that only effeminate **gay** men face marginalisation within the industry. The struggles of managing an effeminate manner and appearance are potentially faced by men of all sexualities, and effeminacy need not be directly linked to homosexuality. This is discussed later.

<sup>2</sup> Including gay performers who successfully ‘pass’ as heterosexual.

<sup>3</sup> I was also interested to discover that sixteen of the twenty police officers were either married (in civil partnerships with other men) or in long-term relationships. Given the ‘normal gay’ is associated with linking sex to love and marriage (Seidman, 2004), this perhaps reiterates the status of police officers as otherwise normal, respectable citizens.

<sup>4</sup> The BBC’s talent search for a new Joseph of *Joseph and the Amazing Technicoloured Dreamcoat!*

<sup>5</sup> As Isaac says, “If you’re a butch homosexual, nobody knows”, yet this contention ignores the fact that hyper masculinity can stick out like a sore thumb, potentially revealing gay identity. This is highlighted by Levine’s (1998) description of the ‘gay clone’ (touched upon in Chapter 2).

<sup>6</sup> A gay character in the British sitcom ‘Are you Being Served?’, broadcast during the 1970s.

<sup>7</sup> In my experience, performers and gatekeepers (CDs) alike.

<sup>8</sup> For example, by casting an effeminate gay man as a straight man.

<sup>9</sup> Wilchins (2005) notes that *all* men who at some point or another fail to be perceived as conventionally gendered are in some sense ‘transgender’, and this term is not strictly applied to those men who identify themselves as such.

<sup>10</sup> In other words, one’s ‘innate’ effeminacy was considered to be an indication of one’s ‘innate’ (gay) sexuality. Beyond this, very little else was considered to be relevant to play the part.

<sup>11</sup> *La Cage Aux Folles* is a well known West End show set in a cabaret club.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS**

This thesis has set out to explore the working realities of gay police officers and performers in relation to ‘gay-friendly/’gay-hostile’ worksites and embodied sexual identity. I have provided detailed accounts of the perceptions of the lived experiences of gay male sexuality within specific occupations. Focusing on the significance of embodied, sexual identity for the performance of the occupational roles of interest has also allowed me to consider the relationship between gender and sexuality at work. In light of this, I contribute to two notable research gaps. The work grew out of the idea that certain worksites are popularly perceived as dis(associated) with gay sexuality. With regard to policing, existing literature alludes to a homophobic workplace terrain (Burke, 1993, 1994; Ward, 2008). On the other hand, cultural studies show that performing is expected to be far more accepting of gay sexualities (Sinfield, 1996). As part of the central aims, I also set out to investigate the significance of diversity policy as a potentially mediating force in the working lives of my participants.

Between the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2010, I collected interview data from a sample of gay police officers and performers, and have presented the analysis of my findings in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. This chapter will now turn to discussing my contribution to existing bodies of research on the ‘gay-friendly’ occupation; the neg(oti)ation of minority sexual identity at work; and the relationship between gender and (homo)sexuality. I draw together the central themes discussed, using the theoretical framework established in Chapter Four. My study develops an understanding of the meanings gay police officers and performers attach to their

working lives by primarily mobilising conceptual resources from sociology, with some additional insights being gained from queer theory.

The chapter is structured as follows. Firstly, I set out how the research contributes to the emerging category of the ‘gay-friendly’ occupation. Secondly, I show how the research contributes on an empirical level to the area of LGB disclosure and management at work. I demonstrate how stigma-based models have been useful here in framing my empirical insights and reflect on whether Goffman’s stigma theory still holds sway in relation to the consideration of gay identities at work. Finally, I reflect on the study’s main theoretical contribution. This is presented in terms of the relationship between gender and sexuality at work, and processes of normalisation. Throughout this final chapter, I also highlight future lines of inquiry that could contribute in developing academic knowledge about the experiences of gay identity and gendered sexuality at work.

## **1. Reconceptualising the ‘Gay-Friendly’ Occupation**

This thesis adds to the small but significant body of emerging research on ‘gay-friendly’ work settings (Colgan et al., 2007; Correia and Kleiner, 2001; Giuffre et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2009). As I state in the Introduction, it is only recently that researchers have examined the growing number of organisations that are cultivating gay-inclusive work environments, demonstrating their commitment towards engaging with the needs and interests of LGB employees through policy. These organisations,



pronounced as a 'new type of workplace...called 'gay-friendly'' (Giuffre et al., 2008) are characterised by, among other things, an intolerance of homophobia and heterosexism, and a management commitment towards issues of equality, diversity and sexual orientation. Unlike studies highlighting these characteristics as significant factors for cultivating 'gay-friendly' work environments (Raeburn, 2004; Colgan et al., 2007), my findings show that other issues are also influential in determining how gay men construct their occupations as 'gay-friendly'.

Indeed, other factors, regardless of policy, are relevant for explaining why study participants understand areas of the performing arts as a 'home' for gay performers. Here it is not just about quantifying numbers of LGB performers, but also about why the nature of performing work is appealing. In terms of structure, employment in this industry is often experienced as ephemeral, sporadic and precarious (Dean, 2005, Layder, 1993), with performers potentially working in different locations and with diverse groups of people, which means they can be skilled in working with all manner of people. Indeed, part of this process involves, as study participants point out, accepting a multitude of human differences, of which sexuality is just one example. Characterised in this way, performance work is constructed as particularly attractive to some gay performers. This is a pertinent observation and indicates that researchers wishing to examine how 'gay-friendly' worksites are experienced and valued by those employed within them would benefit from analysing an extended range of issues that include, for example, organisational histories relating to LGB employees, the structural realities of work and its perceived compatibility with living openly gay identities. Further research is needed to develop these ideas in settings within and beyond performing.

The content of work was also said to affect how participants experience performing as ‘gay-friendly’, as performers are sometimes expected to tap into and embrace difference and deviance for certain roles. Since performers might be required to take on the role of the Other for purposes of dramatic performance, this was felt to contribute in providing a culture of empathy and understanding towards a range of minority identities including minority sexual identities.

Chapter Six reiterated that historically homophobic institutions, such as the police, have become fertile ground for the construction of a wide range of sexual and gendered subjectivities, partly as a result of equality initiatives. Other perspectives, then, support Colgan et al.’s work (2007, 2008) where the ‘gay-friendly’ occupation is described in terms of diversity policy. I illuminated the work experiences of gay police officers in the context of wider changes within the UK police services to disassociate themselves from the negative images of traditional police culture as (hetero)sexist and racist. In line with other studies (Belkin and McNichol, 2002; Colvin, 2009; Loftus, 2008), I show that diversity/equality agendas have played an important role to that end. Indeed, some participants felt the landscape of policing had transformed due to policies ranging from recruitment initiatives to the disciplining of homophobic colleagues. This has been beneficial to officers who remained closeted prior to the early 2000s, at a time when being out was simply not an option, and led to constructive dismissal, psychological identity conflicts or acts of extreme homophobic violence on the job. It is fair to say that it would be misleading to assume that policing remains an oppressively ‘gay-hostile’ occupation since ideas about homosexuality as

deviant within police work are being challenged and appear increasingly moribund. This finding is also significant because it questions previous research in this area (Burke, 1993, 1994). Indeed, for some participants, elements of traditional ‘canteen cop culture’ have been disturbed, enabling them to openly affirm their sexual orientation at work.

Having said this, my police officer participants revealed the gains *and* setbacks experienced at ground level in regard to how the police have attempted to carry the spirit of inclusivity of diversity/equality rhetoric into practice. The research adds nuance, then, to the idea that organisations seemingly committed to issues of equality, diversity and sexual orientation are necessarily experienced as uniformly ‘gay-friendly’ (Colgan et. al, 2007). For example, the value of LGB sexualities is experienced by some of my participants as merely a process of ticking boxes in the pursuit of a diverse workforce. Looked at in this way, diversity/equality practices are focused on adhering to organisational objectives, leaving little room to consider the importance of LGB sexualities in their own right.

We can begin to appreciate that the ‘gay-friendly’ occupation is a problematic, contested and fluid concept. On the one hand, the term ‘gay-friendly’ can be used to describe an occupation that is generally understood as a bastion for gay men, such as performing. It can also be used to describe occupations implementing a set of policies and procedures that seek to level the playing field for gay men at work, such as policing; or the growing number of organisations that are incorporating sexual orientation in non-discriminatory policies, demonstrating their active commitment

towards engaging with the needs and interests of LGB employees. This suggests that the 'gay-friendly' construct, as it is currently understood, requires reconceptualising.

Further, given the insights I provide in relation to the management and disclosure of gay identity in policing and performing contexts (see below), my study advances the theorisation of 'gay-friendly' workplaces not as a static set of environmental factors but as a cultural construct that has a complex relationship with heteronormativity. In this sense, 'gay-friendly' workspaces, whichever way we choose to look at and understand them, are usefully understood as sites of contested understandings and experiences. Developing this conceptualisation by, for example, examining how 'gay-friendly' workplaces reify and essentialise heterosexuality and homosexuality would help to problematise this emerging concept further.

## **2. Neg(oti)ating Gay Identity at Work**

In Chapter Two, I state that stigma theory and the work of Goffman frame this study. Chapter Three revisits the stigmatised status of workplace homosexuality and shows that existing studies on managing and disclosing gay identity in the workplace have drawn on the work of Goffman, revealing the trials and tribulations of neg(oti)ating minority sexual identity (Leinen, 1993). Although using stigma-based models is problematic in so much as homosexuality is increasingly understood as 'normal' (Seidman, 2002), as recently as 2008 authors such as King et al. (2008) assert that LGB people experience dilemmas of disclosure on a frequent basis, as they weigh up the costs and benefits associated with disclosing sexual identities that may be

stigmatised in specific contexts. In other words, stigma theory still holds sway and has been useful in considering the neg(oti)ation of gay identity in policing and performing contexts.

Stigma-based models (Ragins, 2004; Clair et al., 2005) underline how the social stigma of homosexuality is socially constructed. Indeed, the study shows that stigmatised identities are not a fixed and essential property of the individual. LGB identities are socially constructed (Weeks, 1995), evident in how organisational and social contexts shape how LGB identities are built, maintained and ascribed meaning in everyday social interactions. Conceptualised in this way, sexuality and gender are understood as constructs whose meanings are situated, provisional and contested (Greenberg, 1988; Connell, 1995). Accepting that sexual and gender identities are constructed in anticipation of what other people might think has been helpful for understanding that disclosure decisions carry risks and consequences in the workplace. Strikingly, the study showed that concepts such as *passing* and *covering*, first derived by Goffman some 50 years ago (and applied to the management of homosexuality by Goffman himself), are still salient features of the neg(oti)ation of gay identity in twenty-first century worksites.

Stigma-based models have also allowed me to consider how personal *and* contextual factors influence disclosure decisions relating to sexual identity. As I point out in Chapter Three, existing studies fail to elucidate the experiences of sexual minorities working within *specific occupations*. Empirically, my study makes a significant contribution here, and addresses this gaping hole in the literature. My qualitative study has been especially illuminating then for providing rich detail of contextual

factors within the workplace which influence sexual identity management and disclosure for gay police officers and performers. While disclosing a stigmatised identity is a matter of individual choice, these choices are shaped by the contexts in which they are made. As such, I show that organisational culture and climate is particularly influential for shaping the positivity of disclosure experiences. In the case of policing, this has been due to LGB affirmative policies. In relation to performing, the structure and content of work are shown to be important factors that encourage gay men to live out at work. Having said this, the research showed that managing a stigmatised identity continues to be an iterative process and does not finish once an individual has come out. This is the case within both occupations.

For example, in performing work, backstage worksites used for rehearsals or otherwise (dressing rooms/green rooms) appear to afford participants with opportunities to perform visible gay male sexualities without fear of reprisal from their (heterosexual, male) colleagues. In contrast, the audition is shown to be a context within which heteronormative assumptions about sexuality are mobilised by performers and industry gatekeepers, encouraging some participants to adopt identity management strategies more commonly documented in research on worksites less accepting (or even hostile) towards gay men (Humphrey, 1999). While decisions to conceal sexual identities in the audition do not necessarily form part of a wider pattern of identity concealment in other areas of performer's lives at and outside work, they are suggestive of a number of workplace challenges. Like Dean (2005), who also notes that the audition is a key site in which normative constructions of sexuality and gender can disadvantage female performers, the implications for gay performers are also potentially disadvantageous. Dean's (2005: 762) research argues that aesthetic

labour has long been a part of the labour process for women and men performers, 'although within significantly different gendered parameters'. My findings shed new light on the parameters of aesthetic labour for male performers.

On this matter, being visible as a gay performer can mean invisibility in certain situations. While some participants might not view this as a concern, it could equally be considered a personal cost to gay performers since livelihoods are at stake. Some performers appear to be confronted with a stark reality: exhibit (gay) sexuality in ways that do not conform to heteronormative constructions of sexuality and gender and risk losing out on work. As participants in other studies reveal (Bowring and Brewis, 2009; Humphrey, 1999, Ward, 2008), LGB workers can sometimes feel they have no choice but to manage sexual identity in very specific ways, at times eclipsing their gay identity entirely. This is felt to help when it comes to securing work

Organisational context was found to be a particularly influential factor in shaping disclosure decisions and how information about sexual identities was managed in relation to policing. Indeed, I highlight the equally constrained circumstances under which gay sexualities are accepted or deemed to be of 'value' within policing contexts. While LGB sexualities are regarded, at the level of rhetoric, as a desirable feature of a diverse police workforce, I show that homophobic elements of a masculine police culture persist, influencing the work realities of officers and the neg(oti)ation of gay identity, particularly regarding what gay sexualities are considered (un)desirable, where and when. Prior research has not always been sensitive to the variation in policing contexts in terms of organisational norms, work

practices and environments, and their influence on how gay identities are stigmatised, disclosed and managed. My study addressed this lacuna.

Findings showed that attempts to eradicate the undesirable elements of police culture are incomplete (Loftus, 2008), having failed to tackle the reputations of some police units as bastions of sexism, racism and homophobia; such as the firearms unit or the Territorial Support Unit. The general feeling here was that gay men would struggle to disclose and manage their identities in these areas of police. In such contexts, participants voiced anxieties about whether their sexual identity would be stigmatised, discrediting them as men incapable of performing a job associated with violence, technical competence and control (Myers et al., 2004). Indeed, some officers even adopted an identity as a 'single man', despite having a long-term partner. This allowed them to negotiate the normatively masculine dimensions of police work in the firearms unit. A similar picture was painted in relation to contexts of police work involving contact with the public, which appeared to unite most participants in their concerns about disclosing and managing a sexual identity. While some gay officers could be seen to provide a caring and empathetic approach to policing, this construction jeopardised their suitability to undertake certain forms of police work such as crime fighting (Myers et al., 2004). Striking then were those participants who had disclosed to colleagues in backstage police contexts, but then took precautions to manage the risk of not being seen to be 'hard enough' to do the job.

The above findings reveal the status of minority sexual identity as potentially discrediting according to my participants. Some gay employees clearly continue to manage personal information that is potentially discrediting, especially pertinent in



the occupations of policing and performing, which expose LGB employees to new situations requiring new disclosure decisions to be made.

In relation to the ‘presentation of self’ (Goffman, 1959), however, the study shows how gay men actively construct and engineer out gay identities in line with what are deemed accepted, normal or appropriate gay bodies (see Chapter Seven). This represents a step forward and allows us to conceive of minority sexual identity at work less as a stigmatised identity and more as just one strand of an individual’s sense of self. Yet twenty years since qualitative studies first began to emerge on LGB identity at work, Goffman’s work – both *Presentation of Self* and *Stigma* – helps to demonstrate that some men are far from passively inhabiting their gay identities at work. In fact, they continue to present particular conceptualisations of themselves. The research shows primarily that this comes down to concerns of being stereotyped as effeminate or camp as opposed to possessing a gay sexual orientation. The result is that gay men who put on a ‘normal’ gay mask can produce negative outcomes, marginalising those gay men who do not fit normative standards of masculinity in specific policing/performing contexts. This is now explored in more detail below in relation to the relationship between gender and sexuality at work.

### **3. The Relationship between Gender and (Homo)Sexuality at Work**

In her discussion on (re)imagining the relationship between gender and sexuality, Richardson (2007) reminds us that sociologists have long been attuned to the interdependence between gender and sexuality. For example, Gagnon and Simon

(1987) see gender as ‘a central organising principle in the process of constructing ‘sexual scripts’ and sexual selves’. West and Zimmerman (1987) make a similar point in their article ‘Doing Gender’ (in the context of appropriate gender behaviour as an indicator of heterosexuality). In both instances, ‘gender is understood to be constitutive of sexuality, at the same time as sexuality can be seen as expressive of gender’ (Richardson, 2007: 461), although gender is usually prioritised over sexuality (whereas feminists such as Ingraham (1996) argue that heterosexuality is the key organising principle of gender relations, rather than vice versa). Poststructuralists such as Judith Butler capture the intersections between gender and sexuality using the concept of the previously discussed heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). Organizational scholars, however, have yet to fully explore the interrelatedness of gender and sexuality, and particularly the relationship between different genders and different sexualities.

Research into gender at work has often sidelined issues of sexuality. Simpson (2004: 354) interviewed 40 workers in her study on men who carry out feminised work. She notes that 40% of these men identified themselves as gay. However, due to the ‘sensitivity’ of homosexuality, ‘the significance of sexual orientation for the way men managed masculinity in a female dominated environment was not explored in any systematic way’. Simpson’s study indicates the salience of the intersection between gender and (homo)sexuality, but also the perceived difficulties in exploring it ‘due to the ‘sensitivity’ of homosexuality’. This implies that research projects on the area of minority sexual identity at work are potentially revealing. In similar fashion, research into sexuality at work has been in two main areas; sexual harassment and sexual minorities. Research on the latter has roots in discriminatory practices, coming out

narratives and concealment strategies. Generally, these studies separate the concepts of gender and sexuality, and do not consider the experiences of gender in/and/through sexuality at work, whereas I agree with sociologists such as Chauncey (1994) and Levine (1998), that gender and (homo)sexuality are intimately intertwined (Chapter Two). In other words, I theorise sexuality through gender (see also Pringle, 2008), and show that what constitutes a gay identity at work is rendered problematic by something other than a gay 'sexual orientation'; namely a (transgressive) gender identity.

The research finds time and time again that neg(oti)ating minority sexual identity at work is a project in securing a masculine sense of self. To be accepted as a gay police officer or performer primarily requires the tailoring or tapering of the gendered manifestation of homosexuality, *but not always the erasure of a gay 'sexual orientation'*. According to my gay participants, normative masculinity is sought as the most valorised form of identity, and celebrated within *both* occupational contexts as a more appropriate way of being (Beusch, 2009). In this sense, there are more similarities than differences in the experiences of gay police officers and performers. While the experiences of gay police officers are less of a surprise given the cultural landscape of policing, it is surprising that an industry synonymous with the acceptance of gay identity appears particularly unaccommodating to certain gendered sexualities. In short, my research suggests that the acceptance of workplace homosexuality has come at a price – that of an associated gender identity, alluding to a 'gender imperative'.

## *The Gender Imperative*

Firstly, the research reveals gender as ‘situated doing’; ‘a social practice that is (re)produced in its performance’ (Pullen and Simpson 2008: 565, see also Butler, 1990 and West and Zimmerman, 1987). I show that the gender binary is actively (re)produced by my participants ‘as part of the work of gender in everyday interactions that take place in light of normative and localized conceptions of what it means to be a woman or a man’ (Pullen and Simpson, 2008: 565). This is most clearly found in Chapter Seven in relation to embodiment.

As I state in Chapter Two, Butler’s (1990) heterosexual matrix captures the relationship between gender and sexuality, or the conflation of sex-gender-sexuality, and the norm of hegemonic heterosexual identity. As Atkinson and DePalma (2009) highlight, notions of the matrix carry with them the concept of a continual process of discursive construction. Along these lines, I emphasise gay workers’ complicity through consent and their active role in constantly constructing the matrix; through processes of identity policing such as passing, covering and embodying. These strategies appear to enable participants to fulfil the conditions for heteronormativity; of significant importance since heteronormative identity is said to be a prerequisite of workplace competence as far as policing and performing are concerned.

Butler (1990: 151) states that to be a man, there must be a stable sex expressed through a stable gender ‘that is oppositionally and hierarchally defined through the

compulsory practice of heterosexuality'. Men who fail to do gender appropriately by challenging the heterosexual matrix will be called to account. As I describe in Chapter Two, the heterosexual matrix assumes that *desire* for men by men calls appropriate gender into question and is likely to be rebuked by others. In similar terms, for men who express femininity (inappropriate embodiment of gender), this equally amounts to failure to do gender appropriately and is shamed as a result. In other words, men who desire men or effeminate men are not recognised as culturally intelligible subjects as they breach the heterosexual matrix, a key organising principle of social relations.

My research suggests the conditions of this matrix, which render certain identities as (un)intelligible, are shifting at work - particularly in relation to 'compulsory heterosexuality'. This is implied by the experiences of men who desire men but perform masculinity appropriately at work. I will now emphasise that while effeminate men continue to represent abject subject positions, are sanctioned by society, and called to account, masculine gay men in the workplace are less likely to be positioned as problematic.

Drawing on Goffman's work as a conceptual tool, Chapters Five to Seven demonstrate how some gay workers *actively* sacrifice a favoured gender performance. In doing so, they are felt to be accepted within their occupations. I found that many gay performers fashion the body in ways they feel will meet the expectations of casting directors. While this might be considered appropriate, in order to later convince an audience of the character's heterosexuality, some participants focus

intently on altering body posture, clothing, voice and physique. By focusing on the embodiment of gender conventional behaviour, this was felt to avoid coming across as ‘flamboyant’ to casting directors and opened up opportunities to work. In similar fashion, many police officers were intent on embodying appropriate gender whilst patrolling. Uniforms allowed participants to feel more secure on the job. Effectively they acted as a ‘prop’ or tool, and enabled gay officers to blend into certain aspects of police life. Other officers felt that by attending to the contours of their physique or by going to the gym, they were able to outwardly embody the acceptable face of gay identity and policing associated with a masculine demeanour.

In the above circumstances, the research shows that at certain spatial co-ordinates *some* marginalised identities *have* gained acceptance in the workplace, yet these identities must cohere to dominant constructions of gender. In other words, open displays of gay sexuality in policing and performing *can* be characterised as intelligible where they conform to gender norms or, put differently, where minority sexual identity has been normalised (this is discussed in more detail below). Participants acknowledged that by consenting and cohering to the heterosexual matrix in terms of sex-gender (minus desire), there was the opportunity to be recognised as a viable gay police officer/performer<sup>1</sup>. In this regard, identity neg(oti)ation did not always focus on ‘passing’ or conforming to *all* sides of the heterosexual matrix. For example, Daniel (48, I, Terrorism and Allied Matters) felt that he was able to command respect as an otherwise ‘normal’ yet openly gay Sergeant, since he “just so happened to sleep with men”, while certain gay performers felt that being seen to be heteronormative, but not necessarily heterosexual, helped when it came to gaining

access to a variety of roles. In the latter instances, auditioning for straight roles became less problematic (see Lemar's account in Chapter Seven).

In contrast to these experiences, I show that not only does gender continue to serve as the 'master code of sexuality' (Seidman, 2002), but effeminate (gay) workers continue to be framed as unintelligible subjects, in that (trans)gendered sexualities such as the camp cop or prissy performer remain 'impossible bodies' in the workplace.

On the subject of effeminate workers, I highlight that coming out strategies are deprioritised as central components to the neg(oti)ation of minority sexual identity. These workers have less of an option to pass, cover or conceal, and come out on account of the relationship between non-normative gender and sexuality. Such perspectives move us beyond current studies that see these negotiations and the iterative process of coming out as dilemmas faced by *all* gay men in *all* workplaces. My findings show, however, that camp gay men rarely speak in terms of passing or covering gay identity (Goffman, 1959; 1963) since sexual identity is felt to be constantly 'on show' due to gender performance. In similar fashion, my empirical data demonstrates that some (camp) gay men face *effeminophobia* rather than homophobia in the workplace based on the 'obviousness' of their sexuality and experience work life under conditions of the 'homosexual assumption'. Indeed, my thesis brings to the fore the challenges and consequences effeminate gay officers and performers face, since they visibly symbolise a devalued workplace identity in both of the case occupations<sup>2</sup>; gender deviant police officers have been shown to be ridiculed by members of the public whilst patrolling, while camp performers are pigeonholed

for exclusively gay/soft/drag roles. It would indeed appear that *these* individuals represent the *unacceptable* face of gay identity at work, allowing us to refine the stigmatised status of gay sexuality in terms of embodied, sexual identity.

To sum up, where sexuality is constructed as a sexual behaviour rather than a vilified gender performance, some participants have been able to lay claim to hegemonic identities at work. Workplace acceptance appears to have come at the expense of the effeminate gay worker (see ‘Backlash Stories’ below). We have already seen in Chapter Seven how gay police officers and performers distance themselves from images of the effeminate, often equating their own personas to idealised forms of masculinity. Striking, is the extent to which the camp cop and prissy performer are viewed as inappropriate bodies at work<sup>3</sup>. With regard to the idea that there exists a hierarchy of men (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005), camp gay men continue to be positioned at the base of this hierarchy within the two occupations of interest (see also ‘Final Remarks’ below). Camp gay men are referred to in terms of the Other, and their workplace experiences are said to differ markedly from the ‘normal’ gay man, who in contrast can be respected and accepted (Seidman, 2002). The narratives of effeminate police officers and performers allude to their enduring subordination. As summed up by Callum (43, Stage, White): “In our industry, camp men are on one of the lower rungs of the ladder because they are obvious... because they draw attention to themselves.” On this note, the research findings emphasise that gay men’s work experiences do not depend solely on where individuals are positioned sexually. Certain gay men continue to be marginalised and discriminated against at work due to the visibility of their *gendered sexuality*.



In light of the above, my study deconstructs the hetero/homo binary, and shows that the boundaries of this dichotomy have become increasingly indistinct within the world of work. This is demonstrated through the decreasing salience of compulsory heterosexuality according to the perceptions of some gay men in the workplace. So long as men are sure to 'always be walking around and acting 'real masculine'' (Kimmel, 1996: 100 as in Nardi, 2000), laying claim to intelligible subject positions is uncomplicated by desire for the same sex. When this desire manifests itself in the form of effeminacy in men, or indeed for men who simply appear effeminate, such identities are disparaged and framed as outside of the cultural mainstream.

These shifting boundaries of the hetero/homo binary have implications for the concept of the heterosexual matrix itself, which may require reconceptualising. Reconceptualising this matrix should focus on emphasising inappropriately gendered sexuality as problematic, and would grant other gay identities hegemonic status. Decreasing significance would be placed on 'desire' or compulsory heterosexuality, while society's vilification of effeminacy in the form of both gay and heterosexual men would be underscored. As such, the concept of a 'gender imperative' is useful here. Under conditions of the gender imperative, some gender and sexual identities are re-evaluated and granted normative status, while others are (re)emphasised as unintelligible identities. For example, the gay bear: a subculture of gay men who valorise the larger, hirsute (and thus masculine) body (Hennen, 2005) might be understood as normative, while men who act in a camp manner are framed as unintelligible.

In light of a gender imperative, we are forced to draw up alternative research questions in relation to the area of organisation (homo)sexuality. My own research sheds light on a gender imperative and highlights that the experiences of identity disclosure and management, and discrimination vary when we take into account a reconceptualised version of the heterosexual matrix. It is also shown to be a particularly relevant concept within the occupations of policing and performing. Here, men are clearly neg(oti)ating gay identity in accordance to a gender imperative; or the imperative of appearing appropriately gendered, but they are not necessarily living closeted at work. I will now focus on framing this contribution in terms of processes of normalisation. In doing so, however, I show that my findings challenge as well affirm Butler's original matrix.

### ***Processes of Normalisation at Work***

The above discussion can also be theorised in terms of discourses of normalisation (Richardson, 2004; Seidman, 2002; Warner, 1999). At the heart of the 'normalisation' debate is the idea that gay men are able to fashion identities 'beyond the closet' (Seidman, 2002). Rather than being defined by their LGB status, gay men are increasingly able to construct a sense of self that does not have to be framed according to sexuality. Some of my participants did not always treat (homo)sexuality as the crux of identity (see Chapter Seven). In some respects, this afforded informants the

opportunity to feel ‘competent’ or psychologically at ease within the case occupations.

The recognition and valuing of the normal gay worker is an important development and should not go unacknowledged. One effect of this important shift *does* appear to be ‘on feelings of self-worth and personal integrity’ (Richardson, 2004: 401). As Richardson (2004) and Seidman (2002) remind us, normalisation has disrupted associations of homosexuality with concepts of shame, risk and danger, and this idea appears to be reflected in the stories recalled by some of my participants. Arguably, the process of normalisation also challenges traditional assumptions about the interrelationship between sexuality and gender identity; ‘in particular, the assertion that lesbians and gay men are the *same* as heterosexual women and men would seem to imply that the association of homosexuality with the threat of gender subversion is diminished’ (Richardson 2004: 401).

However, I would stress that normalising workplace identity is a *process* gay workers (re)engage in, mediated by the association of homosexuality with the threat of gender subversion, and by doing so, police officers and performers effectively ‘perpetuate their own constraints’ (Dean, 2004: 60). To suggest that the normal gay worker (in the context of my own research) ‘passively inhabits’ his homosexuality at work is questionable (see Williams et al., 2009), and while the end result - ‘normalised gay identity’ at work – appears to challenge assumptions about the interrelationship between gender and sexuality, the success of this subject position is dependent upon

the internalisation of traditional assumptions about the interrelationship between gender and sexuality in the first place.

As we have seen, the normal gay man is associated with a number of (heteronormative) characteristics. They link sex to love, defend family values, personify economic individualism, and display national pride (Seidman, 2002: 133). I show that the defining feature of the normal gay performer/police officer is the idea that he is expected to be gender conventional. Like Williams et al's (2009) participants, those police officers and performers who felt they ascribed to images of the normal gay man *were* able to understand homosexuality as a 'natural, good part of themselves' and 'openly participate in mainstream social life'; however, it is clear that these workers engage in a *process* of normalising, most noticeable when discussions centred on perceptions of effeminacy at work. Here, gender deviance, in the form of the camp cop or prissy performer, was framed as a symbol of derision and incompetence, as 'straight-acting' gay workers attempted to secure a sense of psychological satisfaction and stability.

In this regard, the normalisation of gay identity in certain workplaces is not commensurate with a decrease in the salience of homosexuality in the workplace or its threat with gender subversion. Put differently, the normative status of heterosexuality – or the heterosexual matrix - remains largely intact as an arrangement of power relations through which gay and lesbian employees must still negotiate modes of invisibility and visibility in their work lives. Constructions of 'normal' gay identities in policing and performing have effectively resulted in a state of invisibility, since

their equation with conservative politics, monogamy and masculinity makes them appear indistinguishable from heterosexual identities (Seidman, 2002).

Indeed, what I show most clearly is that certain occupations can (re)produce forms of heteronormativity that permit the expression of gay and lesbian sexualities, so long as they conform to normative constructions about how these employees should look and behave. My findings relate to Williams et al.'s who argue that increasingly, gay workers are expected to live by certain rules associated with the heyday of the 'closet' (2009: 41). While some scholars argue that the importance and influence of the closet has waned (Seidman, 2002), the term has not lost its relevance given the types of neg(oti)ations that take place according to gay police officers and performers. Although attitudes may have changed and certain organisational practices now aim to provide equality for gay men, just as in the era of the closet, the workplace involves forced choices between acceptance and visibility. While for some, 'heteronormativity is not such a bad thing after all' (Rumens, 2008c: 235), bestowing upon gay men heterosexual privilege, valorising a specific model of heteronormative relations leaves little room for exploring alternative ways of being gay at work, particularly along the lines of (trans)gendered sexuality. In fact, the research shows strikingly that gender is the central feature of the normal gay man at work. For effeminate gay men who may link sex to love, defend family values, personify economic individualism, and display national pride, for as long as they are gender deviant, they are unable to decentre their gay identity or lay claim to the normal gay subject position since their homosexuality is perpetually on display in the most defiled of terms.

In light of this, we need to set the above ‘gains’ of normalising discourses against the question of how far these changes reinforce dominant constructions of gender and heteronormativity in the workplace. Might processes of normalisation be silencing or constricting the expression of a plethora of gay identities for police officers and performers? I would argue that the answer to this question is yes, and that we can frame the accounts of effeminate gay men as ‘backlash stories’ indicative of ‘forms of sexual and gender fundamentalism’ (Richardson, 2004: 403). These stories show that normalising discourses at work can ‘secure difference’ and leave intact the concept of Otherness and homosexuality. What we might be witnessing is a shift in, but not the erasure of, boundaries associated with the acceptance of gay identity at work. Richardson (2004: 403) reminds us that when it comes to the deconstruction of the hetero/homo binary ‘new conceptions of Otherness and their attendant identities may be created and developed to accommodate such changes’. This new Othering includes the subject positions of the camp cop and prissy performer. While effeminate gays have been used to being framed as the Other (Nardi, 2000), I would suggest that the Otherness of camp gay men might be intensified not because they are gay, but because they are effeminate.

### **Wider Implications and Suggestions for Future Research**

In addition to some of the wider implications the research has for the concept of the heterosexual matrix, some of the study findings have other important implications for future research. For example, by focusing on a worksite that has long been associated in historical research with LGB people (Friedman, 2007; Dyer, 1990; Miller, 1996;

Sinfield, 1996), the study reveals how gay performers construct and understand their environments; as 'gay-friendly'. This has implications for organisations wishing to develop gay-friendlier workspace in the face of new legislation and changing social conditions. It also highlights the contested understandings of the term 'gay-friendly' given that existing research couches the 'gay-friendly' concept in terms of diversity policy and has yet to consider occupations that have long been coupled with gay sexuality. As my study shows, research focusing on performing can garner additional insights into how LGB workers construct hospitable working environments for themselves.

Having said this, my research confirms that policies on diversity/equality can be important for attracting and retaining sexual minority employees. Chapter Six on policing shows that work environments characterised by the monitoring of diversity/equality policy can be desirable. Here, the idea that diversity policy is a mediating factor in the construction of open performances of gay identity has important consequences; particularly for occupations associated with a lack of diversity initiatives. This is even the case in relation to performing.

With regard to the police, and although policy can be important, a more critical approach is needed if consistency and constraints to pressing ahead with sexual orientation equality work are to be achieved and overcome. As I show, some gay officers continue to experience pressure to fit into existing police cultures, highlighting the persistence of masculinist policing values. Here, further academic research could assist by collecting accounts as to why traditional police culture persists and can be viewed nostalgically. In the context of LGB identity, other issues

that warrant further study include the resentment displayed by some (heterosexual) police personnel about working alongside LGB police officers; the different meanings attached to 'gay-friendly' police work environments; the terms and conditions for granting inclusion to LGB sexualities within police organisations; how 'gay-friendly' police organisations can contain elements of homophobia; and public perception of LGB officers.

In relation to the interrelationship between gender and sexuality, and having dislodged assumptions associated with the invisibility of gay sexuality, sensitivity is needed towards those gay men who experience their sexual identity as (trans)gendered. This has implications on the research questions currently being asked by organisation studies scholars, such as how LGB workers manage sexual and gender identities within contemporary worksites. For instance, I show that managing aspects such as 'coming out' at work are felt to be redundant aspects to the neg(oti)ation of LGB identity for some who see their sexual identity as 'on show'. In a similar vein, I reveal experiences of effeminophobia at work. These stories have potential implications on equality/diversity agendas. Bringing together elements of the diversity agendas of LGB and trans people may help in this regard, as clearly some gay men face challenges at work based on their gendered sexuality. While diversity training programmes may focus on the experiences of LGB people or the experiences of trans people at work, very rarely is gendered sexuality a key concern<sup>4</sup>. Adjusting policies to reflect a range of gay identities is perhaps the next stage of moving towards an employment meritocracy; by inclusion of terms such as effeminophobia as well as homophobia in diversity statements.



Continuing on the theme of the interrelationship between gender and sexuality, in the context of debates on normalisation, it would be interesting to see how the concept of the normal gay worker varies depending on demographics. Acknowledging that the normal gay worker is a fluid and contested concept, accounts of gay men located in female dominated occupations may suggest that gender conventional behaviour features as less significant or that effeminate gay men *are* able to understand themselves as normal through a variety of other mechanisms (Richardson, 2004). Being in a monogamous relationship may be the key defining aspect of the normal gay nurse, for example (I briefly touch upon this in my 'Final Remarks'). This, again, would have implications for reconceptualising the heterosexual matrix. It may be that certain occupational sites problematise the idea that gendered sexuality is necessarily stigmatised or regarded as unintelligible.

My thesis is limited to analysing sexuality and gender, but research on the intersections of sexuality and gender with ethnicity, age, class and (dis)ability would complicate further how these workplaces are understood and experienced. Further research on these intersections will help to develop more complex pictures of the experiences of working as a gay police officer/performer. Indeed, I also note that this piece of work focuses on gay male perspectives and experiences, revealing little about, for example, the potential differences and similarities in how lesbian, bisexual and transgender police officers and performers might comprehend and value their occupations as 'gay-friendly' or 'gay-hostile'. Research involving these people might problematise the term as one that marginalizes and/or excludes their experiences, representing an important step forward in the development of our understanding of the issues and also of practical measures to cultivate workplaces that combat

heteronormative work practices and the hidden inequalities they (re)produce. As I set out in Chapter Three, I decided to omit lesbians as an object of study since much of the existing organisation studies research has tended to lump the LGB population together. This has meant a certain degree of nuance has been compromised. Bringing the experiences of women back into the equation, it would be interesting to see how lesbians navigate their social identities embedded within similar conditions, to show for example, what forms of visibility/gendered sexuality are accepted when it comes to lesbian sexualities in policing and performing.

I would be interested in exploring further how key gatekeepers, managers or colleagues prop up the conditions under which gay sexualities can gain acceptance, particularly since gatekeepers have been shown to considerably impact upon access to work for women performers (Dean, 2005). My participants have enabled me to provide an in-depth account of the perceptions of the lived experiences of gay sexuality at work. It has allowed me to chart some of the contextual issues these groups of workers face, and goes beyond existing studies that do not consider some of the occupational conditions that impact upon the neg(oti)ation of minority sexual identity. An extended analysis that considers, for example, how agents, casting directors, writers, producers and directors see and make decisions around the area of sexual identity would help paint a more detailed picture and inform the experiences of gay performers themselves. Gatekeepers are crucial when it comes to what is produced, who is desirable to play certain roles and *why* this might be the case (Dean, 2005). I have also found that various occupational groups in the entertainment industry are likely to prop up the gender order, which in turn impacts upon the

neg(oti)ation of sexual identity. Any research that extends its focus to include other key gatekeepers would be relevant.

## **Final Remarks**

Chapter Eight has presented my contribution in terms of three areas. Firstly, regarding the emerging construct of the ‘gay-friendly’ occupation (Colgan et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2009), I emphasise that organisational scholars need to be thinking more critically when it comes to applying this concept, be it in terms of policy initiatives or popular perception. For example, reflecting on the empirical data presented, Chapter Five on performing and Chapter Six on policing problematise everyday stereotypes associated with these occupations. Given these worksites are commonly (dis)associated with gay sexuality, I show that all is not what it seems according to my participants. My research challenges negative notions concerning police culture by showing that many constabularies energetically recruit gay graduates, and seek to nurture the endeavours of internal LGB staff networks. Various organisational procedures now ensure gay officers are strongly supported in combating incidents of workplace homophobia, and many appear increasingly comfortable negotiating and managing ‘out’ homosexual identities in the British Police Service. In light of this, we can begin to think of the police as ‘gay-friendly’ workspace. In contrast to the improving conditions for gay police officers, while certain work domains within the performing arts are valued as welcoming spaces for gay performers, the circumstances under which gay sexualities can achieve and maintain visibility and acceptability are decidedly circumscribed, particularly during the audition. Here, certain performances

of gay identity are understood as problematic. Not only is there felt to be an aversion associated with visible gay sexualities that appear too feminine, redolent of gay stereotypes that are no longer seen as relevant, the general association of gay sexuality with a reduction in masculinity means that gay men feel they are restricted access to heterosexual roles. Even for gay roles, straight men are felt to be the preference based on the idea that the public respond better to men on screen who are ‘only pretending’ to be gay. In light of these conditions, gay actors are said to suffer constraints on their ability to work as a result of possessing an identity that continues to be stigmatised (Goffman, 1963).

Secondly, I contextualise many themes discussed in the existing literature on the experiences of LGB people at work (such as coming out, the management and disclosure of gay identity, experiences of homophobia) by researching the lives of two occupational groups. The use of stigma-based models and Goffman’s ideas of the presentation of self have been particularly useful here in illuminating some of stories on managing and disclosing gay identity in the police/performing arts.

Thirdly, I contribute to theoretical debates on the relationship between gender and (homo)sexuality at work using the concepts of the heterosexual matrix and normalisation. Until now, literature on the gendered nature of work and the emerging scholarship on sexuality and organisation have proceeded relatively separately, with the notable exception of the literature on sexualized labour and the commodification of particularly women's (assumed hetero)sexuality in sales-service work (Adkins, 1992; Tyler, 1997). The cumulative effect is that the lived experience and

performance of gender and/in/through sexuality has not been thought about in any sustained way. Although sociologists such as Weeks (1985) have long argued that sexuality cannot be understood without reference to gender, and vice versa, organizational scholars have yet to explore the interrelatedness of gender and sexuality.

Importantly, I show that experiences of work for gay police officers and performers do not depend solely on where individuals are positioned sexually. Specifically, I draw a distinction between the workplace experiences of participants who consider themselves normal but invisible at work and the experiences of those who are visibly gay in terms of gender performance (see Chapter Seven); both of which capture the interrelatedness of gender and sexuality. I show that the perspectives of ‘normal’ gay workers are constrained by ‘the same incoherent logic that characterised the heyday of the closet’ (Williams et al., 2009: 41). In other words, ascribing to images of the competent and respected police officer or performer requires neg(oti)ating identity around the same heterosexual-homosexual binary inherent in the closet (ibid.). The ‘gay-friendly closet’ of these two occupations allows for gay workers, but only on the condition that they conform to heteronormativity and images of appropriate gender behaviour (Williams et al., 2009: 41). This requires individuals to carry out ‘gender work’. Particularly, my participants paid close attention to the ways in which they embodied normative masculinity. I also elucidate the experiences of effeminate workers and show that gender can intersect with sexuality so fundamentally ‘as to negate the possibility of abstracting either one’ (Richardson, 2007: 464). Here, the voices of (effeminate) gay police officers and performers show that ‘discourses of

gender and sexuality are inextricably interwoven’ or indivisible (Wilton, 1996: 125 in Richardson, 2007).

I wish to conclude by emphasising *why* a familiar picture is painted by police officers and performers when it comes to the relationship between gender and sexuality, effeminacy, and *why* familiar hierarchies of masculinity prevail in each industry. I would argue that this comes down to two points. Firstly, the literature on hegemonic masculinity shows that hegemonic patterns of masculinity are embedded in specific social environments, such as formal organisations, including the military and the police (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Within these *two* environments, there is pressure to conform to an established mode of being (heterosexually) masculine. The review of existing literature on the police set out in Chapter Four, combined with the empirical data presented in Chapter Six, shows this to impinge on the neg(oti)ation of gay identity. Beyond this, societal expectations *expect* police officers to be of a certain (masculinsed) stature. This, in turn, impacts upon the neg(oti)ation of sexual identity, as officers are intent on realising popular stereotypes.

With regards to the end products of performing work, this influences the construction of gender relations, or is ‘active in the making of sexual ideology’ (Connell, 1987: 255). This has arguably led to the idealisation of certain (hegemonic) forms of masculinity (within the industry and beyond). In other words, social agents are complicit in constructing masculinities, in that what is produced by writers and directors in the entertainment industry, as well as performers themselves, are part of the articulation of the gender order (Dean, 2005). For example, ‘hegemonic

masculinity is symbolically represented through the interplay of specific local masculine practice... such as those constructed by feature film actors' (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005: 85). Put differently, cultural norms at a particular point in time affect what is produced in the entertainment industry since "art looks to reflect life" (see Charlie's comment in Chapter Seven). As Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) point out, film actors, particularly, will want to demonstrate that they can embody mainstream or current images of what it means to be a man. Arguably, the empirical data show that some performers are more than aware of this, demonstrating that the articulation of the gender order is mediated through those who work as performers (Dean, 2004).

The above points link back to an earlier one made, first presented in Chapter Seven; that policing and performing work are effectively hostage to the production of particular forms of (hegemonic) masculinity. This is what affects the neg(oti)ation of gender and sexual identity at work, since men are expected to (or should be able to) behave in a certain way; *hence the neg(oti)ation of sexuality becomes primarily a gender project for gay performers and police officers*. If we were to think about a traditionally feminine occupation such as cabin crew (Tyler, 1999), it may be that 'camp' is utilised as part of the labour process. Or, as Simpson (2005) notes in her study on men in feminine occupations, homosexual men can feel that certain forms of work fit perfectly well with their overall sense of self (and thus may require a reduction in the neg(oti)ation of gender identity). This is less likely to be the case within industries that are either underpinned by institutionalised forms of hegemonic masculinity (policing) or complicit in the construction of (hetero)gender relations (performing), but this is not to say that such a hierarchy of masculinities permeates

the structures of other/all occupations. For example, one performer who used to work as a full-time hairdresser felt that with certain clients, he tended to use camp as a workplace strategy or performance “where I thought it was going to enhance the experience, or result in me getting a big fat tip at the end of it”. This links back to my comments on the wider implications of my study or the idea that the normal gay worker is likely to be a shifting identity position affected by demographics and other variables.

Importantly, and in relation to current research on LGB identity at work, my thesis creates a small, but significant fissure in the notion that sexuality is invisible at work. This is an assumption that has been widely quoted by scholars (Ward, 2008, Woods and Lucas, 1993) and it paints an unbalanced and inaccurate picture. My research shows that certain forms of gendered sexuality are experienced as very visible yet the voices of camp or effeminate men at work appear to have been sidelined.

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<sup>1</sup> The acceptance of minority sexual identity along the lines of coherent gender performance does not *always* play out. For example, there are those who feel casting directors are inclined to view the masculine(ised) gay performer as an unsuitable candidate for a straight role, and there are instances whereby police officers become anxious that collegiate or public response to minority sexual identity will focus on one’s presumed effeminacy.

<sup>2</sup> I would also stress here that effeminophobia is potentially faced by any man who appears effeminate, but does not necessarily define themselves as gay.

<sup>3</sup> It would be misleadingly incomplete to suggest that sexual identity does not complicate the enactment of valorised forms of masculinity, since these are understood to have a lasting heterosexual component (Connell, 1998).

<sup>4</sup> For example, Stonewall do not refer to gendered sexuality in their guidelines outlining how organisations should be tackling diversity at work for LGB people.



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## APPENDIX ONE

### PARTICIPANT DETAILS

#### *Performer Participants*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Length of Service</b>	<b>Race</b>	<b>Sector</b>	<b>Misc.</b>
Alex	45	22 years	White, British	Variety (Circus), Walk-On	Equity Officer
<b>Callum*</b>	43	26 years	White, British	Stage	
<b>Charlie</b>	33	10 years	White, British	Stage	Also works as a musician
<b>Clyde</b>	47	14 years	White, British	Stage and Film	Equity Officer
Dafydd	25	2 years	White, British	Musical Theatre	
Ed	28	3 years	White, British	Variety	Ex-Performer
<b>Felix</b>	31	5 years	Asian, Singaporean	Stage and Film	
<b>Huw</b>	39	15 years	White, British	Stage and TV	
<b>Jolyon</b>	39	22 years	White, British	Musical Theatre	Now works as a company manager in the West End
<b>Lemar</b>	24	3 years	African-Caribbean,	Musical Theatre	Currently working in the West End
<b>Mario</b>	28	7 years	White, British	Stage, TV and Film	
<b>Peter</b>	21	< 2 years	White, British	Musical Theatre	
<b>Philippe</b>	58	30 years	White, British	Stage, TV and Film	Equity Officer, 'Star'
<b>Rav</b>	29	5 years	Indian, British	Stage	
Rob	60	20 years	White, British	Stage	Visually impaired.
Simon	22	2 years	White, British	Musical Theatre and Variety	
<b>Tyler</b>	31	9 years	White, British	Variety and Musical Theatre	Tyler now works as a musician in

					the West End.
<b>Wyclef</b>	38	5 years	African-Caribbean	Musical Theatre	Currently working in the West End
William	48	19 years	African-American	TV, Variety (Drag Artiste)	
<b>Zac</b>	39	3 years	White, British	Stage and Film	Ex-Performer, Amateur theatre director

*Police Officer Participants*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Length of Service</b>	<b>Division</b>	<b>Rank</b>
<b>Adam</b>	28	14 years	Traffic	Police Constable (PC)
<b>Ben</b>	49	28 years	Roadside Policing	Inspector (I)
<b>Bryn</b>	23	2 years	Response	Special Constable (Sp); Works fulltime as police staff (admin)
<b>Cameron</b>	26	< 2 years	Response	Sp; Works fulltime as police staff (custody suite)
<b>Christopher</b>	29	6 years	Response	Sp
<b>Clive</b>	30	11 years	Neighbourhood Policing	PC
<b>Daniel</b>	48	30 years	Terrorism and Allied Matters	I
<b>Elliot</b>	49	30 years	Retired	PC
<b>Geoff</b>	43	7 years	Neighbourhood Policing	PC
<b>Geraint</b>	27	2 years	Victim Focus	PC
<b>Isaac</b>	30	11 years	Number Plate Recognition (NMPR)	PC
<b>Jason</b>	50	30 years	Traffic	PC
<b>Leo</b>	33	8 years	Sexual Offences	Detective Constable (DC)

Oscar	29	9 years	Neighbourhood Policing	PC
<b>Paul</b>	28	7 years	Fire Arms	PC
<b>Roger</b>	33	8 years	Response	Sergeant (Se)
<b>Sean</b>	38	18 years	Anti-Terrorism	I
<b>Stan</b>	28	4 years	British Transport Police	PC
<b>Will</b>	33	6 years	Response	PC
Wayne	28	6 years	Domestic Violence	DC

*Gatekeeper Participants (Performing)*

<b>Gatekeeper Type</b>	<b>Correspondence Type</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Casting Director One</b>	Interview	Casting Director One is a white female in her late thirties. She casts for films and theatre productions.
<b>Casting Director Two</b>	Interview	Casting Director Two is a white female in her early forties. She casts for a primetime television show for the BBC.
<b>Agent One</b>	Email	Based in London, Agent One is a white male in his early forties. His agency represents 28 male performers, 5 male models and 18 female performers.
<b>Agent Two</b>	Email	Based in London, Agent Two is a white male (age unknown) and currently represents 24 male performers, 6 women performers and a number of creatives.